TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND THE LITERATURE OF ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND*

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Textual criticism is the process of ascertaining and reproducing what an author wrote. Obviously if the author in question lived in our own times, there is a good likelihood that the author's autograph will survive, and in such a case the process of textual criticism is (relatively) straightforward. As we move back in time, however, that likelihood diminishes: when we reach the Middle Ages, there are some few cases where we still possess autograph copies; but when we reach classical antiquity, there are no examples whatsoever of texts which have been transmitted to us in their authors' own handwriting. For classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, then, the texts which have come down to us have been copied, usually many times. And because copyists are human, they are prone to make errors of many kinds in copying - involuntary errors of omission (caused by eye-skip provoked by homoeoteleuton, etc.) or addition (dittography), of miscomprehension of unfamiliar words and names, or voluntary errors caused by deliberate scribal interference (interpolation, emendation, and so on).¹

Textual criticism therefore becomes, in A.E. Housman's memorable phrase, 'the science of discovering error in texts and the art of removing it'.² It needs hardly to be stressed that the detection of error


is facilitated by thorough understanding of the habits and practices of the scribes who copied manuscripts, whereas the correction of error requires a thorough familiarity with the particular author's style, language and subject-matter, as well as a gift for guessing (the technical term is 'conjecturing') what the author might have written in cases where error in the transmitted text has been detected. The principles according to which these procedures are deployed should, one might think, be of urgent concern not only to all those who edit texts, but also to those who use them, no matter what their field of interest. The literature of Anglo-Saxon England has seen intense editorial activity since the mid-nineteenth century (in the case of Old English texts), and earlier still (in the case of Anglo-Latin texts). Yet, curiously, there has been very little theoretical discussion of the principles according to which these texts are edited, and none whatsoever (as far as I know) of the relationship between the principles followed by those who edit Old English, and those who edit Anglo-Latin, texts – even though, as we know, Latin and Old English texts must often have been composed and copied in the same Anglo-Saxon scriptoria, possibly even by the same persons.

In the absence of such theoretical discussion we are justified, I think, in looking outside the Anglo-Saxon field for guidance. The scholarly edition of classical Latin texts has been in train since the Renaissance, and in England at least there is a well-developed tradition of textual criticism. We may begin by looking briefly at this tradition, and by asking whether the principles pertinent to the edition of classical Latin texts are in any way relevant to editors of Anglo-Saxon literature. The tradition of English textual criticism may be said to begin with Richard Bentley (1662–1742), Master of Trinity College, Cambridge; he is known to students of English literature from the satirical portrait of him as the 'mighty Scholiast' in Pope's Dunciad (iv, 199–238) and through his misguided (so it is thought) attempt to produce an emended text of Milton's Paradise Lost (1732). But this same Bentley is rightly known to classicists as one of the most brilliant and learned textual critics ever produced in these British Isles, 'the innovating genius and founder of the science of historical criticism', 'the greatest scholar that England, or indeed Europe, has ever bred', to quote E.J. Kenney. Bentley's reflections on the principles of textual criticism are found pre-eminently in the introduc-
tion and commentary to his edition of Horace. There he defines the textual critic’s prerequisites as *judicium* (‘judgement’), *sagacitas* (‘per-spicacity’), and ‘a certain skill at conjecture’ – *divinandi quaedam peritia* – which cannot be acquired but must be inborn. In establishing the text of an ancient author, more is to be gained *ex conjectura* than by following doggedly the text as transmitted in manuscript. ‘Do not venerate the scribes alone’, Bentley tells the prospective critic, ‘but dare to think for yourself’ (*noli itaque Librarios solos venerari; sed per te sapere aude*). Bentley’s attitude to the authority of manuscript-witnesses vis-à-vis conjectural emendation is encapsulated in his frequently-quoted dictum: *nobis et ratio et res ipsa centum codicibus potiores sunt* (‘in my view, reason and [knowledge of] the subject-matter have more authority than a hundred manuscripts’). Now it is not entirely fair to Bentley to quote this dictum on its own, without on one hand mentioning the brilliance of some of his emendations, and realizing on the other that Bentley often made considerable efforts to consult the best and earliest manuscripts (this is especially true of his editorial work on Manilius and on the New Testament). After all, Bentley did not have the advantage of using published manuscript catalogues to locate manuscripts of classical authors; it was only during the course of the nineteenth century that such catalogues became available on a large scale (and even today there are many great manuscript depositories which lack any kind of published catalogue), and scholars in Bentley’s day were obliged to acquire such knowledge by word of mouth. Yet it was during Bentley’s lifetime that the

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9 Ibid.

10 Q. Horatius Flaccus, 147 (on Odes III, xxvii, 15). Note also Bentley’s remarks on the relative merits of emendation and the ‘hundred manuscripts’ in his Praefatio: ‘Plura igitur in Horatianis his curis ex conjectura exhibemus, quam ex Codicium subsidio; et, nisi me omnia fallunt, plerumque certiora: nam in variis Lectionibus ipsa saepe auctoritas illudit, et pravae emendaturientium prurigini abblanditur; in conjecturis vero contra omnium Librorum fidem proponendis et timor pudorique aurem vellunt. et sola ratio ac sententiarum lux necessitatque ipsa dominantur. Quid quod, si ex uno alterove Codice discrepantem aliis scripturam expromas, frustra es si unico duobusve testibus adversus centum fidem facere postulas; nisi tot argumentis muniveris, quae vel sola pene sine Codicis testimonio ei rei probandae sufficere possint’.

11 Note also that Bentley concluded his dictum by adding the words, ‘particularly if supported by the ancient Vatican manuscript’ (*praesertim accedente Vaticani veteris suffragw*); cf. Kenney, *The Classical Text*, 71–2, and Brink, *English Classical Scholarship*, 71. On the brilliance of some of Bentley’s emendations to Horace, see Brink, *Ibid.*, 69–71.


13 There are some interesting remarks by Kenney (*The Classical Text*, 86–94) on manuscript catalogues and their use by textual critics.
science of palaeography was founded: Jean Mabillon's *De re diplomatica* (1681), the fifth book of which contained examples of script dating from the fourth century to the fifteenth, thus provided a framework for estimating the date and origin of a manuscript; and Bernard de Montfaucon, in his *Palaeographia Graeca* of 1708, first coined the word 'palaeography'. If not Bentley himself, at least Bentley's successors would have been in a position to draw on the ever-increasing gains of palaeography; on the whole, however, their preference has been for Bentley's *ratio et res ipsa* rather than the witness of his hundred manuscripts.

Of Bentley's twentieth-century successors, the most brilliant and most widely venerated is A.E. Housman (1859–1936). Housman greatly admired Bentley, and his admiration is most clearly expressed in the preface to his edition of Manilius, an author on whom Bentley had laboured. There Housman applauded 'the firm strength and piercing edge and arrowy swiftness of his intellect', and it was these qualities above all others which Housman regarded as indispensable for the textual critic. Let me quote the words with which Housman concluded his famous lecture on 'The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism':

Textual criticism, like most other sciences, is an aristocratic affair, not communicable to all men, nor to most men. Not to be a textual critic is no reproach to anyone, unless he pretends to be what he is not. To be a textual critic requires aptitude for thinking and willingness to think; and though it also requires other things, those things are supplements and cannot be substitutes. Knowledge is good, method is good, but one thing beyond all others is necessary; and that is to have a head, not a pumpkin, on your shoulders, and brains, not pudding, in your head.

One of the 'supplements' in question is palaeography; but, as Housman made clear at the beginning of the same lecture, palaeography with its hundred manuscripts is no substitute for, and no equal partner with, *ratio et res ipsa*: 'Palaeography is one of the things with which a textual critic needs to acquaint himself, but grammar is another, and equally indispensable, and no amount either of grammar or of palaeography will teach a man one scrap of textual criticism'. Such a view implies a certain contempt for manuscripts. Certainly Housman

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18 Ibid., 1058; cf. 954: 'Professor Lindsay says in *C.Q.*, xi, 41 that with the help of the *Thesaurus* Latin scholarship is now becoming easy, and that textual emendation will become equally easy when certain advances have been made in palaeography. No advance in palaeography will ever make textual emendation easy, because textual emendation depends much less on palaeography than on several other things, the chief of which is the textual emendator'.
himself seems seldom to have consulted manuscripts in the flesh. Even when embarking on his edition of Manilius, the text of which rests mainly on only three manuscripts, Housman was content to rely on collations made by others. In this respect Housman had scarcely advanced beyond Bentley, though he was a contemporary of Léopold Delisle (1826–1910) and Ludwig Traube (1861–1907). However, my object is not to quibble about Housman’s knowledge of, or esteem for, palaeography; rather, it is to suggest that Housman’s very great prestige among English-speaking editors of classical Latin texts has encouraged in them an unfortunate contempt for manuscripts and palaeography. A good example of this contempt may be seen in James Willis’s *Latin Textual Criticism*, published as recently as 1972. Willis sets out consciously to emulate Housman’s acerbic style, but he goes well beyond Housman in his contempt for the evidence of manuscripts as transmitted to us by medieval scribes, who are referred to in general by him as ‘monastic blockheads’, or caricatured as ‘the abbot of Eselsthal’, his ‘brother of Affengarten’, or as ‘Hucbald of Hamm and Gengulphus of Gravesend’. For Willis, as for Housman before him, palaeography has nothing to do with the true business of textual criticism:

To the textual critic, a manuscript is of interest only as a vehicle of readings. With its age indeed, as making it impossible that it is a copy of a known younger manuscript, he may be concerned, but with the story of how it was written at Lorsch or at Reichenau, later belonged to St. Gall, was acquired by Poggio in 1427 and rebound at Clermont-Ferrand in 1763, he has no more to do than with the travels of Marco Polo; he may study these subjects as things interesting and worthy of attention in themselves, but not as a help to establishing the text of a Latin author. To be able to read and collate a manuscript accurately is enough for his needs; for its date and provenance, if he is prudent and modest, he will seek the expert advice of a Mynors or a Bischoff.

