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Using Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts

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1. Palaeography, Codicology and Anglo-Saxon Studies

The Anglo-Saxonist should be able to both read and describe not only manuscripts written in the period but also those containing Anglo-Saxon texts copied and recopied in subsequent centuries. Only by so doing, whether in the original manuscripts themselves or merely in microform or photographic facsimile, can the character and difficulties of the primary written witnesses for the literature and history of the Anglo-Saxons be appreciated and enjoyed.

The aim of this essay is to provide some guidance to modern users of such manuscripts, primarily for those reading texts composed in Old English but also for Anglo-Latinists. It relates both to the recognition and the recording of those features which are of significance to the origin (the place of writing), the provenance (recorded associations with particular collections or owners) and the users of manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon texts. The study of these features encompasses two interrelated disciplines: palaeography, the classification and description of former styles of handwriting; and codicology, the examination of the physical characteristics of the manuscript book or codex.

Further reading:

M.P. Brown, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (London, 1991).

N.R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957, reprinted 1991), Introduction.

A.J. Petti, *English Literary Hands from Chaucer to Dryden* (London, 1977), Introduction.

B. Bischoff, trans, D.Ó Croínín and D.Ganz, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1990).

L.E. Boyle, *Medieval Latin Palaeography: A Bibliographical Introduction* (Toronto, 1984).

2. Catalogues of Manuscripts

It is essential to make a careful study of any published bibliographies or catalogues which may relate to the manuscripts one wishes to read before visiting the libraries in which they are now kept. This saves the time, energy and patience of both the reader and the various librarians involved. Above all, it is vital to be able to find out the precise press-mark or call-number (e.g. London, British Library, Cotton MS. Vitellius A.xv) of the item concerned in the library or collection where it is at present preserved. This differs from any customary name of the manuscript volume (e.g. the Nowell Codex) or the name of individual textual items within the volume (e.g. 'Beowulf' or 'Judith'), neither of which are of help to the librarian in locating the manuscript on its shelf.

2.1 GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Some general bibliographies have been produced which are of great help to the user of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. The catalogues of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts made in the eighteenth century by Humfrey Wanley (*Librorum veterum septentrionalium ... Catalogus Historico-Criticus*, Oxford, 1705) and in the twentieth by Neil Ker (see 1, above) are essential reading. Both provide a descriptive overview of the corpus, library by library, Wanley dealing with both vernacular and Latin manuscripts, Ker only with the Old English ones but in more detail. A summary list of the whole corpus, library by library, is also provided by Helmut Gneuss in 'A Preliminary List of Manuscripts Written or Owned in England up to 1100', *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1981), 1-60. A categorisation of the surviving Old English material, arranged text by text and with notes of printed editions, is provided by A. Cameron, 'List of Old English Texts', in R. Frank and A. Cameron, eds, *A Plan for a Dictionary of Old English* (Toronto, 1973), 25-306. For documents from the Anglo-Saxon period dealing with land tenure one must consult P.H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography*, Royal Historical Society (London, 1968), whose arrangement is partly typological and partly chronological. For the context of those documents which have been copied into books or cartularies, one should also consult G.R.C. Davis, *Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain: A Short Catalogue* (London, 1958).

2.2 THE CONTENTS OF INDIVIDUAL LIBRARIES

Both modern and medieval libraries have had their contents described from time to time in specific lists or catalogues. These also should be studied and any relevant items compared to the descriptions contained in the books mentioned in 2.1. For the present location of surviving books from medieval British libraries one should consult N.R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, Royal Historical Society (2nd ed., London, 1964) and the *Supplement* by A.G. Watson (London, 1987). These include references to the known catalogues, medieval and later, of the books in each of the libraries concerned. An edition and discussion of all known Anglo-Saxon book-lists is provided by M. Lapidge, 'Surviving Booklists from Anglo-Saxon England', in M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss, *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1985), 33-89, reprinted in the present volume.

3. Describing a Codex

Manuscript volumes should be described as fully and accurately as possible, since each is a unique artefact with its own personal story to be discovered. Besides the intrinsic interest and importance of studying the physical context of any surviving ancient text, there is also the consideration that in the event of future loss of the manuscript, or damage to it, future researchers would at least have a good idea of its current appearance and character.

3.1 BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Much time can be saved by researchers if full and accurate notes are taken as work on a codex proceeds. The following should be discovered at an early stage of work: the present location of the manuscript, its present call-number and volume title (see 2, above); the *secundo folio* reference, i.e. the first word on the second folio of text in the manuscript, a significant feature for the identification of a particular volume; known previous call-numbers as part of earlier collections (cf. below, 3.3.1 and 3.3.4); references to previous catalogue descriptions and to any articles which have been written about its palaeography. In particular the detailed descriptions in Ker, *Catalogue* (see 2.1) should be studied, as also where applicable those in E.A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores: A Palaeographical Guide to Latin Manuscripts prior to the Ninth Century*, 12 vols (Oxford,

1934-72) and T.A.M. Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule* (Oxford, 1971).

