

A Reconsideration of some Fourth-Century British Mosaics

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Roman Britain in late antiquity is an area of special interest to the archaeologist, because life was flourishing peacefully there at a time when we hear about disorder and destruction afflicting the nearby provinces on the continent. Nevertheless – and this perhaps increases the interest – we know very little about cultural life, about the state of education and knowledge in the British provinces at this time. The Channel, which protected Britain from the majority of the invaders, might seem to have had its effect also on the cultural influx from Gaul. The literary sources, which very seldom mention Britain after the Severi, provide scarcely any useful information. There is virtually no one prominent in literary or even political life known to have come from Britain. Nor do we know anything about the cultural effect of the court of the British usurpers or of the presence of Constantius Chlorus and his son Constantine.¹

A. A. Barrett has recently considered this problem and has rehearsed all the quotations and reminiscences which give evidence of the influence of classical literature in Britain.² This is very helpful, but is too restrictive for the general question of the degree of education to be found in fourth-century Britain. One has to look for more than purely literary reflections, for other traces indicating knowledge ultimately derived from traditional education or the reading of classical authors. A wider formulation of the question will necessarily lead to a less precise yet nonetheless interesting answer.

The evidence bearing on this question has always been sought among objects of ancient art,

¹ The following abbreviations are used:

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| ASR | <i>Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs</i> . Ed. C. Robert, G. Rodenwaldt, F. Matz (Berlin 1890 ff.). |
| Curtius | Curtius, L., <i>Die Wandmalerei Pompejis</i> (Leipzig 1929). |
| Dunbabin | Dunbabin, K., <i>The Mosaics of Roman North Africa. Studies in Iconography and Patronage</i> (Oxford 1978). |
| Kraus | Kraus, Th. and L. von Matt, <i>Pompeji und Herculaneum. Antlitz und Schicksal zweier antiker Städte</i> (Köln 1977). |
| Levi | Levi, D., <i>Antioch Mosaic Pavements</i> (Princeton 1947). |
| Rainey | Rainey, A., <i>Mosaics in Roman Britain. A Gazetteer</i> (Newton Abbot 1973). |
| Reinach | Reinach, S., <i>Répertoire de Peintures Grecques et Romaines</i> (Paris 1922). |
| Smith 1969 | Smith, D. J., 'The Mosaic Pavements.' In: A. L. F. Rivet (Ed.), <i>The Roman Villa in Britain</i> (London 1969), 71–125. |
| Smith 1977 | Smith, D. J., 'Mythological Figures and Scenes in Romano-British Mosaics.' In: J. Munby and M. Henig (Eds.), <i>Roman Life and Art in Britain. A Celebration in Honour of the Eightieth Birthday of J. Toynbee</i> (Oxford 1977: BAR. 41), 105–58, pl. 1–xxxiii. |
| Toynbee 1962 | Toynbee, J. M. C., <i>Art in Roman Britain</i> (London 1962). |
| Toynbee 1964 | Toynbee, J. M. C., <i>Art in Britain under the Romans</i> (Oxford 1964). |
| VCH | <i>Victoria County History</i> . |

I would like to thank M. Maury and Professor S. S. Frere for reading a draft of this paper and correcting my English.

No illustrations have been included, as all mosaics discussed are illustrated in Smith 1977, whose respective figures are referred to in the notes.

² 'The Literary Classics in Roman Britain', *Britannia* ix (1978), 307–13.

especially those which deal with mythological subjects. If we consider what the common people or ordinary soldiers were expected to understand when looking at the reverses of coins, we may hope for even better instruction from more sumptuous objects. Of special importance would be objects with Greek inscriptions, like that in the Muses' mosaic at Aldborough³ – it has a literary background rather than deriving from the ordinary language of Greek-speaking people, some of whom may still have lived in Britain in the fourth century.⁴ The Corbridge lanx, for instance, or the Mildenhall treasure,⁵ indicate not only great wealth, but also some acquaintance with and delight in mythology – but here the problem of the degree of knowledge and of the part played in choosing the motif by artisan and patron arises, and in most cases cannot be solved. In general one can assume that both possessed at least a degree of knowledge; the invention and stimulus would for the most part have been the artist's, especially with pieces for export or stock. The artist had to understand a design ordered; the patron on the other hand will have had to understand and appreciate the design, even if he merely chose it from the variety of the stock or the pattern book.

Thus mosaics have rightly been taken as a good instrument for testing the influence of education in Britain:⁶ they were not imported; they probably belonged to that part of the provincial population that might most easily be expected to have enjoyed some sort of education; and they were produced on individual order, the patron probably bearing in mind that he would have to look at them day after day. But, remembering that they are still mosaics and no more, one must not overcharge them with meaning.

What is strange about them is that after a first short prelude in the second century they do not really start to flourish before the end of the third century. The comparative quiet of Britain during the soldier-emperors' time seems not to have had any immediate effect. The hey-day of local mosaic production occurred during the reigns of the tetrarchs and Constantine's dynasty, a period that was slightly less settled in Britain. On the whole this late group of mosaics, which has been given a stylistic and chronological frame by D. Smith's careful work on the workshops, shows some connection with the schools of the north-western provinces.⁷ How far influences in structure and design can be explained and how far independent development can be observed, are questions difficult to assess at the moment. For dealing with iconographic problems Smith has also provided us with a very helpful instrument in his complete collection of mythological figures and themes found in British mosaics.⁸ The purpose of the present paper is not to examine his whole list for the evidence it might offer, but only to contribute some observations on certain individual mosaics, which might help to assess their value for the investigation of the cultural life of their time.

THE MOSAICS

(a) *East Coker, Somerset*

The most interesting of the mosaics of a Roman villa at East Coker, found in 1753, is un-

³ Smith 1977, 119 f. No. 48. fig. 1. p. 1.

⁴ R. G. Collingwood, *The Archaeology of Roman Britain* (London 1930), 177; R. G. Collingwood and J. N. L. Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*² (Oxford 1937), 182 f.; J. Liversidge, *Britain in the Roman Empire* (London 1968), 317 f.

⁵ O. Brendel, 'The Corbridge Lanx', *JRS* xxxi (1941), 100–27; K. S. Painter, *The Mildenhall Treasure* (London 1977); Toynbee 1962, Nos. 106 and 198.

⁶ cf. e.g. I. A. Richmond, *Roman Britain*² (Harmondsworth 1963), 121 ff., Smith 1969, 90 ff.; J. Liversidge, op. cit. (note 4), 317–22; S. S. Frere, *Britannia. A History of Roman Britain* (London 1974), 352 f.; cf. R. Irwin, *The Origins of the English Library* (London 1958), 54–70.

