1
The Chronology and Varieties of Old English Literature

Histories of literary periods can generally rely on simple chronology to organize the material that they cover. There are significant obstacles to such an approach to Old English, the most obvious of which is that in the vernacular, much prose and all but a few lines of verse cannot be dated with any precision. Anglo-Latin works provide a broad framework of literary subperiods within the Anglo-Saxon era, since these are much more narrowly datable. Thus, as detailed above, the studied Latinity of the age of Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin (roughly the eighth century and the latter part of the seventh) is sharply distinguishable from the utilitarian vernacularity of the age of Alfred and his immediate successors (the end of the ninth century and the first half of the tenth); the latter in turn contrasts with the renewed (though circumscribed) Latinity of the immediately succeeding age of revived Benedictine monasticism (see Lapidge 1991c). Vernacular prose can be fitted roughly to this framework: before the viking age, it is commonly assumed, the normal language of extended prose was Latin; texts of the Alfredian period are mostly identified as such in the works of Asser, William of Malmesbury, and others; and thus nearly all the remaining Old English prose is generally assigned to the tenth and eleventh centuries. The ascription of most of the prose to the last hundred years of the period, then, does not contribute much to constructing a literary history based on chronology – though whether this assessment of the age of composition of most anonymous prose is correct is still under discussion.[1]

The problems are more severe in regard to the poetry. Although there may be reason to doubt whether Old English was much used for substantial prose compositions before Alfred's day (see n. 1), the case is plainly otherwise in regard to verse. We have no early poetic codex to prove the recording of substantial poems – such verifiably early scraps of verse as we have are preserved as marginalia or passing quotations in Latin texts – but we know that such existed, in view of Asser's tale of how Alfred, as a child, memorized such a volume (see chapter 3), and in view of the observation in the Old English Bede (but not the Latin) that Cædmon's late seventh-century compositions were taken down at dictation (ed. T. Miller 1890–8: 2.346). From canons issued in multiple years by councils at *Clofeshoh* (an unidentified location) forbidding the practice, we also may surmise that secular verse was sometimes used paraliturgically before 747 (see Remley 1996: 57), and one would suppose this was written. Thus, it is not inherently implausible that even some of the lengthier surviving poems should be late copies of much earlier works. There is linguistic evidence to support this view.[2] Anglo-Saxonists – or at least the literary scholars among them – are sharply divided about the dating of most poems, and since it makes a considerable difference whether, for example, *Beowulf* is viewed in the historical context of Bede's day or Æthelred the Unready's, until there is greater consensus about dating, too much conjecture will always attach to describing Old English poetry in developmental terms, except in regard to its formal properties (meter, alliteration, diction, and so forth). Certainly, some surviving poems must have been composed early, for example *Guthlac A*, the poet of which asserts more than once that the saint performed his miracles within the memory of many persons still living (see chapter 5; Guthlac died in 714) and some poems, including *Beowulf*, seem linguistically anterior to *Guthlac A*. Recent developments in Old English scholarship in fact suggest that there is in progress a turning away from the extreme skepticism about the dating of poetry that has been common now for some years.[3]

A further obstacle to describing Old English literature on a chronological basis is the considerable variety of literary types represented, each of which is better compared to similar types, regardless of chronology, than to unrelated but coeval texts. Ælfric's lives of saints do not make an uninteresting comparison to the roughly contemporary *Battle of Maldon*, but they may be compared more profitably to

hagiographies of the age of Bede. For that reason the chapters that
follow are organized by literary type rather than by period. The one
exception is that works of the Alfredian period are discussed in ensem-
ble, for together they shed light on the concerns of Alfred and his
court at a particularly interesting historical juncture. The literary types
around which the remaining chapters are organized are not all indis-
putably categories that the Anglo-Saxons themselves would have
recognized. Certainly *passiones sanctorum* (chapter 5) and *sermones*
(chapter 4) formed recognized subgenres, but the distinction between
the two is not always definite, since homilies might concern the lives of
saints rather than the daily lection from Scripture. Types like "legal
literature" (chapter 8) and "biblical narrative" (chapter 6) may have no
demonstrable historical validity, but the way such material is organized
in manuscripts frequently suggests that such concepts do have more
than present utility.