To medievalists, for whom the handling of manuscripts has often to be a daily affair, this disdain for them as physical objects must seem
excessive. However, my intention is not to polemicize this English tradition of textual criticism, but rather to ask what it can teach us about the editing of Anglo-Saxon texts. I pause only to remark that there may be some arguable defence for the traditional contempt of palaeography, in that no transmissional history of a classical Latin text can be shown to go back beyond the fifth century AD, that all surviving manuscripts normally descend from one or more late antique archetypes which in themselves were already demonstrably corrupt, and that where recensio fails resort must perforce be made to emendatio.

I have dealt at length with this English tradition of textual criticism because, largely through the brilliance of its principal proponents, the merits of conjectural emendation seem to have gained favour at the expense of palaeography and manuscript studies. Certainly it is for the practice of conjectural emendation that English textual criticism enjoys its international reputation. But is it true that manuscript studies have no more to do with textual criticism than 'the travels of Marco Polo'? I, for one, am unclear as to how errors in a transmissional history – which will inevitably have resulted when (say) a text in Insular cursive miniscule was copied by a later continental scribe unfamiliar with the conventions of Insular script – could be detected and rectified by an editor unfamiliar with Insular script and its peculiar scribal conventions. Again, if we know on palaeographical grounds that two manuscripts of a classical text were written at (say) Lorsch in the early ninth century, we have independent grounds for investigating their relationship carefully; or if a manuscript was owned by (say) Poggio, the annotations and variae lectiones which his (and other humanist) manuscripts attracted will require special attention. In any event, it is only in the English-speaking world that manuscript studies are held in such contempt by textual critics; elsewhere, a thorough knowledge of manuscripts and the cultural contexts which produced them is recognized as an indispensable part of the textual critic's discipline: to quote Giorgio Pasquali (than whom no greater in this domain), 'the best editor of a Latin author transmitted in medieval or post-medieval manuscripts will be the one who knows the Middle Ages and Renaissance as well as he knows his


25 See, e.g., A. Salvatore, Edizione Critica e Critica del Testo (Rome, 1983), 27: 'Si nota oggi, soprattutto in certa critica anglosassone, che pure occupa un posto di prim'ordine nel campo dei nostri studi, una eccessiva disponibilità a ricorrere ad emendamenti, talora anche brillanti ed in apparenza felici, ma che, ad un esame più approfondito, risultano ingiustificati'.

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author and his times and the language of his times'.

Few editors could meet such exacting standards as these, but one who undoubtedly did was Wallace Martin Lindsay (1858–1937), known to classicists for his editions of Plautus, Terence and Martial, and to medievalists for his editions of Isidore and the Latin glossaries. Not only did Lindsay have an unrivalled knowledge of Latin, but he acquired a knowledge of manuscripts and palaeography to the extent that his works on Irish minuscule, Welsh minuscule and manuscript abbreviations have not yet been superseded. In effect Lindsay, with his precise philology and incomparable knowledge of manuscripts, supplies the most helpful model for the prospective editor of medieval Latin texts; but Lindsay never wrote at length on the principles and theory of textual criticism, and in the void of his silence, Bentley, Housman and their followers – with their disrespect and contempt for manuscript study – have held sway. We must now turn to Anglo-Saxon England, and ask in what ways the text-critical principles enunciated by (what one might call) the Bentleian tradition are relevant to the edition of Anglo-Latin texts.

At the very outset of his enterprise, the prospective editor of an Anglo-Latin text will be forced to reckon with manuscripts, not with pre-existing printed editions, of the text which he has chosen to edit. Whereas the classicist begins as a matter of course with a printed edition, against which he collates such manuscripts as he deems appropriate by entering their readings in the margin, so as ultimately


29 As is clear from his massive – and still quoted – work, The Latin Language (Oxford, 1894).

30 Early Irish Minuscule Script (Oxford, 1910); Early Welsh Script (Oxford, 1912); and Notae Latinae (Cambridge, 1915; with supplement by D. Bains, Cambridge, 1936).

31 His brief treatise, An Introduction to Latin Textual Emendation (London, 1896), together with ‘A New Clue to the Emendation of Latin Texts’, Classical Philology, 11 (1916), 270–7, deal with particular examples of textual corruption, not with the principles of textual criticism; see, however, his brief note on ‘Transmission of Texts’, Palaeographia Latina, 2 (1923), 53–5, which contains some brilliantly barbed remarks on the ‘feet-on-the-hob’ school of textual criticism, and deserves to be better known.

to produce a printer’s copy, the Anglo-Latinist must in most cases go directly to the manuscripts, for the obvious reason that very few Anglo-Latin texts exist in satisfactory editions. With few exceptions, most Anglo-Latin texts are available— if at all— only in nineteenth-century editions: those of Giles, those in the Rolls Series, and so on. Not infrequently, these texts are of such abysmal quality that they cannot be used for any serious scholarly purpose, let alone as the basis for collation (as I found to my cost when I began using Whitaker’s early nineteenth-century [1809] text as the basis for a projected edition of the *Vita Prima S. Neoti*). Even in cases where good texts exist, as with Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, the edition of which was put on a sound footing by John Smith in 1722 and subsequently confirmed by Charles Plummer (1896) and R.A.B. Mynors (1969), much can still be done by direct recourse to the manuscripts on which these editions were based, rather than to the editions themselves.

In any event, as soon as one turns to the manuscripts of medieval Latin texts, a host of editorial problems arises which can be solved only by palaeographical skill and experience. As we have seen, no classical Latin text survives in a manuscript which antedates the fifth century AD, and hence in most cases some four centuries have elapsed between the author and the earliest surviving witness to his text. In the case of medieval Latin authors, however, we frequently have surviving manuscripts coeval with the author, sometimes even autographs. But

33 The most noteworthy exceptions are Rudolf Ehwald’s edition of Aldhelm (1919), Ernst Dümmer’s of the Alcuin correspondence (1895) and Alcuin’s verse (1881), Michael Tangl’s of the Bonifatian correspondence (1916), Wilhelm Levison’s of the Bonifatian hagiography (1905), M.L.W. Laistner’s of Bede’s comments on Acts (1939) and C.W. Jones’s of Bede’s computistical works (1943). These editions will stand for the foreseeable future.


35 In making collations for our new edition of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (for the Fondazione Lorenzo Valla), which is to be based solely on the Moore and Leningrad manuscripts, David Dumville and I have noticed a surprising number of instances where the manuscripts and the received text are in disagreement; we hope eventually to publish a full collation.


how do we identify an autograph manuscript? It is not always sufficient to follow James Willis’s counsel and 'seek the expert advice of a Mynors or a Bischoff'. There are cases where even the greatest palaeographers have failed to reach unanimity on whether a manuscript is autograph. Take the case of the 'Leningrad Bede': in the late 1950s E.A. Lowe argued on apparently decisive grounds that the colophon to this manuscript was written by Bede himself; but it was only through the complex and complementary arguments of David Wright and Paul Meyvaert that the colophon was judged to be a medieval forgery. The competent editor of Bede’s Historia Ecclesiastica would be required to adjudicate for himself the palaeographical arguments in favour of the two opposing positions. Or, again, take the question of the annotations by a distinctive Irish scribe in various early manuscripts of the writings of John Scottus Eriugena, especially his Periphyseon. The importance of these annotations was first noted by Traube in 1906, who referred to them as 'I'; E.K. Rand subsequently demonstrated that 'I' was in fact the work of two similar scribes (now renamed 'I1' and 'I2'), and in 1975 T.A.M. Bishop established on palaeographical grounds that the annotations of 'I1' are almost certainly autograph notes by John Scottus himself. Needless to say, this identification has far-reaching implications for the way in which the text of the Periphyseon is to be edited, and these implications have not yet been fully worked out.

The manuscripts of Bede and John Scottus attract attention because they are two of the best-known authors of the early Middle Ages; but with lesser-known authors the problems of identifying autographs are equally severe. Take the case of Frithegod, a Frankish

particular the observation (424, n. 6): 'Was fehlt, ist nur eine genaue Bestimmung der Kriterien, die beim Nachweis der verschiedenen Arten von Originalhss. des Mittelalters jeweils anzulegen sind'.

