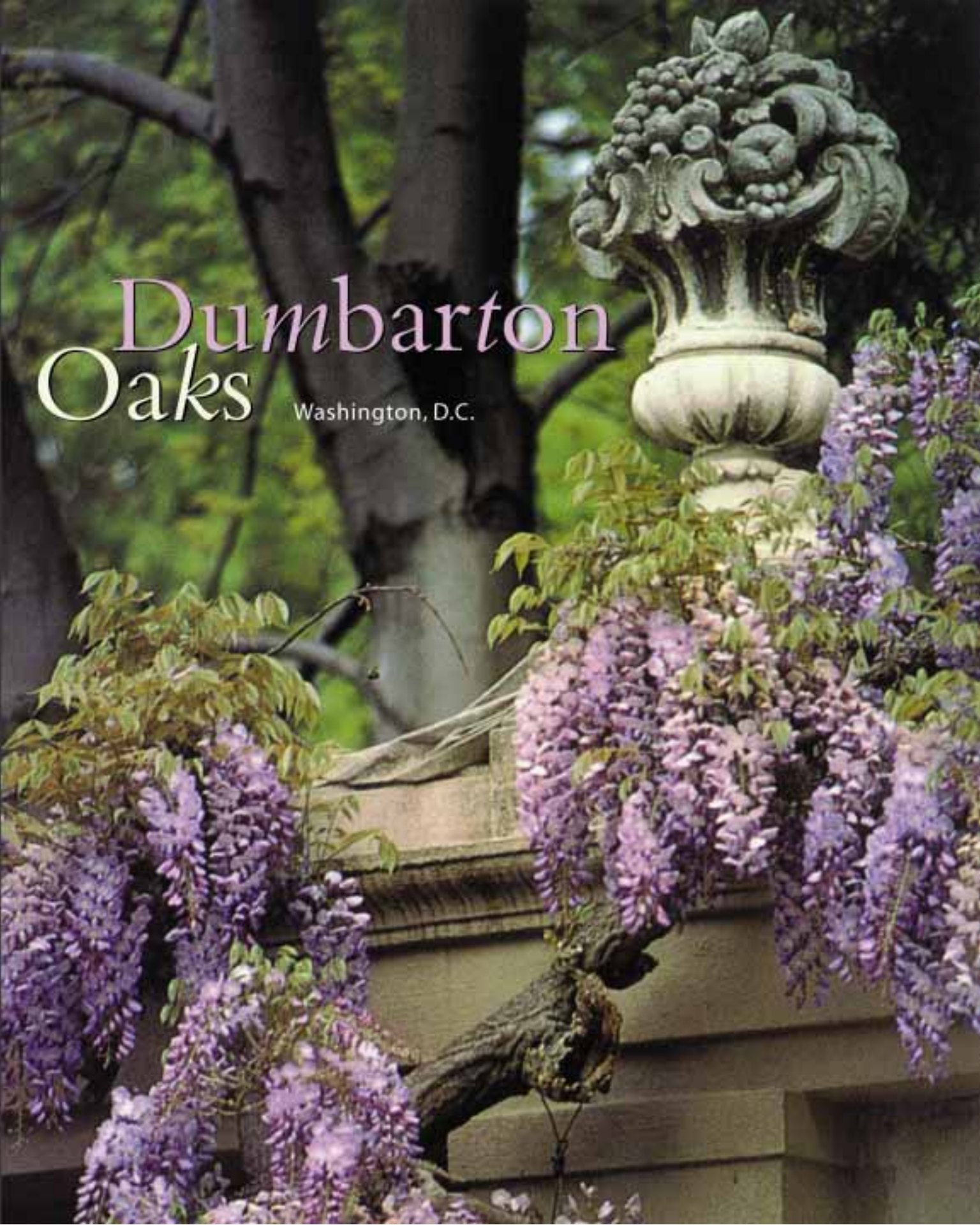
Dumbarton
Oaks
Washington, D.C.

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Edited by Denys Sutton

Denys Sutton

An Oasis of Scholarship

Although Henry James spent most of his life in Europe, he understood much about his compatriots; those, at any rate, who belonged to the upper strata of society and especially those who went to Europe. His gift for perceiving the strain of innocence that could be detected in many Americans when they were abroad is clear, but he was no less aware of their frequent search for an aesthetic ideal.

Needless to say some collectors in the United States, like those in other countries, went in for ostentatious interiors and showed little true concern for art. Yet many American collectors had remarkable flair and bought splendid pieces: C. L. Freer, Mrs. J. L. Gardner, Henry Walters and Jules Bache, to name only some of the most celebrated, were endowed with unusual taste. The next generation produced people such as Duncan Phillips and Robert and Mildred Bliss. The Blisses were the creators of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., which came into the public eye in 1944 when the preliminary discussions leading up to the foundation of the United Nations were held there.

The Blisses were of a type that has more or less vanished—the civilized amateur—and represented American patrician culture at its finest. Those who had the privilege, it was nothing less, of being shown Dumbarton Oaks in the 'old days' by Mr. and Mrs. Bliss with the puckish Director, John S. Thacher, in attendance, will cherish the memory of a golden phase in American life. The taste of the Blisses, Maecenases of distinction, was for the rare and unusual: the Music Room (Fig. 3) is an epitome of 'High Culture', with its rich gold thread tapestry, remarkable early Italian and Northern pictures, a Riemenschnieder figure, a radiant El Greco, a marvellous Degas and one or two superb examples of Chinese and Egyptian art (Figs. 4–10).

Nowadays many museums have become Lunaparks, often invaded by unruly children whose teachers are unable, or unwilling, to control them. This is not the case at Dumbarton Oaks, where the house (of which the history is traced by the Director, Giles Constable, in this issue) is an oasis of culture where the inanimate beauty of the objects within is complemented by the growing beauty of the gardens without. These were created by Mrs. Bliss with the help of Beatrix Farrand, a niece of Edith Wharton and an expert in garden design. Mrs. Bliss also established an important garden library.

Robert Woods Bliss (Fig. 1) was the sort of cosmopolitan and educated American who appears in the novels of Henry James and Edith Wharton. Most of his life was spent in the grand world of international diplomacy. After leaving Harvard (where he studied History), he entered the public service in 1900. His first post was in the office of the Civil Governor of Puerto Rico to whom he was appointed secretary. Later he was *en poste* in Venice, St. Petersburg, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Paris and The Hague. He was also American Ambassador to Sweden and the Argentine. He worked in the State Department in Washington and although retiring at his own request in 1933, he became a consultant in 1942. When Second Secretary at the American Embassy in St. Petersburg he was presented to the Czarina and was in Russia during the Revolution of 1905.

Bliss's father, William H. Bliss, was the United States Attorney in St. Louis and also had railway interests. Left a widower, he married the remarkable Anna Dorinda Blaksley (1851–1935), also from St. Louis, whose lineage gave her membership in the Colonial Dames and the Daughters of the American Revolution. She had been sent to Paris to 'finish' at Miss de Vina's well known school and then travelled round Europe with a chaperone, Miss Emily Mason, known as the 'Florence Nightingale of the South'.

Soon after returning to St. Louis, Anna Blaksley married her first husband, Demus Barnes, a wid-

1

Robert Woods Bliss
(1875–1962)

2

Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss *(1879–1969)* by Albert Steiner, 1908

ower, whose daughter, Cora, was older than she. The new Mrs. Barnes was devoted to her step-daughter after whose premature death she built in her memory a special mausoleum at Woodland, New York. Her own husband died too, but not before they had had a daughter, Mildred. Barnes, who had interests in Fletcher's Castoria Corporation, left his widow an exceedingly wealthy woman. It was an instance of the close ties linking the Barneses and the Blisses that Mildred Barnes (Fig. 2) should have married her step brother, the handsome Robert Bliss.

Mrs. Bliss Senior was clearly a forceful personality, with a pronounced taste for good music. Although before the First World War she and her second husband spent most of the year in Manhattan, she decided to build a mansion in Montecito at Santa Barbara, California. The result was Casa Dorinda, which was erected during the War, a handsome example of the American eclectic style with strong 'Churrigueresque' features. One attraction of this vast residence is the grand music room where such famous artists as Paderewski and Heifetz would perform.

The older Mrs. Bliss's love of music was inherited by her daughter and stepson, who often gave concerts at Dumbarton Oaks, which they bought and renovated in 1920. The Blisses were friends of Nadia Boulanger and commissioned Stravinsky to compose his celebrated Dumbarton Oaks concerto (1938) in honour of their Golden Wedding. The tradition of music-making at Dumbarton Oaks continued after it had ceased to be a private home: it had been given by the Blisses to Harvard University in 1940.

As yet the development of the Blisses' love of works of art has not been examined in any detail. Their long stay in Paris, where Bliss served at the American Embassy from 1912 to 1920, was of paramount importance for shaping their taste. In 1918, for instance, Mrs. Bliss acquired Degas's *La Répétition de Chant* (Fig. 10) at the artist's studio sale. The Blisses moved in the smart upper class intellectual society of the time, which is depicted in the memoirs of Mrs. Wharton with whom Mrs. Bliss did not get on.

A determining influence on the Blisses was Mrs. Bliss's friendship with one of the most intriguing Americans of his time—Royall Tyler (1884–1953), whom she had known since 1902, and with whom she corresponded until his death. Tyler, whose ancestor was the first Chief Justice of Vermont and the first American playwright, and whose grandmother was of Slavonic origin, went to Harrow and then to New College, Oxford, but left after four terms. He studied in Saragossa and became a close friend of the Rector, Miguel de Unamuno. A polymath and a brilliant linguist, Tyler was commissioned by Grant Richards to write a book on Spain (1909). This remarkable volume is one of the first publications in English to pay tribute to El Greco. Tyler eloped with the beautiful Mrs. Richards, born Contessa Elisina Palamidessi de Castelvecchio, the descendant of a son of Louis Napoleon, King of Holland. Royall Tyler was then employed by the British Public Record Office as Editor of the Calendar of the Spanish State Papers.

The Tylers had established their home in Paris; it was there that Tyler first made Bliss aware of the beauties of PreColumbian art, taking him to the small shop of Joseph Brummer in the Boulevard Raspail where he bought his first piece—an Olmec figure. Bliss's response to Pre-Columbian art was analogous to that of many of the Paris avant-garde to Negro sculpture.

Bliss later confessed that on the day he saw the Olmec figure 'the collector's microbe took root...in very fertile soil'. Although he looked for pieces in Latin America he never found anything worthwhile there: his collection was formed of items bought in Europe and the United States. He had no interest in the anthropological or historical aspects of Pre-Columbian art; he only acquired items that appealed to him as works of art. The result is a collection which is one of the most aesthetically pleasing of its kind in existence. It was on view at the National Gallery, Washington, D.C. for many years and, after the owner's death, it was installed in a special wing, designed by Philip Johnson, at Dumbarton Oaks.

Dumbarton Oaks, however, is best known for its celebrated collection of Byzantine art and its Antioch mosaics which were excavated by a Princeton University team. The Blisses had developed their taste for Byzantine art during their time in Paris, largely owing to the influence of Tyler. He

3

The Music Room, facing East

4

Maddona and Child by Tilman Riemenschneider (1460–1531). Wood, height 95·25 cms. Acc. no. H. 24.4

5

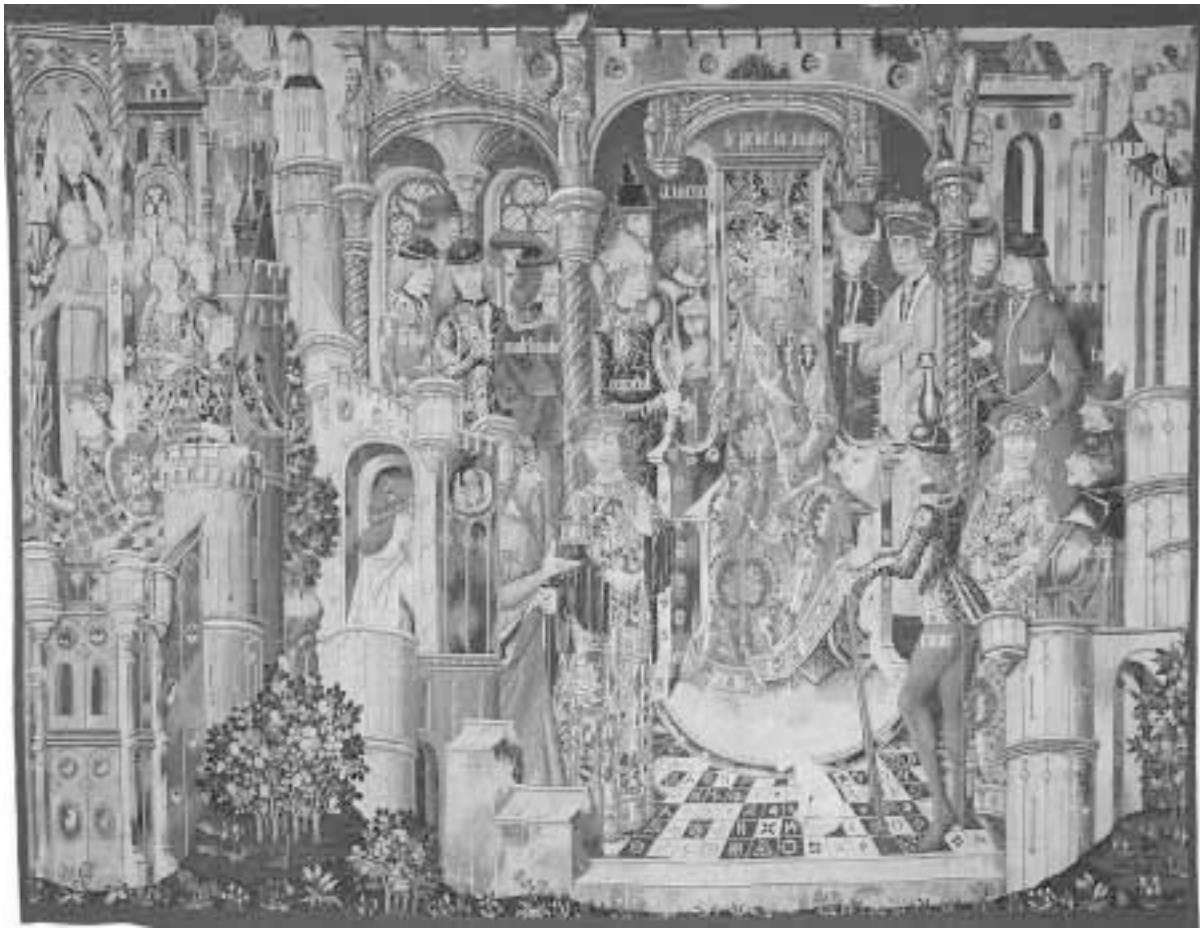
Head of Bodhisattva, Chinese, T'ang period, 618–906. Black stone, height 43 cms. Acc. no. H. 25.5

6

CAT, Egyptian, Late Dynastic Period. Bronze on rose granite socle, *c.* 35·5 cm. Acc. no. H. 21.1

7

LANDSCAPE by Claude Lorrain (1600–82), 1663. Sepia, black chalk and wash, 26·2 × 37·8 cm. 1935. Acc. No. H. 36.48. An outstanding example of Claude's late style, this composition is related to several others of about the same time



8

The Prince of Wickedness, Flemish, thirteenth century. Tapestry, 4·65 × 3·5 m. Acc. No. H. 35.15

9

The Visitation by El Greco (1541–1614). Oil on canvas, 97·5 × 72 cm. Acc. no. H. 36.18. From the Church of Santa Clarel, Diamel (Ciudad Real)

10

La Repetition de Chant by Edgar Degas (1834–1917), *c.* 1873. Oil on canvas, 81 × 65 cm. Acc. no. H. 18.2. Bought by Mrs. Bliss at the Degas Sale of 1918

had fallen in love with Byzantine art when his mother and stepfather had taken him to St. Mark's as a lad; later his friendship with Unamuno further fostered his love of Byzantium. He was to publish in 1926 a small book on the subject with Hayford Peirce, with whom he later wrote two sections of a five volume *L'art Byzantin* that was interrupted by the Second World War; he also played a major part in organizing the Byzantine exhibition of 1931 at the Musée des Arts Decoratifs. Tyler was an all-round man with a fine eye (he owned a magnificent Byzantine chalice) and worked as an economist and official at the League of Nations; his excellent life of Charles V was published posthumously in 1956. During the First World War Royall Tyler served in the American Intelligence in Paris with Hayford Peirce. Their set included Eric Maclagan, head of the British Information Service, Mrs. Wharton and Berenson, who said of Tyler that he was 'perfectly genuine and very lovable, a real scholar and a man of taste'.