The manuscripts also reveal much about the uses of literacy, though
to perceive this it is necessary to shed some modern preconcep-
tions about literacy and literature. At a time when literacy was limited
almost wholly to ecclesiastics, we should expect it to have served
fairly limited purposes, preserving only such Church-related matter
as was not suitable to memorial transmission. Indeed, being illiterate,
lay persons would have had little reason to care about writing at all,
were it not for the legal functions that writing assumed, particularly
in the form of charters proving the right of religious houses and
individuals to hold land (see chapter 8). Thus, Alfred's proposal to
extend literacy to the children of all the aristocracy (see section 5 of
the Introduction) must be seen not as an antecedent of Jeffersonian
idealism about the virtue of universal education but as a calculated
effort to fill the ranks of churchmen decimated by the viking inva-
sions. After all, up to Alfred's day, with rare exceptions like the two
seventh-century kings Sigeberht of East Anglia and Aldfrith of
Northumbria, to think of an educated person was to think of an
ecclesiastic: there was no secular scholarship.

Certain modern preconceptions about literature must also be
shed, since the Anglo-Saxons naturally did not distinguish litera-
ture as art from other literate compositions in quite the way we do.
The important distinction was not between literature and other
writings but between prose and verse, the latter marked by its
elevated diction and artificial conventions, as well as by metrical
forms that, in the case of Latin verse, required prolonged study in

the monastic schools. The privileged nature of verse is the likeliest explanation for the preservation of poems like *Beowulf*, *Deor*, and *Waldere*, which we might not otherwise have expected to be written down at all, since books were precious and difficult to produce, and such texts seem to have little to do with the religious and utilitarian purposes to which manuscripts were put. Given the Anglo-Saxons' own apparent attitude toward verse, and given the basis of modern Anglo-American literary studies in British aestheticism, it is not surprising that studies of Old English literature throughout the last century should have been devoted primarily to verse. Yet for the Anglo-Saxons the distinction between prose and verse seems at times one simply of form, for even the unlikeliest material could be versified, including a calendar of saints' feasts (*The Menologium*), the preface to a rule for canons (*Vainglory*), and the philosophical ruminations on God's foreknowledge and human free will in Boethius' *Consolatio philosophiae*. The poetry is thus quite diverse in subject: nearly every literary category treated in the chapters below includes examples of both prose and poetry.

So diverse were the uses to which literacy was put that the succeeding chapters cannot conveniently encompass all the textual types encountered. Indeed, the body of texts preserved in Old English is larger and more diverse than anything encountered elsewhere in Europe before the twelfth century (see Wormald 1991a: 1). Thus, it may be useful briefly to describe here some of the more incidental varieties, especially as they are revealing about the uses of literacy. Perhaps the commonest writing preserved from the period is, in fact, the mass of glosses and glossaries encountered in so many manuscripts.[4] Glosses are closely tied to the Latin curriculum. They naturally were used as aids to the comprehension of texts in Latin – though their function in this capacity could be varied, since, for example, Psalter glosses could be designed for either liturgical or scholarly use[5] – and their ultimate source was the authority of knowledgeable teachers. Hence, it is not surprising that some glossaries used in England and on the Continent can be traced to the pedagogy of familiar scholars, including Theodore and Hadrian at Canterbury (to whom can be traced the origins of a family of glossaries of which the Leiden Glossary is the oldest surviving example: see Lapidge 1986b and Pheifer 1987) and Æthelwold and his circle at Glastonbury and Winchester (see Gretsch 1999). Glosses are found in both English and Latin (often together, often alternating randomly), in interlinear and marginal

form, and in ink and drypoint (i.e. scratched into the parchment, commonly with a stylus). Usually they are simple synonyms; longer exegetical insertions are generally classed as scholia. Most commonly one encounters widely separated glosses on individual words ("occasional glosses"), though after the early tenth century it is by no means unusual to find interlinear, word-for-word glosses of entire texts ("continuous glosses," the earliest example being the gloss on the Vespasian Psalter). Such continuous glosses are found to Latin psalters, gospels, the Benedictine Rule, the *Regularis concordia*, the *Liber scintillarum* 'Book of Sparks' (an early eighth-century compilation from the Church Fathers by Defensor, a monk of Ligugé near Poitiers), and works by Abbo of St. Germain, Ælfric, Benedict of Aniane, Fulgentius, Isidore of Seville, Gildas, Prosper, Prudentius, and Popes Gregory the Great and Boniface IV.[6] All the glosses on a text, along with the words that they gloss (called *lemmata*, sg. *lemma*, usually Latin, rarely Greek or Hebrew) might then be copied sequentially into another manuscript to form a rudimentary glossary referred to by the term *glossae collectae*. An example is the glossary to the prose and verse texts of Aldhelm's *De virginitate* in London, BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra A. iii., fols. 92–117 (ed. Wright and Wülcker 1884: 485–535, also Quinn 1956: 69–219, with corrections by Voss 1989: 130–4; DOE: ClGl 3 (Quinn), beginning with item 320). Because they preserve the original order of the lemmata, it is frequently possible to identify the sources of such collections. That becomes more difficult when the glosses are rearranged alphabetically. Alphabetization was never complete, however: it might be that all words with the same first letter are listed together, or the first two letters; never more than three. Alphabetization naturally made glossaries more useful than *glossae collectae*, but alphabetization was not the only useful arrangement. As monks, when they spoke at all, were expected to speak only Latin, learners found it convenient to have listed together a variety of words belonging to the same semantic sphere, for example household implements, buildings and their parts, parts of the body, trees, and various plants. Ælfric's *Glossary* (ed. Zupitza 1880; DOE: ÆGl) is an example of such a so-called class-glossary. Some of the earliest manuscripts that preserve Old English are glossaries, including the Épinal and Corpus Glossaries; the former manuscript may have been written as early as ca. 700.[7] Glossaries thus provide important evidence for the early state of the language. Glosses and glossaries are also our chief witnesses to dialects other than West Saxon.