38 The possibility that the 'Leningrad Bede' bore Bede's 'signature' was first mooted by E.A. Lowe, 'An Autograph of the Venerable Bede?', Revue Bénédictine, 68 (1958), 200-2. His arguments were accepted at first by D. Misonne ('Famulus Christi: à Propos d’un Autographe de Bede le Vénérable', Revue Bénédictine, 69 (1959), 97-9) and P. Meyvaert ('Colophons dans les Manuscrits de Bede', Revue Bénédictine, 69 (1959), 100-1); but subsequent analysis of scribal practice in the manuscript by D.H. Wright ('The Date of the Leningrad Bede', Revue Bénédictine, 71 (1961), 265-73) and P. Meyvaert, ('The Bede “Signature” in the Leningrad Colophon', Revue Bénédictine, 71 (1961), 274-86) indicated that Lowe's identification was untenable. The question was reviewed by M. Bévenot, 'Towards the Dating of the Leningrad Bede', Scriptorium, 16 (1962), 365-9; and see now M.B. Parkes, The Scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow, Jarrow Lecture (1982), 5, and the opinion of Bernhard Bischoff there cited.


42 Insufficient account of the annotations of I1 was taken in the edition of the first three books of the Periphyseon by I.P Sheldon-Williams, Scriptores Latinii Hiberniae 7, 9 and 11 (Dublin, 1968-81), but the edition of Books IV and V of the Periphyseon, being prepared by Edouard Jeaneau for the same series, will remedy this defect.
poet resident at Canterbury in the mid-tenth century, where he composed his *Breuiloquium Vitae Wilfridi*, a hexametrical version of Stephen of Ripon's earlier prose Life of St Wilfrid. The *Breuiloquium* survives in three manuscripts, all of them datable on palaeographical grounds to the later tenth century, and all arguably coeval therefore with the author himself. Of the three, one (called by editors 'C') presents a text which was subjected to extensive revision by its principal scribe (there are some eighty corrections over erasures throughout the poem). Where the text before erasure can be read (under ultraviolet light), it agrees exactly with that of another manuscript now in Leningrad (L). Many of the scribal corrections in C were evidently made for the sake of metre, or for incorporating into the text clever and difficult neologisms (neologism, especially based on Greek elements, is the most characteristic feature of Frithegod's diction). Given that the manuscripts are coeval with the poet, it could be argued that L and C (before revision) represent a first draft of a poem which was subsequently improved metrically and stylistically by the poet himself; in other words, that C is Frithegod's autograph. Such an hypothesis will explain most of the alterations in C, but it will not explain them all. There is one passage, for example, where both C and L agree in offering a text which (to me at least) is incomprehensible:

*dulso coenosi lichinos audititidestos* (1.1118)

The scribe of C - arguably Frithegod himself - made corrections to the two immediately preceding lines, but left this one alone. If C is an autograph manuscript, we are obliged to assume that *audititidestos* is a (Greek?) neologism which had some meaning for the poet but one that no subsequent editor has been able to divine; if, on the other hand, *audititidestos* is a scribal corruption, then C cannot be an autograph, and the next editor of Frithegod will be obliged to resort to conjecture to explain what the corruption conceals. In my view the matter can only be decided - if at all - by close attention to the practice of the principal (and correcting) scribe of C. Here is a case where palaeography and textual criticism are inseparable.

The alterations in this manuscript of Frithegod are one example of a situation which (in my experience) is fairly widespread in the

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43 For details of the matter discussed in this paragraph, see M. Lapidge, 'A Frankish Scholar in Tenth-Century England: Frithegod of Canterbury/Fredegaud of Brioude', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 17 (1988), 45–65; as well as the earlier study by D.C.C. Young, 'Author's Variants and Interpretations in Frithegod', *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi*, 25 (1955), 71–98. Of the manuscripts in question, C = London, BL MS Cott. Claudius A.i, fos. 5–36, and L = Leningrad Public Library MS O.v.XIV.1; the most recent edition is that of A. Campbell, *Frithegoi Monachi Breuiloquium Vitae Beati Wilfridi et Wulfstani Cantoris Narratio Metrica de Sancto Swithuno* (Zürich, 1950), 1–62. Campbell's text is based on L; he regarded the alterations in C not as the autograph corrections of the poet himself, but as the work of a foolish scribe whom he referred to as 'ille omnium mortalium stultissimus' (viii)!
transmissional histories of Insular Latin authors: namely, that the manuscripts frequently present unambiguous evidence of authorial revision. Authors in classical antiquity no doubt revised their texts on occasion, and more than one authorial version of a text may often have been in circulation at any one time; the problem once again is that we have no manuscripts coeval with the authors, and it is exceedingly difficult to identify authorial revision when the earliest manuscripts are many centuries later than the author.\textsuperscript{44} But when in the case of medieval texts we do have manuscripts coeval with their authors, such revision may in theory be identifiable.\textsuperscript{45} Bede, for example, evidently made a number of minor alterations to his \textit{Historia Ecclesiastica}: the \textit{m}-tradition (the Leningrad and Moore manuscripts, both earlier eighth-century, and their progeny) has a miracle concerning St Oswald (iv, 14) which is not found in the \textit{c}-tradition (headed by two later eighth-century manuscripts), as well as some corrections of minor inconsistencies, suggesting that \textit{m} represents a later stage of Bede’s work on the text than does \textit{c}.\textsuperscript{46} Similarly, it is possible to see two stages of Bede’s work on his text of the metrical \textit{Vita S. Cuthberti}: an early stage (represented uniquely by a manuscript now in Besançon, and not yet printed), and a later stage which was revised by the mature poet in order to remove metrical infelicities, and which is represented by all the remaining manuscripts.\textsuperscript{47} Another example of a text which, to judge from manuscript transmission, apparently underwent several stages of revision at its author’s own hands, is Wulfstan of Winchester’s \textit{Vita S. Æthelwoldi}, written probably in 996 or shortly thereafter. The details are not important;\textsuperscript{48} what is important to remark is that the manuscript transmission reflects a text in flux – a text which the author evidently tinkered with in minor ways over a period of time. That we are able to detect such authorial tinkering, even in manuscripts dating from a century or so later than the author, suggests that as editors we

\textsuperscript{44} There are some brilliant pages on this subject by Pasquali, \textit{Storia della Tradizione e Critica del Testo}, 397–465: see also H. Emonds, \textit{Zwette Aufgabe im Altertum} (Leipzig, 1941), and M.D. Reeve, ‘Author’s Variants in Longus?’, \textit{Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society}, 15 (1969), 75–85; at 75, n. 1.

\textsuperscript{45} Cf. the remarks of Orlandi, ‘Problemi di ecdotica alto-medievale’, 340.


\textsuperscript{48} The text survives in five manuscripts, none earlier than the twelfth century, and in a number of indirect witnesses, including redactions made by Ælfric in the early eleventh century, and Orderic Vitalis in the early twelfth. These witnesses allow us to glimpse three separate stages of work on the text: stage 1, which in its c. 12 contains a vicious remark concerning the drinking habits of the (Scandinavian?) Northumbrians, and which is represented by two manuscripts and by Ælfric; stage 2, to which Wulfstan added chapter (c. 40) concerning the dedication of the Old Minster, Winchester, and which is witnessed solely in Orderic’s redaction; and stage 3, in which Wulfstan toned down the remark about the Northumbrians but retained the chapter on the Old Minster, and which is represented by all the remaining manuscripts. See M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom (ed.), \textit{Wulfstan of Winchester: The Life of St Æthelwold}, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1991), clxxii–clxxxv.
should always be on the lookout for similar authorial intervention, above all when we are dealing with manuscripts coeval with the author. The point may be illustrated by a poem *De Libero Arbitrio* which was composed (probably by one Lantfred) at Winchester in the later tenth century, and which is preserved uniquely in a manuscript written there near the end of that century (and probably during the author's lifetime). The text of the poem is accompanied at some places by what appear to be interlinear glosses:

\[\text{uel circumdare} \]
\[\text{rex quia quem celsi nequeunt concludere caeli (1.61)}\]

\[\text{uel multis} \]
\[\text{hic caesus diris uibicibus atque flagellis (1.85)}\]

In the first example, *circumdare* could be reckoned a gloss to *concludere*, added by a scribe to elucidate a slightly opaque expression of the poet's; but in the second example, *multis* is in no sense an explanatory gloss on *diris*. Note also that in each case the synonym is metrically equivalent to the word in the text. I wonder, therefore, if the added words were not intended by the poet himself as metrical alternatives: that they reflect the poet tinkering in a minor way with his text, rather than the inept efforts of a later scribe to understand it. The manuscript is not autograph (it contains substantial corruption); but it is coeval with the author, and the 'glosses' or 'metrical equivalents' could have been copied from the autograph. The point is simply that the editor of an Insular Latin text must scrutinize and evaluate every aspect of the manuscript which he is using, even its apparently innocuous apparatus of glossing. To do so, he must have some experience in palaeography.