A taste for Byzantine art was quite the thing in Paris: Mrs. Wharton, who worked with Mrs. Tyler during the war, was keen on it; she would see the Byzantine historian Gustave Schlumberger who was the *ami intime* of the Comtesse de Cossé-Brissac and in her novel *The Glimpse of the Moon* (1922), the American writer introduces a character, Professor Darchivio, who had been invited to give an after-dinner talk on the differences between Sasanian and Byzantine motifs in Carolingian art.

Two considerations inspired the Blisses in their enthusiasm for Byzantine art. They were intrigued by the beauty of its finest objects, a number of which they acquired, and by its arcane qualities: here was a world of art that was then known only to an élite. Robert Bliss was also intrigued by the intellectual problems involved in the study of this art, which then, as now, is notoriously difficult to assess. Huntington Cairns observed in a tribute to Bliss that he was fascinated by a civilization that

> had carried on the secular imperial system of the Roman Empire until the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, and which had preserved the learning of the West. The preservation and transmission of knowledge was the greatest function which, at that time, could have been performed. This the Byzantines accomplished with ardent precision and humility. He saw that here was a field of great richness which Western students had largely neglected. Byzantium was luxurious, commercial, legally minded, theological, touched with science, and motivated by a powerful art impulse. It was an area of history that demanded exploration if medieval civilization were to be fully understood.

Not everyone would agree with that interpretation of Byzantine art, nor with the view of Royall Tylor and Peirce that it was essentially the art of the Imperial Court; nevertheless the works at Dumbarton Oaks reveal a sensibility towards costly materials that is found in Byzantine art at its finest. In any event, the Blisses felt that this was an art that required further study. As Bliss wrote in a piece on 'Dumbarton Oaks; A Dream becomes Reality': 'There was need in this country, we thought, of a quiet place where the advanced student and scholar could withdraw, the one to mellow and develop, the other to write the result of a life's study'. This noble belief, one shared by Bernard Berenson at I Tatti, was an offspring of the ethos of the 'High Culture' of the American Renaissance of the years between 1890 and 1914. Both Dumbarton Oaks and I Tatti are sanctuaries for those who (we hope) seek truth in a disinterested fashion.

Giles Constable

The Building of Dumbarton Oaks

The main house at Dumbarton Oaks, with its various additions, presents a conspectus of American architectural styles ranging from early nineteenth-century Federal through Victorian to neo-Georgian eclectic and modern in the twentieth century (Fig. 1). Each shift in style and ownership was accompanied by a change in name. The site, at the top of a steep slope rising from the Potomac River, was known in the eighteenth century as the Rock of Dumbarton owing to a fancied resemblance to the Rock of Dumbarton in Scotland. During the first half of the nineteenth century, when Classicism and Romanticism alternately prevailed, the house was called Acrolophus, and sometimes the Grove or Oakly. It was renamed Monterey during the war with Mexico, and The Oaks in about 1860, in its Victorian phase. The present name of Dumbarton Oaks, given after the property was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss in 1920, thus combines two elements from its previous history.

The first house was built on top of the hill, facing due south, in about 1800. 'Two stories high, with five bays and built of brick, it resembled other great houses of the early Federal period,' according to Colket and Vander Poel in their unpublished history of Dumbarton Oaks.[1] Among its distinctive features, now lost, were the receding central bay, with a rounded window above the front door, and the parapet, with sections of balusters, along the roof-line, concealing the roof from the ground (Fig. 2). Other features, still visible in the main block of the present house, are the twelve-pane windows, with stone lintels and keystones above and countersunk panels in the brick between them, and, inside the building, the central hall running through the house, with rooms opening on either side. The short eastern wing of the original house set back from the main façade also survives. Some distance beyond this wing the elegant pavilion known as the Orangery, which still exists essentially in its original form and is discussed elsewhere in this issue, was built probably between 1805 and 1812.

The house was totally remodelled in the mid-nineteenth century by Edward Linthicum, who enlarged it on every side (Fig. 3). He first extended the east wing towards the Orangery, and back beyond the original north side of the house, making an ell, and later he added a west wing, with a porte-cochère at the end. In the centre of the back he added a two-storey bay-window, surmounted by a hexagonal tower, shaped like a cupola, rising some distance above the roof-line.[2] On top he added, under a mansard roof (said to be one of the earliest mansard roofs in Washington), a third floor, which was later transformed into a small theatre, the scene of popular social entertainments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Under the enlarged cornice a row of heavy brackets was added, further changing the original character of the building. The disguise was completed by the addition of a portico over the front door, with a glazed-in balcony above, and by porches—two-storey on the west wing, and one-storey on the east wing—decorated with wrought iron, in the southern style. The result was thoroughly nineteenth-century, and it would have

[1] Cited from the typescript at Dumbarton Oaks, part II, p. 20. See also Walter M. Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden, 1800–1966,* p. 15. All students of Dumbarton Oaks are indebted to these works, from which much of the information in this article is derived, supplemented by photographs in the Dumbarton Oaks archives and in memoirs such as John S. White, *To Keep the Declaration,* 1978.

[2] The date of this addition is uncertain, but its angular shape, with three flat sides, and curved topped windows, as well as the tower, mark it as Victorian, as does an illustration in White, *op. cit.,* p. 175, showing it open on the interior, forming a gallery.

1

Aerial View c. 1970. A: Pre-Columbian Gallery (1963), B: Music Room (1929), C: East Wing (*c.* 1860), D: Orangery (1805/12), E: Main House (*c.* 1800), F: West Wing (*c.* 1870) and extensions (1921–9), G: Garden Library (1963), H: Byzantine Gallery (1940)

2

The Original House, with a wooden porch added. The earliest known photograph, *c.* 1860

3

Dumbarton Oaks in the second half of the nineteenth century. The flagstaff and wrought-iron on top of the tower are visible beyond the near chimney. The Orangery, with the hip roof added by Edward Linthicum, can be seen on the left

4

Dumbarton Oaks in the 1920s

required a sharp observer to discern the Federal building within.

The third and most recent transformation, undertaken by Mr. and Mrs. Bliss in the 1920s, to some extent restored the original appearance by removing many of the nineteenth-century accretions, especially the portico over the front door, and the porches. The façade of the central block recovered some of its flatness, with an inset front door protected by a slightly protruding porch, with double columns on either side. The lintels with their keystones and the countersunk panels became more visually prominent. The windows on the ground floor, and some others, were elongated and adorned with small wrought-iron balconies. Most striking was the appearance of the roof, where the heavy Victorian brackets under the cornices were replaced by a lighter neo-classic design and the double-dormer windows with peaked roofs were increased from three to five in number on the central block, changed into rectangular windows with curved and peaked pediments, and connected by a low parapet which conceals some of the roof and gives a semblance of the horizontal roof line of the Federal house. A balustrade was also added around the roof of the Orangery, concealing the hip added in the nineteenth century to improve the ventilation, and the visible roof was covered in curved red tiles, giving it a somewhat Mediterranean appearance, presumably in order to harmonize with the design of the swimming pool.[3] On the north façade, the hexagonal tower was removed and the bay window was rounded in the eighteenth-century style, and a door and stairs made, giving access to the North Vista. The roof of the east wing was raised, and the west wing was extended, forming an ell parallel to that on the east, and topped with an artificial chimney for the sake of symmetry.

The interior of the house was entirely remodelled, except for the central hall which survived throughout its history. As Whitehill says:

In the new dispensation, the room to the left of the central hall [formerly the parlor] became the dining-room, with pantries and kitchen in the [new] west wing. The large room to the right [formerly the library] was subdivided into coat and dressing rooms on either side of a passage that led to an exquisitely proportioned oval room with recessed bookcases and eighteenth-century French furniture. The east wing on the front [formerly a sitting room and dining room] became a less formal library for Mr. Bliss. The space in the ell to the rear [formerly the kitchen and servants hall] was converted into a drawing room [to which a large bay window on the east, overlooking the Green Garden, was added in the late 1920s]. In a long gallery at the back of the house a pair of graceful staircases were introduced.[4]

The extension of the west wing was the first of five major additions made to the house between 1920 and 1963. The second was the Music Room, completed in 1929, which opens off the west wing, down a flight of marble steps. Like the gardens, it incorporates elements, some authentic and some imitated, from France and Italy between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries but is none the less a distinctively American expression of the cultivated eclectic taste of the 1920s. It was the scene in 1944 of the Dumbarton Oaks Conversations, when the foundations of the United Nations were laid, and also of the first performance of Stravinsky's Dumbarton Oaks concerto and other notable pieces of music. It is now used for concerts and lectures and occasional receptions and scholarly meetings. The third addition was the Byzantine Court, completed in 1940, immediately before Dumbarton Oaks was conveyed to Harvard University. It consists of two parallel pavilions, one housing the Byzantine Collection and the other, offices and the main corridor, connected to the Music Room on the east and by a glazed corridor to the west, parallel to the street. In the centre is a courtyard with a lawn, with a large mosaic from Antioch set into it. The two final additions were the wings for Mr. Bliss's Pre-Columbian Collection and Mrs. Bliss's garden library, both finished in 1963, though an ambitious plan was developed in the mid-70s for building a new library under the North Vista and several plans for extending the

[3] In the latest repairs, these red tiles have been replaced by slates, as in the earlier versions of the Orangery.

[4] Whitehill, p. 63. The insertions are based on the floor-plan in White, p. 172 and on old photographs.

5

Exterior of the Pre-Columbian Gallery, designed by Philip Johnson and finished in 1963

exhibition space by covering the Byzantine courtyard have been proposed.

In looking at the house today, the most prominent features on the south and east are the neo-Georgian façade and the Orangery, both reminiscent of the original Federal building, and the twentieth-century additions to the north and west, especially the Music Room and the Pre-Columbian gallery, which is the single most outstanding building at Dumbarton Oaks (Fig. 5). The only visible signs, both disguised, of the Victorian changes are the mansard roof and the bay on the north façade, but just as the Federal house underlay the Victorian mansion, so the Victorian changes influence the present character of Dumbarton Oaks.

The principal effort in recent years has been devoted to renovation and upkeep. Like many first-class houses built almost without regard for cost in the early twentieth century, Dumbarton Oaks has suffered from what has been called 'Good Building Menopause.' Unlike cheap buildings, which need constant upkeep, first-class buildings 'will lull you into a pleasant state of complacency until, at some point between ages sixty and eighty, very substantial sums will have to be found to buy another fifty carefree years.'[5] The early owners of Acrolophos fought a constant battle to maintain the house. The re-buildings in the mid-nineteenth century and early twentieth century each gave it a new lease of life. The recent repairs have given it yet another lease, preserving for the future its distinctive combination of old and new architectural styles.

5 *Technology and Conservation,* VI.3, Fall 1981, p. 23.

George Kubler

Ancient American Gods and Their Living Impersonators

Robert Woods Bliss began collecting ancient American art in 1912 when he purchased in Paris an Olmec jade figurine. During the succeeding years, while he and Mrs. Bliss were forming their Byzantine collection and establishing Dumbarton Oaks, Mr. Bliss continued to acquire exceptional examples of Pre-Columbian art, and he collected selectively but intensively throughout his life. Between 1947 and 1962 his Pre-Columbian collection was on display at the National Gallery of Art. Eager that the Indian art of Latin America be permanently represented in the nation's capital, Mr. Bliss gave this collection to Dumbarton Oaks in 1962 and asked Philip Johnson to design a gallery that would enhance as well as house the collection. With this in mind, the Pre-Columbian gallery was built in 1963 of eight circular glass pavilions that, in combination with transparent and translucent cases, allow the objects to be enveloped in a natural environment with trees.

At a time when most ancient American art was displayed as material culture in museums of anthropology and natural history, Mr. Bliss collected Pre-Columbian objects for their aesthetic value. He did not intend to acquire representative samples of all the arts of this hemisphere before Columbus, but selected small-scale works of the highest creativity, expression, and skill. The ancient art of Mesoamerica—of the Olmec, Teotihuacan, Maya, Classic Veracruz, Mixteca-Puebla, and Aztec cultures—forms the bulk of the collection, but the products in gold and semi-precious stone from Central America are also included, as are a broad range of works from Andean South America. The scholarly study of the collection draws equally on the humanities and the social sciences, in books, articles, and conferences arising from the work of the Fellows of the programme in Pre-Columbian Studies directed by Elizabeth Benson from 1966 and Elizabeth Boone since 1980.

The collection grows slowly within the original definition. Some specialists have debated whether a few pieces in it are Pre-Columbian or modern works. These unpublished observations are considered in this article. The writer remains in favourable suspense of judgement about the sculpture *Woman in Childbirth* recently considered to be modern, although accepted by almost all scholars since 1898 without challenge. The negative arguments are about modern tools and iconographic inconsistencies, but their authors eschew expressional and ritual considerations that are positive.

Portrait of a woman *(fragment of jadeite statuette). Olmec style. (Figs. 1, 2)*

The Olmec origin has never been questioned since its appearance on the art market in 1944 and first publication.[1] It was then identified without signature as Olmec.

Depending on lighting and photographic angle the fragment was first thought to be male and later female. Photographs taken from below with top right lighting and left side turned forward, suggest a singer in performance, lifting her face from turning shoulders (Fig. 1). If posed frontally and lighted from both sides, the fragment is strikingly masculine, and as if listening passively, with the head sunk between shoulders (Fig. 2). Lighting is not alone responsible for the difference. The fractures at shoulders and torso leave the original posture in doubt. Was the figure seated or standing, looking up or ahead, making sounds or silent? Other Olmec

[1] *DYN* [Mexico City], VI, 1944, after p. 24, top left, then given as of unknown provenance or provenience, but in a private collection. S. K. Lothrop catalogued it as of a man (*Robert Woods Bliss Collection, Pre-Columbian Art,* 1957, no. 9).

1 and 2

Portrait of a woman, Olmec style, Mexico, before 500 b.c. Jadeite, height 6.6 cm. Acquired 1948. This fragment of a statuette has variously been interpreted as a female singer or a pensive male

All the illustrations in this article, except figures 4 and 5, are of pieces in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection.

3

Alligator-man pendant Darien style, Colombia, post third century a.d.? Cast and soldered gold, height 12.8 cm, width 9.9 cm. Acquired 1953. With such wide diffusion, stable typology and surprising antiquity, the 'alligator deity' could be among the major cult figures of ancient America

statuettes portraying agitated motions allow the more dynamic standing and twisting posture to be considered as not only possible but originally intended.[2] Turning from posture to expression leads to another uncertainty. Is the woman singing or sobbing? Her dilated nostrils and furrowed brow, carved in translucent surfaces, look like skin wet with tears caused by emotion.