Catalogues are the sort of form one might expect to find in manuscripts devoted to preserving information that resists memorization, and the commonest sort in Old English includes royal genealogies and regnal lists, which tend to be found in manuscripts of laws and chronicles. Lists of kings exist for all the major Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The purpose of the genealogies is generally taken to be more propagandistic than historical. Certainly the way that the genealogies have been repeatedly extended by the addition of names reaching ever further back into the remote and largely imaginary past, eventually leading to Adam, does suggest an effort to shore up the dignity of Anglo-Saxon dynasties, particularly of the house of Wessex.[8] Bishops, saints, and their resting places also have their lists, though the manuscript contexts in which these are found vary widely.[9] Historical works by and large tend to assume the form of lists of an annalistic nature, as with Orosius' history and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and related texts (chapter 3).

Narratives of the historical sort are usually in Latin and concern religious history. In addition to Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* (see section 4 of the Introduction), there is the so-called *Laterculus Malalianus* of Archbishop Theodore (ed. and trans. J. Stevenson 1995a). The *Laterculus* ('List', the title given it in modern times because of an imperial list from Augustus to Justinus that closes it) represents the most extensive of the surviving works from Theodore's own pen. It is a translation of John Malalas' *Chronographia*, a sixth-century chronicle of the world in Greek, to which is added an original typological history of the life of Christ.[10] Preparatory to his *Historia ecclesiastica* Bede composed a short *Historia abbatum*, on the founding of his monastery at Monkwearmouth-Jarrow and on its abbots Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith.[11] Alcuin's *Versus de patribus, regibus, et sanctis Euboricensis ecclesiae* 'Verses on the Fathers [i.e. Bishops], Kings, and Saints of the Church of York' (ed. and trans. Godman 1982), in 1,658 hexameters, draws on myriad sources – particularly on Bede, and on Alcuin's own experience and that of his acquaintances – to recount the history of the northern see from Roman times to the archiepiscopacy of Alcuin's teacher Ælberht (767–8). Of particular interest is the list of authors available for reading at York (1536–62) – forty names all told, of both Christian and pagan authors, with allusions to much other reading material. Similar is the *De abbatibus* of one Aediluulf, a chronological account of the history of an unidentified cell of Lindisfarne, composed in the first quarter of the ninth century.[12] Both of these poems are as much hagiography as history, and the hagiography of the former in

particular has a patriotic cast to it (see Bullough 1981). The purpose of Alcuin's poem in fact seems to be to provide York with an idealized picture of Northumbria's glorious past in order to spur present reform at a time when politics and morals in the north were in disarray (Godman 1982: xlvii–lx). In English there are two shorter historical texts of a religious nature. The first is an account of the monastic reforms during the reign of Edgar, which is appended to Æthelwold's translation of the Benedictine Rule, and which begins abruptly because the heading in the manuscript was never filled in (ed. Cockayne 1864–6: 3.432–4; DOE: RevMon (Whitelock)). The second (ed. Thorpe 1865: 445; DOE: StWulf) is a brief account of St. Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester (d. 1095), though it has little in common with hagiography and much with cartularies, as it is chiefly a record of the estates that he secured for Worcester. It is in fact copied into Hemming's Cartulary (see chapter 8), where it is followed by a fuller Latin version. Mention should also be made of the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* 'Praise of Queen Emma' (ed. and trans. Campbell and Keynes 1998), composed by a monk or canon of Saint-Omer in Flanders on the commission of Queen Emma herself, the wife successively of Æthelred II and Cnut. It is a highly politicized account, in Latin, of the Danish conquest of England, which resembles nothing so much as secular hagiography. Its purpose was probably to promote the succession of Emma's son Harthacnut to the throne, against the claim of Edward the Confessor.[13] A similar life of Edward, commissioned by his queen Edith from another Flemish monk, may have been intended to prepare the kingdom for the transfer of power to her family upon the king's death.[14] If so, the Conquest rendered it irrelevant. The work, however, is of some historical and political significance, since, as argued by Tyler (2008), it attests to female patronage and literary internationalism in pre-Conquest England, qualities usually thought to have come in with the Normans. Grassi (2004) defends its historicity.