3.2 THE TEXT

Individual textual units or articles in a book should be numbered and the following information given, where present, *for each article*:

3.2.1 *Folio numbers* (or page numbers if appropriate, see 3.3.6).

3.2.2 *Title of work* as given in the text.

3.2.3 *The incipit*: the first few words of the text of the article in the particular manuscript studied.

3.2.4 *The colophon, if present*: a statement added at the end of the text of the article, often by the text-scribe, stating information such as the name of the work, its author, the name of the scribe and the date and place of inscription. Care should be taken however to find out whether the colophon refers to the particular manuscript under examination or has been copied wholesale from the exemplar containing the main text. A collection of colophons has been made by the Benedictines of Le Bouveret, Switzerland and is published as *Colophons des manuscrits occidentaux des origines au XVIe siècle*, 6 vols (Fribourg, 1965-82).

3.2.5 *Reference to printed editions of the article that have been published to date*. Besides the bibliographies mentioned in 2.1, above, use should also be made of S.B. Greenfield and F.C. Robinson, *A Bibliography of Publications on Old English Literature to the End of 1972* (Toronto and Manchester, 1980), supplemented by the annual bibliographies in *Anglo-Saxon England* (1972-).

3.2.6 *A summary of the textual content*; the known or presumed date of composition; the language used; whether in prose or verse (with type of metre); whether there are any internal subdivisions (into books, chapters or fitts).

3.3 EXTERNAL FEATURES OF THE CODEX

All aspects of the appearance and structure of the codex need to be observed and recorded in a consistent fashion. The following order proceeds from outside in (3.3.1-12) and then from the writing of the main text to various additions made to it (3.3.13-18).

3.3.1 Binding(s)

The volume may be in a contemporary, later medieval, or modern binding; bindings of early date may give clues about the origin or provenance of the manuscript not contained in the text itself. The materials and the methods used in the binding should be described, e.g. wooden boards covered with decorated or stamped leather and/or metal and jewels; or covers made of stiff parchment or pasteboard. The number and arrangement of the leather bands to which individual quires (see 3.3.8) were sewn should be noted. Differing methods of attaching the boards to the sewn quires by means of the bands were used at various times in the medieval period and these can be used to give an approximate date to a particular binding, see G. Pollard, 'Describing Medieval Bookbindings', in M.B. Parkes and A.G. Watson, *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts, and Libraries: Essays Presented to N.R. Ker* (London, 1978), 50-65. Some medieval bindings have the title (and sometimes the press-mark) of the volume on a parchment slip pasted to the outside cover. A previous owner's badge, coat of arms or initials may appear on the cover (cf. 3.3.4).

3.3.2 Pastedowns

A piece of parchment or paper was usually gummed on to the inside of each of the two boards of the cover in order to hide the grooves into which the ends of the bands (see 3.3.1) were channelled; such pastedowns were sometimes made from fragments of books which had been dismembered, study of which may reveal information about the provenance of the codex (cf. 4, below).

3.3.3 Flyleaves

Between the pastedowns and the leaves containing the text extra leaves were normally added in order to act as a protective buffer between the text and the cover. The parchment or paper used as flyleaves may be blank or again be fragments of dismembered

manuscripts (cf. 4, below); if originally blank, they were often written upon by later owners or users (cf. 3.3.4).

3.3.4 *Marks of previous ownership*

Both institutional and individual owners often marked their books with an inscription, occasionally including an anathema against thieves. The signatures of owners, or donors, of manuscripts may also be found, usually on a flyleaf (see 3.3.3) or a pastedown (see 3.3.2), but also sometimes in the margin of the text itself. Similarly, badges and coats of arms also appear. Library press-marks were sometimes added to a flyleaf or a pastedown, or written on a parchment slip on the cover (see 3.3.1) and may correspond to a surviving library catalogue (see 2.2). Some libraries have used a proprietary stamp to safeguard their property rights, often in former times adding it rather obtrusively to the leaves containing the text or illustrations, a practice now generally discontinued. Details about the acquisition of the volume by a particular owner are also sometimes written within it and may include the date of purchase, the price paid, and the provenance. The personal marks used by various early modern and modern private collectors of manuscripts are described and illustrated in S. De Ricci, *English Collectors of Books & Manuscripts (1530-1930) and Their Marks of Ownership* (Cambridge, 1930) and *Hidden Friends: The Comites Latentes Collection of Illuminated Manuscripts*, Sotheby's Exhibition Catalogue (London, 1985).

3.3.5 *Table of contents or Index*

Internal finding-aids were added to codices from time to time in the form of a table of contents or an index. A table of contents consists of a summary of contents in the order of their occurrence in the volume, usually with folio or page references given (cf. 3.3.6). A medieval index will usually be only in rough alphabetical order of names or subjects, with folio or page or section references given. Either type of finding-aid may provide evidence of an earlier ordering of the contents of a volume or of the loss of items from it.