Authorial revision leads us to consider another way in which certain Insular Latin texts are different from those of classical antiquity. Texts transmitted from antiquity were normally treated with respect by medieval scribes as being somehow fixed in their form and wording; rarely if ever would a medieval scribe presume to revise the text (say) of Vergil or Lucan in the way we have seen Bede and Frithegod and Wulfstan revising their texts. With certain classes of medieval text, however, the opposite is true: every time the text was

49 The poem is ed. M. Lapidge, 'Three Latin Poems from Æthelwold's School at Winchester', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 1 (1972), 85–137, at 126–37; the examples are from 130.

50 A similar case could be made for the glosses which accompany the text of Wulfstan's *Narratio Metrica de S. Swathuno* in BL MS Royal 15.C.VII. Although in this case the glosses are not metrically equivalent to the words which they explain, the manuscript was apparently written at the Old Minster, Winchester, in or shortly after 996, at a time when Wulfstan was precentor there. The manuscript was probably copied under his supervision, therefore, and the glosses may be his.
copied, the scribe altered it to his (or his institution's) requirements. This is particularly the case with liturgical texts. Because religious observance varied from country to country, and indeed from church to church, liturgical books were adapted to local use while they were being copied. The result is that no two service books are ever identical.\(^{51}\) The modern editor of (say) a sacramentary will be able to establish that his text belongs broadly to such-and-such a class of sacramentaries ('Old' Gelasian; Eighth-century Gelasian; Gregorian of the *Hadrianum ex authentico*, or whatever), and will be able to note parallels with and divergencies from other sacramentaries; but it would be an absurdity for him to attempt a critical edition, drawing on manuscript variants to construct an archetype, and so on.\(^{52}\) The same is true of other types of medieval text, especially those which were used for teaching purposes, such as glossaries or colloquies, where again each scribe would feel at liberty to add or delete whatever suited his purposes. We are therefore justified in speaking of 'families' of glossaries, such as (say) the 'Leiden-family glossaries' (to take an early Anglo-Saxon example),\(^{53}\) but it would be impracticable to try to edit a family of glossaries as if they were copies of a stable text whose relationships could be illustrated by a *stemma codicum*. Certain kinds of historical text (annal-collections above all, but other types of historical compilation as well) were prone to redaction. A good example is the *Historia Brittonum*, written originally in Gwynedd in 829–30 but which has come down to us in nine distinct recensions of dates varying from the ninth century to the fourteenth,\(^{54}\) none of which represents the original in its pristine form. In the late nineteenth century, Theodor Mommsen (acting under the impulse to *recensio*) attempted to represent these distinct recensions as a single text with a single *apparatus criticus*:\(^{55}\) with dire results. The most recent editor of the

\(^{51}\) See F.L. Cross, 'Early Western Liturgical Manuscripts', *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 16 (1965), 61–7, esp. 64: 'So far from early liturgical manuscripts issuing from archetypes, for centuries each liturgical book was unique. *Quos codices tot liturgiae*! The highest aim of every compiler of a liturgical text was to improve on his predecessor. I know of no better illustration of this variety than a cursory survey of the very large number of Missals and Sacramentaries described by Adalbert Ebner in his *Iter Italicum* or by Victor Leroquais in his splendid volumes on the Sacramentaries and Psalters in the Public Libraries in France. No two are alike. Liturgical books in this respect may be compared with church buildings, or with works of art, or, in another field, with fashions in clothes. There are certainly styles - Romanesque, Baroque, and so on - but, within each style, each item is different, and purposely different'.

\(^{52}\) Cf. J. Deshusses, *Le Sacramentaire Grégorien* (2nd edn., Fribourg, 1979), 75, who says of his edition that 'elle voudrait offrir au liturgiste la possibilité réelle d'entrer en contact avec les manuscrits grégoriens du IXe siècle, sans leur substituer, si peu que ce soit, les points de vue subjectifs de l'éditeur ... C'est pourquoi on ne trouvera pas ici une édition proprement critique, où l'éditeur proposerait et justifierait ses déductions quant au texte originel, etc.'

\(^{53}\) See M. Lapidge, 'The School of Theodore and Hadrian', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 15 (1986), 45–72, at 67–72, for a list of manuscripts of this 'family'

\(^{54}\) See M. Lapidge and R. Sharpe, *A Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature 400–1200* (Dublin, 1985), 42–5 (nos. 127–34) for a list of the various recensions (but note that this list does not, of course, take account of recensions which must be posited to explain the existing texts).

\(^{55}\) MGH, Auct. Antiq. 13 (1894–98), 111–222.
Historia Brittonum, David Dumville, has chosen the more sensible and appropriate course of editing each of the nine recensions separately: a choice which properly reflects an awareness of the difference between classical and medieval texts, as they were treated by medieval scribes. In making this point I do not wish to enter the acrimonious debate between Professors Hall and Rigg on the propriety of printing so-called ‘scribal versions’ of medieval texts, save to say that the ‘scribal versions’ advocated by Professor Rigg seem to me to be most appropriate in some of the cases I have mentioned (liturgical books or glossaries, for example) where the text is not fixed and where each scribe is in effect the author of the redaction or ‘scribal version’ he is copying. However, in cases where the text is fixed and where scribes are doing their best to reproduce what they have before them, then I believe – with Professor Hall – that it is the duty of the textual critic to ascertain as well as he can the words of the author lying behind the reproductions of the medieval scribes.

Modern editors who wish to represent what a classical Latin author wrote have the disadvantage that there are no autograph manuscripts of classical texts, or even manuscripts coeval with their authors. However, they have one inestimable advantage which editors of medieval Latin texts unfortunately lack: namely the assurance that their authors wrote correct Latin. If the manuscripts transmit a text of an ancient author which contains grammatical blunders or (in the case of poetry) faults of scansion, the text can be emended according to the editor’s sense of what constitutes ‘correct’ grammar or ‘correct’ metre.

56 See D.N. Dumville, The Historia Brittonum, 3: The ‘Vatican’ Recension (Cambridge, 1985), vii: ‘A single variorum edition would require more than editorial and typographical conventions could hope to deliver and more than the patience – or indeed sanity – of editor and readers could bear. It has therefore seemed appropriate to publish critical editions of the individual recensions. . . .’


58 Cf. Rigg, ‘Medieval Latin’, 121–2: ‘We must also recognize the fluidity of medieval texts. Scribes were not necessarily trying to preserve and pass on to posterity an intact and uncorrupted sacred text; often, they treated it as a living work . . . I am asking for more respect for the scribe and for each individual manuscript: we should accept the scribe’s orthography . . . We should accept his carefully produced texts, not as pieces of evidence from which to restore something else . . . but as the product of a creative and intelligent craftsman’.

59 Cf. Hall, ‘The Editing and Emendation of Medieval Latin Texts’, 456: ‘The editors of TMLT say in effect that they do not give a hang if they do misrepresent the authors whose works they edit, and, because the authors are long since dead and their works are in Latin, they presumably expect that no-one will be offended by their uncritical conduct or care to lodge a protest on behalf of the misrepresented authors . . . those authors might at least expect that editors would feel under an obligation to do the decent thing and endeavour to restore to them the words they actually wrote, not the rehash of one of their copyists. At the root of such obligation and such endeavour is the cardinal principle of textual criticism, respect for the truth . . .’
the assumption being that ancient authors, insofar as they were native speakers of Latin, would have been incapable of committing errors of the sort I have mentioned. For medieval authors, who were not native speakers of Latin, this assumption is no longer valid, and the editor of medieval Latin texts has frequently to reckon with the possibility that an error in the transmitted text may in fact be what the author wrote. I shall attempt to illustrate this problem by considering two areas where the editor of a medieval Latin text has little guidance: orthography and grammar.

First, I will consider orthography. Although for classical Latin authors we have no autograph manuscripts, it is possible nevertheless to form some notion of ‘standard’ Latin orthography (of the Imperial period at least) from the writings of various Latin grammarians on orthography. Classical editors are unanimous in restoring this standard orthography to texts of the Imperial period, no matter what spellings they find in medieval manuscripts. For medieval Latin authors there is no standard orthography, for the obvious reasons that in the Middle Ages Latin was learned as a foreign language and that, after the collapse of central Roman government, there were no trained grammatici to teach ‘standard’ orthography. Medieval Latin orthography was often chaotic, therefore, and it is clear that any author who thought about such things was obliged to devise his own spelling conventions, modelling them as best he could on what he understood of ancient (or even contemporary) practice. Bede, for example, was concerned as a schoolmaster with orthographical matters, and his treatise De Orthographia was apparently intended to provide for scribes in his monastery a reference book which they could consult in cases of doubt. One matter which must frequently have occasioned

60 The ‘standard’ orthography used by editors of classical Latin texts is – to some extent at least – merely a convention adopted by Latinists. The conventions were worked out last century by W. Brambach, Die Neugestaltung der lateinischen Orthographic in ihrem Verhaltnis zur Schule (Leipzig, 1868); cf. also his Hilfsbuchlein fur lateinische Rechtschreibung (Leipzig, 1876), and were adopted, for example, by Lewis and Short in A Latin Dictionary (1879). But the conventions are merely that, and there has been considerable discussion about their validity: see R. Sabbadini, ‘L’Anomalia e l’Analogia nell’Ortografia Latina’, Revista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica, 31 (1903), 19–45; A. Meillet, ‘Le Probleme de l’Orthographie Latine’, Recue des Etudes Latines, 2 (1924), 28–34; J. J. Delgado, ‘La Ortographia Latina: su Problematica y su Possible Restauracion’, Helmantica, 7 (1956), 209–59, and Idem, ‘De Orthographia Latina’, Helmantica, 9 (1958), 223–92. There is a useful bibliography on the subject by D. G. Brearley, ‘Texts and Studies in Latin Orthography to 1977’, Classical World, 72 (1979), 385–92 (which however omits the fundamental article by Sabbadini).


doubt is the question of assimilation of nasals and consonants. Bede
gives clear instructions on this matter at various points of his treatise. I
give one example: 63

Imputribile per .m. scribendum, non per .n.; impono similiter et huiusmodi similia;
immitto non inmitto; irrigo non inrigo; impleo non inpleo; immundus non inmundus.