One of the more interesting and peculiar categories of textual types is the range of brief notes encountered, mostly commonplaces and superstitions. They are often written in margins or on empty leaves, sometimes filling a blank space at the end of a longer text, though occasionally as part of a more formal series of miscellaneous texts, as in London, BL, Cotton MS Tiberius A. iii. These reveal much about the preoccupations and beliefs of English monks and canons both before and after the Conquest. There are notes, for example, on the names of the days of the week, the months, the winds, the letters of the

alphabet, the numerals, family relationships, on the age of Christ's mother at the time of the Annunciation and of her death, on the size of Noah's ark and of St. Peter's in Rome, on the six ages of the world, on the Anti-Christ, on the fifteen days preceding Doomsday, on the age of the world since creation, on cryptographic writing (e.g. substituting consonants for vowels), on lucky and unlucky days, on the prognostic significance of sunshine, thunder, phases of the moon, dreams, the letters of the alphabet, the day of the week on which Christmas falls, and so forth.[15] For an extended discussion of such additions, annotations, and marginalia, see chapter 12.

Of a related character are charms, of which there survive in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts about a hundred examples, in Latin, English, and gibberish.[16] A dozen are wholly or partly in a semi-metrical form (see *ASPR* 6.116–28), and some contain letters of the Greek and runic alphabets (e.g. N. Ker 1957: no. 390.b). The charms are directed against a wide array of maladies and misfortunes, including fevers, flux, dysentery, nosebleed, cysts, chicken-pox, a noxious dwarf, various wounds, the theft of cattle or horses, evil spirits, the loss of a swarm of bees, unfruitful land, and aches in the eyes, ears, stomach, and teeth. Thus, many of them have affinities with medical recipes, adding only prescribed rituals to the concoction of medicines, and some are actually found in medical manuscripts (see Kieckhefer 1989: 56–90). Yet it is more often difficult to distinguish between charms and prayers (see Olsan 1992) – charms in fact often call for the recitation of prayers – and indeed, many are preserved in rather pious contexts, such as the Bosworth and Vitellius Psalters (Ker 1957: nos. 129 and 224), and a copy of the Benedictine Rule (no. 154B).[17] This may seem odd to readers who think of Christian religion as antithetical to superstition, and of the charms as therefore associated with pagan belief. To the contrary, aside from an allusion to Woden in the *Nine Herbs Charm* (*ASPR* 6.119–21, l. 32; DOE: MCharm 2), the only very explicit reference to pagan belief has the ancient gods (gen. pl. *Ēsa*, cognate with Old Icelandic *Æsir*) reduced to the status of malevolent, disease-inducing bogies, along with elves and witches.[18] Since the Church taught that the old gods were demons – one word for pagan worship, for example, is *dēofolgield*, literally 'sacrifice to devils' – this variety of supernaturalism must have seemed, to some, of a piece with belief in angels, devils, the intercession of saints, and the efficacy of relics.[19] The views of an exceptionally orthodox thinker like Ælfric are instructive: he warns against setting dates of travel on the basis of prognostics, and drawing

children through the earth at a crossroads, concocting love potions, and consulting witches about matters of health (*De auguriis*, ed. Skeat 1881–1900: 1.364–82; DOE: ÆLS (Auguries)). His objection, how-ever, is simply that this is offensive to God: he freely admits that witches have knowledge of disease (though their knowledge comes from the devil) and that devils do cause poor health in humans and loss of cattle. That he felt obliged to preach against magical practices implies that they were familiar – some of the penitentials and canon collections also censure them – and the wide range of manuscripts in which prognostics and charms are found suggests that moral revulsion like Ælfric's may have been relatively uncommon in abbeys and minsters. Indeed, faith in charms and auguries is evident in some more substantial texts, such as the dialogues of Solomon and Saturn (see chapter 10, section 1), and even *Beowulf* (lines 204, 3051–75). In sum, the seeming marginality of charms and prognostics as textual types may be regarded as a product of the way religion, science, and superstition are sharply distinguished in contemporary academic discourse, and it thus highlights a significant difference between Anglo-Saxon and contemporary thought.