Such visual effects raise the question of the relationship between the makers of clay figurines and the sculptors of stone without metal tools. Users of stone tools early achieved effects of skin textures, gaze, muscular interplay, expressional folds and emotional intensity before 900 B.C. by working at the gigantic scale of the huge basalt boulders used for the famous colossal heads. Their scale, by this argument, was chosen to magnify the field of the work. As at Stonehenge the dimensions are large because the tools were large celts and adzes. Their furrows became smaller only as smaller, harder instruments were fashioned. By this hypothesis about early macrotechnics,[3] small carvings follow colossal heads, as lenses followed gnomons, or stamped coins followed megalithic money.

Enfolded within the history of Olmec sculpture is the contrast recurring throughout Mesoamerican habits of expression—a contrast between the representation of life as it appears to sight, and the mythological system that wove together the intricate ciphers of the imagined life of the gods. A diminutive jade fragment and the colossal heads are to life and religion, as language and art are to 'forms of life' in the context of recent aesthetic theory.[4]

Alligator-man pendant. *Darien style. (Fig. 3)*

The problem here is unique in ancient America. It is about all the alleged deities for whom neither mythologies nor rituals were collected in meaningful records. Over two dozen such breast pendants exist. Most are in Colombian collections with provenances from the northwestern Darien region adjoining Panama. One was in the Well of Sacrifice at Chichen Itza and another at Venado Beach in the Canal Zone of Panama. One radiocarbon date at A.D. 227 plus or minus sixty years pins down this site which has no evidence of long occupation.[5] With such wide diffusion, stable typology, and surprising antiquity, the 'alligator deity' in cast gold could be among the major cult figures of ancient America.

The symbolic structure is that of a frontal human presented symmetrically with flattened legs and joined feet; arms holding rods of gold to the mouth; winglike finials with scrolls (from fronds?) flanking a face panel; and two hemispherical bosses in the headdress above nose and eyes. The spiralled scrolls and the braided wire across the face are cast from wax threads and soldered to the frame. These techniques were in use from Colombia and Panama to Mexico.[6]

If crocodile be taken as the dominant representation, then only the bosses and the finials can be read as *caiman* (the American genus of crocodilians). Neither is sure, unless the bosses are the 'floating' eyes of the submerged *lagarto de Indias* or alligator (the American crocodile). If the winglike or fernlike finials are of the alligator, they might be beneficent jaws spreading instead of crushing, but we have no text for comparison. The rods to the mouth show fernlike scrolls (Pérez de Barradas No.

[2] The jadeite Olmec 'gladiator,' ibid., plate IV, fig. 10 and p. 234.

[3] G. Kubler, 'Commentary,' *Contributions of the University of California Archaeological Research Facility,* no. 11, 1971, pp. 162–3.

[4] Richard Wollheim, commenting on Wittgenstein's aesthetics, in *Art and its Objects: an Introduction to Aesthetics,* 1968, on the sense that language and art are 'forms of life'.

[5] J. Pérez de Barradas, *Orfebrería colombiana. Estilos Quimbaya y otros,* 2 vols., 1965–66; I, figs. 55–56; II, láminas 63–81.

[6] D. Easby, 'Ancient American Goldsmiths,' *Natural History,* LXV, 1956, p. 404.

4

Couple Embracing, Codex Dresdensis, *fol. 23c*, Maya style, Yucatan, Mexico, post A.D. 1200. Ink and wash on sized fig bark paper. Sächsische Landesbibliotek, Dresden. Compare with pottery figurine in Plate III. The old man is Itzamna in his human sun-god aspect

5

Deity in Parturition, Codex Borbonicus, *fol. 13,* Aztec style, Valley of Mexico, early sixteenth century. Ink and washes on sized fig bark paper. Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée Nationale, Paris. Compare with sculpture in Plate II. The deity, Tlazolteotl, is giving birth to a child already clothed in the livery of the goddess

351, Fig. 48), or fruit-like pods (ibid., No. 6420, Fig. 75; No. 3494, Fig. 66). It might even be that the god (or his impersonator) is eating a plant. If, however, the wings are avian, their scrolls should be feathers. We have no explanation other than alligator for the grinning teeth in some (ibid., No. 3064, Fig. 54; No. 6031, Fig. 79, etc.), which might be taken for teeth, dripping water as scrolls.

One specimen finally has double-spouted, bridge-handled kettles for the bosses (ibid., No. 6031, Fig. 79), and alligator dentures 'ingesting water plants' in a caparison where the human wearer of the paraphernalia carries alligator jaws on his shoulders, eats water plants, and balances kettles on his head in a ritual dance—impersonating a deity for whom we still have no accepted text or name.

Couple embracing. *Jaina style. (Plate III)*

Commonly identified[7] as a 'scene of lovemaking', this moulded figurine with modelled heads was reportedly found in a mortuary jar on Jaina Island. At least ten other pottery versions of the same subject exist, proving the distribution of the theme throughout Maya history and geography.[8] Pendergast interprets the scene as representing the moon goddess (Ixchel) and an old god labelled N (in the Schellhas typology).[9]

More is known from Maya mythology, in the Chilam Balam books of Chumayel, Tizimin, and Mani, in López de Cogolludo, and in the Kekchi-Mopan legends,[10] reporting the Maya belief that the moon and the sun, being the first pair to copulate, were together the patrons of human reproduction. One myth of the Kekchi cycle, reported from the Guatemalan highlands by G. B. Gordon, tells of the moon as a girl continually following the sun: 'she sometimes nearly catches up with him and they go down in the west almost together'.[11]

The old man was thought by Eric Thompson to be Itzamna in his human sun-god aspect, as shown in the Dresden Codex (23c, Fig. 4). In the Kekchi-Mopan cycle of Belize, the deerhead hat of the old man in the Dumbarton Oaks figurine is described: 'deer, willingly or unwillingly, aided the sun in his efforts to win the moon. The stuffed deerskin gives him his introduction to the moon, a deer restores the moon for him to full womanhood, and a deer, by lending him his skin to hide under, enables him to reach his wife....'[12] The same deerhead-bowknot headdress is worn by a youthful male portrayed in a figurine from Jaina Island, who may be the morning aspect, rather than the old evening one.[13]

The Bliss figurine alone among its group shows the hand of high art: withered age and ample youth support one another in equal embrace, glance and gesture, veiled and restrained in a lifting rhythm of reciprocal shapes in their sunset conjunction every moon at waning crescent.[14]

Woman in childbirth. *Aztec. (Plate II)*

As with many Aztec sculptural studies of natural forms and processes, no iconographic attributes permit naming the work as portraying a god.[15] Other sculptures also portray plants, animals

[7] Lothrop, op. cit., no. 127, p. 255; E. P. Benson, 'From the Island of Jaina: A Maya Figurine,' *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts,* LVII, 1979, no. 3, pp. 95–103.

[8] J. E. S. Thompson, *Excavations at San José,* 1939, p. 155, fig. 92*n* from Burial 11 (before A.D. 850). David M. Pendergast, 'The Old Man and the Moon,' *Rotunda,* XIV, 1981/2, no. 4, pp. 7–12.

[9] P. Schellhas, 'Representation of Maya Deities of the Maya Manuscripts,' *Papers,* Peabody Museum (Harvard), IV, 1904–10, pp. 1–47.

[10] Thompson, 'The Moon Goddess in Middle America,' *Contributions to American Anthropology and History,* V, 1939, pp. 127–73.

[11] G. B. Gordon, 'Guatemala Myths,' *The Museum Journal* (Philadelphia), VI, 1915, no. 3, pp. 116–121.

[12] Benson, op. cit., pp. 100–1; Thompson, ibid. and *Commentary on the Dresden Codex,* 1972, p. 60.

[13] A. Emmerich, *Gods and Men,* 1967, fig. 42.

[14] F. G. Lounsbury, 'Maya Numeration, Computation, and Calendrical Astronomy,' *Dictionary of Scientific Biography,* 15, 1978, pp. 774–6.

[15] H. B. Nicholson, 'Religion in Pre-Hispanic Central Mexico,' *Handbook of Middle American Indians,* X, 1971, pp. 420–2.

Plate I

Rabbit Impersonator and Eagle Knight, Aztec style. Cempoala (Veracruz), Mexico, fifteenth century a.d. Jadeite, height 18.1 cm, width 9.15 cm. Acquired 1947. In Metztitlan myth the rabbit is a symbol of night and the moon, sheltering a bird man who is symbol of the sun and daytime

Plate II

Woman in Childbirth, Aztec style, Valley of Mexico, post a.d. 1450. Aplite (a fine-grained granite of quartz and feldspar) with inclusions of garnet, height 20.2 cm, width 22 cm. Acquired 1947. Tlazolteotl was most prominent among some twenty deities who received worship in childbirth

Plate III

Couple Embracing, Jaina style, Yucatan, Mexico, before a.d. 700. Moulded and modelled figurine with blue paint, height 25.6 cm, width 13.5 cm. Acquired 1954. In Maya mythology the moon and the sun, being the first pair to copulate, were together believed to be the patrons of human reproduction

and people in physical fullness as sacrifices worthy to continue the endless cycle of vital exchange in the universe. Human sacrifice nourished the gods who were thereby enabled to replenish the earth with life again each year.[16]

If we believe our eyes the woman is in labour, but if we believe what has been written about her, she is among some twenty deities who received worship in childbirth. Most prominent was Tlazolteotl, 'goddess of carnal love', also known by other names, to whose priests sinners confessed. The sculpture was drilled with many suspension holes on ears, feet, chin, and on the body and carved hair, for affixing attributes that might be changed as needed. Such alterations may have conveyed different names, as with the mannequins of Catholic saints.

E.-T. Hamy, who was a doctor of medicine in Paris, wrote of the statue in 1898 that it and a scene in *Codex Borbonicus* (Fig. 5), (folio 13) explained each other, and that the newborn hands in the manuscript were shown as ready to seize the interlocking loops, symbolic of *'dualité créatrice'*. The phrase was taken from the commentary on *Codex Borbonicus* by Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, who wrote before Hamy of it, the creative duality, as present and presiding during parturition, and of the neonate as wearing 'the livery of the goddess herself'.[17] Hamy and Paso both knew the sculpture, which was then in the collection of the geologist, A. Damour, in Paris.

The antiquity of the Dumbarton Oaks piece was never questioned until the 1960s, when some archaeological and art historical opinions combined in the view that the drilling technique was modern. These investigations still being inconclusive, the evidence of inconsistency in style is under discussion. None of it, technical or stylistic, is published. But the thoughts of Esther Pasztory on Aztec masterpieces in 1976 justify suspending judgement until decisive evidence appears. She writes that small size is admissible (p. 379), and that at this late date, about 1490, in Tenochtitlan the quality is a function of 'the creation of a new formal and iconographic image drawing freely on a variety of visual sources'.[18] Dr. Pasztory adds in a recent letter (21 May, 1983), 'How can I quarrel with your refutation of my opinions . . . when you quote my own words? I still find a hard-edged quality and a slickness in the [Dumbarton Oaks Tlazolteotl] sculpture that disturbs me.' Thus the modern specialists, whether in anthropology or history of art, operate as would computers for retrieval from a data base, on which a variety of desired models may be arranged. The modelling is limited by the data base.

Whether the Dumbarton Oaks sculpture was made in Mexico in the 1490s, or in Paris in the 1880s does not affect its quality as a work of high art made with superior knowledge of the period and place. It may now be considered as a piece of ancient sculpture perhaps partly re-worked in recent times with modern drills (until more is known).[19]

Rabbit impersonator and eagle knight. *Aztec. (Plate I, Fig. 6)*

Colossal in being twice as tall as the human crouching between its legs, the seated and sheltering person wears rabbit attributes in a long-eared head and rabbit paws. Both humans are in animal costumes: the small one with hands and arms on his chest wears a round-eyed bird helmet (parrot? eagle?). If he were to stand up he would be as high

[16] G. Kubler, 'The Cycle of Life and Death in Metropolitan Aztec Sculpture,' *Gazette des Beaux-Arts,* XXIII, 1943, pp. 257–68.

[17] E.-T. Hamy, 'Note sur une statuette mexicaine en wernerite représentant la déesse lxcuina,' *Journal de la Société des Américanistes,* III, 1906, pp. 1–5. Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, *Descriptión histórica y exposición del códice pictórico de los antiguos nahuas que se conserva en la Bibliotecà de la Cámara de Diputados de Paris (antiguo Palais Bourbon),* 1898, p. 74.

[18] E. Pasztory, 'Masterpieces in Pre-Columbian Art,' *Actes [42d-International Congress of Americanists],* VII, 1979, pp. 388–9.

[19] Felipe Solis Olguin reports having seen stone fragments of a similar sculpture in the storerooms of the Museo Nacional de Antropologia e Historia. He believes the Dumbarton Oaks piece to be of Aztec date.

6

Rabbit impersonator and Eagle Knight, rear view of Plate I

7

Face of a young man with smoking mirror emblems, Aztec style, Valley of Mexico, *c.* 1507. Stone, mottled grey, height 18·5 cm, width 16·5 cm. Acquired 1948. This stone portrait head represents the severed head of a human sacrifice to the god Tezcatlipoca, whose name means smoking mirror

8

Rear view of Figure 7

as the seated rabbit. If the rabbit person rose to his full height he would tower twice as high as bird man.[20] Said by its owner, when it was shown in 1940 at the Fogg Museum, to have been found in Cempoala near Veracruz, the piece was acquired by Mr. Bliss in 1947.

This imagery has been connected by Walter Krickeberg with a sixteenth-century myth recorded in 1575 among the people of Metztitlan in eastern Hidalgo.[21] The deity of pulque (maguey cactus beer) who represented all vegetation in its annual cycle of dying and reviving, lives in the moon, also waxing and waning, in whose spots the people were accustomed to see a rabbit, thrown there by the gods, to keep the moon darker than the sun. Rabbit, however, was also the symbol of pulque as a calendar day named 2 Rabbit.

The myth reported from Metztitlan tells of the renewal of life in death, and renewal of day in each night. The rabbit would be a symbol of night and the moon, sheltering a bird man who is a symbol of the sun and daytime. A remote connexion with the Kekchi myth of sun and moon may be suspected (see p. 242).

FACE OF A YOUNG MAN. *Aztec. (Figs. 7, 8)*

Less than life-size, a stone portrait head, agreeable in proportion, with images of smoking mirrors on both temples, would have been recognized in Tenochtitlan as the severed head of a human sacrifice to the god Tezcatlipoca, whose name means smoking mirror. Carved inside the face is a calendar date (2 Reed) signifying the day name of Tezcatlipoca or the year 1507, when a new cycle of fifty-two years began with relighting the fires extinguished at the end of the preceding period.

The sacrifice was chosen each year from among a group of prisoners of war, as the most perfect to enact the role of the god. The ceremony ended with his decapitation. The head was displayed on a large rack as a skull perforated twice for suspension from one of many poles. A portrait likeness was also made in stone to commemorate his appearance. Sahagún's informants said he was chosen for perfection, as being not corpulent and without defects or scars; smooth of flesh ('like a tomato'), not broad-headed nor square, not bald, neither flat nor wide nor arched of nose, not thick-lipped, and of well arrayed teeth.[22]

Traditions of portraiture were rare and widely separated in ancient America. Great differences of period also kept artists in ignorance of others. For instance, Olmec and Maya portraiture in stone were one prolonged focus in eastern Mesoamerica, enduring 2,000 years. But Aztec stone portraiture arose separately, about 600 years after the end of Maya portrait images. Mochica ruler portraits on pottery vessels are another focus on the central Andean coast, lasting only a few centuries before A.D. 800. Yet no good evidence links Maya and Andean portraiture, although they were coeval. These parallel passages in separate civilizations without contact resist diffusional analysis. Another approach would be to search for differences more than resemblances in morphology and etiology. This use of double images, more like a stereogram than a magnification, might also be ideogrammetric rather than iconographic, in relation to comparative studies of differentiation.