This example is clear enough, and permits us to deduce the principle
underlying it: -nm- is always assimilated to -mm-, -np- to -mp- and -nr-
to -rr-. The question for the prospective editor of one of Bede’s works,
however, is whether Bede always followed this principle in practice.
Although we have no autograph manuscript of Bede, we have two
manuscripts of the Historia Ecclesiastica which were copied within a
few years of Bede’s death, one at least (the ‘Leningrad Bede’) in his
own scriptorium. 64 What is immediately striking about these manu­
scripts is that they do not follow Bede’s orthographical principle
concerning assimilation of nasals. Of the six specific examples cited by
Bede himself I note that: imputribile does not occur in HE; impono
occurs 15 times, always spelled inp-; immitto occurs 4 times, always
spelled inm-. irrigo occurs once, spelled irr-. impleo occurs 27 times,
spelled imp- 13 times but inp- 14 times; and immundus occurs 6 times,
always spelled inm-. What does the editor do with this information?
Did Bede break his own rules? Did inattentive scribes alter Bede’s
own carefully devised orthography, in which case it would be the
editor’s duty to restore it? 65 Given the date and orthographical
consistency of the manuscripts, I incline to think that Bede did not
practise what he recommended in his orthographical treatise. My
point is simply that the editor of a medieval Latin author must do his
best to determine his author’s orthographical practices. 66

In cases where we have autograph manuscripts, the matter is
relatively straightforward. For example, in the autograph copy of his

63 De Orthographia, ed. Jones, 30. There is no precise source known for Bede’s statement, and
it may be his own; but cf. analogous statements in the ‘Orthographia Bernensis II’, Grammatici
manuscript).

64 On the origin and production of the ‘Leningrad Bede’, see Parkes, The Scriptorium of
Wearmouth-Jarrow, 6–12.

65 An interesting attempt was made to edit the Historia Ecclesiastica according to the
principles stated in Bede’s De Orthographia by A. Holder, in the series Germanischer
Bücherschatz 7 (Freiburg, 1882); cf. 311: ‘Leider ist der Codex [sicl. the ‘Moore Bede’] nicht in
des Verfassers eigener Orthographie niedergeschrieben; deswirde daher, soweit die in Bedae liber
de orthographia . . . mitgeteilten Beispiele ausreichen, in vorliegende Ausgabe eingeführt’.

66 The point was made powerfully by N. Fickermann in his appraisal of the MGH edition
(1935) of the Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg: ‘. . . der Text auch in Grammatik und
Orthographie dem Original des Autors entsprechen bzw. so hergestellt sein müsse, daß er nach
dem handschriftlichen Material als ihm wenigstens nahekommend angesehen werden kann . . .
Die Sprache eines Autors muß also als historisches Faktum begriffen und respektiert werden’
(‘Thietmar von Merseburg in der lateinischen Sprachtradition. Für eine sprachgerechtere
Edition seiner Chronik’, Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Osteuropas, 6 (1957), 21–76,
at 21).
Gesta Pontificum (Oxford, Magdalen College Latin MS 172), William of Malmesbury consistently uses -t- rather than -c- before -i- with a following vowel, so as to produce spellings which (from the point of view of classical Latin orthography at least) look decidedly odd: aditiens, conuitium, defitiens, dultius, iuditium, Mertia, offitium, perties, prouintia, and so on. However odd these spellings may appear, they are undoubtedly William’s. But should an editor of another of William’s works which survives only in later, scribal copies, apply William’s orthographical principle throughout? I believe he should. But the matter is less straightforward when there is no autograph manuscript to offer guidance. Wulfstan of Winchester’s Vita S. Æthelwooldi survives in five manuscripts, none earlier than the twelfth century and all reflecting (as one might expect) Norman orthographical practice. Although we have no manuscript which is certainly Wulfstan’s autograph, there are two manuscripts which were probably written for his use at the Old Minster, Winchester. 67 In our edition of the Vita S. Æthelwooldi, therefore, Michael Winterbottom and I have chosen the expedient of adopting the orthographical practices of these two manuscripts in preference to that of the twelfth-century manuscripts which actually preserve the work. More problematical still is Byrhtferth of Ramsey, whose floruit fell in the early eleventh century, but whose works survive only in manuscripts of the later eleventh and twelfth centuries. 68 In all these manuscripts, written at various places and times by various scribes, there are certain recurrent and eccentric spellings which can be explained only as deriving from Byrhtferth himself: prefatus spelled with -ph- (prephatus), multipharius by analogy, and — apparently on the same eccentric principle — nemphe with -ph- (nemphe). It is not easy to deduce what the principle may have been: a misguided theory that dari and its compounds derived from Greek φαίνομαι, perhaps. But what does the editor do when he finds (say) the word prefatus spelled ‘correctly’ in one of the manuscripts? Restore prephatus, on the grounds that a later scribe has failed to understand Byrhtferth’s eccentric orthographical principle and has silently corrected to prefatus? Such an editorial ‘emendation’ — that of restoring prephatus to the text in lieu of prefatus — would strike a classicist with horror, no doubt, but it would arguably represent what Byrhtferth wrote.

67 BL MS Royal 15.C.VII (on which see above, n. 50) and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 473. The possibility that the latter is an autograph of Wulfstan was first suggested by A.E. Planchart, The Repertory of Tropes of Winchester, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ, 1977), i, 32–3 (who identifies Scribe II as Wulfstan).

68 On the canon of Byrhtferth’s Latin writings, see M. Lapidge, ‘Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the Early Sections of the Historia Regum attributed to Symeon of Durham’, Anglo-Saxon England, 10 (1982), 97–122. The principal manuscripts are: BL MS Cott. Nero E. i, pt 1 (Worcester, s. ximed: Vita S. Oswaldi and Vita S. Ecgwine); Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 328 (unknown English origin, s. ximed: Enchiridion); Oxford, St John’s College MS 17 (Thorney, AD 1110: Epistolæ); and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 139 (Sawley, A.D. 1164: Historia Regum).
Let us now turn to editorial problems pertaining to the grammar of medieval Latin authors. A brief illustration will show the sort of problem which frequently confronts the prospective editor. In a Latin poem composed at Llanbadarn Fawr in west Wales in the late years of the eleventh century, Ieuán ap Sulien commemorated in verse the achievements of his illustrious father Sulien, sometime bishop of St Davids; near the end of the poem Ieuán names himself (Iohannes is Latin for Ieuán) and asks his readers to pray for his sins:

> pro mis commissis, uocitor quem rite Iohannes
> hec qui dictauï, scribendo quique peregi. (ll. 148–9)

'(Pray) for my sins, I who am called Ieuán, who composed this verse . . .' Here, one might think, a foolish scribe – Gengulphus of Gravesend, perhaps – misunderstood the construction with the passive indicative of *uocito* and wrote *quem* where *qui* is required (or, equally possible, *uocitor* for 3rd pl. *uocitanf*). An editor could easily enough emend the text to restore 'correct' Latin grammar, were it not for one thing: the unique manuscript which preserves this poem (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 199) is almost certainly the autograph of the poet. In other words, it was Ieuán himself, and not a bumbling scribe, who committed the egregious solecism *uocitor quem*. I make the point simply to show that an editor of medieval Latin texts must exercise extreme caution when emending to restore what would be 'correct' Latin by classical standards. In this case, the editor must retain *uocitor quem* because the manuscript is the poet's autograph; but the procedure is less clear in cases where a text is preserved only in later copies. Consider the case of the early ninth-century Northumbrian poet Æthelwulf, whose poem *De Abbatibus* is transmitted in three manuscripts: *L* and *O*, both Southumbrian manuscripts of eleventh-century date, and *C*, a Northumbrian manuscript of the later twelfth century. In the opinion of the most recent editor, *C*, though later, 'represents the text as it survived in the area of origin', whereas 'L and O show how the text developed after transference to the south'. The two traditions frequently offer discrepant evidence, particularly in matters touching on Latin grammar. Here is the text of two separate lines as transmitted by *L* and *O*:

nam tibi dum proceres *propria de sanguine* signant (l. 17)

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69 See M. Lapidge, 'The Welsh–Latin Poetry of Sulien's Family', *Studia Celtica*, 8–9 (1973–74), 68–106; the quotation is from 86.