3.3.6 *Foliation(s) or Pagination(s)*

Individual leaves within a codex may be identified by a sequence either of folio or of page numbers. Foliation, the name given to the former of these methods, is the standard one used in manuscripts. In

this, each leaf is numbered once, with the addition of *v* for 'verso' to refer to the back of the leaf, and sometimes of *r* for 'recto' to refer to the front. A pagination, in contrast, numbers each side of the leaf separately, as in modern printed books. Such numbers are added to the leaves in ink or pencil; earlier medieval ones will be in roman numerals, later ones in arabic numerals. Some foliations or paginations can be related to the construction of a table of contents or index; see 3.3.5.

3.3.7 *Quire-numbers or Quire-signatures*

It was often the practice to add a sequence of numbers or letters at the foot of the last folio verso (but occasionally the first folio recto) of each quire (see 3.3.8) in order to show to the binder of the volume the correct sequence of the quires. Later addition or insertion of quires into a volume, or the re-ordering of quires, can sometimes be detected from their lack of appropriate numbers or letters. Unfortunately, however, such quire-numbers or signatures are often now missing, having been lost when the leaves were trimmed as the last part of the binding process.

3.3.8 *Collation*

The internal make-up of individual quires (groups of leaves, usually consisting of sheets of parchment or paper folded into pairs of conjoint folios, but often with associated half-sheets) should be recorded. The number of pairs used per quire is usually consistent within a period; the normal number in the Anglo-Saxon and medieval period is four, but five, six, or more, occur. The abbreviated formulas commonly used in the recording of the collation of a manuscript volume assumes an ideal quire of several paired folios to which modifications may be made by the addition or omission of half-sheets. Examples are as follows:

2⁸. The second quire (eight leaves) is made up of four conjoint pairs.

4⁸ 3 and 6 are half-sheets. The fourth quire (eight leaves) consists of three conjoint pairs, with the third and sixth leaves being half-sheets.

7⁶ + 1 leaf after 3. The seventh quire (seven leaves) consists of three conjoint pairs, with a half-sheet used by the original scribe after the third leaf.

8⁶ + 1 leaf inserted after 3. The eighth quire (seven leaves) is similar to the preceding, but the half-sheet has been added at a date later than that of the main text.

9¹⁰ wants 4. The ninth quire (nine leaves) contains a gap in the text which shows that the fourth leaf is now missing.

9¹⁰ wants 10, probably blank. As preceding, but the loss of a leaf is suggested by the fact that the scribe finished writing his text at the ninth leaf.

10 nine. The tenth quire consists of nine leaves but its make-up is uncertain.

In Anglo-Saxon manuscripts up to the beginning of the eleventh century the leaves were normally arranged within each quire so that all the hair sides faced outwards, thus giving a hair-flesh arrangement to all the openings (two facing pages) within a quire, except for that in the middle, but giving a hair-hair one where quires met. Later on, the internal arrangement was changed so that hair faced hair and flesh faced flesh, as it had from earlier times on the Continent.

3.3.9 *Catchwords*

A few words of the text were often written at the foot of the final folio in a quire, being an anticipation of those on the first line of the following quire. This was done to preserve the correct sequence of quires before or during binding. Catchwords were also used within quires to preserve the correct sequence of individual folios prior to binding, preceding the addition of a foliation or a pagination to the whole codex (see 3.3.6). They are often now missing, however, having been on that part of the leaf trimmed by the binder.

3.3.10 *Leaves*

Anglo-Saxon texts surviving in contemporary manuscripts and in most medieval copies are written on treated animal skins, the generic term for which is 'parchment'. The better type (vellum) was made from calf or lamb skin, the less fine from that of sheep or goats. The method of preparation of the skin included cleaning in a solution of lime, eradication of the animal's hair or wool by shaving, smoothing the skin with a knife or plane, whitening it with chalk, and cutting it to the required size. Despite the best efforts of the parchment-maker, there usually remains a discernible difference between the hair and the flesh sides of a parchment leaf, the former being darker in colour than the

latter and often less smooth. There is also a difference, in the early Anglo-Saxon period of literacy, between the parchment produced in the British Isles and that produced on the Continent, the former being darker in colour, thicker and more velvety than the latter.

Anglo-Saxon texts surviving in early modern copies will usually be written on hand-made paper rather than parchment and will often have watermarks by which it may be possible to date and locate the place of production.

With both types of writing surface, the following details should be recorded: the nature, texture, and colour of the material; the outside dimensions of the leaves, height x width in millimetres; the presence of holes, tears or repairs (and whether these were made before or after the writing of the text).

3.3.11 *Pricking and Ruling*

Before any writing was added to a page its layout (see 3.3.12) was planned and marked out by means of ruled lines guided by patterns of prickings made in the margins with a sharp point. Sometimes a pricker in the form of a wheel was used in order to get an even distribution of pricks. A few lines, often in pairs, were ruled vertically in order to mark the sides of the intended text-block. Many more were ruled horizontally as a guide to enable the scribe to keep each line of text even across the page. Before the mid twelfth century it was normal to use a hard point, of metal or bone, to make the ruling; later, lead (plummet) was used. There was a short transitional period in the mid to late twelfth century when both hard point and lead were used together. By the late medieval period, ruling in ink is also found, but often merely as a frame for an internally unruled text-block. The presence in a manuscript of one of these methods of ruling rather than another may thus be used as a rough dating feature.