[20] A. S. Leopold (*Wildlife of Mexico,* 1972, pp. 344–61) illustrates many rabbit species all seated on hind legs folding forward, never back. E. Pasztory, *Aztec Art,* 1982, pp. 171–2, notes that the rabbit figure is seated with its arms raised in the 'death-goddess posture.' The rabbit's skull-and-bones belt supports this association. A similar rabbit person appears carved on an alabaster vessel in he storerooms of the Museo Nacional (16 cm. W.).

[21] Gabriel de Chávez, 'Relación de la provincia de Metztitlan' [1579], *Boletin del Museo Nacional de Arqueologia e Historia,* epoca 4, 2, entrega 5, Jan.–Feb. 1924, pp. 109–120 cited by Walter Krickeberg, *Felsbilder Mexikos,* 1969, pp. 100–2. See also Elizabeth H. Boone, 'The Macuilxochitl and Ometochtli Deity Clusters in the Codex Magliabechiano,' Master's thesis, 1974, University of Texas, Austin.

[22] Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's Aztec informants, in *Florentine Codex,* translated by A. O. Anderson and Charles Dibble, II, 1951, pp. 64–5 (paraphrased), recorded before 1585. Similar sacrifice was made of an impersonator of the war god, Huitzilopochtli, in another month (ibid., p. 73).

Phrased more generally, to work with n expressions all different as to configuration, yet of the same idea (whether integral to the time and place, or interpretative and later) is comparative in higher degree than a linear or diffusional study of isolated traits devoid of context. In effect, the idea of diffusion produces mirages that may be reduced by the methods of morphology and semiology to more substantial findings.

Coiled rattlesnake. *Aztec. (Fig. 9)*

Fire serpent (xiuhcoatl). *Aztec. (Figs. 10, 11)*

The contexts of the two sculptures interlock: the rattlesnake (*Crotalus*) is portrayed accurately to suggest an enhanced vitality greater than that of nature,[23] while the Fire serpent signifies the dry season as well as divine power in the daily descent of the sun in the sky.[24]

In the sixteenth century Sahagún described such fire-serpent ceremonies in his encyclopedic study of native Mexican life.[25] These rituals enacted the daily descent of the sun at sunset and annually from summer to winter solstices. In Tenochtitlan, Xiuhcoatl and Quetzalcoatl as regents of dry and wet seasons were serpents similar but opposite.[26] The tribal god of the Aztec peoples, called Huitzilopochtli, appeared in the person of his priest clad as a Xiuhcoatl serpent, who ran down from the top of a pyramidal platform on fire 'like a pine-wood torch', with a tongue 'made of red arara feathers' and a long tail of paper. While he descended his tongue flickered 'as a red snake', and the Xiuhcoatl costume was thrown into a bowl of sacrifice where it burned.[27]

These coiled serpents, from the same civilization and century, show interdependent domains of nature and mythology. The torpid flattened spiral of lethal energy is zoologically plausible, but the other timeless mythological expression invokes a numinous and protean being, whose existence depends on constantly renewed human sacrifices in a relationship where mankind was the eucharist.

[23] *Crotalus:* 'rattles of more than 12 joints are rare, but one having 21 is known.' J. P. Moore, *Encyclopedia Americana,* 1953, 23, p. 228. The caudal rattle of dry, horny epidermal rings is loosely fitted, and formed when the skin is sloughed three or four times each year.

[24] H. B. Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 412–14.

[25] Arid Hvidtfeldt, *Teotl and *Ixiptlatli,* 1958, pp. 131–2.

[26] G. Kubler, 'Serpent and Atlantean Columns: Symbols of Maya-Toltec Polity,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians,* XLII, 1982, no. 2, pp. 112–3.

[27] A. M. Tozzer, 'Landa's Relacion,' *Papers,* Peabody Museum (Harvard), XVIII, 1941, p. 162, n. 848. The segmentation of the Dumbarton Oaks Xiuhcoatl is nearly identical with that of the Calendar Stone (H. Beyer, '*Calendario Azteca*' 1921, reissued in *México Antiguo,* X, 1965, pp. 135–256). Beyer's fig. 208 may be a less damaged pendant to the Dumbarton Oaks piece. Beyer does not mention its location. A stone body section of Xiuhcoatl in the Museo Nacional storeroom shows four segments beginning at the tail, in which the dots increase by two in each section: 9, 11, 13, 15. . . . The serpent scales are the same as in the Dumbarton Oaks segments, but in a form suggesting that the Xiuhcoatl segments on the rim of the Calendar Stone are halves of one serpent seen in both profiles, right and left, with each segment containing a flame symbol instead of serpent scales (Beyer, figs. 208–212).

9

Rattlesnake, Aztec style, Valley of Mexico, post A.D. 1450. Rhyolite porphyry, height 18·3 cm, width 60·6 cm. Acquired 1946. The coiled rattlesnake is connected with fire-serpent ceremonies and with rituals enacting the daily descent of the sun at sunset and annually from summer to winter solstices

10

Fire serpent (Xiuhcoatl), Aztec style, Valley of Mexico, *c.* 1507 A.D. Quartz-diorite, height 43·4 cm, width 45·4 cm. Acquired 1940. The Fire serpent signifies the dry season as well as divine power in the daily descent of the sun in the sky

11

Fire serpent, *view of underside of Figure 10*. The date shown carved on the base (1507) marks the end of the fifty-two-year cycle with knotted rope

Mary Ellen Miller

Four Maya Reliefs

About twenty years ago, Dumbarton Oaks acquired four Maya relief panels.[1] Like most such carved Maya stones of the Classic period (A.D. 300–900), these reliefs depict rulers of independent centres in the Maya lowlands. The associated hieroglyphic inscriptions record historical data, although mythic information is often included as well.[2] Stone carvings of the Classic Maya are usually freestanding limestone stelae, but in the western Maya region, along the Usumacinta River and west to Palenque, carved panels similar to *Dumbarton Oaks 1–4* (Figs. 1, 2, 4 and 6) were often set directly into architecture, as both structural and decorative elements. Despite the absence of a documented provenance for three of the four panels, text, style, and architectural positioning all argue for a western Maya origin for the Dumbarton Oaks carvings.

Both text and formal elements of *D.O. Panel 1* suggest a provenance within a short radius of the important Usumacinta site of Piedras Negras. As Coe and Benson have pointed out, *Lintel 5,* Piedras Negras, and *Lintel 1* from nearby El Cayo, both resemble *D.O. 1* in composition. The uncarved portion of *D.O. 1* has been sawn off, but the dimensions of the sculptured area (65 × 63.5 cm) are very similar to those of the El Cayo panel (68 × 67.5 cm). Similar Piedras Negras monuments are substantially larger.[3] Although such panels are usually called lintels, archaeological evidence from Piedras Negras and Bonampak now suggests that many such small panels, including *'Lintels' 5 and 7* of Piedras Negras, were exterior panels designed to abut staircases.[4]

The Dumbarton Oaks panel shows a single figure within a stepped niche on a ground line slightly higher than the glyphic frame, which suggests that the figure stands within architecture. Structure 39 at Yaxchilan has doorways of similar shape, and so our figure may be standing in such a structure, completely framed by glyphs.[5]

The text of *D.O. 1* records the events in the life of a ruler who owed fealty to Piedras Negras, for the local ruler's name is connected by a statement of relationship to that of an individual who uses the Piedras Negras emblem glyph throughout

[1] Michael D. Coe and Elizabeth P. Benson published the first three panels in 1966, 'Three Maya Relief Panels at Dumbarton Oaks,' *Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology,* No. 2 and Mary Ellen Miller and David S. Stuart published the fourth, Dumbarton Oaks Relief Panel 4, *Estudios de Cultura Maya,* XIII, 1981, 197–204. D.O. 1, 2, and 4 were never seen in situ, but the Lacanha panel (D.O. 3) was recorded by Wolfgang Cordan at that site (which he labelled Kuna), *Geheimnis im Urwald,* 1955.

[2] The single, standing Maya figure was labelled 'the Classic motif' by Tatiana Proskouriakoff, *A Study of Classic Maya Sculpture,* Carnegie Institution of Washington Publication 593, 1950. Proskouriakoff later determined that the figures depicted were historical rulers of independent polities and that the associated hieroglyphs recorded historical information, 'Historical Implications of a Pattern of Dates at Piedras Negras, Guatemala, *American Antiquity,* 25:4, 1960, 454–475.

[3] Lintel 5, for instance, measures 120 × 158 m, with only a small plain margin.

[4] How such panels were positioned can best be seen in Tatiana Proskouriakoff's reconstruction drawing of Piedras Negras Structure K-5 1st, *An Album of Maya Architecture,* 1946.

[5] See Teobert Maler, 'Researches in the Central Portion of the Usumatsintla Valley: Report of Explorations for the Museum, 1898–1900,' *Memoirs of the Peabody Museum,* Harvard University, 11:2, 1903, Plate XLIII. Less standing architecture is preserved at Piedras Negras and El Cayo than at Yaxchilan, so any buildings there with such doorways may have collapsed.

1

Carved wall panel (D.O. 1), probably from El Cayo Chiapas, Mexico. Limestone, height 65 cm. A standing warrior is depicted within a niche which may represent Late Classic architecture of the Usumacinta region

Figures 1–5 are dated to the eighth century of The Late Classic Maya period, A.D. 600–900

the text. Given the proximity of El Cayo to Piedras Negras, it is plausible that the subsidiary ruler of the D.O. panel held sway at that site.

Unfortunately, the erosion of the lengthy text allows for little more than a sketch of our figure's life.[6] A distinctive element of all names in the text, including our protagonist, his father, and the Piedras Negras ruler, is the turtle carapace, recorded at Cla,[7] C2b, F1b, E2b, and throughout the text. The glyphic record includes an anniversary (recorded at F2) of the completion of three years in office of the Piedras Negras ruler in A.D. 689, and seven years later, the seating (H2a-b) of our protagonist in an office typical of secondary lords rather than of major rulers. Our individual lived into his dotage, and he probably died at the age of 83 (J2a-13b), three years after he had been succeeded in office (J4). *D.O. 1* is thus a memorial, and the protagonist is remembered as a warrior, bearing the spear and flexible shield used in battle.

Dumbarton Oaks 2 (Fig. 2) must also come from a secondary site, because although a Palenque ruler is depicted, the panel could not have come from the site of Palenque itself. The reason this panel may have been set at some distance from Palenque will shortly become apparent.

This panel was probably flanked by side panels which are now missing. Both the text and the figures of the panel are incomplete, and the stone shows saw marks. Large interior wall panels predominate at Palenque, and this panel may have been set within a small enclosure inside a temple chamber, as are the Cross Group panels of that site. Captions identify the two seated individuals as Lady Ahpo Hel and Lord Shield Pacal; the text itself names Lord Kan-Xul as the protagonist.

Lord Shield Pacal was the first great ruler of Palenque. During his 68-year reign (he acceded as a boy of twelve in A.D. 615), a monumental architectural programme was begun, and long glyphic records were made on limestone tablets, documenting both the real and mythic activity of the ruling family. He was succeeded by a son, Chan Bahlum, who ruled from A.D. 683 to 702. A second son, Kan-Xul, then acceded to power, and it is this ruler who is the central figure on *D.O. 2*.[8] Late in Kan-Xul's life, Palenque engaged in warfare with Toniná, some sixty kilometers away. Kan-Xul was apparently taken prisoner, for he is depicted as a captive at Toniná.[9] This single Toniná monument is unlike others of that site, resembling instead the Palenque monuments, especially in pose and profile. Monuments celebrating victory often resemble the sculpture of the conquered site, which suggests that reparations included artistic labour. For all we know, Kan-Xul himself may have designed the record of his own demise. Later, on *D.O. 2,* he is shown after death, in the guise of the Maya deity known as G1.[10] The shell diadem, shell earpiece axe, and knotted pectoral are all characteristic of G1.

As Peter Mathews has recently shown, the Palenque lineage was thrown into chaos after the death of Kan-Xul, and dynastic instability marked

[6] Coe and Benson made the first studies of these texts. For their analysis, see Coe and Benson 1966.

[7] Maya hieroglyphs are read in columns, by pairs of two, from top to bottom. Columns are given letters and rows are assigned numbers. Many texts begin with what is known as an Initial Series, a record of all days elapsed since the beginning of time, a mythical date in the fourth milennium B.C. A correlation constant allows Maya dates to be converted to Julian dates, and these are given along with Maya dates in the text. The date 9.18.10.0.0, for instance, notes that zero days, zero months of twenty days (for this is a vigesimal system), 10 years (each composed of 360 days for computing purposes), eighteen blocks of twenty computing years, and nine periods of four hundred computing years have elapsed since the beginning of time. The standard Goodman-Martinez-Thompson correlation constant fixes this date as occurring in A.D. 800.

[8] As outlined by Peter Mathews and Linda Schele in 'The Lords of Palenque—the Glyphic Evidence,' in *Primera Mesa Redona de Palenque, Part I,* ed. Merle Greene Robertson, 1974, pp. 64–75.

[9] His name is clearly shown emblazoned on the thigh in the drawing of Monument 122 of Toniná by Ian Graham and identified by Peter Mathews, reproduced in Pierre Becquelin and Claude F. Baudez, *Toniná, une cité maya du Chiapas (Mexique),* III, 1982, fig. 168.

[10] Linda Schele, 'The Xibalba Shuffle,' Paper read at the Princeton University Conference on Maya Vase Painting, Princeton, New Jersey, November 1980.

2

An important Palenque ruler, Lord Kan-Xul *(D.O. 2)*. Limestone, height 167 cm. His reign commenced in A.D. 702. Depicted posthumously in the guise of a Maya deity, he stands between his seated mother, Lady Ahpo Hel (left) and his father (Lord Shield Pacal)

3

Drawing of the relief in Figure 2 by Linda Schele

several generations.[11] It is likely that political circumstances precluded the erection of this posthumous memorial within the heart of Palenque.

Although *D.O. 2* is a very important panel, it also shows signs of haste and lack of finish in its execution. The section of the panel below the crack line has been crudely carved: the feet, hands, and textile designs of the two parents seem to have been only roughed out. The entire ground surface of the stone shows the sculptor's marks, and the buttery, smooth surface typical of Palenque carvings was not achieved. In technique, this panel most resembles that celebrating the accession of Chac-Zutz, a possible usurper of the same era.[12]

The ruins of Lacanha have received little systematic study, probably because of their proximity to the more famous site of Bonampak.[13] It may be incorrect to consider these two places distinct, however, for these two sites appear to have been ruled by a single family, who in turn maintained close ties with Yaxchilan, 26 kilometres to the northeast. Bonampak and Lacanha lie on opposite sides of the Lacanha River, perhaps to control traffic. These upper reaches of the Lacanha were fertile ground for artistic invention, for it was here that stone sculpture with many figures first appeared in Early Classic times,[14] and no surviving programme matches the complexity and beauty of the *Bonampak murals,* painted at the end of Classic times, c. A.D. 790–800.

In keeping with the Bonampak tradition, the skill and beauty of the *Lacanha panel D.O. 3* (Fig. 4) surpasses the other Maya monuments at Dumbarton Oaks. A single figure rests gracefully on a representation of personified stone. The right leg is sharply foreshortened, and the line created by the extended left leg leads the viewer's eye to the face of the figure and then to the beginning of the text at upper left. The seated figure bears a double-headed serpent bar in his arms, and with his left hand he chucks the bearded monster under the chin. In contrast to most Maya lords, but like many others from Lacanha and Bonampak, he displays facial hair, and like his descendant on *Stela 1,* his eye has been drilled.[15]

Among his names and titles is the expression Knotted-eye Jaguar at C4, as scholars now refer to him. Mathews has shown him to be the father of the more famous ruler of the era of the paintings, and his own parentage is included from D6 to J4, thus establishing several generations of rulers.[16] We probably see the ruler in formal garb appropriate to a portrait commemorating the closing of an era: his clothes are simple but elegant, his posture calm but regal. According to the text, Knotted-eye Jaguar had already been installed on 9.15.11.17.3, or A.D. 743, into the same office that is named on *Dumbarton Oaks 1,* possibly a lesser position than ruler. Despite the absence of references to Yaxchilan on thison monument, it is possible that Bonampak and Lacanha held a subsidiary position to that city. Although this panel has been labelled a lintel, any doorway it spanned would have been wider than those usually seen in the region. Like *Dumbarton Oaks 1 and 2,* the *Lacanha panel* was probably set either into an interior wall or against an exterior abutment.