70 That the manuscript is autograph was first argued by Lindsay (*Early Welsh Script*, 32), who based his opinion on the distichs (in Latin and Welsh) added by the scribe throughout the manuscript.

The problem here is that sanguis is masculine, and one would expect masculine forms of the adjectives, viz. proprio and tuo; and in fact C at these points does indeed preserve the readings proprio and tuo. An editor might be forgiven for assuming that C preserves the 'correct' reading in each of these lines; yet it is worth pondering the fact that the very same corruption has apparently occurred twice, at distant points of the poem. Did this corruption affecting the gender of sanguis occur randomly at these two distant points in the text? Or does the later manuscript (C) preserve what Ædilulf wrote? An affirmative answer would carry the implication that Ædilulf did indeed know the correct gender of sanguis; but there are so many errors regarding the gender of nouns in the transmitted text of the poem that the prospective editor must beware. The writings of Byrhtferth also provide a cautionary example of this sort. In all manuscripts of Byrhtferth’s writings there is pervasive confusion of the active and passive forms of the infinitive.\textsuperscript{72} I give some examples:

\begin{quote}
plurima dici poterant et pluriora referre (Ench., p. 222) \\
elegendo innocenter uiuere cum ipso, et inuidiam de cordis thalamo expellere (Ench., p. 208) \\
quis roboratus ingenio Homeri potest exprimi (VSO, p. 434) \\
praecepit rex epistolam ostendere et legere (VSE, p. 379) \\
estuabat sui cordis penetralia suffundi et thalamum pectoris sacris litteris imbui (HR, p. 74)
\end{quote}

The fact that the same kind of grammatical error occurs in different texts copied by different scribes indicates fairly clearly that it should be charged to the author: Byrhtferth was simply unable to master the syntax of constructions involving the infinitive. Here again, the editor must be on his guard against the urge to emend away grammatical solecisms. I do not mean to say that medieval scribes did not commit errors of their own, and that all grammatical solecisms are to be charged to the authors in question. Medieval scribes certainly did make errors. But the editorial process of determining to whom an error should be charged is seldom straightforward. Consider, for example, Ælfric’s \textit{Vita S. Æthelwoldi}, which survives in a single manuscript written by a Norman scribe about AD 1100 (that is, a century or so after Ælfric).\textsuperscript{73} In c. 16 of the work, the manuscript reads:

Exinde expandit Ætheluwooldus alas suas, et, annuente rege Eadgaro, expulsit clericos de Nouo Monasterio. . .

\textsuperscript{72} The relevant manuscripts are listed above, n. 68; for the examples given here, see Lapidge, ‘Byrhtferth of Ramsey’, 103.

\textsuperscript{73} Lapidge and Winterbottom (ed.), \textit{Wulfstan of Winchester: The Life of St Æthelwold}, 70–80.
Ælfric was a grammarian, and any editor would surely hesitate before foisting on him a solecism like *expulsit* (for *expulit*). Fortunately no such drastic course is necessary, for in his *Grammar* Ælfric discusses the verb *expello* in some detail, and from his discussion there can be no doubt whatsoever that he knew how to conjugate it correctly.74 Nevertheless, there are places in the text where the grammatical concordance is badly astray, and it is not clear whose is the fault:

\[
\text{cuidam fratri Wulfgarum vocabulo \ldots (c. 22)}
\]

\[
\text{aduocato monacho \ldots uidelicet Wulfsanum cognomento Cantor (c. 27)}
\]

In both cases the errors involve personal names, and it is possible that Ælfric regarded them as some kind of parenthetical addition—a sort of 'nominative of quotation'—lying outside the grammatical construction, hence not subject to the normal rules of concordance. His *Grammar* unfortunately throws no light on the subject.

More complex still is the case of an Anglo-Latin epitome of Isidore’s *Etymologiae*.75 The epitome is preserved uniquely in a manuscript written c.800 by a continental scribe somewhere in northern France, and now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. There is evidence to suggest that the French scribe was copying from a (lost) manuscript which had been written in a cursive grade of Insular minuscule script (this much is clear from his attempts to reproduce graphically various Insular compendia which he evidently failed to understand: those for *autem, eius, enim, per, quam, quod* etc.). And that this lost exemplar was of Anglo-Saxon (rather than, say, Irish) origin is further clear from the fact that the French scribe reproduced eight Old English words (again, without apparently understanding them) which were embedded in the text of his exemplar. On linguistic evidence, it is clear that the Old English words were first written down by a Mercian scholar at some time in the early eighth century, perhaps close to, or not long after, c.700. In other words, the French scribe was simply reproducing an epitome of Isidore’s *Etymologiae* which was compiled in England by a Mercian scholar in the early eighth century. The epitome thus has interest in its own right as a witness to Anglo-Saxon scholarly enterprise at that time, quite apart from its interest as a witness to the transmission of Isidore (it is by far the earliest English witness to the text of the *Etymologiae*). However, the text as copied by the French scribe is desperately corrupt, and the nature of the corruption poses interesting

74 J. Zupitza, *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar* (2nd edn., with foreword by H. Gneuss, Berin, Zürich and Dublin, 1966), 180 ('expello ic ut adraef, *expulit*'); cf. 110 ('a se *expulit hostem* itam him he adraef Pone feond').

editorial problems. By way of example I give one passage from the Epitome, followed by the corresponding passage in Isidore from which it was drawn:

Epitome: Acrocerauni montes a flumine dicti; greci enim ceraunus flumen dicitur. (§ 331)

Epitome: Acrocerauni montes a flumine dicti; greci enim ceraunus flumen dicitur. (§ 331)

cf. Isidore, Etym. XIV.viii.6: Acroceraunii montes propier altitudinem et fulminum iactus uocati sunt; Graece enim fulmen xεραυνός dicitur.

The Epitome derives the name of the Acroceraunian Mountains from that of a river (ceraunus allegedly meaning ‘river’ in Greek). It is easy enough to see how the error occurred: fl (with a suspension mark, for ful-) was misread as flu-; whence fulmen (‘lightning-bolt’) became flumen (‘river’); so that the Acroceraunian Mountains take their name from the river which struck their summits. Again, if the error is to be attributed to the Anglo-Saxon epitomator rather than the French scribe, it is a valuable witness to the knowledge of Greek in early England, implying (as it would) that the epitomator had insufficient Greek to correct an elementary error – and this at a time when, according to Bede, there were students of Theodore and Hadrian about who knew ‘Latin and Greek just as well as their native tongue’ (HE iv, 2). The epitomator clearly was not one of these, if the xεραυνός error is his; or has he been badly misrepresented by the French scribe? As far as I can see, there is no simple answer to this question. Because Latin was a foreign language for the Anglo-Saxons, they were capable of making errors not only in Latin orthography and grammar, but in all matters of substance pertaining to the transmission of ancient learning. The editor of Anglo-Latin texts must therefore use every means at his disposal to determine whether an error in a transmitted text derives from the author or from a subsequent copyist. If, after due reflection, the error is thought by the editor to be scribal rather than authorial, then – in my view – it is his duty to correct it, according to his sense of what constituted ‘correct’ Latinity for the author in question. But the editor’s sense of what is correct can only be acquired by thorough familiarity with the manuscripts in which that author’s works are transmitted.

The business of editing Latin texts composed and transmitted by Anglo-Saxons is a complex one, precisely because Latin was not their native language. How do matters stand with respect to the composition and transmission of works composed by Anglo-Saxons in their own language? Are we entitled to expect a higher level of accuracy and correctness in the transmission of Old English texts than that which we have found in Anglo-Latin? The answer to this question depends entirely on the attitudes of individual editors to the manuscripts before them; and it must be said that attitudes have changed considerably during the century and a half in which the editing of Old English texts
has been a major scholarly enterprise.\textsuperscript{76} In the first half of the nineteenth century, the attitude to medieval vernacular texts was conditioned to some considerable degree by the attitudes of editors of classical Latin texts. In fact the discipline of editing vernacular texts was not distinguished in principle from that of editing Latin texts, and the two disciplines could be combined in one person. A notable example is the great Karl Lachmann (1793–1851), regarded as the founding father of stemmatic criticism, who not only produced editions of vernacular works such as the \textit{Nibelungenlied} and the writings of Wolfram von Eschenbach and Hartmann von Aue,\textsuperscript{77} but in the field of classical Latin produced editions of Propertius, Catullus, Tibullus and above all Lucretius.\textsuperscript{78} The so-called 'method of Lachmann' was founded on the assumption that an author's text could be established by recourse to 'recension' (\textit{recensio}) of manuscripts in combination with emendation (\textit{emendatio}) guided both by knowledge of manuscript variants (\textit{ope codicum}) as well as by divinatory ingenuity (\textit{ope ingenii}); above all, even in the case of vernacular authors, Lachmann was clear that it was the editor's duty to establish what the author wrote, and not make the author subservient to what the manuscripts transmit.\textsuperscript{79} It is not surprising that the early editors of Old English texts, particularly in Germany, should have been guided by the attitudes to recension and emendation then prevalent. To take one example: Ludwig Ettmüller, professor of Germanic philology in


\textsuperscript{78} On Lachmann and his 'method', see Kenney, \textit{The Classical Text}, 101–10 and 130–42, and esp. S. Timpanaro, \textit{La Genesi del Metodo del Lachmann} (2nd rev. edn., Padua, 1985). It was above all Lachmann's edition of Lucretius (1850) which established the importance of recension and stemmatic criticism; on which see Timpanaro, 63–76.