3.3.12 *Page-layout*

The outside size of the space taken up by the text on each page should be measured and recorded, height x width in millimetres. It will normally be found that the outside height of the text-block approximates to the width of the actual leaf. The shape of the text-block in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts for most purposes is usually a rectangle whose height is greater than its width. Double columns are unusual in vernacular manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon period, but are more

common in Latin and bilingual texts, particularly glossaries (where triple columns also occur); when they are used they are normally of equal width. A single wide column of long lines is usual for vernacular texts; it should thus be noted that poetic lines are not used in the manuscripts of Old English verse, despite their appearance in printed editions, though they are used in Latin verse of the period.

An allowance of blank space within the text-block was often left by the scribe for the subsequent insertion of coloured initials, rubrics, line drawings, music, or interlinear glosses. Full-page illustrations or miniatures, however, were sometimes added on half-sheets within or at the beginning of quires.

3.3.13 The Writing of the Text

The text was often written in an acidic ink intended to burn into the surface of the page just enough to give it permanence, but not enough to burn right through and cause irreparable damage. Recipes consisted of various mixtures of oak galls, iron sulphate, gum, and water, wine or vinegar. Other types of ink contained ingredients such as carbon and thorn branches.

The ink was added to the surface by means of a quill pen, usually made from the tail feather of a goose, its thicker end cut to shape and re-sharpened as necessary during the course of the writing. Marked changes within a text, both in the colour of ink and in the width of the nib, should be noted as they may be preliminary indicators relevant to the distinction between the work of different scribes.

The various types of script used (both for the text and for headings, glosses, rubrics or initials) should be described by their respective standard names. Those to be expected in contemporary Old English manuscripts are *insular minuscule* or *pointed*, *square* and *round Anglo-Saxon minuscule*. Latin texts of the Anglo-Saxon period were written in the same scripts as Old English ones until the mid tenth century after which *caroline minuscule* was adopted for Latin (but not vernacular) texts. Bilingual texts were thus subsequently written in two different scripts, one for each language. In early Middle English manuscripts some form of *protogothic minuscule* was used with varying ranges of Anglo-Saxon letters being retained. From the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries some form of *gothic minuscule* will be found: formal *textura*, *cursive anglicana* or *cursive secretary*. In later transcripts *italic*, *round* or *copperplate* scripts were used.

A date should be assigned to the writing, using the standard formula where 's.' stands for 'from the ... th century' (Latin *saeculo*) and a roman numeral with an added modifier indicates a sub-division of a particular century. For example, the sequence of possible dates within the tenth century runs as follows:

s.ix/x	= c.900	
s.x ⁱⁿ	= 900 x 920	[ⁱⁿ = Latin <i>ineunte</i> 'at the beginning of ...']
s.x ¹	= 920 x 940	
s.x ^{med}	= 940 x 960	[^{med} = Latin <i>mediante</i> 'in the middle of ...']
s.x ²	= 960 x 980	
s.x ^{ex}	= 980 x 1000	[^{ex} = Latin <i>exeunte</i> 'at the end of ...']
s.x/xi	= c.1000	

It should be noted that palaeographical dating is subjective and can only be periodic rather than annual. Particular scripts remained in use for several generations and individual scribes tended to stick fairly closely throughout their career to the styles in which they were first trained. The broad succession of scripts used in Anglo-Saxon England is however established, as are some modifications within them (e.g. the addition of a horn on the left shoulder of *e* in Anglo-Saxon minuscule from the tenth century). Characteristic features of each of the scripts need thus to be studied.

Some attempt should be made to distinguish between the work of different scribes within a manuscript. The key to this is the accurate description of the hands involved. The distinctive characteristics of the hand amount to consistent slight modifications of shape of letter-form from a norm to be expected within the type of script used.

The features of each hand should be described in the following order:

- (i) *The treatment of ascenders*: their height in relation to that of minims; whether clubbed at the top, or curved, or notched, or looped;
- (ii) *The treatment of descenders*: their length in relation to the height of minims; whether they end in a point, or curve in one direction or the other;

(iii) *Minims*: their width (reflecting the width of the nib); whether they have feet or not, and, if so, are these horizontal or oblique?

(iv) *Individual letters*. Where any letter-forms seem to be made in a consistently idiosyncratic fashion these should be described (in alphabetical order) as succinctly as possible. The terminology used in describing letter-forms is often taken from that for parts of the human body, e.g. 'head', 'shoulder', 'waist', 'back', 'neck', 'arm', 'leg', and 'foot'; but terms like 'tail', 'cross-bar', and 'bowl' also occur. Whatever terms are chosen, it is important that they should be applied in a consistent fashion. There is no need to mention letters whose appearance is not unusual within the context of the type of script being used. The shape given to the following letters is most often significant in distinguishing between hands: *a, d, e, g, r, s, t, y, æ, ð*. Note should also be made of the usage of particular forms of a letter where more than one was available, e.g. normal instead of '2-shaped' *r* after *o*; low, long, and round forms of *s* (particularly in relation to *-ss-*); and the three forms of *y*.

