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Anglo-Saxon Micro-Texts

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Foreword

Old English and Anglo-Latin text and manuscript studies have been a major field of research at the University of Munich ever since Helmut Gneuss became Professor of English Linguistics and Medieval English Literature at the English Department in 1965. His scholarly devotion to Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and early English books, their history and their documentation manifested itself above all in the successive growth of a seminal work: starting as a “Preliminary List” in 1980, his manuscript catalogue developed into a *Handlist* in 2001, and in 2014 took on its final form under the title *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (together with Michael Lapidge). This indispensable standard reference tool aims “to provide complete records of the contents of each manuscript” (Gneuss and Lapidge 2014: 7), but for practical reasons does not generally include “details” such as “minor additions and alterations, scattered glosses in Latin or Old English, supply leaves, additions of any kind, and glosses (English, French or Latin) entered after 1100”, etc. (*ibid*. 8). Information about such “minor” items has, however, been diligently recorded in a substantial number of lever-arch files on the shelves of Helmut Gneuss’s personal library.

With this wealth of special information at hand, which he has always most willingly shared with everyone, from undergraduate student to professorial colleague, Helmut Gneuss has also come to support and promote our interest in “details” enriching a great number of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, namely the kind of “minor”, additional and marginal pieces of writing here called ‘micro-texts’. It thus seemed appropriate to celebrate Helmut Gneuss’s 90th birthday with a symposium on “Anglo-Saxon Micro-Texts”, held at the University of Munich on 3–4 November 2017, in appreciation of his inestimable contributions to Anglo-Saxon studies and English historical linguistics as a collector, compiler, author, reviewer, bibliographer, researcher and mentor. The enthusiastic response to the call for papers for this occasion by junior and senior scholars attests to Helmut Gneuss’s exceptional standing within the international scholarly community of Anglo-Saxonists.

The present collection comprises many of the papers presented at the symposium, together with some further studies on the topic. We would like to thank all the speakers at the symposium, whose inspiring presentations, animated discussions and conviviality made this scholarly gathering in honour of Helmut Gneuss a very special occasion, both in academic and personal terms.

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Our thanks go to Birgit Ebersperger for her invaluable work as a co-organizer of the symposium and to Christoph Hauf, Paulina Backs, Lisa Eitinger, Theresa Plomer, Constanze Späth and Veronika Wust for the manifold assistance we have received from them in the preparation of this volume. We also thank Ulrike Krauß, Katja Lehming and Dipti Dange for their professional guidance and support throughout the publication process. We owe a special debt to Carolin Harthan, whose sharp eye and painstaking care in copy-editing have been of immense help in preparing this book for publication.

Thanks are also due to the external reviewers, whose diligent comments and useful suggestions helped to make this a better book. Our greatest debt, however, is to our 'master reader' Helmut Gneuss, who made himself *nützlich*, and indeed indispensable, with his reports on each of the papers. He returned them with plenty of marginal notes, drawn from the wealth of wisdom on matters Anglo-Saxon stored in his memory and culled from his extensive collection of special literature – not forgetting the famous lever-arch files. By generously sharing his great learning, scholarly enthusiasm and superb expertise in Anglo-Saxon studies with the whole community, our honorand has contributed enormously to the advancement of the discipline. As a small token of gratitude and with all our warmest wishes for many happy years to come, we dedicate this volume to Helmut Gneuss, scholar, teacher, colleague and friend.

Lucia Kornexl
Ursula Lenker

Contents

Lucia Kornexl and Ursula Lenker

Anglo-Saxon Micro-Texts: An Introduction

1 The Concept of 'Micro'-Text

> [...] we must always keep in mind that our written texts provide us with a mere fraction of what was once a living language, spoken all over England for more than six centuries.
> Once this has become clear, however, it seems safe to say that Old English, as compared with other contemporary languages, has been extremely well preserved. Leaving aside single-sheet documents, we still have more than 1,200 manuscript books, or fragments of such books, written or owned in Anglo-Saxon England between the late seventh and the late eleventh centuries. More than a third of them, and a considerable number of twelfth-century manuscripts, are written wholly or partly in Old English, or contain at least short texts or glosses in that language. (Gneuss 2013: 22–23)

As Helmut Gneuss reminds us, the relative richness of documentation that distinguishes Old English from most of its Germanic cognate languages is to a considerable extent due to the preservation of "short texts or glosses". It is such "short texts", ranging from one word (often a name) to a few sentences or a limited number of verses, that are in the focus of this volume. These do not only appear on parchment but can be found on all kinds of materials – e.g. wood, stone, metal, textile – and on sundry objects such as coins, pieces of lead sheet or garments. They are scripted in the Latin alphabet or, to a minor extent, in runes or both scripts, and may be a (more or less essential) integral part of the original physical design of their carrier medium. Not infrequently, however, do they take the form of subsequent additions, filling different kinds of marginal or otherwise peripheral positions on the media displaying them, but they by no means serve merely supplementary functions: by providing snapshots of Anglo-Latin and Old English literacy in practice, they are indispensable puzzle pieces that help to create a fuller image of "what was once a living language".

For these diverse types of short texts, this volume introduces the term *micro-text*, literally 'small text', coined both in analogy to recent designations such as *microblog/microblogging* or *micropost* and with reference to the term *macrotext*.[1]

1 For *micro-*, comb. form, see *OED* s.v. For the antonymic conceptualization of formations pre-modified by *micro-*, see *OED* s.v. 1.a. "Forming terms in which *micro-* indicates small (often microscopic) or relatively small size, frequently in contrast with related terms beginning with *macro-* or *mega-*". On the notion of *macrotext*, see the discussion of *macro-* vs. *micro-text* in **Dekker**, p. 206 and the references given there, and also below, Section 5.

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In literary and textlinguistic studies, *macrotext* refers to the complete, or at least longer, primary text in the manuscript, which a particular micro-text may be part of. These notions are, for example, relevant for the micro-text taking on the form of a *Reisesegen* (as discussed by **Eric Stanley**), preserved in a letter written by an anonymous cleric (its macrotext).

With the current popularity of new digital media such as text messaging (*SMS = Short Message Service*), Twitter or *microblogs/microposts*,[2] short texts have not only gained a prominent role in communication, but also in our awareness of communication. In these new media, the number of characters a particular text may comprise generally ranges from about 140 to 280, and thus – depending on the language – from about 35 to 45 words. Accordingly, a length of up to 50 words was suggested as a rough guideline for the Anglo-Saxon micro-texts examined in the present volume.