⁷ Smith 1969; cf. D. Johnston, in J. Munby and M. Henig (Eds.), *Roman Life and Art in Britain. A Celebration in Honour of the Eightieth Birthday of J. Toynbee* (Oxford 1977), 195 f. On the earlier period cf. D. J. Smith, in *La mosaïque Gréco-Romaine* ii (Paris 1975), 269 ff.

⁸ Smith 1977.

fortunately lost. It is preserved only in a description in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that year and in a drawing of the time.⁹ The two sources are not completely consistent. The drawing depicts a comparatively large single medallion set into a square field. Four busts of Mercury in the corners have been recognized, undoubtedly correctly, as the four winds with conch shells and winged heads, as they occur several times on British mosaics.¹⁰ A double row of concentric circles on a short section of the frame of square and medallion is the draughtsman's way of reproducing a double guilloche. The figures in the medallion appear to be rather small, but some shading seems to suggest landscape around them. Perhaps the draughtsman did not entirely maintain the proportions, perhaps he neglected some damaged details, as is suggested by the missing fourth figure mentioned in the description.

A woman is lying on a slightly ascending couchlike support with a cloak draped around her legs. The nude upper part of the body is shown frontally and raised on the left arm supporting the head. According to the old description, the elbow rests on an hour-glass and the right arm holds a flower-pot, but nothing of that sort is to be seen in the drawing.¹¹ At the feet of this figure stands a woman with long curly hair, who wears a crown with a cross on top, a long gown and over it a cloak, which has sleeves with cuffs and, according to the description, purple strips along the border. In her right hand she holds a semicircular object like a bag or basket. The right leg is turned way, but the left arm is extended towards the reclining woman and the head is turned towards her. The description adds that this woman as well as another one at her side (missing in the drawing) touch the drapery of the reclining figure. That the hand in the drawing is much higher than the knee may be due to negligent copying. Behind the legs of the reclining woman stands a stout bald man with two-pointed beard dressed in a long gown and holding a torch in his left hand. He is turned towards the crowned woman and points to the reclining one with his right forefinger. The 18th-century interpreter takes him for a 'physician . . . prepared to do some operation by the fire, either cupping or burning'. Just as with the corner-busts, both the writer of the description and the draughtsman, unfamiliar with ancient art, had difficulty in understanding the central picture, and so misrepresented it in terms of objects and situations known to them. Instead of this anachronistic interpretation Sir Ian Richmond suggested that the birth of Bacchus was actually what was represented, and this has generally been accepted.¹² The reclining woman he understood as Semele giving birth to her son Dionysus-Bacchus in the presence of Juno and Jupiter. The crown is Juno's diadem, the torch is Jupiter's lightning which caused Semele's death. For the lost fourth figure he suggests Ino, Semele's sister and the first nurse of Dionysus. Apart from the facts that this theme is of no special importance, on monuments or in literature, and that a bald Jupiter would be ridiculous, neither Juno's presence nor the general typology and gesture of the figures fit this interpretation very well.

If, on the contrary, we start from the typology of the whole scene – keeping in mind the

⁹ Drawing in the Bodleian Library, Oxford: *VCH Somerset* i (1906), 303, fig. 88; Smith 1969, 91, fig. 3.3; Smith 1977, 136, No. 109; 146, No. 131, pl. xiiA. The description in *Gentleman's Magazine* (1753), 293 is cited by Rainey 68 and Smith 1977, 146.

¹⁰ For instance Toynbee 1964, 240; Rainey, 68; cf. Frampton: Smith 1977 Nos. 107 ff. especially No. 109 pl. xiib. (Such busts of Mercury actually do appear in mosaics in Britain, for instance at Rudston (Smith 1977, pl. xxixA) but of course not four times.)

¹¹ An hour-glass in a related scene (Mars—Rhea Silvia): Robert, *ASR* iii 2, No. 190 pl. Lxi.

¹² I. A. Richmond, *Roman Britain*² (Harmondsworth 1963), 123; cited also by Toynbee 1964, Smith 1969 and 1977 and Rainey, 68; cf. A. A. Barrett, *Britannia* ix (1978), 312. Semele giving birth to Dionysus seldom appears in Roman art, for instance on Dionysiac sarcophagi. Details such as the child Dionysus, the Ilithyiae and Mercury are necessarily present. Cf. A. Greifenhagen, *Röm. Mitt.* xlv (1931), 27–30, pl. 1 f.; G. Hanfmann, *Am. Journ. Arch.* xliii (1939), 239 ff.; F. Matz, *ASR* iv 3, 343 ff., Nos. 195–198; 196 f. A rather strange painting, once in the collection of Prince Galitzin, was already suspect to Reinach (16, 5); cf. also an ivory pyxis of the fifth century A.D. in Bologna, Museo Civico.

probable misrendering of several details – we are reminded of the finding of Ariadne on Naxos by Dionysus and his thiasus, which is so often represented in Roman art.¹³ Neither the archetype of this picture, which goes back via Hellenistic intermediary stages to a classical painting, nor its great variety of composition need to be discussed here. The main elements are the sleeping, or just-awaking, Ariadne in the foreground (sometimes seen from the front, sometimes from the back) and the approaching god Bacchus. Often some members of his thiasus are added, such as Pan, Silenus or a satyr, who call their master's attention to the sleeping girl, or even lift her cloak to display her, though more to the spectator than to the god. The reclining Ariadne presents no difficulty. Her right arm is not always put around the head in the ancient gesture of sleep. Sometimes she leans on her left arm as she does here. The coarse stylization of late mosaics explains the confusion between male and female figures by observers unaccustomed to ancient iconography. One could easily imagine the head of Bacchus in other mosaics, as for instance at Chedworth,¹⁴ being misunderstood as a female head with a crown. Then there is the long female gown, which has always been customary for Dionysos-Bacchus and which accounts for the indication of female breasts in the drawing. The 'bag' in the god's hand might be a large cup. The gesture of pointing one finds elsewhere with Bacchus and the respective 'finder' of Ariadne. The bearded baldhead is easily recognized then as Silenus. That he is slightly too large compared to Bacchus can be attributed to the draughtsman again. The lost woman between them suggests a maenad, but the gesture described would better fit Pan or a satyr showing Ariadne to his master. If this explanation of the mosaic at East Coker should seem acceptable, the repertoire of British mosaics would be enriched by one of the most important themes of Dionysiac iconography, not recognized here previously.