\textsuperscript{79} Note Lachmann's comment in his edition of Hartmann's \textit{Gregorius} (1838), as quoted by Ganz, 'Lachmann as an Editor', 28: 'wenn man ihn [sic. den Schriftsteller] zum Knechte Einer Handschrift macht, die, mag sie die beste seyn, darum nicht nothwendig gut seyn wird, und niemals vollkommen'.

Zürich, published in 1850 an impressive collection of Old English prose and verse under the title *Engla and Seaxna Scopas and Boceras.* (Recall that 1850 was also the year in which Lachmann's great edition of Lucretius appeared.) On the title-page of his work Ettmüller advised his readers that he *collegit, correctit* and *edidit* the Old English writings in the volume. I suspect that no twentieth-century editor of Old English texts would dare to state that he had 'corrected' the works he was printing; but Ettmüller went even further and explained that he had 'emended, as seemed appropriate, all the corrupt places in the text'.

Ettmüller's emendations often shed light on passages which are evidently corrupt, even if they cannot all be accepted (some are excessively bold, not to say reckless); and his attitude to the Old English texts he was editing and correcting was followed by other German editors of the late nineteenth century, such as Christian Grein, Karl Körner, and above all Moritz Trautmann. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, particularly in the English-speaking world, a reaction set in against the practice of emending Old English texts whenever they seemed to transmit something less than perfect sense. Because they are so few in number, the surviving manuscripts of Old English verse were accorded an immense reverence, and this reverence is palpable in Anglo-Saxon studies today. Consider, for example, how many editions of Old English verse are manuscript-oriented (I refer to editions of the Exeter Book, the Junius manuscript, or the poems in the Vercelli Book) rather than author-oriented: there has never been, as Malcolm Godden pointed out, a collected edition of the signed poems of Cynewulf, presumably because these are transmitted in separate manuscripts. The manuscript, rather than the author, has come to dominate the consciousness of editors of Old English verse. Every last detail of the manuscript is lovingly reproduced by editors: orthography, punctuation, pointing, and so on. Even on the rare occasions when an Old English poem survives in more than one copy, the *apparatus criticus* is not devoted to what one might call 'significant' variants, but is taken up with recording details of orthography and punctuation. Consider an example of an *apparatus criticus* from the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, the most widely cited and 'standard' edition of the corpus of Old English verse:

80 Ernst Moritz Ludwig Ettmüller (1802–77): born in Saxony, studied at Jena, appointed in 1833 Professor 'der deutschen Sprache und Litteratur' at the Gymnasium in Zurich, then from 1863 until his death held a similar chair at the Hochschule in Zurich: see *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 6 (Leipzig, 1877), 398–400.
81 (Quedlinburg and Leipzig, 1850).
82 Ibid., xxiv: 'Locos corruptos, redita ut par erat ratione, emendavi, difficiliores partim in annotatione, partim in lexico explicavi. Quodsi interdum erraverim in tarn difficili opere, lector benevolus lubenter mihi ignoscat'.
84 ‘Old English’, 17.
85 *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. E. V. K. Dobbie (New York, 1942), 110; the pointing is given ibid., cxlv.
The text to which the *apparatus* belongs (the metrical preface to King Alfred’s translation of the Pastoral Care) survives in four manuscripts; as can be seen, the editors have recorded all the orthographical variants in all the manuscripts (the pointing, not recorded here, is given separately in the Introduction). Among all this *apparatus*, there is only one variant which might be thought ‘significant’ for the purposes of classing the manuscripts: *iegbuendum/eordbugendum* in line 3. The rest of the *apparatus* is a record of scribal practices and preferences.

There is of course some theoretical justification for recording orthographical variants, no matter how seemingly trivial. In the case of variant spellings of proper names, for example, it has on occasion proved possible to classify manuscripts according to divergence from a (hypothetical) common source. 86 It could also be argued that variants reflect differences of pronunciation by the scribes, and hence provide evidence of dialect, and so should be recorded. More importantly, it is becoming increasingly clear that, until the late tenth century, scribes of Old English verse were familiar enough with the system of oral formulas from which the verse was composed to enable them to improvise while copying; that is, they often substituted – whether deliberately or accidentally is not clear – one formula for another (the variants *iegbuendum/eordbugendum* are probably an example of such substitution). 87 In other words, the texts of Old English poems

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87 The case has been argued persuasively by K. O’B. O’Keeffe, Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 4 (Cambridge, 1990); on the variant versions of the Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care, see 77–107 (and esp. 87 and 102–3 on *iegbuendum/eordbugendum*).
were not regarded as 'fixed' in the sense that (say) the Aeneid of Vergil was a 'fixed' text which required to be copied word for word, letter even for letter. In such circumstances, every manuscript copy of an Old English poem is, in effect, a 'scribal version' and as such deserves to be treated on its own. My point is simply that, in their concern with manuscripts and scribes, modern editors of Old English poetry may risk doing a disservice to their authors.

The past 150 years, therefore, have seen a distinct change in the attitude of editors of Old English texts. Whereas scholars of Ettmüller's generation regarded it as axiomatic that perceived error in the transmitted text required to be emended, more recent editors have become increasingly suspicious of the inclination to emend, and have inclined instead to the wish to conserve what the manuscripts present, to 'save' manuscript-readings from the misguided efforts of earlier editors to emend them away. The prevailing climate of conservatism among editors of Old English texts has been judiciously stated by Helmut Gneuss:

Editors of OE prose and poetry have hardly ever made an attempt to reconstruct a critical text from the variant readings of several MSS or by means of conjectural emendation, as is feasible and usual in classical texts. Editions of OE texts have generally tended to be very conservative, and quite a number could actually be called diplomatic, that is, they reproduce the text exactly as it stands in the MS. For various reasons - because of the linguistic interest of the texts, because many texts have been transmitted in only one MS, etc - it seems desirable to continue this general policy in future editions and to produce editions of OE texts in a conservative or even diplomatic form.

In a recent article, E.G. Stanley has analyzed the assumptions underlying this tendency to conservative criticism, and he concludes his analysis with the observation that, 'we should feel happiest as editors when we have demonstrated that a manuscript reading, spurned and excised by previous editors, deserves to stand in the text. A Rettung is worth more than a palmary emendation'. Given our awareness of the way scribes could make free with the texts they were copying, it may never be possible to arrive at what the author wrote; and given that the scribes of Old English verse were native speakers of that language, we - for whom Old English is a 'dead language' - cannot hope to emulate their knowledge. I quote Stanley once again:

88 Cf. Rigg, 'Medieval Latin', 120.
91 'Unideal Principles', 273.
92 Ibid.: 'We cannot get back to the author's original'.
93 Ibid., 256.
94 Ibid., 257.
But we in our subject have to remember with constant humility that though perhaps, not certainly, most scribes may not have been the equals in Old English of the best Old English poets, every one of them, sleepy and careless as he may have been at times, knew his living Old English better than the best modern editor of Old English verse.

Nevertheless, 'sleepy and careless' scribes are excessively prone to make errors. The question is, what are we as editors to do when, in our judgement, a scribe has made an error through sleepy carelessness? Shall we nevertheless make every effort to 'save' his text? In my opinion, it is the editor's first duty to detect error in the transmitted text and, if possible, remove it, but I am aware that such an opinion is against the prevailing spirit of Old English textual criticism.