(v) *Ligatures*. Any deliberate union of neighbouring letters should be noted, e.g. that of *e* with the following letter, *c + t* or *s + t*.

(vi) *Abbreviations*. In order to save both space and time, Latin texts were normally heavily abbreviated by the omission of letters from within or at the end of words. The general stability of Latin inflexions and the frequent occurrence of certain groups of letters allowed a large body of accepted abbreviation-symbols to be developed by the early medieval period. Old English texts, being less consistent in orthography, are much less abbreviated than their Latin counterparts. The most frequent ones are the following: *ȝ = and/ond* (to be left unextended in transcripts and editions, see 6.2.6); *æft̄ = æfter*; *f̄ = for*; *ḡ = ge*; *l̄ = oððe*; *s̄ce = sancte*; *p̄ = þæt/pet/pat* (to be left unextended; see 6.2.6); *poñ = þonne*; *-ū = -um* or *-un*.

(vii) *Punctuation*. Although often internally consistent, the systems of punctuation used by Anglo-Saxon and medieval scribes differed from modern ones. It is therefore most important to study the system in operation within a particular text, in order to distinguish the scribal usage of the various symbols in relation to minor and major pauses in the text, the usage of accents (marking either vowel-length or word-stress), word-division, and the sorts of hyphen used to indicate the breaking of a word at a line-end.

(viii) *Orthography*. Scribal preferences should be noted as regards a range of possible variations in spelling in both Latin and Old English. In the latter, one should in particular look for the usage in relation to *an/-on-*, *æ/e/ea/a*, *b/f/u/v*, *eo/io*, *y/i/e/u*, *ð/p* (in later copies *y*)/*th*, *u/uu/wynn* (in later copies *w/wu/gu*). In Latin texts, usage as regards *ae/ē/e* and *s/ss* should in particular be noted. Such spelling preferences may at least be significant for determining the place at which the scribe was trained, if not necessarily for deciding the place of origin of the manuscript.

Further reading:

Ker, *Catalogue*, xxv-xxxvi.

E.A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, vol. 2, *Great Britain and Ireland* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1972).

T.A.M. Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule* (Oxford, 1971).

D.N. Dumville, 'English Square Minuscule Script: The Background and Earliest Phases', *ASE* 16 (1987), 147-79.

3.3.14 Rubrics and Running Headings

Rubrics, as their name implies, were normally written in red ink, but occasionally occur in ink of another colour or in the ink of the text. They are short headings at the beginning and/or within texts, introducing the textual unit about to begin. They are usually slightly later additions made in spaces left by the scribe of the text, so that all the writing in red or coloured ink might be done at the same time. If written by someone other than the scribe of the text, they may have differences of letter-form, spelling or wording and so amount to a sub-text of the main work. It is therefore important in a transcript to distinguish them by a note (see 6.2.2) and in an edition by either footnotes or the use of a different typeface.

Running headings, often in red or coloured ink, are found in later medieval manuscripts, being a title given in the upper margin of each page, either the title of the whole work or the title or number of the chapter within it whose text appears on that particular page.

3.3.15 Contemporary Glosses or Commentaries

The text of some works, particularly religious ones, was sometimes explained by means of words or whole sections of commentary written either between the lines of the main text or in an adjacent margin.

These are distinguished as either 'interlinear' or 'marginal' glosses. They are sometimes in a language different from that of the main text and can develop into a continuous translation of it and provoke a double-column arrangement of the page. The longer commentaries sometimes were or became separate works and then followed their own individual manuscript tradition.

3.3.16 Alterations or Corrections

Where possible, a distinction should be made between alterations made en passant by the scribe of the text and corrections effected as a separate process in the production of a book or document.

Whether alteration or correction is involved, the methods used were more or less the same: either erasure (by scratching away the ink) of the incorrect letters or words and rewriting; or deleting, underlining or subpuncting of the mistake and writing of the correct version adjacent or interlineally. The second of these methods was the more common since the other often caused damage to the surface of the parchment and made rewriting impossible without blotting. Occasionally a serious copying error such as the repetition of a whole page of text caused a folio to be scrapped and this would be reflected by the collation (see 3.3.8).

3.3.17 Decoration

Note should be taken of the type of decoration found within a manuscript, and of its location in relation to the text. Styles of decoration may provide clues as to the origin of a manuscript.