(b) *Chedworth, Glos.*

The main mosaic of the well-known villa at Chedworth consists of eight trapezoidal fields surrounding an octagon.¹⁵ While the four seasons in the triangular corner-fields are still nearly complete, only three of the trapezoids are so much as half preserved. Of two others only tiny fragments are left. In each field a satyr and a maenad were represented; in the lost octagon, therefore, a picture of the lord of the thiasus, Bacchus, has been suspected.¹⁶

The three better-preserved fields lie towards the entrance of the room beside an ornamental entrance section. It is striking that the middle field is broader than the other two and differs in composition from them and obviously also from the next one on the left: there the couples are moving violently and at the same time closely embracing one another, whereas here the two figures are seated at a short distance from one another in a rather symmetrical position around the axis of the field and of the whole room. The legs point outwards; the heads are turned towards one another. This reminds us of the way that Dionysus and Ariadne are sometimes represented sitting together, alone or in the middle of their thiasus.¹⁷ That the figure

¹³ cf. e.g. Reinach, 111 ff.; 112, 6; 113, 1–15; Curtius, 308 ff. figs. 176–79; Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines* 1, 15. Levi, pl. xxviiA, xxviiB; V. von Gonzenbach, *Die römischen Mosaiken der Schweiz* (Basel 1961), pl. 78; M. Borda, *La pittura Romana* (Milano 1958), fig. on p. 365; H. Stern, *Recueil général des Mosaïques de la Gaule* (*Gallia Suppl.* 10), i 1 (Paris 1957), pl. 39; A. Blanco Freijeiro, *Mosaicos Romanos de Merida* (Madrid 1978), pl. 26a. F. Matz, *ASR* iv 3, Nos. 207–29.

¹⁴ See below. Cf. for instance Curtius, figs. 176–77; Levi pl. 1a.

¹⁵ R. Goodburn, *The Roman Villa of Chedworth* (London 1972), 25 pl. 6; R.C.H.M., *Iron Age and Romano-British Monuments in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds* (1976), pls. 4–5; Smith 1977, 130 No. 85, 139 f. No. 120, pl. ix.

¹⁶ Satyrs and maenads: Toynbee 1964, 267; Goodburn, loc. cit. (note 15) 25; Rainey, 40 f.; Smith 1977, 139. Bacchus in the centre: Goodburn, loc. cit.

¹⁷ Curtius, 354 ff. fig. 193; 369 fig. 201; A. Maiuri, *La Villa dei Misteri* (Roma 1931), fig. 58, pl. 8 and 10; K. Schefold, *Pompejanische Malerei* (Basel 1952), pl. 2; Reinach, 114, 4 and 6; J. Balty, *Mosaïques antiques de Syrie* (Bruxelles 1977), 50 Nos. 20 ff.; M. Yacoub, *Le Musée du Bardo* (Tunis 1970), 184 fig. 101; Th. Kraus,

on the right is not a satyr but Bacchus is supported not only by the accentuated position of this field, but also by comparison with the satyr on the left: instead of short hair with a shaggy wreath he has long curls, which are given a crown-like contour by the impression of a bandeau. This simplification of Bacchus's usual coiffure with wreath and bandeau explains well the misunderstanding of his representation on the mosaic at East Coker.¹⁸ The thyrsus, which is larger than that in the other fields, and the velum-like cloak in the background fit this interpretation. The round object in the god's left hand could be a tympanum like the one on the ground in the next field; but it might be a reduced form of a drinking cup, which would be more suitable for Bacchus himself. The woman at his side must be Ariadne then. This manner of representing them is quite similar to the pictures of their wedding,¹⁹ and from that special type the more general one found at Chedworth might have been influenced; so this important episode in the Dionysiac myth, though not explicitly represented, may well have been intentionally hinted at here. One may expect that the destroyed middle octagon will not have duplicated Bacchus. Dionysus and Ariadne are often figured among their thiasus, even in comparable circular compositions;²⁰ on the other hand the central fields of such mosaic compositions do not need to have a direct, immediately obvious relation to the pictures surrounding them.

(c) *Keynsham, Somerset*

One of the most interesting mosaics for the tradition of mythology and picture-types was found in a hexagonal room opening on the great courtyard of the villa at Keynsham.²¹ The rectangular and semicircular alcoves of the six walls are not integrated into the ornamental hexagon. Among the various small fields with birds and ornaments, six larger squares are set. Unfortunately, only three of them are preserved, and even these not completely.

The well-preserved middle one is without complication: Europa mounted on the bull is seen, not in the frequent type crossing the sea, as for instance at Lullingstone, but at an earlier stage: the bull settled on the beach is being decorated with garlands by Europa and fed from a basket by one of her companions. This obviously is a repetition – though simplified and cut at the edges – of a picture-type known, for instance, from a painting at Pompeii²² that may go back to a Greek original.

Of the field to the left, about the upper left quarter is destroyed. This has hindered understanding of the composition and of the whole scene. There is a clear separation of the background by a low wall or the like. Behind it a bearded man with a stick looks down towards the action in the centre, from where a figure is running off to the right in disgust, horror or alarm, as expressed by the gesture of the hands. In the middle a female figure with a garment covering only the legs is bending to the other side. Her left arm crosses the body. Her right leg is shown

Propyläen Kunstgeschichte ii (Berlin 1967), pl. 343b; A. Garcia y Bellido, *Arte Romano*² (Madrid 1972), 525 fig. 920. F. Matz, *ASR* iv 1, Nos. 36–41, No. 75 f. Rhyton from Plovdiv: *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica* iii, 116 fig. 146.

¹⁸ See above; cf. note 14.

¹⁹ cf. note 17, especially Curtius 356 ff.; Maiuri, *op. cit.* (note 17), 148–51; Schefold, *op. cit.* (note 17), 55 ff., 196.

²⁰ Thiasus with Bacchus on a circular frieze around an independent central picture for instance on the Oceanus Cup of the Mildenhall Treasure: Toynbee 1962, No. 106 pl. 117; K. S. Painter, *op. cit.* (note 5), figs. 1 and 4.

²¹ A. Bulleid-D. E. Horne, *Archaeologia* lxxv (1926), 109–38; 125 ff., pl. 16–18 (plan of the villa: 111 fig. 1, of room W: 127, fig. 6); Toynbee 1964, 240 f., pl. 57; Rainey, 101; Smith 1977, 141 No. 123; 149 f. Nos. 137–8, pl. xix, b–d. Only the pictured fields are now in the museum of a chocolate factory (Cadbury-Schweppes) at Somerdale.

²² Reinach, 13, 1 and 5; Curtius, pl. iv; W. J. T. Peters, *Landscape in Romano-Campanian Mural Painting* (Assen 1963), 96 pl. xxi, 80.

in profile, the left one frontally, it seems; therefore the foot in profile further to the left should belong to another figure, as should the end of a cloak on the ground. A dark, square field behind the sitting figure, but in front of the arm of the running one, has been explained as the back of a throne. J. M. C. Toynbee's interpretation of the scene as Leda with the swan²³ is weakened by the mixing up of drapery and swan's feathers as well as by the unnecessary doubling of Jupiter as swan and spectator. A more attractive explanation is that the picture reflects the often-copied painting of Achilles among the daughters of Lycomedes on Scyros, as has been suggested by I. M. Barton.²⁴ The frightened girl on the right, though a rather common type, does turn up there; the figures in the back, among them king Lycomedes with his sceptre, do sometimes stand beyond a small separating wall. Achilles should have been depicted on the left then; more important than Odysseus and Diomedes might have been thought the inclusion of the trumpeter in the background. But this explanation too is unsatisfactory, and some other subject more rarely depicted may be intended.²⁵ Anyway the closeness of the composition to some Pompeian paintings that copy Greek originals of the fourth century B.C. shows that this scene is still inspired by the same iconographic tradition.