In the digital media, we see that such texts – even though (very) short – can be employed by speakers to communicate effectively and efficiently. Since 'shortness' in the form of *brevitas* has, moreover, been recognized as a poetological principle since Classical Antiquity and thus also in the Middle Ages,[3] it is certainly not anachronistic to also approach Anglo-Saxon verbal records by focussing on one aspect of their material property, namely them being 'short'. Length, like size, though, is a relative concept, which is why we must allow for some flexibility at the upper end of the scale. Whatever may be responsible for the comparative shortness of a micro-text – restrictions in the available space, genre conventions or some conscious decision by an individual scribe or author relevant for one particular micro-text only –, it is important to note that the quantitative characteristic of reduced length often goes hand in hand with qualitative features. These will now be explored in more detail.

2 The Textuality of Micro-'Texts'

Definitions of the notion of 'text' are numerous and varied; it thus seems best to look for a definition that is broad enough to cover the markedly different conditions under which Old English and modern texts were and are produced. In textlinguistics, where the term occupies a central theoretical status,

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2 *Microblogging* was first used in 2005 in the sense 'blogging done with severe space or size constraints typically by posting frequent brief messages about personal activities' (*Merriam-Webster*, s.v. *microblogging*). For *micropost*, as yet neither found in the *OED* nor *Merriam-Webster*, *Wictionary* gives: "(Internet) A very short posted message".

3 See the literary examples collected and discussed in Holznagel and Cölln (2017).

> [t]exts are seen as language units which have a definable communicative function, characterized by such principles as cohesion, coherence and informativeness [...].
>
> (Crystal 2008, s.v. *text*)

Even though most of the micro-texts explored in this volume fulfil these principles, a weighting of textual features with respect to their significance appears to be especially useful for those micro-texts that do not belong to the prototypical core. As **Susan Irvine**'s study of the Old English scribbles at the end of the Royal Psalter manuscript demonstrates, even strings of symbols that seem to lack a definable purpose can be assigned a compositional intention and communicative function; they shed light on scribal negotiation with literacy and text as in the case of a scribe familiar with the association between vernacular verse and the psalms.

One-word items such as single names on coins (**Naismith**) or the scratched glosses examined by **Andreas Nievergelt** would naturally defy an ascription of a textual status if the presence of cohesive links were regarded as a necessary condition for textuality. Pragmatics and speech act theory have, however, shown that within communities of practice that share particular modes of expression and discursive strategies, one-word utterances can without problems function as self-contained, semantically and pragmatically meaningful communicative units.[4] A similar process compensating for a lack of formal textual substance (and thus cohesive ties) can be observed in micro-texts which are an integral part of a specific carrier medium, as is the case with the numismatic inscriptions surveyed by **Rory Naismith**. Even though these inscriptions on coins commonly consist of only one or two words (mostly names and titles), their communicative function of identifying the carrier object as a (valid or no longer valid) means of payment is still clear. Lack of explicit markers of textuality or cohesive ties can also be counterbalanced by coherence signals reflected in particular scribal habits. In an investigation of rubrics and colophonic material in the Codex Amiatinus, **Richard Gameson** can show that "even the briefest, most formulaic of texts when considered holistically in their manuscript context" (p. 100) reveal certain conscious communicative decisions by individual scribes, thus shedding light on the cultural milieu and practices of literacy in which the manuscripts were produced. Compensatory effects may thus be embedded in a particular material and cultural context or common scribal habits, but hold, of course, in particular in the case of genre conventions and intertextuality (see below, Sections 3 and 5).

From the findings of the individual studies assembled in this volume we may conclude that in establishing the textuality of a micro-text, deficits in cohesion

4 On single-word utterances in Present-Day English, see Lenker (2018).

can be made up by factors promoting coherence, i.e. the writer's and the reader's shared knowledge, their common assumptions and inferences. This seems particularly relevant for those types of Anglo-Saxon micro-texts which, like dry-point glosses, are practically hidden from the reader's eye or whose sense is intentionally concealed in cryptic writing (see **Nievergelt** and **Scragg**). Similar mechanisms – here of a symbolic nature – may lie behind the communicative functions of other hidden micro-texts, such as the embroidered text found on the *reverse* sides of both terminals of a matching stole examined by **Gale Owen-Crocker** and the hidden parts of inscriptions on lead sheet discussed by **John Hines**. Though such practices may seem to markedly differ from today's text production and display, they are nevertheless based on shared conventions which allow for a better understanding not only of historical text production, but also of the reception of the diverse manifestations of literacy in the Anglo-Saxon period.

3 Micro-Texts across Text Types and Genres

The concept of 'micro-text' cuts across text-type and genre distinctions. It also encompasses different kinds of literary production commonly associated with briefness, such as inscriptions and poems. While in inscriptions, shortness may be triggered by the materiality of the carrier medium and the limited space it provides, it is the genre conventions of poetry that characteristically evoke briefness.[5] Due to the relatively standardized formal and stylistic characteristics of Old English poetry, a genre-oriented analysis of micro-texts in verse form suggests itself, even though in content and communicative function a *Reisesegen* within a clerical letter (**Stanley**) is hardly comparable to *Cædmon's Hymn* (**Bammesberger**), the biblical and liturgical *Hymnus trium puerorum* (**Lapidge and Gneuss**) or the metrical scribbles in the Royal Psalter manuscript (**Irvine**).

To establish a parallel group of prose micro-texts would be of little value, as the relevant (sub-)types are simply too diverse and lack a common formal shape. Suffice it to say that most of the non-poetic micro-texts belong to the category of non-literary, 'pragmatic' prose and exhibit a kind of 'practical' or 'functional'

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5 Composition abridgement and thus relative shortness play an essential role for the small literary forms resulting from *abbreviatio* – a systematic application of the classical ideal of *brevitas* – that seeks to produce skilfully condensed versions of larger texts. For a study of the practice of *abbreviatio* based on 'reduction as a poetological principle' in Latin and German literature of the later Middle Ages, see Henkel (2017). For the full spectrum of Anglo-Saxon poetry, however, length – or rather shortness – is neither a necessary nor a sufficient criterion. This is, for example, impressively demonstrated by the epic length of *Beowulf*.

literacy that differs from the 'cultured literacy' we find in literary texts.[6] As indicated above, the display (or concealment) of micro-texts on specific materials and objects forms an essential part of their pragmatic effect. These two closely interconnected dimensions will be briefly explored in the following section.

4 Micro-Texts on Different Materials: Forms and Functions

The bulk of Old English and Latin micro-texts have survived on parchment, where they may be a regular part of the text. Especially the physically 'marginalized' ones among the micro-texts, i.e. those placed in a visibly subordinate position between the lines or in some marginal space, offer valuable insights into the complex genesis of individual manuscripts and different types of interaction between their authors, scribes and users. Text reception and reader response in their more or less individualized forms play a crucial role in the pragmatics of micro-texts, as, for instance, in the scratched glosses and the mark-ups by the 'Tremulous Hand of Worcester' examined in the contributions by **Andreas Nievergelt** and **David Johnson**, respectively. **Joyce Hill**'s study demonstrates that the dialogic space between manuscripts and their readers may even extend to a period of about one hundred years, with Coleman's passionate marginal objections attesting to the continued (and in this case critical) reception of Ælfric's works.