Dumbarton Oaks 4 (Fig. 6) is in poor condition, having been broken in antiquity and then sawn in modern times. The remaining pieces were set in cement, and it is hard to determine whether the fragments were part of a wall panel or a freestanding stela.

Unfortunately, much of the face and headdress of the figure have been lost. In his left hand he

[11] Peter Mathews, 'Palenque's Mid-life Crisis,' Paper read at the Quinta Mesa Redonda de Palenque, June 1983.

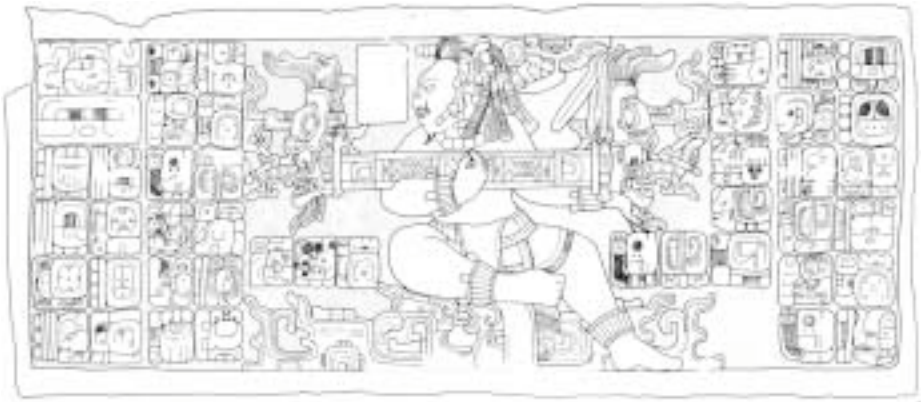
[12] *The Tablet of the Slaves* can be seen in Westheim, Ruz *et al., Prehispanic Mexican Art,* 1972, figs. 148 and 150.

[13] See, for example, Frans Blom, *La Selva Lacandona,* 1957.

[14] The earliest example of multifugural Maya carving on a single surface of stone is the so-called *Po panel,* now in a private collection in the United States. Early sculptures from Caracol, Belize, also show multifigural compositions.

[15] The best illustrations of the Bonampak stelae are in Raul Pavón Abreu, *Bonampak en la escultura,* 1962.

[16] Peter Mathews, 'Notes on the Dynastic Sequence of Bonampak, Part I,' in *Third Palenque Round Table, 1978, Part 2,* 1980, pp. 60–73.



4

Lacanha wall panel *(D.O. 3)*. Limestone, height 70 cm. This panel dipicts a Lacanha-Bonampak lord celebrating the Maya period ending in A.D. 746. He is named as 'Knotted-eye Jaguar' and, like his successor, Lord Chaan-muan of Bonampak, he sports a goatee and moustache. He has bound his hair with small beads, and appears to wear a nosebead as well

5

Drawing of the Lacanha wall panel in Figure 4 by David S. Stuart

6

Carved wall panel *(?)*. Limestone, height 151·5 cm. Probably from Tabasco or Chiapas, Mexico, A.D. 800. This monument suffered both in antiquity and modern times. In his right hand the figure holds the strap of a shield, displaying the clenched hand of the ruler

holds a short serpent bar; in the right, he grasps the strap of a shield, showing the viewer the clenched hand of the ruler. Unlike the other three Dumbarton Oaks panels, the glyphic text makes no reference to persons or places known from other sources. The text gives us a date, 9.18.10.0.0 (A.D. 800), late in Classic Maya chronology, and names the ruler (A3–A4) and a woman related to him, either a wife or mother (A5–B6). Based on its date, style, and workmanship, the piece can be attributed to the region of Tabasco or Chiapas lying between Tenosique and Palenque.

The four Maya panels at Dumbarton Oaks represent a good cross-section of sculpture from the western Maya region during Late Classic times. Different aspects of rulership are recorded: *D.O. 1* shows a posthumous warrior, framed by architectural space; *D.O. 2* represents the apotheosis of a past lord; the *Lacanha panel* (*D.O. 3*) shows a contemporary lord, celebrating the passage of his reign. *D.O. 4* is a late monument, executed during an era when many sites no longer erected stone monuments. The increasing poverty of expression during the ninth century is augmented by the poor preservation of this monument.

Cyril Mango

The Byzantine Collection

A public collection or museum devoted largely to objects of the Early Christian and Byzantine periods is something of a rarity. Next to the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, one can think only of the Byzantine Museum in Athens, in which the holdings, however, are to a considerable extent post-Byzantine, containing, as they do, Greek religious and folk art down to about the year 1800. Why are there only two such institutions in the whole world? Not because Byzantine art has been neglected; on the contrary, it has been sought out and assiduously studied for the past hundred years and more. The reason is rather that available Byzantine objects of museum quality are few and far between. The heritage of Byzantine art is, in the main, irremovable: it is made up of paintings and mosaics decorating the walls of churches and of heavy pieces of architectural sculpture in marble. Has the rest simply perished? Undoubtedly, most of it has been destroyed in the ceaseless wars and invasions that make up the annals of the Byzantine Empire—burnt, melted down and looted by Huns, Slavs, Arabs, Bulgars, Crusaders and Turks. The residue is small and we cannot always assume that it is representative of what originally existed. The only nearly complete series is that of Byzantine coins, of which Dumbarton Oaks possesses probably the most extensive group in the world.

It cannot be claimed that the Dumbarton Oaks Collection represents a conscious attempt at a systematic coverage of Byzantine artifacts. It is rather a reflection of personal taste, that of the founders, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss, who were greatly influenced by Royall Tyler, himself a collector and connoisseur, and that of the first Director, John S. Thacher. They were guided by criteria of artistic quality and had a penchant for precious materials—gold, silver, enamel, ivory. This propensity gives to the Collection (or, at any rate, that part of it that is visible to the public) the appearance of a medieval treasury. A financial contribution made to the Franco-American excavation of Antioch in the 1930s brought in several mosaic pavements, a silver lampstand and ewer and a number of other objects. For the rest, discounting gifts from individuals, the acquisitions were limited to pieces on the art market. From today's viewpoint it is truly remarkable that from the 1920s to the present the market could yield such an array of riches—superior, in the Byzantine field, to that held by the greatest national museums, with the possible exception of the Hermitage at Leningrad.

I have mentioned the emphasis on precious materials as representing the taste of wealthy private collectors, but that, perhaps, is not a sufficient explanation, since the preference expressed by the Blisses also corresponded to a certain conception of Byzantine art; and if we seek to find its formulation, we may discover it in a book entitled *L'art byzantin* by Hayford Peirce and none other than Royall Tyler (Paris, 1932–34). In the opinion of these authors, Byzantine art was essentially a luxury art, an art of the Imperial Court, that was born when the capital of the Roman State was moved to a Greek country and that died with the Fourth Crusade in 1204, when Greek artists, because of the prevailing poverty, lost access to beautiful and costly materials. After that date they turned to a descriptive or anecdotal approach (referring, I suppose, to late Byzantine painting), to mere 'illustration' that lacked the true spirit of Byzantium. This is not a conception that many specialists would endorse today, but it does have something to be said for it.

Even though the Dumbarton Oaks Collection is not a representative cross-section of Early Christian and Byzantine art, it is sufficiently extensive to raise certain questions in the mind of the informed visitor. The nature of these questions will naturally depend on the visitor's viewpoint and

knowledge. He may be motivated by purely aesthetic considerations as Mrs. Bliss probably was herself. No justification is needed for aesthetic enjoyment; besides, it has been respectable since the 1920s to admire Byzantine art for interpreting, instead of reproducing perceived reality, as Robert Byron put it. But if the visitor wishes to understand as well as to enjoy, he will have a harder task unless he is content to fall back on accepted verdicts. Understanding implies some form of classification, of pigeonholing. But how is one to classify Byzantine art? By date? By place? By School?

No one will deny the importance of dating. Some Byzantine objects are, in fact, independently dated by inscription, e.g. an appreciable part of the silverware of the sixth and seventh centuries which bears State control stamps and of which Dumbarton Oaks has many important examples. It is helpful to remember that some of the dates provided by the stamps would not otherwise have been guessed at. Who would have thought, for example, that the Silenus plate (Fig. 3), to which I shall return, was of the sixth century and not of the third or fourth? The majority of Byzantine objects are not, however, dated except by comparison with other objects, so we have to content ourselves with labels saying 'Fourth-sixth century' or 'Tenth-twelfth century'. No doubt, we shall eventually get better at this sort of thing. In the meantime, we ought to bear in mind that recognized authorities may disagree by as much as five centuries regarding the date, not of some ring or button, but of a major work of art; which implies either that the development of Byzantine art is not yet known in many areas or that it developed so slowly and imperceptibly as to deceive the best trained eye.

A classification by place and/or School is even more problematical and, before resorting to it as if it were self-evident, we should ask ourselves to what extent it is helpful. Some provincial areas, it is true, like the Coptic (rather poorly represented at Dumbarton Oaks, except for textiles) are fairly distinctive. But when we deal with major urban centres, do we really know in what respect the art of Constantinople differed from that of Antioch or that of Alexandria? The most extreme disagreements in attribution are clear evidence that we do not.

In case I should be thought to be exaggerating, let me single out the attractive and well-known ivory plaque of the Nativity (Fig. 9) which is related to a larger group of ivories, now shared between Milan, London, Paris and Lyons. For a long time these (or some of them) were attributed to Alexandria or Cyrenaica with a date of c. A.D. 600; they were then moved to southern Italy or Sicily and to the eleventh or twelfth century; while the latest opinion, by Professor Kurt Weitzmann, is that the Dumbarton Oaks plaque and a few of the others are Syro-Palestinian work of the eighth century. Professor Weitzmann is not given to flights of arbitrary fancy; yet not everyone has been convinced by his arguments. So much for places and dates.

Faced with such uncertainties, I should like to adopt here a somewhat different approach, namely to inquire what the objects and works of art can tell us about Byzantine civilization, its society, its values and its material resources. First, however, a matter of terminology ought to be clarified. We tend to speak rather vaguely of the Byzantine period as extending, in the eastern Mediterranean, from the foundation of Constantinople in A.D. 324 to the capture of that same city by the Turks in 1453. So did Peirce and Tyler, except that they set the terminal date in 1204. We also speak of Early Christian art (East and West) from its obscure beginnings in the second century down to about the sixth. This overlapping use of labels leads to considerable confusion. In terms of what actually happened, it is more helpful to think of the Later Roman Empire, of which Constantinople was the eastern and more important capital, an Empire that broke down towards the middle of the seventh century; and of its successor, the Byzantine Empire, which reached its apogee between the ninth and twelfth centuries and survived in a diminished form until 1453. Only if we adopt such a historical perspective can we place the artifacts of the periods in question in their proper context. I shall, therefore, use the label Late Roman for objects dating between the third and mid-seventh centuries, whatever their geographical origin, and the label Byzantine for objects produced within the Byzantine Empire or under its immediate influence from the mid-seventh century to the mid-fifteenth.

1

Mosaic Pavement, Antioch, second to third century A.D. Stone tesserae, length 2·64 m., width, 1·68 m. Acc. no. 40.64. Three winged erotes are shown fishing, one from a boat and two from the banks of the pond. From a house at Daphne-Harbiyer

2

The Riha Paten, Antioch (?), 577. Silver repoussé with gilding and niello, diameter 35 cm. Found near Riha, Syria. Acc. no. 24.5. Christ is represented twice distributing the eucharistic bread and wine to two groups of Apostles. The rim is inscribed in niello with a dedication of the state official Megas and his family

3

Fragment of a Plate, Constantinople (?) 542–50. Silver cast and engraved, present diameter 29·3 cm. Acc. no. 51.20. A drunken Silenus is shown reclining, while another figure blows a trumpet in his ear. This fragment was the centre of a very large plate and has hallmarks of the reign of Justinian (527–65) on the reverse

Entering the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, one treads over three Antioch pavements (Fig. 1) and glimpses a fourth (a very big one of Tethys among marine animals) in the pool in the open courtyard. The mosaic pavements evoke a cultural setting. They were made at various times between the second century A.D. and the sixth, but were probably still in use when the city fell, first to the Persians, then to the Arabs, in the seventh. They tell us, therefore, that the citizens of Antioch in the days of Justinian (527–65) and later were still dining and bathing amidst symbols of pagan mythology and in circumstances of considerable material comfort. The silver objects in several cases in the main gallery belong to the same milieu. Some of them are liturgical—the famous Riha paten (Fig. 2), the Riha chalice and the flabellum; others are secular—a dish with a hunting scene, two plates with episodes from the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra and the fragment of a large plate showing a partly nude Silenus turning his head away from a horn that a personage is jocularly blowing in his ear (Fig. 3). The Silenus plate is dated by control stamps to the reign of Justinian and is, therefore, almost exactly contemporary with the Riha paten, dated (577) in the same manner. We need not concern ourselves with the precise geographical origin of the objects in question, nor should we suppose that the Silenus plate was made for a person holding pagan views.

The important fact to notice is that in the sixth century an art with a Christian content co-existed with an art of antique or traditional content depending on its destination and, occasionally, on the social class of the person that commissioned it. By the standards of a 'happier' age, the Augustan or the Antonine (compare the Hildesheim silver treasure in Berlin), the style of these objects may appear less than refined, which only means that they belong to the tail end of the classical tradition. Anyone familiar with the literature of the period, who has read the History of Procopius or the epigrams of the Palatine Anthology, will have no trouble in accommodating both the Silenus plate and the Riha paten within the same historical context.

Certainly, the Christian element was gaining the upper hand with the gradual decline of the old urban gentry and the funnelling of ever-increasing funds into ecclesiastical donations, and here the 'Sion treasure' is of particular importance. It is a silver treasure found near Antalya in southern Turkey in 1963, of which Dumbarton Oaks holds about one half (some thirty to forty pieces) and the Antalya Museum most of the rest. Unfortunately, this find has not yet been studied in its entirety and many of its constituent objects, badly squashed in the process of burial, have not been restored to their proper shape, so that their function remains uncertain. What is, however, obvious—and in this respect the 'Sion treasure' is so much more instructive than single objects of the same character that have found their way on to the market—is that we are dealing with a considerable portion of the silver mobilier of a provincial cult centre, that of the monastery of Sion, set up in Lycia by a St. Nicholas who was active in the first half of the sixth century and of whom a biography is preserved. Many texts describe the silver furnishings of contemporary churches, particularly that of St. Sophia at Constantinople, but never before have we been able to visualize them so exactly—the sets of patens (Fig. 4), chalices, censers, openwork lamps and polycandela (Fig. 5) and various forms of revetment that were applied to the altar table and, perhaps, other items of furniture. Stunning as this collection is, we must remember that an urban cathedral of the period would have had more varied and extensive furnishings in silver.