To the right of Europa and the bull, only the lower part of a field remains, two figures in long gowns and cloaks. The one on the left is sitting on an irregular dark object, seemingly a rock. Her right leg is shown frontally, the left one in profile is supported by a smaller block. The exact position of the upper part of the body is not quite clear, but everything suggests that it was turned in profile. The end of a roughly stylized tibia in the centre can be prolonged to the area of the face; a second tube on the left is almost completely destroyed. Of the figure opposite even less is left. She seems to have been sitting almost symmetrically in a similar position. Her left hand, fragmented just above the wrist, is holding a dark round object with light rim. Though generally taken for a tympanum, it might well be a vessel with a wide mouth seen from above. From this a sort of dark pillar converging towards the bottom leads to an important but controversial object, an irregularly-shaped frame on the ground between the feet of the two figures. It contains a helmeted head with tibiae in the mouth. The explanation as the torn-off head of Orpheus giving oracles while floating down the river explains the helmet as a misrendered Phrygian cap, but is unacceptable; the tibiae are not an understandable substitute for the characteristic lyre of Orpheus.²⁶ The crested helmet is rendered too well – but it does not force the explanation as a male, or even as a Roman soldier's head.²⁷

A tibiae player in front of a box with a head in it can be found in different contexts, for instance, the 'preparation of a satyr play' on a wall-painting in Pompeii,²⁸ with masks, but this will not be meant here. The irregular contour on the ground cannot be anything but a reflecting water surface. The very fact that above the tibiae-playing head is represented another

²³ Toynbee 1964, 240; Rainey, 101 and 77 f.; contrary Smith 1977, 149. A similar scheme for Jupiter-Danaë: A. Blanco-Freijeiro, *Mosaicos Romanos de Italica* (Madrid 1978), pl. 7a. For Leda in Roman art see e.g.: Reinach, 16, 7–17; Robert, *ASR* ii, No. 2–9 pl. 2–3.

²⁴ Mentioned by Smith 1977, 149; for the theme cf. Reinach 166, 2–167, 1; Curtius fig. 124, pl. II; Dunbabin pl. VI, 12; Robert, *ASR* ii, No. 20 ff., pl. 6 ff.; L. Guerrini, *Archaeologia Classica* xxiv (1972), 27 ff.; F. Brommer, *Denkmälerlisten zur griechischen Heldensage* ii (Marburg 1974), 80 ff.; V. M. Strocka, *Die Wandmalerei der Hang-Häuser in Ephesos (Forschungen in Ephesos viii/1: Wien 1977)*, 108 f. with a list in note 380. Cf. especially the mosaic at Sainte-Colombe: *Inventaire des Mosaïques de la Gaule* i (1909), No. 198; Reinach 167, 1; *Monuments Piot* lvi (1969), 41, fig. 37.

²⁵ The frightened girl running off is a frequent type in representations of several different stories apart from Achilles on Scyros; to cite just sarcophagus reliefs for instance with Proserpina (*ASR* iii 3, Nos. 358 ff. pl. 119 ff.), the Dioscuri carrying off the Leucippidae (*ASR* iii 2, Nos. 180–85 pl. 67 ff.), Orestes killing Clytaemnestra and Aegistheus (*ASR* ii, No. 154 pl. 54, cf. the following) or among the dying Niobids (*ASR* iii 3, Nos. 312 ff. pl. 99 ff.).

²⁶ Toynbee 1964, 241; Rainey, 101; contrary: Smith 1977, 149 f.

²⁷ Bulleid-Horne, loc. cit. (note 21) 128; Smith 1977, 149 f.

²⁸ Curtius, fig. 26; Kraus, fig. 49.

tibiae-playing figure points to a reflected image. This interpretation is strengthened by comparison with the way in which this detail is rendered on other mosaics. The story of Narcissus, well-known from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, offers good parallels.²⁹ The popular picture-type of Perseus and Andromeda regarding the head of Medusa reflected in the water³⁰ is not quite as close, because of its symmetrical composition. Here, as in the other scenes of the mosaic, we shall have to look for a mythological theme. Philostratus the Elder³¹ describes a picture of auloi-playing Olympos, who looks at himself mirrored in a fountain. But this player does not correspond to the rest of the left-hand figure at Keynsham. Identification must start from the head of this figure, which is not quite lost, since its reflected image is preserved on the ground. A female figure wearing a helmet, blowing tibiae, and looking at her own image in the water – this can be no one but Minerva herself, the inventor of the tibiae; when she realized that her face was disfigured by the blown-up cheeks, she threw away her new invention and left it to Marsyas, who challenged Apollo with it and so brought about their famous match and his own end. The deformation of her face struck Minerva when looking on the surface of the lake, where she had collected the reeds for the instrument. This moment was reiterated by Ovid in several variations, so it must have been well known even in later Roman times.³² Surprisingly, it is not found very often in pictorial representations, although later episodes of the story – the throwing away and finding of the tibiae, the match between Apollo and Marsyas and the latter's bitter end – frequently are. The story is seen in all its phases rolling off in a wide landscape on a mural painting of the third style from Pompeii.³³ In the foreground Minerva with her crested helmet is sitting at the foot of a rock on the shore of a lake, blowing her tibiae, while in front of her a nymph coming up from the water holds out a big mirror symbolizing the reflecting water surface. Marsyas's actions follow in the background. Mythological pictures of this type often reassemble picture-types and elements from older originals in their new comprehensive frame. In another wall-painting, once at Rome,³⁴ Minerva with helmet and tibiae is sitting between two nymphs, one of whom leans on a vessel. Neither water nor mirror can be recognized here, but the general picture-type is the same. Roman figured sarcophagi devoted to the story give few explicit parallels for this episode;³⁵ only on the sides Minerva and Marsyas as well as the nymphs sometimes are shown together. The match with Apollo was much more important. The second figure on the Keynsham mosaic, which cannot be Marsyas, is probably a nymph indicating the location. The round object in her hand must be her fountain³⁶ and the strip under it the water-jet falling into the small lake, Minerva's mirror.

²⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* iii, 339 ff.; Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines* i, 23; cf. Reinach, 196–7; Kraus, fig. 257; V. von Gonzenbach op. cit. (note 13) pl. 63 and 85; Th. Kraus, *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte* ii (Berlin 1967), pl. 347.

³⁰ Reinach, 206, 1–4; 207, 1–2; cf. Brading: Smith 1977, 139 No. 119, pl. vi. b.

³¹ Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines*, i, 21 (pointed out to me by W. Hölscher).

³² Ovid, *Fasti* vi, 697–710, especially 699–702; cf. *ibid.* vi, 701 with Ovid, *Ars* iii, 505 f., Ovid, *Metamorphoses* vi, 386; 'tibiae ad fontem' proverbial: Lactantius iii, 14, 1; cf. F. Bömer, *Kommentar zu den Fasten* (Heidelberg 1958), 382. See for instance Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* i, 42; Hyginus, *Fabulae* 165; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* xiv, 616 (Kaibel p. 360).

³³ Reinach 21, 2; W. J. T. Peters, op. cit. (note 22), 83, pl. xix, 69. (Further figures cited by K. Schefold, *Die Wände Pompejis* (Berlin 1957), 72).

³⁴ Reinach; 21, 1. The destroyed painting at Pompeii vi, 16, 28 remains obscure: 'Marsyas (?) lernt von Nymphen das Flöten? Rechts oben Priap?' (Schefold, loc. cit. (note 33) 159).

³⁵ C. Robert, *ASR* iii 2, 242 ff., especially No. 196 pl. 63; cf. Nos. 205 and 207 pl. 67, No. 208 pl. 68; H. Sichtermann-G. Koch, *Griechische Mythen auf römischen Sarkophagen* (Tübingen 1975), No. 35 pl. 85; No. 36 pl. 89 (when playing the tibiae Minerva never wears her aegis). G. F. Hartlaub, *Zauber des Spiegels. Geschichte und Bedeutung des Spiegels in der Kunst* (München 1951) (pointed out to me by W. Hölscher) mentions the theme (p. 77) only shortly, citing an unpublished Heidelberg doctoral dissertation: L. Dreger, *Das Bild im Spiegel* (1939).

³⁶ For instance Woodchester, Glos.: Smith 1977, pl. xxxiib; a similar fountain jet filling a sea which reflects the bathing Artemis: S. Germain, *Les mosaïques de Timgad* (Paris 1969), pl. 7. Dunbabin pl. vi 13.

With this further example,³⁷ the picture-type of the initial phase of the story before the arrival of Marsyas seems to be more firmly established for us in the Roman iconographical repertoire. Like the other two scenes in the mosaic, it seems to derive still from the same general tradition, which we can see, e.g. in scenes of Pompeian mural painting. So the question arises, whether it also goes back somehow to a Greek painting, and the other five emblemata, now lost, as well. The state of preservation does not allow any conjecture of a thematic connection, but it seems that the owner of the villa tried to assemble in this floor a sequence of emblemata of very traditional, 'classical' conception. Maybe the mosaicist even embellished it in his estimate by fictive attribution to some old masters.

(d) *Pitney, Somerset*

The mosaics of a villa at Pitney are preserved only in early 19th-century drawings.³⁸ The disposition of the main one resembles that of the mosaic at Chedworth. The central and the eight trapezoid fields have a single figure in each; some of them are identifiable, some have no traditional attributes. They do not conform to any cycle of eight or nine figures of the kind sometimes found in such mosaics. The alternation of men and women, as well as the respective turning of the heads, indicates that they are grouped as four couples, as was recognized by J. M. C. Toynbee;³⁹ this subdivision is strengthened by the oblique axis of the central figure. So Neptune with his trident is running towards a water nymph, perhaps Amymone, whom he is several times represented surprising at a fountain.⁴⁰ The figure-type and the diptych on the ground indicate that the sitting woman on his other side must be Phaedra, the youth turning away Hippolytos. Taken together they represent the central element of the Phaedra-Hippolytos scene;⁴¹ the unity of the two figured fields is made obvious here by the diptych, which in more detailed versions is brought by Phaedra's old nurse and actually falls to the ground from Hippolytos's hands. The running man beyond the Neptune group is Mercury with a mis-shaped cerycium and a purse rather than Perseus with Gorgon's head in a bag and the sickle – especially since the woman with sceptre and velificatio does not look like Andromeda; nor will she be Herse or Chione, but rather Venus herself. Though Mars is her lover in the first place, she has a very old connection with Mercury. The two are regarded as Hermaphrodite's parents. Occasionally they are represented as a couple in Roman mosaics and paintings.⁴² The remaining figure is a herdsman looking like Paris in his oriental dress with Phrygian cap. His companion with tympanum or vessel and syrinx cannot be Venus, as was suggested. The same couple obviously appears in comparable pictures, for instance two

³⁷ As Prof. Metzler informs me, another example of this scene appears on a mosaic at Utica, Tunisia, still unpublished.

³⁸ *VCH Somerset* i (1906), 327 fig. 84; Toynbee 1964, 248 f.; Smith 1969, pl. 3.3; Rainey, 129; Smith 1977, 120 f. No. 50, 124 No. 60, 136 No. 96, 150 f. Nos. 140–44, pl. xxvii; Smith 1978, 129 fig. 39 (after a coloured lithograph of 1828 by Samuel Hassel).

³⁹ Toynbee, loc. cit. (note 38).

⁴⁰ Toynbee 1964: Amphitrite. For Neptune and Amymone see Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines* 1, 8; Reinach 34, 5 and 7; F. Berti, *ASAtene* l–li (1972–73), 451–465, especially 459 ff. Cf. also J. Balty, *Mosaïques Antiques de Syrie* (Bruxelles 1977), 82 No. 36–38.

⁴¹ Toynbee 1964, 249. Cf. Schauenburg, *dtv-Lexikon der Antike*, Rel. i, 313; Philostratus, *Imagines* 2, 4; cf. Reinach, 209–10; Levi, 71–5 with fig. 29, pl. xib.

⁴² Thus also Toynbee 1964, 249; Rainey 129; contrary, Smith 1977, 151 No. 141. For the figure-type of the Perseus Andromeda scene cf. e.g. a mosaic at Bulla Regia: Dunbabin pl. v 9. Mercury and Venus as parents of Hermaphroditus: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* iv, 288, 383–7; Christodorus of Coptus, *Anth. Pal.* ii, 102–7. (Mercury and Herse: Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* iii, 14, 3 and 6; Hyginus, *Fabulae* 166; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* ii, 708–832; Mercury and Chione: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* xi, 303–15). Mercury and Venus: Reinach, 97, 3 and 7; Catalogue *Antik mosaikole* (Budapest 1974) No. 10; A. Furtwängler, *Antike Gemmen* (Berlin 1900), pl. 43, 58. Cf. Reinach 97, 5 (Mercury carrying off a woman). For Venus cf. e.g. Robert, *ASR* ii, No. 10, pl. 4 (before Paris).

other British mosaics (see below). A possible identification might be Paris and Oenone,⁴³ his first wife, a river-god's daughter. He left her for Helen and later her refusal to heal his wound brought about his death. Their letters in Ovid's *Heroides* and the appendix to it made her well-known in Roman times. They were even represented as a couple amidst a group of heroes connected with the fall of Troy in the sculptural repertory of the Zeuxippos baths at Byzantium, perhaps of Constantinian date.