In material, formal and pragmatic terms, colophons can be singled out as a specific type of micro-text on parchment:[7] not only is the placement of such paratexts at the end of the relevant reference text highly conventionalized. Their authorship lies with the (otherwise mostly anonymous) scribes who, as **Richard Gameson**'s investigation of the colophons in the Codex Amiatinus shows, couch their direct or indirect addresses to the readers – in, for instance, directive speech acts such as prayers, invocations or supplications – in highly formulaic terms.

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6 For early uses of the terms 'practical' and 'cultured literacy', see Parkes (1973) and Wormald (1977). 'Practical literacy' may extend from the capacity to recognize, but not necessarily sign, one's own name to the ability to write formal documents in Latin, while 'cultured literacy' may range from reading prose in the vernacular to composing Latin in the classical tradition. This means that "the more advanced types of pragmatic literacy might well overlap with the more basic cultured levels" (Wormald 1977: 95). See also below, Section 4.

7 For an overview of Anglo-Saxon colophons, see Gameson (2002). For attempts at their study within pragmatic and textlinguistic approaches, see Schiegg (2016).

The provocation of a reader response is here an integral part of the design and the illocutionary force of the scribe's self-identifying utterance.

With coin-inscriptions – "the most plentiful form of micro-text from Anglo-Saxon England" and "the most micro of micro-texts" (**Naismith**, p. 13 and 25) – we encounter another highly standardized text type whose linguistic form and communicative function are to a large extent object-bound. Here often a single name carrying authoritative force suffices to achieve the intended pragmatic effect. The functional literacy of moneyers and die-cutters is paralleled by the "practical runic literacy" of carvers active in Anglo-Saxon England throughout three major historical stages identified by **John Hines** – the Pre-Old English, Early Old English and Late Anglo-Saxon periods –, with the last phase being represented by some recently found inscriptions on pieces of lead sheet. Strikingly, these inscriptions have a "predominantly ecclesiastical and learned character", but still represent a "mode of literacy quite distinct from the familiar contemporary manuscript culture" (p. 29).

Yet another form of practical literacy in which material and message are interconnected in specific ways are micro-texts on textile. Under the title "Ælfflæd's Embroideries", **Gale Owen-Crocker** introduces us to a particularly impressive example of textile inscription, significantly placed at the reverse sides of a matching stole and maniple. Deposited in the shrine of St Cuthbert, this vestment set was elevated to the status of a textile relic, its micro-texts providing significant evidence of "royal female patronage and piety" (p. 82). It is in particular these kinds of micro-texts that – as recently also fruitfully discussed by, for instance, Orton (2014) and Thornbury (2014) – shed light on the relations and interdependences of the different kinds of Anglo-Saxon literacy.

5 Micro-Texts in Manuscripts: Interdependences and Intertextualities

Prototypically, a text constitutes an independent, self-contained unit. For micro-texts, this property can best be demonstrated by texts that were 'emancipated' from their manuscript contexts and took on separate communicative functions. Thus, the prayer at the beginning of St Augustine's *Soliloquia* (its macrotext) is classified by **Hans Sauer** as a special kind of micro-text, namely "a text within a text", whose peculiarities in genre and form gave it a special position in its original context and made its independent transmission – both in Latin and Old English – possible. Similarly "The Twelve Rooms of Thomas' Palace", a verbal collection of the elements of late-antique palace architecture, had a varied circulation as part of the Latin *Passio Thomae apostoli* and in the form of a glossary, which in one instance became integrated into a large class glossary (**Lendinara**). And the *Hymnus trium puerorum*, in all probability "an unrecognized poem by Wulfstan of Winchester" (**Lapidge and Gneuss**, p. 347), very likely found its way from the manuscript into the liturgy of the mass on specific Ember days.

Evidence for a usage of a (part of a) text that goes beyond the given manuscript context is often hard to come by. The majority of the micro-texts represented in this volume exhibit, however, more or less pronounced traces of interdependences and intertextualities. This is particularly obvious in the short versified *Saxonicum Verbum* for which the late **Eric Stanley** suggested the literary category *Reisesegen*: it clearly forms a separate textual entity, but is at the same time an integral part of a letter by an anonymous continental cleric, its macrotext. And even if, due to their separate placement, many of our micro-texts are physically independent, they are nevertheless directly or indirectly related to or dependent on companion texts or textual units. The "exasperation of Coleman and his Worcester contemporary, expressed with vehemence in manuscript margins" (**Hill**, p. 140) about a hundred years after Ælfric's original strictures had been written down, are a particularly striking case of an asynchronous theological dispute carried out on parchment.

Several kinds of micro-texts examined in this volume also attest to forms of accumulation and preparation of information that could be – and sometimes demonstrably were – put to new (textual or pragmatic) usages and thus establish prospective intertextual relationships. The "twelve-room glossary" charting out St Thomas' palace (**Lendinara**) belongs in this category, as do the encyclopaedic notes explored by **Kees Dekker**.

Even more explicit cases of literacy in practice revealing different stages in the process of the composition of new texts are the annotations, punctuation interventions and other marks left by the 'Tremulous Hand of Worcester' in several Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, which were made "with the possible intention of compiling a vernacular *liber exemplorum*" (**Johnson**, p. 225). Yet another case study of micro-texts allowing a better understanding of work in progress carried out by an Anglo-Saxon author are the (hitherto barely legible) drafts and notes in Archbishop Wulfstan's own hand in London, British Library, Additional 38651, fols. 57r–58v, which may have served as building blocks for his homiletic and legal compositions; in these micro-texts, we see "Wulfstan at Work" (**Rudolf**, p. 267).

As pointed out in Section 2 above, even a mere scribble on the final page of a psalter manuscript (London, British Library, Royal 2.B.v) can, on closer inspection, reveal links to vernacular psalm culture and show traces of versification which suggest "an interest in producing a series of poetic paraphrases, perhaps in order to facilitate memorization and rumination" (**Irvine**, p. 145).

Two kinds of micro-textual activities in our sample represent very special types of intertextuality: using a variety of ciphers, cryptograms systematically de-familiarize the material shape of conventionally scripted texts (**Scragg**). They not only attest to "scribal interest in the wordplay of hidden meanings" (Fulk and Cain 2013: 348), but also display a kind of literacy that makes their author stand out among the 'writing community'. With scratched glosses, the dependency of an interpretamentum on its model is again deliberately turned (almost) invisible (**Nievergelt**). Their concealment enhances them with a much more complex communicative function than does the normal gloss written in ink.