Late Roman jewellery, of which Dumbarton Oaks has a particularly rich array, shows the same mixture of secular and Christian elements, sometimes on the same object. The gold marriage belt, for example, has Christ blessing the nuptial pair on the larger medallions and pagan divinities on the smaller ones (Fig. 6). One pressed gold pendant has a figure of Dionysus nonchalantly pouring wine into the mouth of a panther, while another pendant of the same period has the Baptism of Christ. Elsewhere a nude Aphrodite in gold, standing on a shell of lapis lazuli, holds up her long wet tresses (Fig. 7). Equally strong is the Imperial element, often in the form of coins or medallions that have been incorporated into pieces of jewellery, as in the two remarkable filigree pendants containing medallions of Constantine I (Fig. 8) or the two

4

Sion Paten,
Constantinople, *c.* 546–65. Silver with gilding and niello, diameter 60·5 cm. Found at Kumluca, Turkey. Acc no. 63.36.1. Between the engraved *chrismon* in the centre and the cusped border with leaves and palmettes, runs a nielloed inscription stating that the paten was given in the time of Bishop Eutychianus

5

Sion Polycandelon,
Constantinople, 546–65. Silver with niello, 56·5 × 56·6 cm. Found at Kumluca, Turkey. Acc. no. 65.1.1. This *polycandelon* is unusual in being cruciform; the more common form of these suspended lamp-holders is circular. The open circles, which held the glass lamps, are supported by pairs of dolphins and foliate ornament

massive gold bracelets decorated with coins of the Emperors Maurice, Phocas and Heraclius (made shortly before 640) that we can imagine gracing the burly arms of a State official or military commander.

I have mentioned the high level of urban life that was enjoyed at Antioch until the sixth century: the same surely applied to many other cities of the Empire. Of this several indications may be found in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection. Such are the finely made bronze lamps and lampstands that must have been used for domestic lighting; the medicine boxes, scribe's writing case, furniture plaques and hairpins in ivory or bone, carved with figural decoration; and the series of objects pertaining to the marketplace: calibrated bronze steelyards with hooks and chains, bronze weights in the form of an emperor or an empress and smaller weights, usually rectangular, with the indication of the number of ounces inlaid in silver. There is also a great rarity, namely a silver fork of about the sixth century, with a spirally fluted handle terminating in an animal's head; though probably of Sasanian workmanship, it surely reflects Roman practices of the time. So uncommon are forks of this period that a distinguished German scholar some fifty years ago could argue that since they are shown in representations of the Last Supper in Cappadocia, the paintings in question (executed, in fact, in the eleventh century) could hardly be earlier than the fifteenth or sixteenth!

When we turn to the objects of the Byzantine period, i.e. of the eighth and following centuries, we may not be immediately aware that we are confronting a somewhat different civilization. At first sight there is no evidence of a dramatic change; on the contrary, there is a deceptive continuity, especially in the retention of a canon of religious illustration which both in its iconography and its style remains close to much earlier models. What we may not immediately perceive is the disappearance of whole categories of artifacts: there are no longer any bronze lamps or lampstands, any steelyards or weights, any forks or spoons, any medicine boxes or furniture ornaments. Secular silver of whatever description is totally lacking. Even ecclesiastical silver is represented only by one icon frame (gilded silver and enamel) and three crosses, the most interesting of which depicts the miracles of the Archangel Michael and Constantine's conversion by Pope Sylvester (Fig. 10): it should not, incidentally, be associated with the Patriarch Michael Keroularios (1043–58) as has been asserted. In the place of the massive silver patens of the sixth century, we find only two copper ones. Jewellery remains very fine, but its range is more limited than in the earlier period and the objects themselves become smaller. The Imperial element in the form of inset coins or medallions is replaced by religious imagery. Increasing use is made of cloisonné enamel, as on a beautiful gold clasp with busts of Christ and the Virgin Mary (Fig. 11). At the same time there is a growing tendency towards 'personalization' in the sense that the owner's Christian and family names are occasionally inscribed, witness the ring of the eleventh-century historian Michael Attaleiates or that of the twelfth-century admiral Michael Stryphnos.

Setting aside personal jewellery, the secular sphere is pretty much limited to two ivory boxes and a collection of glazed pottery. The first of the boxes is a 'rosette casket' attributed to the late tenth or eleventh century (Fig. 12), not nearly as fine as the Veroli Casket in the Victoria and Albert Museum, but a good specimen of the same class nevertheless. It bears tiny, pudgy figures, some of them nude, most of them armed. In Professor Weitzmann's opinion they have been copied partly from an illustrated Book of Joshua, partly from a Dionysiac procession—an odd combination of sources, which suggests that the figures have lost all meaning just as they have lost any feeling for the human form. The other ivory box, a diminutive circular pyxis (height only 2.9 cm.), is quite unique. It represents two Imperial families and the offering of a city, probably of Thessalonica to the Emperor John VII in 1403–4.

The collection of glazed pottery, though limited to the last phase of Byzantine art (twelfth to fourteenth centuries) is remarkable for the number of complete pieces it contains (Fig. 13). Here we reach a broader social class than that of the aristocrats and government dignitaries who could afford gold and ivory and it is interesting to observe that the pottery in question is completely divorced from the antique tradition. The graffito technique, the

6

Marriage Belt (detail). East Mediterranean, late sixth to seventh century. Gold pressed discs, diameters 4·8 cm. and 2·5 cm. length 75·5 cm. Repurtedly found at Antioch. Acc. no. 37.33. The two large discs showing Christ between the marriage couple are inscribed 'from god, concord, grace and health' and the twenty-one small discs are ornamented with busts of Dionysiac characters

7

Necklace (detail of pendant), East Mediterranean, early seventh century. Gold and lapis lazuli, length 83 cm., height of pendant (without chains) 4·5 cm. Repurtedly from Egypt. Acc. no. 28.6. A gold *Aphrodite Anadyomene* is mounted in the lapis lazuli shell

8

Pendant with Medallion of Constantine I, East Mediterranean, fourth century. Gold Struck medallion mounted in *opus interrasile,* diameter 8·5 cm. Acc. no. 70.37.

The medallion of Constantine I (306–37), a two *solidi* piece, was struck at Sirmium in 324 and is a unique specimen. The pendant in which it is set, with three male and three female projecting busts, may have been executed elsewhere

9

NATIVITY OF CHRIST, Syria or Palestine (?), end of seventh to eighth entury (?). Ivory plaque, 9·3 × 19·1 cm. Acc. no. 51.30. The Virgin and Child, flanked by Joseph and Salome, are set against a dense architectural background instead of the usual cave. Variously dated from 600 to the twelfth century, and assigned to workshops from Alexandria to Sicily, the present attribution was lately proposed by Professor Weitzmann on the basis of iconographic and stylistic details of the entire group of fourteen plaques, to which the *Nativity* beongs. The latter may have been attached to a church sanctuary door

decoration of stylized animals, the splashes of green and brown glaze are of a type that was then current all over the Near East in both Muslim and Christian lands.

The rest of the Byzantine objects in the Collection are decorated with religious subjects, whether they were intended for ecclesiastical or private use. Among several pendant reliquaries, there is a lovely one of St. Sergius in gold and an even more curious one of St. Demetrius in gold and enamel. There is a superb series of small ivory icons, such as that representing the Incredulity of Thomas (Fig. 14), one of a set that originally included the Twelve Feasts. There are also two miniature mosaic icons of great rarity, that of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste which shows the Palaeologan style at its very best, and that of St. John Chrysostom (Fig. 15) in which the same style has been used to more hieratic effect. The sphere of illuminated manuscripts is represented by three books and three single leaves, the most interesting being a magnificent Psalter and New Testament of the year 1084 that once belonged to the Pantocrator monastery on Mount Athos (Fig. 16). Paradoxically, it is in objects such as these that the antique tradition survives, encapsulated in the unchanging conventions of Christian iconography.

It would be, of course, unwarranted to draw any broad historical conclusions from the contents of a single collection, especially one so personal as that of Dumbarton Oaks, and I would not have made the above remarks had they not applied in large measure to all other collections of Byzantine antiquities. What strikes me is not so much the restriction of the secular element in Byzantine art as the scarcity of the kinds of object, still common in the Later Roman world, that bespeak a high level of individual comfort and a developed urban life. This can hardly be due to accidents of preservation. If the medieval Byzantines had continued to use on a large scale finely made objects in their daily life, such as lamps, candlesticks, metal vessels, toilet articles, etc., the chances are that an appreciable number of them would have survived and found their way into museums. Seeing that they have not, one can only conclude that the domain of civilized life shrank very considerably between Late Antiquity and medieval Byzantium, as it also did in western Europe.

It was not the Blisses' intention to create what would be called today a 'study collection' so as to document all aspects of Byzantine civilization. Even so, it would not be true to say that they used artistic quality as their sole criterion. Thus, Mrs. Bliss provided funds for the acquisition of many thousands of lead seals which are of little beauty, but will constitute, when published, an extremely important body of material for the prosopographic

10

Three Arms of a Cross, Constantinople (?), eleventh-twelfth century. Silver with gilding and niello, height of upper arm 15·3 cm., width of left arm 7·5 cm. Gift of John S. Thacher. Acc no. 64.13. The upper arm shows the *Conversion of the Emperor Constantine* (306–37), who bows towards the icons of Saints Peter and Paul, held by Pope Sylvester. On the left arm is represented the *Miracle at Chonae* in Phrygia, in which the Archangel Michael saves a church from a torrent of water; it is inscribed THE FUNNELING OF THE WATERS. The third surviving arm features a scene from Joshua (5:13–15)

11

NECKLACE CLASP, OBVERSE AND REVERSE, Constantinople, tenth century. Gold and cloisonné enamel, 2·3 × 5 cm. Gift in Memory of Frances Lake Thacher. Acc. no. 65.4 A bust of Christ is on the obverse (to the right) and that of the Virgin Mary on the reverse (to the left). The wires surrounding the quatrefoil plaque were originally strung with pearls

12

ROSETTE CASKET, Constantinople, late tenth to eleventh century. Ivory mounted on wood, 16 × 22 × 16 cm. Acc. no. 53.1. One of a group of caskets characterized by their bands of rosette ornament. The warriors on the fifteen rectangular panels and the animals in the vine *rinceau* have apparently been drawn from a number of iconographic sources. Dionysiac battle and grape harvesting scenes, the Book of Joshua, the *Physiologus,* the *Phaeonomena* of Aratus and a textile

13

SHALLOW BOWL, Byzantine, thirteenth century. Glazed and incised pottery, diameter 31·7 cm. Acc. no. 58.103.

The figure of a Harpy wearing an elaborate headdress is incised through the slip-painted ware and covered by a pale green glaze. The marked orientalizing features of the design suggest the dish was made in the Chersonese or possibly the Caucasus

14

PLAQUE, Constantinople, mid-tenth century. Ivory, 10.6 × 8.8 cm. Acc. no. 37.7. *The Incredubility of Thomas* is inscribed THE DOORS BEING SHUT (John 20:26) and shows the usual eleven Apostles, without Judas. Carved in very high relief, the plaque was strongly influenced by painted icons or miniatures

and administrative study of the Byzantine Empire. Inevitably, as we look back, we can point to certain areas that the Blisses neglected, for example that of painted icons. Fifty years ago many excellent icons could have been acquired and it is a pity they were not, considering their present popularity and rise in value. The same may, perhaps, be said of illuminated manuscripts. Though the possibilities of purchase are not the same today as they were when the Blisses were active, one may hope that the Dumbarton Oaks Collection will gradually fill the few gaps in its holdings so as to reflect more fully all the significant aspects of the Byzantine artistic heritage.

15

PORTABLE MOSAIC ICON, Constantinople, *c.* 1325. Glass tesserae set in wax ground with wood backing, 18 × 13 cm. Acc. no. 54.2. St. John Crysostom, whose name is inscribed on the golden background, holds a gospel book

16

HEADPIECE OF THE MAGNIFICAT, ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT, Constantinople, *c.* 1084. Tempera on parchment, 16·2 × 10·3 cm. Once belonged to the Pantocrator Monastery on Mt. Athos. Acc. no. 62.35. This shows a two-zone composition of *The Annunciation* (above) and the *Seated Virgin,* who holds an open prayer book (below). The opening initial of the text is historiated with *The Visitation*

Kurt Weitzmann

The Saint Peter Icon of Dumbarton Oaks

We see the apostle* half-length, slightly turned to his left and looking with concentration into the outside world, his gaze bypassing the beholder (Plate IV). He is dressed, as usual, in tunic and pallium, the former being dark blue, the latter olive green, highlighted in gold, and rich in folds that suggest a soft material. With his left hand he holds two attributes simultaneously, and the somewhat distorted rendering of the fleshy hand suggests that the artist had some difficulty in making him hold both in one grip. One attribute is a long staff surmounted by a black metallic cross with spiral leaves at the bottom and knobs at the ends of the arms; the cross of Peter's martyrdom has here become a liturgical object—that is, a processional cross staff. The other attribute is a scroll tied by a red string, similar to an Imperial *chrysobullon*. With the long fingers of his right hand, of which the knuckles are emphasized, Peter points at the scroll, thereby alluding to the writing of his Epistles. There is, however, still a third attribute: two golden keys with which the gates of Paradise are to be opened. In a most unusual depiction, for which I know no parallel, the keys are hanging from the neck on a golden cord. All three attributes have traditionally been associated with Peter, but their combination here in a single composition is quite exceptional.

Turning now to a closer examination of the head of the Dumbarton Oaks *St. Peter,* the most striking features are the pronounced plasticity of the skull and the firm fleshy face with its articulated muscles, which together produce the effect of a high degree of physical reality. His penetrating eyes set beneath contracted brows give the impression of intense concentration, on the one hand, and of a brooding mood—which might also be interpreted as a quick temper—on the other. But no matter how one interprets the expression of the face, there can be no doubt that it was the painter's intent to depict Peter in a state of tension. Yet the underlying naturalism of the head is mitigated by the adoption of stylized formulae for certain features. The focal point is the junction of the bridge of the nose and the brows where a U-shaped wedge, coming down from the forehead, separates the arched brows, and where two tufts of white hair jut out with almost explosive force. Creasing the forehead are two long furrows, one ending upward, the other downward, which serve to intensify the frowning expression. The nose, instead of forming a continuous ridge, is tripartite, structured (metaphorically speaking) almost like a column, with a globe-like base, a swelling shaft, and a basket capital. The tendency toward linear form led to an oval pattern for the right cheek. The desire for vivid forms is marked in the treatment of the hair, which is depicted as a series of short overlapping locks, two rows of which cover the head, while others cascade along the right temple and form the scalloped, parted beard. Even the flow of the moustache is disrupted in order to underline the general staccato effect. Each one of these devices serves the purpose of heightening the mood of the figure.

How is the Dumbarton Oaks icon to be dated? In our view it is at least a generation earlier than the frescoes of the Protaton, Mt. Athos, of around

* The most important addition to the Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection in nearly two decades, this icon of St. Peter (acc. no. 82.2) is without parallel outside the Balkans in its combination of extraordinary size (93.1 × 61.3 cm), quality, and art-historical significance. The present short article was excerpted and adapted from a lecture of the same title delivered by Kurt Weitzmann at the opening of the exhibition 'Masterpieces of Byzantine Icon Painting,' held at Dumbarton Oaks on April 27, 1983, in honour of this new acquisition. The full text of the lecture has recently appeared as Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection Publications, no. 6.

Plate IV

St. Peter by a Greek painter working in Macedonia or Serbia, *c.* third quarter of the thirteenth century. Tempera on panel, 93·1 × 61·3 cm. The most important addition to the Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection (1982) in nearly two decades, this icon is without parallel in collections outside the Balkans for its combination of extraordinary size, quality, and art-historical significance. Its high level of plasticity and emotional expressionism are stylistic qualities which associate it with Macedonia

1300, and not much later than those at Mileševa, in Serbia, of about 1235.[1] The former represent the fully-developed Palaeologan style, which our icon has not reached, while the latter show the formal devices upon which Peter's already fully developed style rests. In the sixty year period between the frescoes of Mileševa and those of the Protaton, there is one major dated monument—the Trinity Church of Sopoćani, in Serbia, erected and decorated around 1265 by the Serbian Tzar Stephen Uroš. Among its frescoes is an especially impressive head of Paul (Fig. 1),[2] which immediately suggests a relationship with our Peter icon. In general, there is a similar degree of plasticity in the well-structured head, and a comparable forcefulness in the expression of the face; in particular there are the familiar devices used to delineate the eyebrows, the furrowed forehead, the U-shaped wedge into the bridge of the nose, and the oval of the cheek.