Many of the surviving vernacular manuscripts from the Anglo-Saxon period are quite plain, with only minimal decoration in the form of large initials, often in the ink of the text but sometimes in one or more coloured inks. In some manuscripts, however, the construction of the initials is intricate, being made up of biting beasts (e.g. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Tanner 10, the Old English translation of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*; see Ker, *Catalogue*, plate I) or ending in foliate terminals. The illustrated *Hexateuch* (London, British Library, MS. Cotton Claudius B.iv) has coloured drawings illustrating the text, added in specially reserved spaces in the text-block, while the *Paris Psalter* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS. lat. 8824) has little drawings placed in the column containing the Latin version, whose text is shorter than that in the parallel column containing the

vernacular translation. In general, the line-drawings in coloured inks found in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in either language are of high quality, with good attention to details of anatomy, expression and dress. As might be expected, however, manuscripts of Latin texts belonging to the liturgy or teachings of the Christian church throughout the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods are much more sumptuous, with the use of gold leaf, whole pages carpeted with decoration or containing coloured miniatures.

Further reading:

Descriptive terms: L.N. Valentine, *Ornament in Medieval Manuscripts* (London, 1965).

Drawings: F. Wormald, *English Drawings of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1952).

Illumination: J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts from the 6th to the 9th Century* (London, 1978); E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900-1066* (London, 1976).

Subjects: T.H. Ohlgren, *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Illuminated Manuscripts: An Iconographic Catalogue, c. A.D. 625 to 1100* (New York and London, 1986).

3.3.18 Non-contemporary Marginalia and Glosses

Words or text were sometimes added to a manuscript by its readers, either between the lines as a gloss or in the margin as notes. A series of these in the same hand can provide a clue as to the purpose or main interest of one particular user of the manuscript. It is thus of importance both to read and to be able to date such notes. It is sometimes possible to identify their author if he or she has a distinctive hand and has written in other surviving manuscripts. It is sometimes possible to identify a user with a distinctive hand who has written in other surviving manuscripts. Such notes have proved to be helpful in studying the use of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts by early antiquaries such as Archbishop Parker, whose distinctive underlining and notations in red crayon in manuscripts now at Cambridge and elsewhere have provided much evidence about his interests and activity as a scholar-collector.

Further reading:

C.E. Wright, 'The Dispersal of the Monastic Libraries and the Beginnings of Anglo-Saxon Studies', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 1 (1949-53), 208-37.

3.4 BOOKLETS

The examination of the external features of a codex in the manner described above (3.3) may sometimes lead to the conclusion that within what is now treated as a single volume there exists more than a single unit of production. In these cases we may be dealing with a collection of structurally (and textually) independent booklets, each with its own physical history, which should be treated and described as separate entities, under the relevant headings.

Further reading:

P.R. Robinson, 'Self-contained Units in Composite Manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Period', *ASE* 7 (1978), 231-8, reprinted in the present volume.

4. Describing Manuscript Fragments

Throughout the medieval period it was common practice to dismember books that were no longer of interest or whose script was old-fashioned and difficult to read. The parchment of individual leaves was then re-used as pastedowns (see 3.3.2) or, often cut into strips, as stiffening within new bindings. The identification of the text contained in such manuscript fragments is sometimes a difficult task. The origin and provenance of the original codex from which they have come is even more difficult to ascertain, but a careful record of the discernible external features is important as it may lead to the discovery of other fragments from the same book elsewhere. Similar problems are encountered with the many fragments surviving in a charred and shrunken state from the fire in the Cotton Library in 1731, now kept together in boxes in the British Library.

Further reading:

M.P. Brown, 'A New Fragment of a Ninth-Century English Bible', *ASE* 18 (1989), 33-43.

R. Watson, 'Medieval Manuscript Fragments', *Archives* 13 (1977), 61-73.

5. Describing Single-Sheet Documents

Besides the intrinsic historical and linguistic interest of their text, those Anglo-Saxon documents which survive written in contemporary scripts are of importance to the palaeographer as dated manuscripts whose features may be compared to those in undated ones. Thus a careful record should be made of the appearance of their leaves, any

pricking and ruling, their page-layout, the character of the writing, alterations or corrections, and any marks or notes associated with later owners or users (cf. above, 3.3.4, 3.3.10-13, 3.3.16, 3.3.18). In addition, a description should be made of any seal (on writs or letters) present now or any indication of past sealing, of any folds in the parchment, and of any endorsements.

Further reading:

A. Bruckner and R. Marichal, eds, *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores*, III, *British Museum, London* (Olten and Lausanne, 1963).

T.A.M. Bishop and P. Chaplais, eds, *Facsimiles of English Royal Writs prior to A.D. 1100 presented to Vivian Hunter Galbraith* (Oxford, 1957).

S. Keynes, ed., *Facsimiles of Anglo-Saxon Charters*, British Academy (Oxford, 1991).

6. Making Transcripts and Editions of Manuscript Texts

6.1 THE USE OF FACSIMILES

It is sensible to be as proficient as possible in the reading of Anglo-Saxon and later scripts before one visits libraries in order to see the manuscripts themselves. It is important to remember that librarians cannot be expected to read the text for you but that they will often advise in cases where a manuscript is damaged, if only by the provision of aids such as cold light-sources or magnifying glasses.