Overall, the hermeneutic assets and problems evolving from such interdependences and intertextualities are central to many of the contributions in this volume. In his attempt to analyse *Cædmon's Hymn* without taking immediate recourse to its Latin version in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, **Alfred Bammesberger** doubts the poem's origin in a back-translation of Bede's Latin version, but stresses its originality, assuming that "Bede's intent may have been to gloss over details in the Old English text that seemed to him theologically controversial and/or dogmatically doubtful" (p. 329). Exemplarily, the benefits of a minute metrical and stylistic analysis and a detailed textual comparison are demonstrated by **Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss** in their article on the Latin poem entitled *Hymnus trium puerorum* in Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, 1385 (U.107). The proximity of the *Hymnus* to some Wulfstanian hymns in the manuscript as well as striking similarities in metrical practice and diction suggest "that the *Hymnus* is an unrecognized poem of Wulfstan" (**Lapidge and Gneuss**, p. 347).

6 Conclusion

With only "a mere fraction of what was once a living language" (Gneuss 2013: 23) having survived in written form, our picture of Anglo-Saxon literary activities in Latin and Old English will, of course, always remain fragmentary. The contributions in this volume show, however, how modern research can help to expand our understanding of literacy in this period, especially as regards 'smaller' texts and forms. Thus our corpora of scratched glosses have been growing steadily, and also those of runic inscriptions, revealing ever more formal and intertextual interdependences between texts in runic and Latin script. With new technological means, we are also able to rescue and decode text which could not be seen with the naked eye or whose communicative functions have not been fully clear. Acknowledging also the briefest of evidence in the margins and peripheries of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and taking a comprehensive perspective on Anglo-Saxon texts encompassing Old English and Anglo-Latin verbal records, in manuscript culture and beyond, may help to overcome what has been called "the rather myopic view of Old English literature as little more than '*Beowulf* and the Bible'" (Fulk and Cain 2013: 319). An integrative view of micro-texts, as taken in this volume, sheds valuable fresh light on the range and role of literacy and the individual and collective decisions taken by authors, compilers and scribes in the various phases of the production and reception of text throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.

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Part I: **Micro-Texts beyond Manuscripts**

Rory Naismith

Reading Money: An Introduction to Numismatic Inscriptions in Anglo-Saxon England

Abstract: Coin inscriptions are the most plentiful form of micro-text from Anglo-Saxon England. The many personal names they carry have been studied from a philological perspective. This contribution therefore takes a different approach, considering what coin inscriptions suggest about language, literacy and the structures of oral and written communication behind the coinage.

1 Introduction: Coin Inscriptions as Micro-Texts

It is difficult to get more micro than the micro-texts on Anglo-Saxon coins. The letters on these struck metal disks are typically between one and three millimetres in length (and the coins themselves between about 10 and 25 millimetres in diameter), and the total inscription will usually only run to one, two or three words per side, sometimes heavily abbreviated. These are micro in every sense of the word. Yet they also effectively reinforce why micro-texts matter.

Coin inscriptions range in date from the early seventh century to 1066, covering more than four centuries of Anglo-Saxon history, although they only became common after the mid-eighth century.[1] Coin inscriptions were carefully engraved by manufacturers, as the information they conveyed was fundamental to the acceptability of a coin. It was through condensed and often abbreviated micro-texts – as on the penny of Æthelred II (978–1016) illustrated as Figure 1 – that one knew this was a coin issued under the auspices of a ruler, and that he was a 'king of the English': +ÆÐELRÆD REX ANGLO[*rum*]. To reject the coin was thus to reject the king and to adulterate it was to undermine the king's rule, and law-codes from the time of Æthelstan onwards described the heavy penalties that awaited those who did either (Screen 2007: 164–170). The reverse of the coin gives the

1 Images (sometimes of considerable symbolic complexity) were the key carriers of meaning in earlier times, and remained an important counterpart to inscriptions in and after the eighth century (Gannon 2003; Naismith 2012). The focus here, however, will be on the contents and contexts of coin inscriptions.

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name of the man who made the coin – and, to my knowledge, it was always a man (no female moneyers ever being named in England) – along with where he was based, in this case Ælfstan at Totnes in Devon.

Figure 1: +ÆÐELRÆD REX ANGLO[*rum*]/+ÆLFSTAN MΩO TOTA. Æthelred II, silver penny, ‘Long Cross’-type, Totnes mint, moneyer Ælfstan (image: CNG).

Coin inscriptions also matter in crude quantitative terms. They represent the most plentiful single source of inscriptions surviving from Anglo-Saxon England. At a conservative estimate, there are some 120,000 surviving specimens with an inscription of some sort. It is likely that they represent only a tiny fraction of the number of coins originally produced, which must have run into the millions.[2] While use of gold and silver pieces was more common among the wealthy, as well as town-dwellers and merchants, most of the population would have come into contact with them at some stage in their day-to-day lives (Naismith 2014b). For the average Anglo-Saxon, therefore, coins would very probably have been the most familiar and frequently-encountered object bearing text.

Of course, that is not to say that the bulk of the population was in a position to get much out of these inscriptions. The limitations of early medieval literacy are widely known, and occasionally very apparent in relation to coinage: when coins were forged or imitated, for instance, the accuracy of inscriptions typically declined. This can be observed across the Anglo-Saxon period, from gold issues of the seventh century which borrowed the general look of Roman coins and the format of Merovingian ones, but not the literate inscriptions of either, to Anglo-Viking coins of the ninth and tenth centuries, and on into the late Anglo-Saxon period. The inscriptions on these coins run from the recognisable but mangled through to just a meaningless series of strokes and circles. I will not dwell on such pseudo-inscriptions except to stress that they underscore the prominence of letters and literacy even among those who did

2 The scale of production is a hotly contested topic; see Allen (2012: 295–304).

not possess the requisite learning to comprehend them. There was an expectation that coins should carry something that looked broadly like script even if its content was meaningless.

2 Numismatic Epigraphy

The script in which these micro-texts were engraved has received surprisingly little attention in scholarship (Naismith 2017: 372–379). Partly this is a result of the relatively brief nature of most such texts, but it is also a consequence of disciplinary divides: with the important exception of coins carrying runes, which are well known to runologists (Blackburn 1991; Page 1999: 117–129), numismatic inscriptions have not usually been seen as within the purview of epigraphists or palaeographers. This is not the case with other contemporary coinages elsewhere in Europe: there is a strong tradition of epigraphic study of Visigothic coinage in Spain, for instance (Pliego Vázquez 2009). In England, unfortunately, the single largest body of epigraphic material from the Anglo-Saxon period has received only scant attention, and is a subject crying out for more detailed work.