Drawing our conclusions from this and other evidence, we would like to date the Dumbarton Oaks St. Peter icon to the third quarter of the thirteenth century and close to Sopoćani, leaving open the possibility that it may be a bit earlier or later. Thus we propose a date somewhat earlier than that suggested by Manolis Chatzidakis,[3] but we completely agree with him on the attribution to Macedonia. He and A. Xyngopoulos before him have consistently stressed the 'realistic' element in Macedonian painting, the centre of which was Thessaloniki. But this does not necessarily mean that our icon was executed in Thessaloniki, since artists from that centre worked in Ohrid, and in many other places in Macedonia and Serbia. It thus seems wiser to attribute the Dumbarton Oaks icon to the hand of a Greek painter working in Macedonia or Serbia.

All scholars who have worked on Macedonian painting of the thirteenth century have realized that Macedonia did not possess a clearly-defined style of its own, and that Thessaloniki, its artistic centre, at all times depended strongly on Constantinople. The difficulty is to define this dependence and the subtle differences of style between these two dominant artistic centres within the Byzantine Empire. Because of the lack of material securely localized in the capital, particularly in the unsettled period of the Latin conquest (1204–61), there is no basis for concrete comparison. And while we cannot solve this problem here, we can, I think, bring its solution perhaps one step closer. There is an icon in the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai with a majestic bust of St. Peter which, at one metre in height, is even slightly larger than the Dumbarton Oaks icon; its impressive features became apparent only after its recent cleaning (Fig. 2).[4] In his left hand Peter holds a scroll, and a pair of keys on a ring over the index finger. What is most striking about the figure, however, are the plasticity and clear structure of the head, and the sharp but at the same time brooding gaze, which is achieved with devices similar to those of the Dumbarton Oaks icon: the U-shaped wedge between the brows which causes the effect of frowning, the tufts of hair, *et cetera*. Yet there are also decisive differences. The Sinai Peter is more withdrawn and more aristocratic, qualities which are usually—and this is true for all periods—associated with the style of Constantinople. Yet, the stylistic features of both icons have so much in common that it seems likely that both ultimately depend on the same source—a source we believe to have been Constantinople. The measurably greater degree of realism in the Dumbarton Oaks icon must be considered the Macedonian contribution. Of course we do not know whether the Sinai *Peter* was in fact the product of a Constantinopolitan atelier, as it may well have been. Another possibility would be Cyprus, where the Sinai monastery had (and still has) major possessions, and from which it recruited artists, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

By its size (nearly a metre high) and composition, the Dumbarton Oaks *Peter* belongs to a category of large icons which were not made to be single and self-contained, but rather to be part of

[1] For the Protaton, compare especially A. Xyngopoulos, *Manuel Panselinos,* 1956, Plate 17; and for Mileš eva, S. Radojčić, *Mileš eva,* (in Serbo-Croatian), 1963, Plate XIII.

[2] V. J. Durić, *Sopoćani,* 1963, Plate I.

[3] *Icons and East Christian Works of Art,* ed. M. van Rijn, 1980, 168f.

[4] Unpublished; 105.7 × 71.1 cm. It was cleaned by T. Margaritoff in 1967.

1

St. Paul (detail), *c.* 1265, Trinity Church, Sopoćani, Serbia. Fresco. This impressive head immediately suggests a relationship with the Dumbarton Oaks icon (Plate IV) by its plasticity and the forcefulness of its expression. Compare also the U-shaped wedge at the bridge of the nose, and the oval of the cheek

2

St. Peter, Constantinople or Cyprus, first half of the thirteenth century. Tempera on panel, 105·7 × 71·1 cm. Monastery of St. Catherine, Mt. Sinai. The panel has been cleaned of its later overpainting to reveal an image more withdrawn and aristocratic than that of Plate IV—qualities that associate it with the Byzantine capital

3

ST. PAUL, Constantinople or Cyprus, first half of the thirteenth century. Tempera on panel, 104·3 × 89·8 cm. Monastery of St. Catherine, Mt. Sinai. Unlike Figure 2 this panel has not been cleaned, but is a companion piece to St. Peter, much like that which would have accompanied the Dumbarton Oaks icon

grander ensembles. That Peter is shown turning toward one side indicates that he once had a companion icon of Paul, probably much like that which survives as the pendant to the Sinai Peter (Fig. 3).[5] And quite surely, both portraits would have been placed on an iconostasis, that screen of holy images which separates the sanctuary from the nave in an Orthodox church. Moreover, their extraordinary size suggests that they were placed below the epistyle, between the columns of the iconostasis, where they would likely have flanked portraits of Christ, the Virgin, and John the Baptist as part of a Great Deesis.

Although the Dumbarton Oaks *Peter* stands in a firmly established artistic tradition, it shows a relatively greater individuality compared with other St. Peter icons of the period. Stylistically, it has a rare combination of a high degree of physical reality on the one hand, and an intensity of emotional expression on the other. Iconographically, it shows a hair style which has no precise parallel among any of the other heads of Peter, and it is apparently unique in the motif of wearing the keys around the neck. Thus, this icon fills a gap not only in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection but also in our knowledge of thirteenth-century icon painting generally.

[5] Unpublished; 104.3 × 89.8 cm. It is slightly smaller in height than the *Peter* icon, but that the two icons form a pair cannot be questioned. To my knowledge the Paul icon has not yet been cleaned.

Agnes Mongan

A Fête of Flowers: Women Artists' Contribution to Botanical Illustration

Every year thousands of visitors come to see and enjoy the gardens at Dumbarton Oaks. Few of these visitors are aware of the planning that went into the preparation of the gardens or that Mrs. Bliss, as she grew older, instead of narrowing her interest in gardens, stretched her imagination and broadened her knowledge of them. After World War II, she began with acumen and enthusiasm to collect beautifully illustrated garden books and manuscripts. She called on three different sources for advice: her friend, the designer of the gardens, Beatrix Farrand; the Houghton Library (the rare book library at Harvard); and the librarian at the Harvard School of Architecture. Although the Blisses had donated Dumbarton Oaks to Harvard University in 1940, in 1963 Mrs. Bliss commissioned the construction of a new wing of the building to house her collection which became the property of Harvard on her death in 1969 (Fig. 1).

In a volume now at the library, in which a record was kept of her acquisitions, the first garden book entry is dated 1948. It lists Stevens and Liebault's *Countrie Farm* (or *Maison Rustique*) published in 1600. That book was a fortunate beginning. As long as she lived Mrs. Bliss continued to acquire not only standard reference books, which she added to her already considerable collection of 'How To' books on gardening, but also rare and beautiful publications or manuscripts devoted to flowers, gardens or fountains. The collection grew steadily and when she died it had become one of usefulness and distinction.

The stacks in the downstairs library contain nearly 7,000 reference books. Rare books devoted to botany or portfolios of original drawings, which date from the late fifteenth century to the present, are kept in the beautifully lighted, spacious Rare Book Room. There are about 3,500 volumes.

It is not too surprising to find that the Garden Library contains a large number of books by and about women and their enduring concern with the floral and herbal world. For centuries floral and herbal illustration has been considered one of the few appropriate genres for women artists. In 1772, G.{t}B. Passeri prefaced his account of the lives of artists and architects of Rome (which included only one woman) by writing

> . . . the Lord did not endow them (women) properly with the faculty of judgement, and this he did in order to keep them restrained within the boundaries of obedience to men, to establish men as supreme and superior, so that with this lack, women would be more amenable to suggestion.'

The ladies discussed here were not always very amenable to suggestion.

An outstanding but little-known woman artist represented in the collection, Giovanna Garzoni (1600–70) came from Ascoli Piceno, the Marches, Italy. She worked in Florence, as well as Rome and Naples. That she was well-known in her own time can be surmised when we learn that among her patrons were the Medici, the rulers of Florence, and the Spanish Viceroy of Naples. Her portrait was painted by two of the leading artists of the period, Carlo Maratta and Sassoferrato. She was a member of the Roman Accademia di San Luca, and it was to that academy that she bequeathed her estate and an album containing twenty-two studies of insects and flowers. In the Garden Library there is a large folio volume, almost completely unknown, even to specialists. It contains fifty watercolours of plants by Giovanna Garzoni as well as a frontispiece (Fig. 2). The latter shows within an elaborate frame supported by three cherubs, a self-portrait in red and black chalk. On the frame, in capital letters in heavy ink, is: GIOVANNA GARZONI. ASCOLANA MINIATRICE. A collector's stamp at the lower left reveals that the book once belonged to the Strozzi family.

The watercolours, all full-page and measuring 49.5 × 38 cm, reveal not only an artist of exquisite

1

The Rare Book Room of the Dumbarton Oaks Garden Library. Designed by Frederick Rhinelander King and completed in 1963

accuracy and control, but one of a lively and delightful inventiveness. At the top of each page, the scientific name and reference is written in ink. One can follow the reference. For example: on the first page which represents a plant of sea holly, (Fig. 3) there is written at the top of the page in heavy ink: ERYNGIUM MARITINUM CASP BAUH: 386 P.M. If one turns to Kaspar Bauhin's *Theatri Botanici,* first published in Basel in 1658, one finds on page 386 under ERYNGIUM MARITINUM reference both to Dioscorides and Pliny, sufficient indication that our artist was acquainted with the botanical history of Greece and Rome, as well as that of her own time.

When we move to the end of the seventeenth century, there is a volume bound in white parchment, a coat of arms stamped in gold on its front cover. The title page records, within a wreath of exquisitely drawn and deftly coloured tulips, carnations and other flowers (Fig. 4), that the volume was offered to 'the world famous University of Altdorf' in 1692 by the author Magdalena Rosina Funck, about whom nothing is known. The book contains 295 watercolours of flowers all drawn in a very fine, thin, precise line and coloured with an astonishing range of light colours. The name of each flower is written in black ink below the flower.

Naturally one would expect to find at least one volume by the seventeenth-century naturalist, Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717). The daughter and wife of artists, she devoted her career to the study and illustration of insects in their natural environment. Her major innovation was the depiction of insects on the plants on which they were normally to be found (Fig. 5). Her illustrations are notable for their botanical as well as their entomological beauty and accuracy.

Her interests in natural history led her to travel with her young daughter to Surinam, today the Republic of Suriname, where she remained for three years. In the library there is a fine copy of her book, *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensum,* published in 1719, two years after her death.

When we move into the first half of the nineteenth century, there is a portfolio containing twenty-four watercolours by Priscilla Susan Bury, the wife of a railroad engineer, who lived and worked in Liverpool (Fig. 6). Possibly inspired by the example of William Roscoe and his daughter-in-law, both of whom published flower illustration books, she had her watercolours published as a book entitled *A Selection of Hexandrian Plants belonging to the Natural Orders Amaryllidae and Liliacae* (London, 1834). A comparison of the plates of the book and the watercolours, also in the collection, shows the astonishingly faithful reproduction made possible by the recently invented colour printing techniques used. Robert Havell, Mrs. Bury's printer, is better known for his printing of John James Audubon's *The Birds of America.*

In 1816 George Brookshaw published in London a delightful and instructive volume, *A new Treatise on Flower Painting or Every Lady her Own Drawing Master . . . Familiar and Easy Instructions.* It was one of the many books on the subject to appear in the nineteenth century when it was fashionable for all young ladies to learn to draw flowers. A folio containing fifteen watercolours by a French lady, Céline Guillaume, is entitled *Histoire Naturelle Botanique.* The artist, whose dates are unknown, lists fifteen classes of plants and draws, on heavy wove paper, one example from each class. Opposite the lively and exquisite watercolour is a page headed by the plant's botanical class. Beneath the latter, within a ruled pen and coloured ink border, are the families. Descriptions in very fine script note the distinguishing characteristics of each family (Fig. 7).

Another handsome volume bears the title *The Fête of Flowers.* It is a seven page sentimental gathering of light verse opposite watercolours of flowers. The unsophisticated verse, handwritten on pages with borders of flowers drawn in a light pen line, is followed by a section, *Blossoms and Berries,* which contains eight watercolours of different berries, wild roses and deadly nightshade (Fig. 8). A pencilled note opposite the title page states, 'JANE ELIZABETH GIRAUD, 1868. Author of Flowers of Milton, Flowers of Shakespeare.'

An American example of ladies' flower illustration of this era is Laura Gordon Munson's *Flowers from My Garden Sketched and Painted from Nature* with an introductory poem by the author (New York, Anson D. F. Randall, 1864). The aquatints are intense in colour and varied in design (Fig. 9).

2

Self-Portrait by Giovanna Garzoni (1600–70), ms. *c.* 1650. Red and black chalk. Frontispiece to *Piantae Variae*

3

'Eryngium Maritinum' (*Sea Holly*) by Giovanna Garzoni. Watercolour. Fol. 1, Piantae Variae

4

Title page, *Blumenbuch* by Magdalena Funck (active late seventeenth century), ms. 1692. Watercolour

5

Plate 67, Disertatio de Generationi et Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium by Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717), (2nd ed.) 1719. Engraving with watercolour

6

'Amaryillis Johnsoni' by Priscilla Susan Bury (active 1831–37), 1829. Watercolour. No. 14 of the twenty-five in the Collection

7

'Liseron', *Histoire Naturel Botanique* by Céline Guillaume (nineteenth century). Watercolour

8

'Blossoms and Berries', *The Fête of Flowers* by Jane Elizabeth Giraud (nineteenth century), ms. 1890. Pencil and watercolour

9

'Crocus', *Flowers from my Garden, Sketched and Painted from Nature* by Laura Gordon Munson (nineteenth century), 1864. Aquatint

10

'Guttiferae Clusia' by Margaret Mee, 1960. Watercolour. Used in preparation for the printed folio *Flowers of the Brazilian Forests,* 1968

11

'Magnolia Virginiana' by Marian Ellis Rowan (1848–1922). Watercolour

The twentieth century is represented by an impressive folio of Brazilian flowers drawn and painted in watercolours in the 1950s and 1960s by Margaret Mee, an English resident of Brazil. The watercolours are rich in colour, varied in texture and handsome in design (Fig. 10). A note informs us that they were made at Visconde de Maua, S. Paulo. A foreword on Brazilian forests was contributed by the distinguished Brazilian artist, architect and landscape designer Roberto Burle Marx, and a preface by Sir George Taylor, the former Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

Four large handsome watercolour drawings by the Australian artist, Marian Ellis Rowan (1848–1922) are on exhibition in the stairway hall of the library. Rowan spent her life recording the beautiful and exotic flora of her native country. Widowed at an early age, she travelled the outback and rainforests painting the flowers and shrubs she saw. Many of her illustrations were eventually purchased by the National Library of Australia as a priceless record of the subcontinent before 'civilization.' The four paintings at Dumbarton Oaks of American plants were given in 1968 to Mrs. Bliss by Lady Casey, the wife of the then Australian Ambassador to the United States (Fig. 11).

The collection of works by women artists in the Dumbarton Oaks collection is characteristic of the variety of aims their art fulfilled. While some of the paintings were done as pastimes by society ladies, such as the *Fête of Flowers* or as designs for embroidery or other decorative arts, most had a serious scientific purpose. Plant studies and depictions by women over the centuries made important contributions to the developing science of botany and the dissemination of knowledge of newly discovered species.

We have mentioned only some of the women artists represented in the Garden Library at Dumbarton Oaks. There are others of equal talents and distinction whose works are to be found in this very special collection.