There seems to be a division between unhappy human love to the left and successful divine love to the right of the figure enthroned in the central field, who has been identified as Bacchus by the cup in his right hand. Beyond the influence of wine on love, however, there seems to be no direct connection between him and this 'thiasus' of pairs of mythological lovers.

(e) *Brading, I. o. W.*

Four other mythological couples are to be seen on a mosaic in Room 12 of the villa at Brading, in rectangular fields surrounding a Gorgon's head.⁴⁴ The representation of Lycurgus and Ambrosia, who was changed into a vine, is obvious. On the opposite side the attributes indicate the story, famous through the Eleusinian mysteries and Attic cultural propaganda, of Demeter-Ceres giving the ears of corn and with it the knowledge of agriculture to Triptolemus of Eleusis.⁴⁵ The third rectangle again shows the Phrygian herdsman and the nymph, who were identified as Paris and Oenone above. So the question arises, whether in the damaged fourth field there might not have been another mythical couple rather than an anonymous satyr and maenad, as has been suggested. In these groups, so frequent in Dionysiac iconography, the maenad seldom shows such an obviously terrified attempt at flight. The thyrsus and other Bacchic attributes are missing. A god surprising a human girl would be more appropriate therefore. Apollo and Daphne are not very probable candidates, because the sprouting branches of laurel cannot all have been lost in the gap. But there are several other possibilities. A now-destroyed attribute of the god may well have identified the couple to the spectator.⁴⁶ The mosaic in the neighbouring part of the triclinium seems to have shown a cycle of mythical pairs of lovers, of whom only Perseus and Andromeda survive in a recognizable state. Obviously the artist did not want simply to repeat this general theme here: Ceres and Triptolemus are not lovers. As this couple stands for agriculture and Ambrosia for viticulture, the mythical herdsman may represent cattle-breeding. Whether in the last square a fourth important means of man's support was thus represented, perhaps fishing via Neptunus, can only be guessed. The picture of an astronomer in the passage between the two parts of the room, identified on iconographic evidence as the archaic natural philosopher Anaximandros of Miletus,⁴⁷ cannot help here. It need not necessarily have any connection with the neighbouring mosaics, and to the fourth-century villa owner he was perhaps just a famous wise astrologer.

⁴³ Toynbee 1964, 249; Paris; Rainey 129: 'Orpheus?' That his clothing immediately evokes Paris, is shown by Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* x, 30, 2. Paris and Oenone: Ovid, *Heroides* v, 12-30 and 139; cf. Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* iii, 12, 6; Christodorus of Coptus, *Anth. Pal.* ii, 215-21 and others. Cf. Reinach 163, 4; 164, 3; 165, 1 (?); Levi, 210 f. pl. 46a. (That the syrinx, just as on the Ludovisi Relief cited *ibid.* and here in Pitney, is held by the woman, argues against the alternative explanation favoured by Levi as Argus and Io) Cf. also Paris and the nymphs on a Roman sarcophagus: Robert, *ASR* ii, No. 10. pl. 4.

⁴⁴ *VCH Hampshire* i (1900), 314 fig. 23; Toynbee 1962, No. 196 pl. 233; Toynbee 1964, 257; Rainey, 28; Smith 1977, 108 No. 4, 138 f. Nos. 115-18 pl. v.

⁴⁵ Explanation as Ambrosia and Triptolemos by Toynbee, Rainey and Smith, *loc. cit.* (note 44).

⁴⁶ Neptune and Amynone or Amphitrite: Reinach 34, 5 cf. 34, 6 and 7. Jupiter and Antiope: A. Blanco Freijeiro, *Mosaicos Romanos de Itálica* i (Madrid 1978), 27 pl. 4b (the context leads to this interpretation there); S. Germain, *Les mosaïques de Timgad* (Paris 1969), 78 f. No. 96, pl. 33 f. Apollo and Daphne: Reinach, 26, 1-7; Levi, 211 ff.; 212 No. 96, pl. XLVIB; K. Scheffold, *Pompejanische Malerei* (Basel 1952), pl. 40; O. Elia, *Pittura di Stabia* (Napoli 1957), pl. 11.

⁴⁷ See K. Parlasca, *Römische Mosaiken in Deutschland* (Berlin 1959), 29 with n. 2, pl. 28, 2.

(f) *Frampton, Dorset*

The so-called Neptune mosaic of Frampton is especially famous for the frame containing a Christogram and two damaged epigrams on Neptune and Cupid.⁴⁸ One of the four square corner-fields in its major section is damaged; another corner as well as all the four semicircular fields between them, are destroyed, seemingly on purpose.

According to J. M. C. Toynbee's interpretation, the series of squares formed a Venus-Adonis-cycle.⁴⁹ Two points seem to me to be against this thesis. There is no cycle of the postulated form – the mosaic of Low Ham being different in structure – among other British mosaics, whose pictorial sequences normally consist of independent themes that are connected by some similarity or equivalence. And one should always start with the hypothesis that in their complete state the pictures must have been easily recognizable to a spectator even only partially acquainted with mythological iconography; in this he was helped by the rather traditional picture typology. We know the iconography of the Venus-Adonis story from Roman figured sarcophagi. But unfortunately there are no attributes which allow the viewer to identify immediately any figure in the mosaic, nor are there typological relations to the sarcophagi. An enthroned figure with sceptre in the half-damaged field could be a goddess – Venus or Proserpina – with little Adonis in front of her; but parallels seem to be missing. No matter how one may complete this field (perhaps the child-like feet are simply drawn out of proportion), the two complete fields obviously show pairs of mythological lovers – and this may once again have been the *tertium comparationis* of the corner-field series. The sitting Phrygian herdsman and the standing nymph, who lacks any attribute here, seem to be the same as those on the mosaics of Pitney and Brading, for whom interpretation as Paris and Oenone was suggested above. One could also compare the representation of Attis (a figure related to Adonis) with the nymphs.⁵⁰ The reclining figure in the last square recalls sleeping Endymion, whose discovery by the moon-goddess was a favourite theme of Roman relief sarcophagi and appears also in mural painting.⁵¹ The Endymion here has no hunting spear, the approaching goddess no crescent, only a normal diadema, but the torch in her hand appears again on a mural painting. If one adheres to the Adonis interpretation, the woman cannot be taken as Venus, whom alone this scene would suit according to traditional iconography, but only as Proserpina, because of the turned-down torch. This indicates a chthonic or nocturnal goddess.