Some initial observations can be offered, however, based in large part on having recently worked through nearly 3,000 Anglo-Saxon coins from across the period while preparing the Fitzwilliam Museum's collection for publication (Naismith 2017). The first thing to stress is that the large majority of Anglo-Saxon inscriptions are executed in capitals, although as with many display scripts there is a significant degree of eclecticism in letter-forms. Non-classical letter-forms found on Anglo-Saxon coins include top-barred **A**, or **A** with a chevron-shaped cross-bar; angular **C**, **G** and **S**; lozenge-shaped **O**; uncial **D**; and an **M** made up of three vertical strokes crossed by a horizontal. Elisabeth Okasha has described this form of script as "Anglo-Saxon capitals", and identified a similar admixture of letter-forms on many other inscribed objects of Anglo-Saxon date (Okasha 1968: 321), although broadly similar scripts were also used elsewhere in western Europe, including on coins.

The highest degree of diversity in the lettering of coin inscriptions came in the eighth and ninth centuries. Pennies of Offa, king of the Mercians (757–796), gamely mix several variants of the same letter in the same word, as seen in Figures 2a and b with **D** and **E**, while an uncial form of **M** became established as the preferred shorthand for *Merciorum*, persisting into the 870s. The specifically Old English letter **ð** is always cast in lower case on Offa's coinage, although the capital form had probably been used on coins since the early seventh century, appearing on one of the first inscribed Anglo-Saxon gold coins of King Eadbald of

Kent (616×618–640) (Shaw 2013: 128–134). But in the later eighth century, a generation of moneyers avoided capital **Ð** quite scrupulously – a practice that seems to have been largely numismatic, with only one parallel I have been able to find in the inscription on a later gold ring (Okasha 1971: no. 156).

Figure 2a: OFFA REX/+DUD. Offa of Mercia, silver penny, London (?) mint, moneyer Dud (British Museum; image: SCBI; Naismith 2016: no. 62).

Figure 2b: OF[*fa*] R[*ex*] M[*erciorum*]/EADBERHT EP[*iscopus*]. Offa with Eadberht, bishop of London, silver penny, London mint (British Museum; image: SCBI; Naismith 2016: no. 735).

In the eighth and ninth centuries there was wider admixture of uncial and even minuscule letter-forms with capitals in coin inscriptions. Uncial **U** is found on coins of Offa and minuscule **G** on some coins of Coenwulf, probably from London (Naismith 2016: no. 130), but the most eclectic coinage of the period was that of Northumbria. From about 700 until around 870, the moneyers of this kingdom used letters from several different scripts: uncial **D**, and half-uncial or minuscule **G**, **H**, **S** and **T**. These are encountered most often in the early part of the coinage, and in the work of certain ninth-century moneyers who had a greater tolerance, or even preference, for variation (see Figures 3a–c).

Figure 3a: +ALDFRIDUS. Aldfrith of Northumbria (685–704), silver penny (image: CNG).

Figure 3b: EADBERHTVS. Eadberht of Northumbria (737–758), silver penny (image: CNG).

Figure 3c: +EDELRED REX/+LEOFDEGN MONET. Æthelred II of Northumbria (*c.* 840/841–844, 844–848), base metal penny, moneyer Leofthegn (image: CNG).

Over time, and especially after about 900, Anglo-Saxon numismatic inscriptions became less heterogeneous, at the same time as the geographical network of minting expanded. Certain idiosyncrasies became particular to regions or mints, such as a form of capital **Ð** with the line running through the hoop rather than the upright that was characteristic of the West Midlands in the early tenth century, and which can be used to help pin down the attribution of a coin. Ligatures, on the other hand, became more common, perhaps in part because inscriptions were typically longer, especially once it became common to include the name of the mint-place, temporarily under Æthelstan (924–939) and then permanently under Edgar (959–975) and his successors. The ethnic component of the royal style – an abbreviated form of *Anglorum* – was very often cut short, often with the same OR ligature used for contractions of *-orum* in manuscript contexts. This ligature, used only rarely before on coins, was adopted on the Reform coinage of Edgar, issued at the height of the influence of Æthelwold and Dunstan in the early 970s, and may be a result of the involvement of these learned bishops in setting policy at the heart of the kingdom (Naismith 2014a: 80–83; Molyneaux 2015: 189–192).

All of this is to say that there was not a single or distinct tradition of numismatic epigraphy in Anglo-Saxon England, and not simply because preferences varied between regions, periods and individual craftsmen. Rather, those who engraved coin inscriptions were closely integrated into the broader usage of capital and other scripts in epigraphic contexts, which was itself related to the display scripts sometimes used in manuscripts. Indeed, there is some reason to think that numismatic epigraphy had significant influence. Coin-like objects intended as brooches or for other ornamental purposes were common, especially from the ninth century onwards (Leahy 2006). Some used actual Roman or Anglo-Saxon coins; others imitated the general layout and look of a coin, including its epigraphy. A few examples are meaningful, like the Ashmolean brooch bearing the words +EADWARD REX ANGLORVM (Hinton 1974: no. 39) or the remarkable pewter disc inscribed ÆLFWOLD+ME FEC[*it*] from the Thames waterfront in London which looks essentially like an enlarged coin from the time of Cnut to Edward the Confessor (Lyon 2017: no. 1072); others, like a lead brooch recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS: SF3885),[3] seem to be meaningless, though still replicate the semblance of an inscription. The very plentiful micro-texts on coins were an inspiration in themselves, as well as a sponge soaking up practices from other media.

Script is just one dimension of the texts on coins. What they communicated would only make sense to those who were literate in the language and script of the text. Roman letters were the norm, but runes were used on some coins between the seventh and ninth centuries (Blackburn 1991; Page 1999: 117–129). They were more popular in some coinages and kingdoms than others, and had particular staying power in East Anglia. Early moneyers' names were cast entirely in runes, and the first issues of an East Anglian king – Beonna in the mid-eighth

3 PAS = <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/18443>.

century – mixed Roman and runic letters (Figure 4).[4] Interestingly, when Offa of Mercia imposed his rule on East Anglia and was named on coins minted by local moneyers, the king's name and title were almost always represented in Roman script, while the name of the moneyer was mostly still cast in runes (Figure 5). Offa may have stipulated this treatment of his own details, and left the rest of the inscription open to individual tastes, which perhaps reflected a local predilection for runes on coins.

Figure 4: +BE**onna** REX/EFE. Beonna of East Anglia (fl. 749–758), silver penny, moneyer Efe (British Museum; image: SCBI; Gannon 2013: no. 805).

Figure 5: OFFA REX/**botred**. Offa of Mercia, silver penny, East Anglian mint, moneyer Botræd (British Museum; image: SCBI; Naismith 2016: no. 40).