The general availability of facsimiles of manuscripts has provided the student with the essential tools needed for home practice in transcription and description. Such a need was recognised by the palaeographers of the eighteenth century such as Thomas Astle, George Hickes and Humfrey Wanley who included engraved facsimiles of handwritten texts in their publications. More recently photography has provided the student with more extensive and more accurate reproductions of the manuscripts. Photographs of specific pages of manuscripts for private study may usually be ordered from the libraries where they are now preserved, unless the physical state of the manuscript does not allow this. Many of the most important surviving contemporary manuscripts from the Anglo-Saxon period have now

however been published in facsimile and should be available in major libraries around the world. The student may thus consult the following:

-The series *Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile* (Copenhagen and Baltimore, 1951-), 23 vols to date; giving complete reproductions of whole codices, with detailed introductions.

-The Early English Text Society's useful (and reasonably priced) facsimiles of *Beowulf* (Original Series, vol. 245; 2nd ed., 1959) and *The Parker Chronicle and Laws* (Original Series, vol. 208; 1941).

-E.A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores* (Oxford, 1934-72), 12 vols; giving palaeographical commentary and sample photographs from Latin manuscripts written before A.D. 900; some manuscripts with vernacular glosses are included.

For documents, see the works listed in 5, above. Also: E.A. Bond, *Facsimiles of Ancient Charters in the British Museum* (London, 1873-8), 4 vols; W.B. Sanders, *Facsimiles of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, Ordnance Survey (Southampton, 1878-84), 3 vols.

6.2 TECHNIQUES OF TRANSCRIPTION

A distinction needs to be made between the facsimile reproduction of a manuscript, as an engraving or in print (see above, 6.1), and the making of a transcription. The latter is the rewriting of a text in one's own handwriting, rather than being an attempt to imitate the precise shape of the letter-forms in each word of the particular manuscript concerned. [A single facsimile alphabet can be made as a useful tool, however; see below.] Nevertheless, a transcription must entail the accurate recording of features of the manuscript which concern the scribe's preferred orthography. In particular it must be stressed that there is a need for strict consistency in the methods used to make a transcription, in order to minimise the amount of checking back to the manuscript at a later stage.

Before starting to transcribe, it is best to read right through the text at least once and to make preliminary notes on the punctuation and abbreviation. At this stage it is also helpful to make a facsimile alphabet of the letter-forms used by the scribe, or each scribe of several, concerned in the writing of the text.

The following rules are recommended for the use of transcribers:

6.2.1 Transcriptions should be written legibly, in ink or pencil, on lined paper, writing only on alternate lines, so that, if present, interlinear glosses may be transcribed in their actual position.

6.2.2 So long as rubrics, new columns, or new pages, are indicated in bracketed notes (see 6.2.9, below) there is no need to imitate the niceties of page-layout of the original. Old English verse should be kept in long lines however, as in the manuscripts. Line-ends should be indicated by the use of an oblique line [*freond/scipe*]. Word-division should be modernised, but notes may be made on the system used by the scribe(s).

6.2.3 All words should be spelt, letter for letter, in the transcript as they occur in the manuscript.

6.2.4 All Old English letters (ash, eth, thorn, and wynn) should be retained in the transcript (and in an edition, see 6.3, below) wherever they occur in the manuscript. The letter *g* in Old English texts, even though it is the formal ancestor of Middle English yogh, should always be transcribed as modern *g*, since it has both palatal and velar sounds, not just the velar one of yogh. In Middle English texts, yogh (having the value of either *y* or *ogh*) should be retained wherever it occurs.

6.2.5 The usage of the manuscript should be retained in the transcript for the following:

capital letters
numerals [e.g. roman as opposed to arabic]
punctuation, accents, hyphens

ae/æ/ę and *AE/Æ/Ē*
i/j and *i/y* and *u/v*
uu/w and *Vu/VV/W* and wynn
þ/ð/th

However, the occurrence of ligatures between letters such as *c + t*, *r + t*, *s + t* need not be indicated in the transcript but should be mentioned in the notes to the alphabet of letter-forms made as a preliminary to the transcription (see above).

6.2.6 The following abbreviations should not be expanded in the transcript, as the contemporary form of the expansion would have varied according to local convention or to dialectal spelling:

7 = OE *and* or *ond* 'and'; also in the compound 7lang = OE *andlang* or *ondlong* 'along'

þ = OE *þæt* or *þet* ME *þat* or *þet* 'it, that, which'.

īhs xp̄s. In the abbreviation for 'Jesus Christ', words which by custom were seldom written out in full, Greek letters were retained by Anglo-Saxon and medieval scribes writing texts in Latin scripts. As there is some uncertainty about what would have been the accepted extension of this abbreviation, in particular whether *cristus* or *christus* would have been thought more correct by any particular scribe, it seems best to leave it unextended in a transcript. See P. Chaplais, 'The Spelling of Christ's Name in Medieval Anglo-Latin: "Christus" or "Cristus" ?', *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 8 (1987), 261-80.

6.2.7 All other abbreviations should be expanded in the transcript, unless there is real ambiguity as to the scribe's intention.