The strangely systematic destruction of the four semicircular fields has left but a few tiny fragments in one of them of what seems to be fishes' fins. Perhaps they were part of mythological marine hybrids. So according to the probable sense of the two epigrams in the doorways,⁵² the realms of Neptunus and mightier Cupido might have been opposed to one another in the two picture sequences as well.

⁴⁸ Published by S. Lysons in: *Reliquiae Britannico-Romanae* iii, (1813), 2–4, pl. v. T. D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art to A.D. 900* (1938), pl. 21; Toynbee 1962, No. 199 pl. 234; Toynbee 1964, 250 f.; *ead.* in: M. W. Barley, R. P. C. Hanson, *Christianity in Britain 300–700* (1968), 183 pl. 2; Smith 1969, 109 pl. 3, 27; K. S. Painter in: G. de G. Sieveking (Ed.), *Prehistoric and Roman Studies* (London 1971), 164 f. pl. 71; Rainey, 78; Smith 1977, 111 f. No. 17 (lit.), 140 No. 121, 148 f. Nos. 134 f.; *id.* in: M. Todd (Ed.), *Studies in the Romano-British Villa* (Leicester 1978), 129 fig. 41.

⁴⁹ Toynbee 1964, 250 f.

⁵⁰ In the architecture of a fourth-style wall-painting: G. Picard, *Die Kunst der Römer* (Stuttgart 1968), 74 f. fig. 48; Kraus, fig. 251. Why not Paris?

⁵¹ Reinach, 53, 4–54; especially 54, 1 and 3 (with torch, but not a turned-down one); 54, 2 and 4 (Endymion without arm over the head); G. Calza, *La necropoli del porto di Roma nell'isola sacra* (Roma 1940), 171 fig. 84; Dunbabin pl. v 10; M. Yacoub, *Le Musée du Bardo* (Tunis 1970), fig. 76; Robert, *ASR* iii 1, 53–111 Nos. 39–92, pls. 12–25 (with torch: No. 72 pl. 18).

⁵² The epigram, for the most part taken as heptametres, might better be interpreted as *versus paroemiaci* as by F. Bücheler, *Anthologia Latina* ii (1897), No. 1524. His conjectures for the missing parts at the end of line 3 and the beginning of line 7 and 8, made without knowledge of the drawing, seem too long but necessary. Either the fourth-century mosaicist or Lysons must have been somewhat inexact here.

(g) *Bramdean, Hants.*

In the centre of a now-lost mosaic at Bramdean⁵³ is shown, in the type of a wrestling match, how Hercules defeated Antaeus by lifting him from his strength-giving mother Earth. At the right Hercules has put down his club and lionskin, to the left a helmeted woman is sitting, whom Smith⁵⁴ identifies as mother Earth by what he thinks is part of a globe at her side. Her helmet he explains as the misrendered portion of a tree in the original copy. But comparison with other Roman representations of this theme shows that Minerva, as she had previously been called,⁵⁵ must actually be intended here. The Hercules-Antaeus group can appear alone, or with Earth sitting on the ground, or with the mutual helpers Earth and Minerva framing the group or sitting side by side, according to the requirements of the proportions of the picture.⁵⁶ The explanation of the helmet and of the semicircular shield-contour as the misrendering of a tree and a globe is unsatisfactory. The same type of helmet and the stretched-out arm are associated with Minerva, whereas Earth turns one arm up to heaven in despair or mourning, or else is sitting sorrowfully on the ground. Though more essential to the story than Minerva, she must have been left out here. Perhaps she was sitting in the foreground in front of Minerva in the pattern book, too complicated an overlapping to be followed and perhaps not even correctly understood by the mosaicist.

(h) *Dyer Street, Cirencester*

Among the Orpheus mosaics, so typical of the Corinium workshop, there is a rather strange one found at Cirencester itself.⁵⁷ The figure of Orpheus in the central medallion is pressed down rather small towards the lower edge by another figure. Unfortunately the interpretation of this rather obscure figure is marred by the fact that it is known only from a drawing published a considerable time after the mosaic was found and destroyed.

A frontal head with a conical cap is set on a short thick body. In his vertically outstretched arms the figure is holding an arrow and a whip or hatchet or the like. Instead of legs, he has three winding, snake-like legs ending in a sort of fish's tail. He cannot be a Triton or similar marine creature, and his higher position compared to the stooping Orpheus symbolizes visually his superiority and preponderance. Frontal appearance and out-stretched arms address the viewer directly and make one think of a supernatural epiphania. (Nothing like the *orans*-type of late antiquity can be meant here.) The snake-legged feature reminds one of the so-called 'Abraxas',⁵⁸ in vogue especially in late antiquity on gems, amulets and magic objects. Normally he has a cock's head, as has the figure recognized as 'Abraxas' on a mosaic in the villa of Brading.⁵⁹ But there he has cock's legs as well, no attributes in the hands, and is standing in front of a temple and two griffons. The other two fields of the same mosaic, depicting a

⁵³ C. Roach Smith, *Collectanea Antiqua* ii (1852), 54-64, pl. 21; *VCH Hampshire* i (1900), fig. 19; Toynbee 1964, 258; Rainey, 28 f, pl. 2 A; Smith 1977, 144 No. 129 pl. vii b.

⁵⁴ Smith *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Toynbee and Rainey, *loc. cit.* (note 53).

⁵⁶ For instance a painting in the tomb of the Nasonii at Rome: B. Andreae, *Studien zur römischen Grabkunst (Römische Mitteilungen)*, 9. Ergh.: Heidelberg, 1963), pl. 55; relief from Steinheim: E. Espérandieu, *Recueil Général des Bas-Reliefs . . . de la Germanie Romaine* (Paris, Bruxelles 1931), No. 696; sarcophagus Rome, Museo Naz. delle Terme: C. Robert, *ASR* iii 1, No. 138 pl. 138; relief from Capua: *ibid.* fig. on p. 162. Cf. the list on this theme by F. Brommer, *Denkmälerlisten zur griechischen Heldensage* i (Marburg 1971), 24-8.

⁵⁷ K. J. Beecham, *History of Cirencester* (1886), 257, pl. opposite p. 226; Toynbee 1964, 268 f.; Smith 1965, 107 f. fig. 12; Rainey, 48; Smith 1977, 126 No. 70 pl. xib.

⁵⁸ For the magical figures in vogue in late antiquity cf. A. Procopé-Walter, 'Iao und Set. (Zu den Figuræ Magicæ in den Zauberpapyri)'. *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* xxx (1933), 34-69, especially 40 ff.; C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets. Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor 1950); K. Preisendanz, Abrasax, in: *Der Kleine Pauly* i, 17 f. Comparison with Triton: Rainey, 48.