Runes generally fell out of use on coins over the ninth century, only being used for individual letters on a few specimens of East Anglian and Northumbrian coinage. There are a small number of instances of other forms of script on coins: Greek letters, specifically alpha and omega, are used in some Christian iconography from the ninth century onwards (Figure 6), and Arabic appears on the famous

4 Transliterations of runic inscriptions are given in **bold** type.

Figure 6: +VVLFREDI ARCHIEPISCOPI/+DOROVERNIAE CIVITATIS. Wulfred, archbishop of Canterbury (805–832), silver penny, Canterbury mint (British Museum; image: SCBI; Naismith 2016: no. 742).

Offa dinar, which carefully replicates the original, although it is highly doubtful that its meaning was known to the Anglo-Saxons (Naismith 2012: 113–114).

3 Names and Titles

As names were a key element of coin inscriptions, Old English, Old Norse and other languages which fed into the onomastics of Anglo-Saxon England are well represented. Numismatic names are especially important to philologists (Smart 1968 and 1986; Colman 1992 and 2014). They have the distinct advantage of being strictly contemporary and also closely datable and placeable, with some caveats that will be revisited later. Furthermore, the names of mints and moneyers on coins constitute a distinct tradition of recording, separate from and parallel to the testimony of manuscript sources. It has been remarked that moneyers' names reveal linguistic developments which only become apparent in other sources later, such as lenition of the intervocalic fricative in the eleventh century, which made the name-element *Æthel* into ÆGEL or ÆIEL (Colman 1981). This is just one among many examples of how moneyers' names can be, and have been, explored from a philological perspective.

Besides names, the content and language of coin inscriptions was fairly limited. Certain words and letters form part of the religious iconography of coinage: alpha and omega, the words CRVX 'cross' and PAX 'peace', and in one case a label DEXTE[*ra*] for the 'right [hand of God]' (Naismith 2017: no. 1406). The most ubiquitous elements on numismatic inscriptions were the cross that introduced most inscriptions, and the title of the king, normally the Latin REX. Sometimes the name of the people over whom the king ruled was given too, again in Latin, as with REX ANGLORVM, which became popular under Edgar and his successors. This portion of the royal style could show a surprising degree of variation. Offa, for instance, was sometimes REX M or REX MERCIORVM, while on a few enigmatic coins the abbreviated royal style O F R A probably stands for *Offa rex Anglorum* (Naismith 2012: 81–82). Pennies of Alfred the Great minted at London in the 870s endow him with the title REX ANGLO[*rum*] as well, perhaps to emphasise his power over a city that had traditionally been Mercian (Naismith 2016: no. 1417). In the early tenth century, Æthelstan's coinage presented a significant departure from the fairly staid situation under his father Edward the Elder (899–924). A royal style REX TO BRIT or similar, for *rex totius Britanniae* 'king of all Britain' appeared after he took control of York and received the ceremonial submission of other kings from various parts of Britain in 927 (Keynes 2015: 78–79; Molyneaux 2011). This same title (sometimes complementing *rex Anglorum*) was also used in contemporary charters, manuscript donation inscriptions and poems. It must reflect a buzzword that was doing the rounds of the royal court at this time, and which was imposed in all sorts of contexts by an authority with control over many aspects of royal representation. These intersections of the coinage with other media underscore how flexible and responsive the currency could be when taken in hand.

Titles and other material besides names were only occasionally cast in anything other than Latin. A famous group of coins minted at York by Viking rulers in the years around 940 made extensive use of Old English (Blackburn 2004). Olaf Guthfrithsson was called ANLAF CVNVNG, using the preferred Old English form of Ólafr and probably the Old English word for king,[5] while the moneyer's position was also put into Old English as MINETRI or similar. This unusual move formed part of an effort to distance the York coinage from that of the English kings, which also involved reverting to an older weight standard and in some cases using innovative and distinct iconography (Blackburn 2004: 340; Naismith 2017: 300). The only other cases come from early in the eleventh century. Æthelred II's unusual 'Agnus Dei'-type, probably minted in 1009 and (in a departure from traditional iconography) showing the Lamb of God and the Holy Dove, introduced the Old English preposition ON in the reverse legend, and the next type ('Last Small Cross'-type) marked the start of a move towards the Old English forms of place-names like London which had an alternative Latinate form (Keynes and Naismith

5 ANLAF does not display the loss of nasal and lengthening of the resultant vowel which produced ON *Ólafr*. CVNVNG should probably be understood as *cynyng*, a variant on the normal Old English word for king, *cyning*. While use of **u** in place of **y** or **i** would be suggestive of Old Norse, there is ambiguity in the representation of **u** and **y** (and **c** and **g**) in numismatic epigraphy, and the coin inscription does not display the nominal **r** which would be expected by this time (cf., for example, the inscription on the tenth-century 'Gorm' stone at Jelling, which describes the king as *kunuk*R; Jacobsen and Moltke 1941–1942: no. 41).

2011: 190). ‘Agnus Dei’ was also the only type regularly to give the whole of the ethnic or national portion of the royal title in full. A few pennies of the subsequent type give MTR for the moneyer’s job title, which could be *mynetere* as well as *monetarius* (Hildebrand 1881: no. 2477). On the whole, however, names aside, Anglo-Saxon coin inscriptions were in Latin.

4 The Making of Coin Inscriptions

How, then, were these inscriptions created? Physically, the process was quick but required technical expertise and access to specialist tools. It was a matter of carving the inscription into a stamp or die, so that when it hit the coin, the letters would be left standing in relief. This meant, of course, that the inscription on the die would run backwards, as seen on the few examples of surviving coin-dies from the early Middle Ages (e.g. Pirie 1986: 33–41). The inscription could be carved directly into the die by hand. The coin of Offa illustrated as Figure 5, with linear letters drawn between dots or pellets, may have been engraved that way. But from about 800 onwards, it was much more common to create the inscription using what are usually called punches in modern scholarship: pieces of metal which could be used to impress the same recurring element of a letter, such as an upright, a wedge or a curve (Sellwood 1962). No surviving specimens have as yet been identified, though their traces are clear on surviving coins. Figure 7, for example, shows a close-up of a well-preserved penny of Æthelred II. The punch marks are readily apparent. One can see how they were applied in sequence to create letters and crosses, with the same punch sometimes being used multiple times. The same technique can also be detected in other objects of similar fabric, such as a recently discovered seal matrix of late-tenth- or eleventh-century date (Kershaw and Naismith 2013).

Figure 7: Magnified image of a silver penny of Æthelred II, ‘Crux’-type, Canterbury mint, moneyer Leofric (private collection).

