

## REVIEWS

THE JOSHUA ROLL. By K. Weitzmann. (Princeton University Press, \$7-50. London, Geoffrey Cumberlege; 42s.)

THE MOSAICS OF NORMAN SICILY. By Otto Demus. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; £4 4s.)

Two recent publications have revolutionised the study of phases in Byzantine art history though it may be many years before art historians have fully worked out their implications. Both had been long expected. At least since 1935 Dr Kurt Weitzmann has possessed an international reputation as the greatest living authority on Byzantine manuscript illumination and it was rumoured as early as 1940 that he had reached conclusions as to the dating of the 'classical' paintings in the Joshua roll which contradicted a number of current generalisations on the development of Byzantine painting. His final decisions have now been published from the Princeton University Press.

The miniatures in the Joshua Rotulus in the Vatican library had been dated as early as the fifth century. Gradually the dating had shifted and the most commonly accepted opinion had placed them close to the year 1700. Dr Weitzmann has now proved them to be tenth century work and by so doing has transformed all previous estimates of middle Byzantine Art. He analyses stylistically not only the Joshua rotulus but the group of illuminated MSS most closely connected with it—Vatican Gr. MSS. 746 and 747 and the Vatopedi Octateuch—and introduces a scientific system of dating which will be applicable to quite different MS groupings. He then deals in turn with the origin and development of such recurrent motifs as the Hellenistic town, the rustic villa and the tower in the sacred grove. At the close he discusses the sources for the triumphal idea in pictorial art. He has established for ever the vitality of the classical renaissance in tenth-century Constantinople.

It would be possible to make minor criticisms of his great work, especially in his treatment of the Vatopedi Octateuch, but the main lines of his interpretation are clearly definitive and it would be cheap to criticise so great a master. It is significant of the far-reaching results of his detailed research that the *Joshua Roll* provides an obvious clue for the dating of the astonishingly classical wall paintings found near Varese; though these have only been published since the publication of his own book. The study of Italian as well as of Byzantine painting will be profoundly affected by his consummate scholarship.

A close parallel is offered by the publication of *Mosaics of Norman Sicily*. It had been rumoured since the end of 1938 that Dr Otto Demus

had established the Constantinopolitan origin of the great mosaic series in the Cathedral of Monreale. It was realised that this would have major implications for the study of pictorial art in late twelfth-century Byzantium and Southern Italy. The results of his research have just been published in 1950.

The effects of the delay have been in many ways most fortunate. For here again a discovery has been placed in its full context. The volume consists of 457 pages of text and 120 plates of illustrations. The first 195 pages deal definitively with the monuments of Norman Sicily and their mosaic decorations, the next thirty-five pages with their iconography, the next sixteen with the use of motifs from landscape and architecture and the rest with the development of mosaic style in Norman Sicily and its dissemination.

Once again it would be easy to construct a list of little criticisms: thus the present reviewer would query nearly every judgment Dr Demus passes on Cypriot wall paintings. It would be so easy and so cheap. Like Dr Weitzmann, Dr Demus is a master of the first rank. Fifteen years of careful research have been distilled into a study which will retain its value for generations and which has illuminated quite different fields of art history from those he has made particularly his own. Thus any future analysis of twelfth-century English painting must take this book into a full account. For the schools of Anglo-Norman painting only become fully intelligible when they are related to the stylistic changes in Norman Sicily. Behind the bending figure of St Paul in St Anselm's Chapel in Canterbury there lies the bending figure of St Paul in the Capella Palatina at Palermo, mosaics in Monreale are a source behind the work of two of the greatest masters in the Winchester Bible; the master of the Genesis initial and the master of the Morgan leaf. While the two most beautiful illuminations of the Winchester Psalter are most probably derived from the the half-destroyed mosaics in the Martorana.

The long research of Dr Weitzmann and Dr Demus have once more illustrated the fact that any marked advance in the study of medieval art history bears with it, directly or indirectly, the possibility of an advance in all the rest.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

DEGAS THE DRAUGHTSMAN. By Randolph Schwabe. (Rockliffe Publishing Co.; 21s.).

The admiration aroused by the works of Degas at various times, has been considerable in this country. The justice of this has been questioned whether indeed he is worthy of such an elevated position, but whatever may be said against him in regard to the relative absence of genuine creativity his undeniable value lies in his drawings; for these