Diane Kostial McGuire

The Gardens

. . . the serenity of open spaces and ancient trees; . . . are as integral a part of Humanism at Dumbarton Oaks as are the Library and the Collection.

Mildred B. Bliss[1]

The Dumbarton Oaks garden is an especially well-designed and well-maintained example in America of European influence in gardens as it was interpreted in the earlier part of this century by American designers who wished to offer their clients opulence, grandeur, a sense of history and European sophistication. It is the work of two women, the client Mildred B. Bliss and the designer Beatrix Farrand,[2] both possessed of highly refined taste, who wished to create the atmosphere of the culture of early Humanism which they saw as most appropriate for private recreation combined with scholarly pursuits. Major construction began in the gardens in 1922 and continued through the transfer of ownership to Harvard University in 1941 until Mrs. Bliss's death in 1969. The maturity of the garden as a work of art most closely approximating to the vision Mildred Bliss and Beatrix Farrand had of the garden, was attained in the five year period from 1936 to 1941.

Fortunately, the garden was recorded at this time in a topographical view (Fig. 1) by Ernest Clegg, which occupies a position of central importance above the fireplace in the music room and is especially valuable because it indicates the extent of the garden, including the twenty-seven acres of the naturalistic section. This was not given to Harvard in 1941, but instead went to the National Park Service and has been allowed in the last forty years to grow over, although several architectural features remain, in various states of ruin, objects of curiosity for the garden archaeologist. The present garden consists of all of the formal spaces and some of the more naturalistic portion. These formal enclosures form a series of outdoor chambers (Fig. 2), used for different functions, some ceremonial, some private, but all characterized by a sense of appropriateness and fitness with respect to scale and choice of materials.

Garden Structures

There are several important structures which reinforce the architectural quality of the garden enclosures, as well as providing contrast to the plantings. Preceding the Bliss ownership of the property is the Orangery which was built by Robert Beverly, *c.* 1810. It is a distinguished structure, originally a rectangular pavilion with seven, tall, arched sash windows (formerly eighteen panes by eighteen) on the south side and three on the east end (Fig. 8). An impressive fig, *Ficus pumila,* whose branches now cover the interior of the building, was growing here as early as 1860. The roof of the Orangery was redesigned by Lawrence White of McKim, Mead and White, architects who collaborated with Beatrix Farrand on the additions to the house. Now, fifty years later, a new roof has been designed and restoration of this charming building continues at the present moment. The Orangery houses mediterranean plants from the arbour terrace in winter, as the temperatures in Washington can fall to –21°C during periods of severe cold. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries orangeries were found on properties of some size, especially in Virginia; there is a well-restored example at Mount Vernon and another at Wye House,[3] in Maryland, which were used

[1] From the preamble to the last will and testament, August 1966.

[2] Beatrix Jones Farrand (1872–1959) landscape gardener, and the only woman founder of The American Society of Landscape Architects, 1899.

[3] Wye House, in Talbot County, Maryland was the home of Colonel Edward Lloyd, brother-in-law of Robert Beverly. The Orangery at Wye is a considerably larger

1

A Topographical View of Dumbarton Oaks, Georgetown, D.C. by Ernest Clegg 1935. Water colour on paper. Although located in the centre of one of the oldest sections of Washington, D.C., the gardens express the atmosphere of a country estate

2

The Lover's Lane Pool, 1923. This charming garden theatre has seats adapted from the well-known open-air theatre on the slopes of the Janiculum Hill at the Accademia degli Arcad Bosco Parrasio

3

The North Vista. The view is taken from the main door from the garden into the house, the broad sweep of lawn ending with the large tulip poplar in the distance

primarily for citrus fruits and tender ornamentals. At Dumbarton Oaks, the Orangery is now attached to the house by a passage which provides a cross-axial entry to the formal part of the gardens, effectively dividing them from the informality of the sweeping east and south lawns.

The loggia and the Pool House, set into and below the Green Terrace to take advantage of the abrupt grade change, were also designed by McKim, Mead and White in 1926, and reflect in their design the influence of the Orangery, but with a more studied mediterranean effect. It is in the immediate area of the swimming pool (Fig. 4) with its dramatic siting and its architectural complexity that one can now experience the atmosphere and the ambience of the French Riviera that Mildred Bliss sought to evoke. Adjacent to the pool, facing the former tennis court (now the pebble garden) is a generous pergola of semi-circular design with handsome built-in teak seats. The provision of shade and the modelling of the earth to take advantage of the prevailing breezes were primary requirements in the design of the garden as it was intended to be used for exercise as well as for more sedentary pursuits.

In the lower portion, three large tool houses dominate, their ornate roofs covered with convex terracotta tiles in an armorial shield pattern; they are designed in the Portuguese manner with curved lines and heavy, strapped, cypress doors. One of these houses is the focal point of the cutting garden and is flanked by two large English lead cisterns, with *Sophora japonica* behind. This composition is directly reminiscent of the English gardens in Oporto, terraced as they are down to the banks of the Duoro with a combination of Portuguese design and English artifacts.

A long, rustic arbour marks the southern end of the kitchen garden and another more elaborate arbour is the dominant feature of the arbour terrace (Fig. 5). It was placed in this position to minimize the rather overwhelming height of the stone wall which was needed to retain the northeast corner of the rose garden. The arbour, constructed of heart-wood tidewater cypress, was modified from a design of DuCerceau (from his drawing of the garden of the Château Montargis).[4] It is planted almost entirely with wisteria, mainly of the lavender variety, but with some plants of white.

The Garden Furniture

The garden furniture and the various gates are of special interest, most of them are unique in design although there are also pairs and sets. These are constructed of teak or cypress, often with iron work (in the form of rods in strapping) incorporated in the design. Most of the furniture has been designed for its specific place in the garden, and is therefore appropriate in scale and form, as well as in type of material. This furniture was designed as the garden developed by Beatrix Farrand in the following manner. Initially, in consultation with her patron she would decide the location of a proposed piece and its general form or style, as well as the specific materials, then preliminary sketches were prepared in her New York office.[5] She would comment on, reject or approve these sketches several times as the process continued. Eventually, three or four alternative sketches would be approved by Beatrix Farrand and shown to Mildred Bliss. When a design was chosen, it would be 'mocked-up' and the full-scale mock-up placed in the garden for further study. Adjustments were made in proportion and often subtle design changes were decided upon at this critical stage. It was typical of Mildred Bliss to come back after one of her trips abroad and to study a great many of these mock-ups at one time, including not only garden furniture, but gates, piers, walls and sculpture as well. Only after her inspection was the furniture actually constructed and placed in the garden.

Although Beatrix Farrand maintained throughout her long career that the wishes of the client were of paramount importance and one of the two great responsibilities she had as a designer (the other being to fit the garden to the form of the land), it would have been informative to have overheard the two women discuss such matters. Beatrix Farrand

structure, the major sash windows were over thirty feet high.

[4] Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, *Le premier volume des plus excellents basiments de France,* Paris, M.D. XXVI.

[5] Anne Baker, Margaret H. Bailie, and after 1929, Ruth Havey were the designers in her New York office who worked on Dumbarton Oaks.

4

View of the Swimming Pool and its surroundings looking West. The *rocaille* work on the enclosing walls is used in various parts of the garden. In bloom is *Azalea indica alba*

5

The Arbour. Wisteria hangs down from the roof and clematis is trained around the posts

was more conservative in her approach to design, whereas Mildred Bliss favoured a more flamboyant approach. She admired the great sweeps and smaller excitements of baroque art and this influence can be readily seen in work executed in the gardens by Ruth Havey after Beatrix Farrand's retirement in 1947. Beatrix Farrand's simpler approach checked Mrs. Bliss's exuberance while never diminishing the vitality which underlies the design of most of the elements in the garden. Ruth Havey, on the other hand, was closer in spirit to the exuberance exhibited in the final design of the Garden Library garden and the pebble garden, (Fig. 6) the latter being the last work undertaken by Mildred Bliss at Dumbarton Oaks and the part of the garden most admired by the public.

The Ironwork

Ironwork, and ironwork together with teak or cypress, forms a principal decorative feature of the gardens. The gates between the various enclosures of the formal gardens are especially noteworthy for their combination of delicate beauty and strength of design, and it is unfortunate that when visitors are in the gardens all of these gates must be open in order to encourage passage between the various parts. The gates in their closed positions form a very important aspect of the design by reinforcing the character of the planting while at the same time allowing the distant scene to become a part of the general composition. The design of many gates is characterized by a plant motif and this varies considerably in intricacy and in stylization. The more naturalistic designs are the most arresting as they have the greatest delicacy.

In the past thirty years some of the ironwork has deteriorated and has not been replaced and some of the gates have disappeared. A substantial amount remains, however, and it has recently been restored and repainted. The ironwork, throughout the gardens, is painted glossy black with the notable exception of the main entry gates which are glossy black highlighted with elaborate gold leaf. Originally these wide entry gates were wood, solid and somewhat rustic in appearance. The change to imposing heavy iron entry gates was a significant one as it considerably altered the character of the approach to the house, changing it from the appearance of an arts and crafts garden sequestered in a leafy suburb to a grander image associated in Washington with embassies and governmental offices.

With the exception of the entry gates the ironwork complements the planting and is most noticeable when combined with teak in gates and in the garden furniture. It is an integral part of the garden design and provides lightness and contrast to the heaviness of the substantial stone walls. The designs were prepared in Beatrix Farrand's office, and were made into mock-ups to be approved on the site. Because the various pieces of ironwork were done over a span of thirty years, they represent the work of several craftsmen with varying quality.[6] The combination iron-teak gates are of special interest because of their strong and vigorous designs, and because they contribute significantly to the arts and crafts motif of the garden.

In addition to the ironwork there is some very fine work in lead, although its use is limited to the rose garden and fountain terrace. Lead work was commonly used in European-inspired American gardens in the early part of this century. At Dumbarton Oaks it is combined with stone where it lightens the effect and offers an effective foil to the tracery of vines and rambler roses (Fig. 7).

Planting

When work began in 1922, there were on the property some fine trees, primarily native American oaks, many of which were integrated into the garden scheme. In addition there were outstanding specimens of silver maples, Japanese maples, paulownia, katsura and beech, which Beatrix Farrand carefully preserved and worked into the design with success. Older large trees formed an important part of Beatrix Farrand's work and she defended her choices,

[6] Current ironwork restoration is being carried out by Thomas Bredlow, who executed some of the fine ironwork in Washington Cathedral. Restoration of the garden furniture, gates and pergolas has been undertaken by Charles Appleton, cabinet-maker, who constructed some of the memorial outdoor furniture at Harvard University.

6

The Pebble Garden, 1969. The pool basin holds a shallow sheet of water, intensifying the colour of the cobbles brought from the beaches of Mexico

> The big *Paulownia tomentosa* on the southeast side of the east lawn is a tree which has often been criticized adversely, but the magnificent size of its trunk, its great height, and its purple flowers in the early summer make it so conspicuous and splendid an object that the gawkiness of its lower structure should be overlooked.[7]

Her planting design is of an extraordinarily subtle and complicated nature. She used plants as strong design elements in themselves, but combined them so skillfully that one experiences a pervasive atmosphere of restfulness in all of her gardens. In her planting designs the formalism which characterized her work comes through clearly. At Dumbarton Oaks, as one enters each garden enclosure, the arrangement is such that one contemplates the whole and then examines the detail. The balanced planting within a space contributes greatly to this sense of completeness, and yet because plants were used as markers as well as specimen plants, there is also a sense of progression from one space to another.

Beatrix Farrand relied heavily on broadleaf evergreens to form the structure of the design and to provide strong textural interest. The hollies and boxwoods do both, and they have enormous versatility. The history of the use of plants was of importance to Mildred Bliss, who not only wanted to live on a country estate, but to have at the same time the feeling that her garden was old and furnished amply with historic associations. The plants most commonly used in the design, the oaks, the yew, the holly, and the boxwood, are the embodiment of our deepest associations with the older gardens of England.

In several instances trees were planted in the European manner. The Kieffer pears at the end of the arbour terrace were planted in the style of the Tuscan gardens of the early Renaissance as a raised double hedge with look-outs that frame the view in a series of panels. Several *Magnolia grandiflora* espaliered against the house are an example of an American tree planted and maintained in the European way. The specimen trees have had the gardens designed around them or have been introduced into the design to further the impression of monumental sculpture. The large beech on the beech terrace, the magnolias adjacent to the urn terrace and the silver maple are examples of trees skilfully placed to achieve a sculptural effect. Most of the varieties used in this manner have outstanding winter form and bark giving them year-round interest.

Dumbarton Oaks is representative in many ways of the arts and crafts movement in gardens especially in choice of materials, choice of plants and in a limited way choice of colour. In this latter consideration, Beatrix Farrand was directly influenced by Gertrude Jekyll, but also by the preferences of Mildred Bliss who considered the many hues of white to be the essential colour of the garden. However, the most successful use of colour at Dumbarton Oaks is in the rose garden (Fig. 8) which is the grand ballroom of these outdoor enclosures. The various roses seem to me as figures in bright costume gracefully moving in the late afternoon breeze. This exemplary rose garden was planned together by Beatrix Farrand and Mildred Bliss, and we read that

> the pink and salmon colour sorts have been selected for the south third, together with a few of the very deep red ones, such as Etoile de Hollande and Ami Quinard. The centre third of the garden was planted more particularly with salmon-coloured and yellowish-pink roses, while the northern third was given over entirely to yellow or predominantly yellow and orange sorts. There was a wash of colour over the garden, deepening in hue from north to south.[8]

The gardens were designed for winter as well, therefore the thought behind the planting of the rose garden has been given quite as much to the evergreen and enduring outlines and form as to the roses.

Representative Plants in the Dumbarton Oaks Garden

Cedrus deodara	Deodar cedar
Cedrus libani	Cedar-of-Lebanon
Tsuga caroliniana	Carolina hemlock
Magnolia grandiflora	Southern magnolia

7 *Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks,* ed. Diane Kostial McGuire, 1980, p. 19.

8 *Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book,* pp. 63–4.

7

Small Villa. Located in the grounds at the head of 32nd Street. It is an example of the attention given to detail by Lawrence White and Beatrix Farrand in secondary structures and spaces

8

Rose Garden. The view looks west to the Orangery

Buxus sempervirens	Common box
Buxus sempervirens 'Suffrutiscosa'	Edging box
Ilex crenata	Japanese holly
Ilex opaca	American holly
Acer palmatum	Japanese maple
Acer saccharinum	Silver maple
Cercidiphyllum japonicum	Katsura tree
Cornus florida	Flowering dogwood
Magnolia heptapeta	Yulan magnolia
Paulownia tomentosa	Karri tree
Quercus alba	White oak
Quercus nigra	Red oak
Quercus velutina	Black oak
Sophora japonica	Japanese pagoda tree
Ulmus americana	American elm
Abelia grandiflora	Glossy abelia
Forsythia intermedia	Border forsythia
Forsythia suspensa	Weeping forsythia
Jasminum nudiflorum	Winter jasmine
Syringa vulgaris	Common lilac
Hedera helix	English ivy
Parthenocissus tricuspidata	Boston ivy
Wisteria sinensis	Chinese wisteria

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Cyril Mango was lecturer in Fine Arts at Harvard University from 1957–8; Junior Fellow and then lecturer in Byzantine Archaeology at Dumbarton Oaks from 1951–63; Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History at Kings College, University of London, from 1963–68. He has been the Bywater and Sotheby Professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek at Oxford University since 1973. He is the author of several books on Byzantine art and history.

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1

Interior of the Music Room, finished in 1929. The fireplace is French, late sixteenth century; the tapestry depicts the Prince of Malice (Tournai, late fifteenth century) with a Madonna and Child by Riemenschneider placed below. The floor is French eighteenth century

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