The importance of the use of punches is that the practical process of making inscriptions on coins and similar objects was very different from that which applied to stone, wood or bone. Coin and seal inscriptions would probably have been made by craftsmen with a distinct set of tools and skills. This raises the important question of whether those craftsmen were actually responsible for composing the inscription or, if not, how the content was communicated to them. In other epigraphic contexts, composition, layout and incision could all be carried out by separate individuals (Okasha 1995: 69–70). There is a high chance that coin inscriptions were composed by the craftsmen responsible for making the dies. One factor pointing in this direction is that the volume of work required by minting, or even just to manufacture dies, was very substantial. Estimates are inevitably imprecise, but might run to several thousand dies per year in England at peak output in the early eleventh century (Allen 2012: 295–304).

Aspects of the orthography of coin inscriptions from various periods give further clues to who was responsible for their composition. In the opening decades of the ninth century at Canterbury, a mint-name was – unusually at this time – placed on the pennies of Archbishop Wulfred (805–832). This took the form DOROVERNIAE CIVITATIS 'of the city of Canterbury'. But on a few dies, CIVITATIS is spelt CIFITATIS (Naismith 2011: C36.1–2). Substitution of **f** for **v** was not common in Latin charters of this period from Canterbury (Lapidge 1996: 446–454; Brooks and Kelly 2013: 123–126), and makes most sense in a context where the craftsman was more comfortable with the vernacular, in which **f** could signify a voiced labiodental spirant when used medially (Naismith 2012: 77–78). In other words, someone who was used to a different, possibly more Old English-oriented, orthography was responsible for inscribing these dies, and let that background show when composing a less familiar word.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, as the scale of the minting network grew, a new layer of complexity emerged: how would a moneyer's name and its spelling be communicated to the agents responsible for producing dies? In the time of Wulfred it is likely that the die-cutters were identical with the moneyers, or closely associated with them, as mint-places tended to be few and large. The key individuals could have easily been in direct contact. But already in the years around 900, it is clear that there were numerous moneyers based some distance from where their dies were made (Blunt, Stewart and Lyon 1989: 29–34). *Domesday Book* reveals that in 1066 moneyers from Hereford and Worcester received their dies from London; the coins suggest that a comparable system had been in place for most of the kingdom for several decades (Naismith 2017: 243–248).

The die-cutters seem to have been sovereign in these conditions, suggesting that their own preference was what counted. This becomes apparent when one examines the handling of moneyers with unusual names, and who worked at various times with die-cutters in different locations. One moneyer at Lincoln in the time of Æthelred II illustrates how interactions with die-cutters could work in practice. In the last coin-type of this reign, production of dies was relatively decentralised, and Lincoln was one of several places making them (Lyon 1998). A local moneyer was generally named IVSTAN or GVSTIN on reverse dies from this source (Mossop 1970: pl. XXIV.5). His name is normalised as Old Norse *Iosteinn*. But for whatever reason, a pair of dies was on one occasion made and sent from London, and on these the name of the moneyer is rendered as IOSEDAN (Lyon 2017: no. 884, with comment on p. 148). It is very probably the same actual individual, but his name is represented so differently that one strongly suspects the name was relayed orally to a London die-cutter, who inscribed it without direct reference to either the moneyer's own preference or that of northern die-cutters. He did his best under the circumstances, but this case raises the possibility that die-cutters managed the process on the basis of information passed on by word of mouth via moneyers or agents working on their behalf. One can see the same thing occur again a few years later, again at Lincoln. The normalised Old Norse name-form of one moneyer under Cnut was *Áslakr*. In the first issue of the reign, which was also very decentralised, dies were made in Lincoln itself, and name him ASLAC. In the next type of the reign, in which a mix of local and central (probably London) dies were employed, one finds both ASLAC and OSLAC. In the final type of the reign, struck only from central dies, just OSLAC occurs on the coins (Mossop 1970: pl. XXXIII, no. 4, XLII, no. 19 and LIII, no. 28).

These issues could affect royal names as well, although not in quite the same way. In the ninth century rulers' names were sometimes represented in slightly different ways depending on the local dialect: thus the final diphthong of Æthelberht of Wessex (858x860–865) was represented as ÆÐELBEARHT on coins of Canterbury and Rochester, reflecting a specifically Kentish treatment of the name (Naismith 2011: C160–210 and R42–43). Æthelberht's name would have been known in Kent for many years by this stage, and it is unlikely that the die-cutters depended on a written model sent from the royal court; rather, they created a local adaptation of the king's name in conformance with local dialectic and orthographic norms.

At the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, in the 1050s, one coin-type of Edward the Confessor points more strongly towards use of written instructions by die-cutters. The elegant 'Sovereign/Eagles'-type was exceptional in a number of ways. It was the first to show an enthroned, full-length image of the king rather than a bust, inspired by representations on mainland European coins and seals (Naismith 2017: 373). In addition, coins of this type occasionally render the king's name in a highly unusual form: EADVVEARDVS (Figure 8). This seems to have been restricted to the early part of the coinage, though dies with this name-form were used at a number of mints across the country. It was probably a brief initial quirk of the central London die-cutters. Both the replacement of *wynn* with VV and the Latinisation of the ending were highly unusual, and can only be paralleled a century or more before these coins were minted. These coins betray the influence of an agency grounded in different traditions of orthography, which is hardly surprising in the context of a coinage which was also such a departure visually. That agency could have been the same one responsible for Edward's seal, which featured the same name-form (EADVVEARDI) as well as very similar iconography, drawn from a range of German and Roman precedents (Keynes 2018: 78–80). A non-Anglo-Saxon craftsman, that is, probably created a model closely related to the new seal, which was copied by the die-cutters and moneyers before being adapted to suit existing tastes.

Figure 8: EADVVEARDVS REX ANGLO/+LIFINC ON WINCEST. Edward the Confessor (1042–1066), silver penny, 'Sovereign/Eagles'-type, Winchester mint, moneyer Leofing (image: CNG).

Edward's coinage is an important reminder that there was no one pattern for how names and other content could be conveyed between the king and those who selected designs, moneyers and the craftsmen responsible for implementing them. Written models could be used, but oral communication also seems to have played a large part, transmitted either from mint to die-cutter, or perhaps via gatherings of moneyers such as those called by Charles the Bald in 864 and Henry I in 1125 (Grierson 1990; Allen 2012: 27–29). Importantly, this presupposes a pragmatic form of literacy among those responsible for making dies, from the eighth century onwards. They were able to spell out names, a criterion used to define functional literacy in many contexts, and largely avoided significant errors in the reproduction of names or titles. As the philological interest of names on coins highlights, the literacy of moneyers and die-cutters was a distinct phenomenon, parallel to rather than dependent on that of ecclesiastical scribes. These most micro of micro-texts bear witness to a whole world of talk and literacy that underpinned the making of coined money.