I should like finally to show how this spirit works by looking at one passage of Old English verse which has been suspected of being corrupt, and which has attracted various sorts of editorial attention during the past 150 years. I choose a passage from the Battle of Maldon. This poem survived into modern times in a single manuscript in the Cottonian collection which was, unfortunately, badly burnt in the Cotton fire of 1731; and the folios containing the Battle of Maldon (which occurred at the beginning of the manuscript) were completely destroyed. By chance, however, a transcript of the text had been made shortly before the fire by David Casley, and the editio princeps of the poem was printed from this transcript by the antiquary Thomas Hearne in 1726. Casley's transcript subsequently went missing, and nineteenth-century editors were obliged to rely on Hearne's printed text, without having any means of gauging its accuracy. In the 1930s the transcript was rediscovered by Neil Ker in the Rawlinson collection in the Bodleian Library, and editions since 1937 have been based on the transcript rather than on Hearne. Note only that we have no medieval manuscript of this poem, merely an eighteenth-century transcript. The passage in question occurs in the transcript as follows:


96 On the burnt manuscript, see H. Gneuss, 'Die Handschrift Cotton Otho A.xii', Anglia, 94 (1976), 289–318.


98 T. Hearne (ed.), Johannis ... Glastoniensis Chronicæ or Historia de Rebus Glastoniensibus, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1726), ii, 570–7. Hearne was a contemporary of Richard Bentley, and - as perhaps befits an editor of Old English verse, even an eighteenth-century one - was contemptuous of Bentley's inclination to emend against manuscript authority; note his observation that, 'tis well known, Bentley is not a sound critic (for 'tis his way to go boldly against all MSS.' T. Hearne, Remarks and Collections, ed. G.H. Doble et al., 11 vols. (Oxford, 1885–1921), 11, 364.
The passage, which forms lines 182–4 in most printed editions of the poem, is usually rearranged in verse as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{and begen } \text{þa } \text{beornas } & \quad \text{þe him } \text{big-stodon} \\
\text{Ælfnoð } & \quad \text{and } \text{Wulfmaer } \quad \text{begen } \text{lagon}, \\
\text{ða } & \quad \text{onemn } \text{hyra } \text{frean } \text{feorh } \text{geseadon}.
\end{align*}
\]

The problem is that line 183 lacks alliteration. Early editors assumed that the passage was corrupt, and set about restoring the alliteration. Ettmüller undertook fairly drastic surgery:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{and begen } \text{þa } \text{beornas } & \quad \text{þe him } \text{big-stodon} \\
\text{Ælfnoð } & \quad \text{and } \text{Vulfmaer } \quad \text{be on emne } \text{lagon} \\
\text{begen } \text{hyra } \text{frean } & \quad \text{feorh } \text{geseadon}.
\end{align*}
\]

The alliteration has been restored by transposing \textit{onemn} from line 184 and emending it to \textit{emne} so as to provide an alliteration with \textit{Ælfnoð}, but since this emendation was so drastic, it was not adopted by any subsequent editor. In 1857 Christian Grein proposed a simpler solution: that of emending \textit{begen} in line 183 to \textit{bewegen} (on the analogy of \textit{forwegen} in line 228), so as to produce alliteration on \textit{w}: ‘Ælfnoð and Vulfmaer bevegen lagon’.

Grein’s emendation was followed without much challenge by a number of nineteenth-century editors, including Max Rieger, Karl Körner, and Henry Sweet in the early editions of his \textit{Anglo-Saxon Reader}. The last editors to print Grein’s \textit{bewegen} were apparently W.J. Sedgefield in 1904 and Levin Schücking in 1919. From that time onwards, the text has been left unemended, and has been printed as it is found in Hearne’s edition and the eighteenth-century transcript, although various editors have commented variously on the extent to which the line may be corrupt. Thus Margaret Ashdown, in her edition of 1930, printed the transmitted ext but noted that Grein’s emendation ‘would provide the missing

99 \textit{Engla and Seaxna Scopas and Boceras}, 133–40.
100 C.W.M. \textit{Grein}, \textit{Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie} 1 (Göttingen, 1857), 343–52. The unsatisfactory nature of Grein’s emendation was first noticed by E.V. Gordon in 1937 (see below, 108), who pointed out that \textit{bewegen} means ‘to cover’, not ‘to slay’, and that concord would require \textit{bewegene}, not \textit{bewegen}.
101 \textit{Alt- und angelsächsisches Lesebuch} (Giessen, 1861), 84–94.
103 \textit{Anglo-Saxon Reader} (Oxford, 1876).
104 The \textit{Battle of Maldon} and other \textit{Short Poems from the Saxon Chronicle} (Boston, Mass., 1904).
alliteration’, 106 in his edition of 1936, E.D. Laborde, the last editor to base his edition on Hearne, gave in his notes a full record of the emendations adopted by various editors, but retained the transmitted text. 107 E.V. Gordon, the first editor to benefit from Neil Ker’s discovery of the transcript, noted that ‘The line has no alliteration and is probably corrupt’; he suggested that ‘the copyist’s eye caught begen earlier in the sentence, and he wrote this word again, instead of some other word now irrecoverable’ which ‘may not have resembled begen at all’, but he did not propose any emendation of his own, and left the line to stand as transmitted. 108 So, too, did Dobbie in 1942, who likewise suspected ‘that begen is a scribal reminiscence of the word begen in the preceding line’, but nevertheless was satisfied that, ‘as the line stands in the MS., it makes good sense if not good verse’. 109 This is the first explicit statement that the transmitted text may not be corrupt after all. Pope recognized that the text was corrupt, but nevertheless allowed it to stand. 110 So, too, did Scragg; although he noted that ‘the line is without alliteration and almost certainly corrupt’, he did not venture to emend it. 111 Most recently, Mitchell and Robinson incline to suspect that the alliteration-less line is perhaps simply a ‘metrical irregularity’, and they also allow it to stand. 112 So after 150 years of editorial attention, the line as transmitted in the transcript has been ‘saved’. 113

Now I agree with E.G. Stanley that ‘the quality of Old English verse is not sufficiently good or sufficiently uniform for us to be sure that, where the transmitted text does not make good sense or where it does not seem to belong to the highest flights of poetry, any palmary emendation of ours is likely to restore the poet’s original’. 114 But

106 M. Ashdown, English and Norse Documents Relating to the Reign of Ethelred the Unready (Cambridge, 1930), 22-37; the note is at 84.
109 The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems, 144.
110 J.C. Pope, Seven Old English Poems (New York, 1966), 76: ‘Like Gordon and Dobbie I have allowed this obviously faulty line to stand because I do not know how to correct it’.
112 B. Mitchell and F.C. Robinson, A Guide to Old English (4th ed., Oxford, 1986), 232, n. to line 172: ‘A few words may be lost, but since there are other metrical irregularities [scil. that in line 183 inter alia] it is also possible that this is a feature of the later, loose style of The Battle of Maldon’.
113 Editors of Old English texts who follow the manuscript even when they suspect that it is wrong may wish to consider a remark of E.T. Donaldson (‘The Psychology of Editors of Middle English Texts’, in his Speaking of Chaucer (London, 1970), 102-18, at 115-16): ‘Now while I sympathize with an editor who follows a MS he is fond of when all other resources fail him . . . I do not think he should imply that this is an admirable course – he should not be permitted to make a virtue of his necessity. And he should certainly not be permitted to use the authority of a MS instead of his own head. Perhaps we ought to devise a new symbol, to be placed prominently in the text when authority is being docilely followed, one that means, “Editor has no idea what to read here, and hence is taking refuge, as usual, in dear old MS Pf.” A small ostrich, with head in the sand, might do’.
114 ‘Unideal Principles’, 273. Here as elsewhere in the article Stanley uses the word ‘palmary’ incorrectly (cf. 255: ‘An editor inclined to indulge in palmary emendations might think of . . . ’). ‘Palmary’, from Latin palmaris, means ‘worthy of a palm’: a brilliant emendation may be
surely we know enough to say that Old English verse has alliteration. And surely in this case it is clear, as Gordon and Scragg remark, that the alliteration has been corrupted by the scribe by that most common of scribal errors, dittography? Perhaps there is some argument for prostrating ourselves in constant humility before the Old English scribes who in their sleep and carelessness knew more Old English than we do. But should we prostrate ourselves thus before David Casley’s eighteenth-century transcript? My view is that, as editors, we have a duty to students of the subject not only to detect error, but if possible to remove it. In this case a simple emendation could at least show what the poet might have written. If we recall that the poet subsequently refers to the English warriors who fight on after their lord’s death as ‘proud thegns’ (205: *pa ðær wendon ford wælc hegenas*), then line 183 might be emended as follows:

Ælfnoð and Wulmær  
wlance lagon

‘Ælfnoth and Wulmær, the proud ones, lay dead.’ Alternatively, bearing in mind the poet’s later report that the ‘(English) warriors perished in the struggle’ (302: *wegan on gewinne wigend cruncon*), line 183 could be emended to read:

Ælfnoð and Wulmær  
wigend lagon

‘The warriors Ælfnoth and Wulmær lay dead.’ And there are no doubt other possible emendations. I do not pretend that these emendations are anything other than ‘feeble’;115 they are merely exploratory, as I say, an attempt to suggest what the poet *might* have written. I wish simply to stress that the tradition of Maldon editors has, because of the prevalent spirit of conservatism, discussed but finally rejected the only two emendations which have ever been proposed for this line (Ettmüller’s of 1850; Grein’s of 1857) without trying other possibilities, and that a better service would be rendered to the poet if editors of Old English verse could be persuaded to relinquish a bit their reverence for the manuscript – even for an eighteenth-century transcript – and think more about the poet behind it, even if this means indulging in occasional editorial conjecture. In this respect editors of Old English have much to learn from their Latin colleagues. Kenneth Sisam put the matter with his characteristic incisiveness, and I should like to end by quoting him: ‘there would be a real gain if conjecture, instead of being reserved for the useful but disheartening task of dealing with obvious or desperate faults, were restored to its true functions, which include probing as well as healing’.116

awarded a palm by other editors (cf. Brink, *English Classical Scholarship*, 71), but not by the editor to himself, least of all if he doesn’t accept it.

115 Ibid.: ‘A feebler emendation is as likely to restore a feeble poet’s text as an emendatory, inspired fancy’.

116 *Studies in the History of Old English Literature*, 44.