Unambiguous expansions should be indicated by underlining the added letter or letters with a straight line: þonne

On the rare occasions where there is some ambiguity as to the spelling intended by the scribe in the expanded word, a wavy underline should be used under the part that is in doubt: callu

On the even rarer occasions where extension is impossible given the available information, e.g. with some names, a single inverted comma should be placed to show where the abbreviation was marked in the manuscript: Lond'

6.2.8 Interlineations (i.e. words or letters added between the lines of text) should be shown by caret-marks \ / :

dri\h/ten

Cnut \cing/ gret

6.2.9 All incidental notes or comments of one's own should be placed within square brackets and underlined, cf. 6.2.10.

6.2.10 Where a word has been altered in the manuscript by the original scribe, or has been corrected by a contemporary corrector, the altered or corrected reading should be given in the transcript, but precise details of what has occurred should be added within square brackets:

friond [freond, e *subpuncted*, i *written above*]

6.2.11 Where a scribe has inadvertently omitted a letter or word and the missing text is known then it may be supplied in angle brackets:

f<r>eond

Cnut cing <gret> Lyfing arcebisceop

6.2.12 Where damage to the manuscript has caused irretrievable loss of text, this should be indicated in the transcript by the use of square brackets containing a space or, where possible, a dot for each letter calculated to be missing:

[] or [.....]

If it is possible to reconstruct such damaged words with certainty this should also be done within square brackets:

f[r]eo[n]dscepe

The above rules are for the making of transcripts and are to be distinguished from those for editing (cf. 6.3). They are intended to record as much as possible of the external character of the text of individual manuscripts, for the future use and convenience of the transcriber, without going to the extreme of creating an imitative facsimile. Frequently they can save the researcher from the need to make a return visit to a library to check a doubtful or unusual reading.

6.3 FROM TRANSCRIPTION TO EDITION

Some conventional editorial interventions are usually carried out as a secondary stage in the scholarly transmission into print of texts from manuscripts. Simplifications and emendations have to be made to the text as first transcribed (see 6.2), both for reasons of economy, given the modern cost of printing, and in order to standardise the conventions of the manuscript for a wider readership, one used to the orthographic conventions of modern printing. Such modifications should however be kept to a minimum if the character of the original is not to be obscured. Where the edition being produced is part of an ongoing series (such as that of The Early English Text Society) there will naturally have to be conformity with the conventions laid down by the editorial committee of the series. With independent editions however there is more scope for decisions to be made which are particularly appropriate to the characteristics of a specific manuscript. Ideally,

editorial modifications of the character of a manuscript for the reproduction of its text in print should be made sparingly. Justifiable ones include the following: not indicating the extension of standard and non-ambiguous abbreviations; not indicating line-endings; the rearrangement of poetry into verse lines and the addition of line-numbers; modern usage as regards capital letters; the addition of footnotes.

Otherwise, however, the manuscript should be followed as regards the usage of all Old and Middle English letters (including wynn), and medieval punctuation should be reproduced wherever a consistent pattern can be discerned. All such decisions will need to be justified in the editor's introduction.

Further reading:

A.G. Rigg, ed., *Editing Medieval Texts: English, French, and Latin, Written in England* (Toronto, 1977).

Careful attention to the recording of all external features of manuscript books, fragments, and single-sheet documents, as well as to the accurate transcription of the texts they contain, will assist the editor in his or her task. For all those using Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, for whatever purpose, physical clues exist as to the date and provenance of the manuscripts concerned, as well as sometimes to the origin of the text itself. There is a great deal of information on the manuscript page besides the actual words of the text, if it can be interpreted. It cannot even begin to be useful however until it is first noticed and then carefully recorded in ways similar to those suggested above.

Self-Contained Units in Composite Manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Period

P.R. Robinson

Many medieval manuscripts are composite volumes, made up of a number of self-contained units which elsewhere I have called 'booklets'.¹ Such a unit originated as a small but structurally independent production containing a single work or a number of short works. Two of the earliest surviving examples, dating from the late eighth century, were produced on the continent. Each is a single gathering now bound with other gatherings into a codex: Merseburg, MS. Stiftsbibliothek 105, fols. 85-105, containing Alcuin's *Vita S. Vedasti* and some of his homilies, and St Gall, MS. Stiftsbibliothek 567, pp. 135-53, containing a *Vita S. Lucii*.² There is a fold in the centre of every page of both these quires, made after the text had been copied and not present in the other quires with which they are now bound. In both instances the completed quire was folded so that the verso of its last leaf became the outer pages or 'cover' of the resulting booklet. This 'cover' is more soiled than the other pages in the quire, suggesting that the booklet once circulated independently of the other quires in the manuscript into which it is bound. Two such folded booklets have survived from eleventh-century England: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Hatton 115, fols. 140-7, containing a vernacular

¹ P.R. Robinson, 'The "Booklet": a Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts', *Codicologica* 3, ed. A. Grujjs and J. P. Gumbert, *Litterae Textuales* (Leiden, 1980), 46-69.

² Bernhard Bischoff, 'Über gefaltete Handschriften, vornehmlich hagiographischen Inhalts', *Mittelalterliche Studien* 1 (Stuttgart, 1966), 93-100.