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Practical Runic Literacy in the Late Anglo-Saxon Period: Inscriptions on Lead Sheet

Abstract: The corpus of runic inscriptions from Anglo-Saxon England is growing steadily, and the evidence of several recent finds sheds valuable new light on the range and role of literacy in this culture as well as on early forms of the Old English language and its dialects. Few of these inscriptions can be disparaged as mere graffiti, and it is in fact clear that there is a significant patterning in the types of text written in runes in successive phases within the more than six centuries of the Anglo-Saxon Period. Three principal historical stages can now be identified. Pre-Old English and Early Old English phases that cover the fifth century AD to the ninth can be defined on linguistic grounds; concurrently, quite distinctive forms and uses of text are associated with each of these phases. The present paper identifies a 'Late Anglo-Saxon' phase, defined in terms of runographic practice and historical and archaeological context rather than linguistic criteria, although interestingly runic inscriptions of Latin text are prominent in this set. The phase is represented particularly by a number of recently found inscriptions on pieces of lead sheet. The examples which now allow us to define this group are published here, most of them for the first time. The material has a predominantly ecclesiastical and learned character, and yet it represents a mode of literacy quite distinct from the familiar contemporary manuscript culture.

1 Runic Inscriptions of the Pre- and Early Old English Phases

Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions are typically 'micro-texts'. Taking the admittedly arbitrary limit of fifty words suggested by the editors of this volume in their Call for Papers as the defining criterion, the only inscription which exceeds this total is that on the Ruthwell Cross – and that only if the longer inscriptions on the north and south sides containing verses that are subsequently found embedded in the Vercelli Book poem *The Dream of the Rood* are counted as one text (Hines 2018). In the case of the runic texts on and around the side panels and lid of the

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Franks Casket (Page 1999: 172–179), as also with the Latin *tituli* around the pictorial panels on the east and west faces of the Ruthwell Cross, we are faced with a series of discrete micro-texts that are functionally interwoven with the object on which they appear and its decoration, as well as with other texts on the same object or elsewhere.

Recent runological study within the Old English corpus of material has defined successive Pre-Old English and Early Old English periods, the dividing point being the completion of the series of primary Old English sound-changes traditionally known as 'pre-historic', culminating with the phonologization of the fronted and/or raised vowels created by *i*-mutation consequent upon the disappearance of the unstressed *i* that caused umlaut – prior to which the differences between umlauted and non-umlauted vowels remained allophonic (Waxenberger 2017). The distinction between these two periods in respect of the practice of literacy proves to go a long way beyond such purely grammatical aspects. Pre-Old English runic inscriptions remain few (tabulated in the Appendix).[1] These are all very short strings of text. Several of them are totally incomprehensible: in some cases because of uncertainty over which runic graphs are represented in relatively untidy inscriptions, but in others because perfectly legible strings – such as the **neim** and **buhui** on the sixth-century brooches from West Heslerton and Wakerley respectively – defy anything but the most conjectural reading.[2]

1 This paper considers and compares two similar but quite distinct phase-systems. The *runological* evidence may be divided into successive Pre-Old English, Early Old English and Late Anglo-Saxon periods, as explained in this article. *Archaeologically*, the Anglo-Saxon Period is also conventionally divided into three phases: Early Anglo-Saxon (the early fifth to late seventh century AD), Middle Anglo-Saxon (the late seventh to mid-ninth century) and Late Anglo-Saxon (mid-ninth to late eleventh century). The phases in the two systems are interestingly similar in dating and duration, but must be kept quite distinct as they are defined on entirely different bases. The 'Early Old English' inscription on the Harford Farm grave 11 disc brooch, for instance, demonstrates that the Early Old English Period had begun around the middle of the seventh century, shortly before the end of the Early Anglo-Saxon Period, which is defined as the period in which the burial of the dead with grave goods was a regular practice (Hines and Bayliss 2013: 27–30). The potential for confusion in the similarity of label but difference in date of the Early Anglo-Saxon (fifth to late seventh centuries) and the Early Old English (mid-seventh to early tenth centuries) periods is regrettable, but both terms are irreducibly standard within their own domains.

2 Conventions for the presentation of runic inscriptions observed in this paper are as follows: a) Transliterations of runic inscriptions are given in **bold** type; b) *Italic* script within transliterations represents uncertain readings; c) A hyphen (**-**) within a transliterated string represents the presence of a rune for which not even an uncertain reading can be suggested; d) A slur below a pair of vowels, e.g. **e͜a**, denotes a single rune which represents a diphthong; e) A slur above a pair

We are nevertheless able to make something significant even out of the fog of obscurity within which our Pre-Old English inscriptions are embedded. An important observation is that some of the formal obscurity appears likely to derive from experimentation in runic orthography in face of the extensive changes in vowel phonology the nascent Old English language and its dialects were undergoing. A development which was regularized very early was the introduction of a new runic graph *ōs* (Figure 1) for /ã:/, and subsequently for *o* and *ō* of whatever origin when that vowel became de-nasalized. This was such an early and indeed regular innovation that the as yet unrefuted although equally as yet unproven proposition that its appearance on the Undley (Suffolk) bracteate of the second half of the fifth century represents a runic innovation introduced already in Continental northern Germany still deserves serious consideration (Hines and Odenstedt 1987). Otherwise, we can trace innovations in Kentish runic writing for vowels from the sixth century to the ninth, and in East Anglia in the eighth century (Hines 2006; 2011; 2019; forthcoming a).

Figure 1: The new runic graph *ōs*: a: the obtuse-angle type; b: the acute-angle type. Drawn by the author.

Another fundamental contrast between the Pre-Old English and Early Old English inscriptions resides in the syntax of a well-formed text in the two periods. Our earliest Early Old English inscription as defined here is that on the back of a repaired disc brooch buried in a woman's grave around the middle or in the third quarter of the seventh century at Harford Farm, Caistor St Edmund (Norfolk). The text reads **luda:gibœtæsigilæ**, and – although a more complicated alternative has been argued for – this can be read with confidence as a straightforward SVO sentence directly reflecting the circumstances in which the inscription was added to the brooch: *Lud(d)a gibœttæ sigilæ* 'Lud(d)a repaired (the) brooch' (Hines 2000; Bammesberger 2003; Hines forthcoming a and b).

Even allowing for all of the uncertainty there is over what is contained within many of the Pre-Old English inscriptions, the consistent shortness of these inscriptions means that we have examples of one, two or at most three words – each of which counts can produce relatively intelligible texts, as in the cases of Caistor by Norwich **raïhan** 'of, or from, a roe deer' (Page 1973), Watchfield **hariboki:wusa** 'of, or from, (the) army-book: Wusa' (Nedoma 2016) and Undley **g͡ag͡ãg͡a.maga.medu**

of letters, e.g. **d͡e**, represents a bind-rune (ligature); f) Square brackets] … [represent the start and end of lacunae in the inscription.