⁵⁹ Toynbee 1962, 202 No. 197 pl. 231; Toynbee 1964, 255; Smith 1977, 106 No. 1 pl. iv b.

gladiatorial match and a half-destroyed scene with a fox, also remain unexplained; so this context cannot lend much help in explaining the Cirencester mosaic. Perhaps the frontally presented cock's head of a magical papyrus has simply been misrendered in this one. But the so-called Abraxas has a lot of variations and related figures in the iconography of magical papyri and amulets. These figures and the gnostic mystical speculations they represent may have played a part in the late antique Orphic cult as well. The griffons, fabulous hybrids and watchers of the far north or beyond, in late antiquity sometimes appear among the wild animals of Orpheus scenes as is the case in some mosaics in Britain.⁶⁰ A 'gnostic infiltration' of the Orpheus mosaics seems a possibility, however they should be classified.

CONCLUSIONS

These reinterpretations, whose more or less casual character points to the fact that there still remain several problems of interpretation waiting for solution, may give rise to further reflections.⁶¹ The Cirencester Orpheus mosaic probably shows the infiltration of gnostic mystical elements into the surviving classical form of the late mosaics. This reinforces the possibility that at this time a deeper meaning might be read in the Orpheus mosaics.⁶² Though formally quite different, the placing of a christogram on the mosaics of Frampton and Hinton St. Mary seems to be a similar phenomenon.⁶³ The seemingly paradoxical juxtaposition of classical mythology and non-classical religious symbols reflects a change in the Roman attitude towards classical iconography that had probably come about some time ago. Even in its stylistically reduced provincial form classical iconography remained absolutely dominant for a long time, and in some instances even seemed to be regaining ground. Consequently the intrusion of extraneous, as it were 'subcultural', elements must have been regarded as inappropriate to have been kept back for so long.

Unfortunately the intermittent development of mosaics in Britain does not provide enough material for comparison between earlier and later phases. It may be significant for the geographical position of Britain, that gnostic and christian symbols were placed (obviously on the special order of the villa owners) among scenes of classical iconography without any feeling of incongruity, while the mosaicists did not provide any specific religious patterns except for classical ones open to other interpretation, like Orpheus. Fear of prosecution does not account for this, but simply lack of need for any other alternative iconography.

A special feature in the mosaics is the cycle of panels, normally four in number, according to the mosaic's structure. They reflect the Roman fondness for series of exempla: they, too, seem to be held together by some common meaning, which in damaged mosaics is difficult or even dangerous to conjecture. Not all of the complete picture-sequences found in mosaics make good sense. Their figure-types are ultimately derived from traditional prototypes and complete scenes too, but have been singled out, mixed up with other figures and adapted to

⁶⁰ Cf. H. Stern, *Gallia* xiii (1955), 55 fig. 14 No. 31; J. Balty, *Mosaïques Antiques de Syrie* (Bruxelles 1977), 44 ff. Nos. 17-19; in Britain: Smith 1977, 126 No. 69 pl. x b (Cirencester, Barton Farm); 127 No. 75 pl. xxxb (Whatley, Som.; rather odd); 128 No. 78 (Woodchester, Glos.; better picture: D. J. Smith, *The Great Pavements and Roman Villa at Woodchester, Glos.* (1973), fig. 5.)

⁶¹ For instance, the mosaic with a boy, a snake and a fallen bucket at Pitney. Because of the bucket none of the interpretations offered (see Smith 1977, 151 f., No. 145, pl. xxvi b) seems acceptable, except for that as 'Cadmus and the dragon', though Cadmus would be rather young. For 'Opheltes-Archemorus left at the fountain Nemea' (cf. E. Simon, *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1979, 31-45) on the other hand, the boy might seem to be already too big.

⁶² Smith 1969, 88 ff.

⁶³ The difference of conventional decorative mythological iconography and such new elements of deeper religious meaning has been stressed especially by H. Brandenburg, 'Bellerophon christianus? Zur Deutung des Mosaiks von Hinton St. Mary und zum Problem der Mythendarstellungen in der kaiserzeitlichen dekorativen Kunst', *Römische Quartalschrift* lxiii (1968), 49-86, perhaps too restrictively.

two-figure groups or, at Pitney, formally even into single figures. Some of the picture-types are very appropriate for this use, as for instance Perseus and Andromeda at the lake, others less so. Whereas the choice of the figure-types from the stock of copies of the same or a related character must have been up to the artist, the patron may occasionally have had a hand in the choice of the subjects and the composition of the cycle. To understand these groups a considerable acquaintance with mythology, traditional iconography and its internal laws was needed; otherwise they would have remained enigmatic to the viewer, especially since in Britain there were usually no captions identifying the figures. Now to understand the connection of a cycle (especially if it did not just consist of pairs of lovers), and still more to plan such a grouping oneself, would demand a fairly good knowledge of mythological iconography. All this suggests that such mosaics were produced for a group of people still fairly-well educated, as might be expected of the villa owners.

The new interpretation of the East Coker mosaic suggested here replaces a comparatively rare episode with a well-known traditional type. Being well-established in Bacchic iconography, it does not demand too detailed a familiarity with classical mythology. On the other hand the rocky background points to a closer connection to the versions found, for instance, in Pompeian murals.

The Keynsham panels also provide traditional picture-types of classical myths. But here the iconographic traditions are more obvious, the subjects are less common and form a cycle, so the whole has a more 'classical' ring. It is not certain whether they were copied from special pattern books belonging to the workshop or from illuminated books. The latter is more evident in the case of the mosaic at Low Ham, since the pictures conform less to the mosaic frame and style than is usual.

In any case, the panels seem to have been made at special request; the would-be 'classical' style and typology may represent a deliberate choice, a conscious recourse to the 'good old' art. This could be interpreted – though it need not be – as a reflection of the fourth-century pagan renaissance, the exponents of which were Julian and the aristocratic opposition in Italy and the East. That such an attitude, indeed, was to be found also in Britain is attested by the well-dated sanctuary at Lydney with its marine mosaics.⁶⁴

Whether the distribution of the more complex mosaics, like those discussed here, in the limited area of a few southern counties depends more on the good economic conditions and the feudal villa-structure of this area, or on the availability of capable mosaicists in local workshops, can hardly be assessed. But both the mosaicists and the local gentry of the fourth century can still be regarded as representatives of a certain grade of traditional education.

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⁶⁴ R. E. M. Wheeler, T. V. Wheeler, *Report on the Excavations in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire* (Oxford 1932). Cf. O. Brendel, *JRS* xxxi (1941), 100–127 on the Corbridge lanx.