   The riddles are also difficult to situate squarely in any of the succeed-ing chapters. In modern scholarship they are often treated as lyrics, perhaps because those in Old English are nearly all found exclusively in the Exeter Book, and perhaps because some are narrated in the first person. Yet the Exeter Book includes many short poems with no real lyrical content, and the riddles are distinguished from all other Old English verse by their frank humor. Borysławski (2002) argues that they belong to the genre of wisdom literature. The riddle genre was established in England by Aldhelm, who wrote a century of Latin *enigmata* ('mysteries', ed. and trans. Glorie 1968; also trans. Stork 1990 and Lapidge in Lapidge and Rosier 1985: 61–101, the latter with an informative introduction) in imitation of the late Latin poet Symphosius. These were his best-known verses, studied widely in the early Middle Ages as part of the monastic curriculum. They were also imitated both in England and abroad, notably by Tatwine (the Mercian archbishop of Canterbury, 731–4) and Eusebius (possibly to be identified as Hwætberht, abbot of Monkwearmouth-Jarrow from 716 to sometime after 747, for Bede calls him by that name), who filled out Tatwine's collection of forty, arranged in an ingenious word puzzle, with another sixty.[20] Boniface also composed *enigmata*, twenty in all, treating the vices and virtues in acrostic form;[21] Bede apparently composed some that are now lost (see Lapidge 1975); and

a few scattered Anglo-Latin riddles by others survive.[22] The genre is thus a scholarly one (see especially Lapidge 1994d), and so it is not surprising that the riddles in Old English, in imitation of the Latin ones, are all in verse. Aldhelm's "mysteries" are sober contemplations of God's Creation, but Tatwine's and Eusebius' focus chiefly on classroom topics, everyday objects, and fantastic creatures. Thus, while Aldhelm certainly was the model for several specific Exeter riddles (see Tupper 1910: xxxvii–xliv, and Williamson 1977, *passim*), Tatwine's and Eusebius' may have inspired the playful tone (though not the ribaldry) of many of the remaining vernacular riddles, which contrasts so strikingly with the somber dignity of other Old English verse.[23]

In the standard edition there are ninety-one riddles in the Exeter Book, though damage to the manuscript, along with disagreement about where some riddles begin and end, renders it impossible to be certain that there were not originally one hundred.[24] They are written out in three groups of fifty-seven, two, and thirty-three in the latter part of the manuscript, though one of the middle two is simply another copy of no. 28. One is in Latin (86), though its solution depends upon an English pun. Two are translations: no. 38 renders Aldhelm's final riddle, "Creatura" ('Creation' or 'Nature'), and fairly faithfully, while no. 33 translates the corresponding number in Aldhelm's collection, "Lorica" ('Mail Coat'), and it is also found in a Northumbrian version called *The Leiden Riddle* after the location of the manuscript.[25] There is some reason to think that the riddles were culled from various sources (e.g., several seem to demand the same solution, such as "ship" and "sword"), though except for the translation of Aldhelm's "Creatura," the language and meter of the collection are notably cohesive (see Fulk 1992: 404–10). Spellings such as runic HIGORÆ 'magpie, jay' and non-runic *agof* (backward for *boga* 'bow', with mistaken scribal modernization of -*b* to -*f*) support the evidence for the relatively early and/or dialectal origins of at least some of the riddles (pp. 404–10); for further arguments for early composition, see Fell 2002.

No solutions are provided in the manuscript, though in blank spaces a rune was here and there written or scratched after the copying of the text, presumably the first letter of a guess at the solution. In one instance (no. 34) a solution in cryptography has been copied from the margin of the exemplar into the text of the poem. The solutions to many of the riddles are obvious, though quite a few are uncertain. They are almost all familiar objects (shield, cup of drink, horn, anchor, etc.) and animals (swan, nightingale, cuckoo, barnacle goose, ox, fox, etc.), often

described as wondrous beings (see McFadden 2008), and occasionally larger forces of nature (wind, sun, constellation, moon and sun together, Creation). A few are absurdly obscure (Lot and his family, ten chickens, one-eyed seller of garlic). The device of *prosopopoeia*, or attribution of human characteristics to animals and objects, is frequent, so that the speaker is often the object itself (on which see Hayes 2008). Obfuscation is enhanced in a variety of ways, the most obvious of which is the use of runes within the text, which may stand for letters or rune-names, and which may or may not be in the proper order. Formulaic language is also deployed in ways that raise misleading expectations (see Riedinger 2004), and P. Murphy (2011) has argued that the riddles' language is informed by metaphors largely unrelated to their solutions. Less obvious, and more playful, is the use of *double entendres*, particularly salacious ones (see G. Davis 2006), as when an onion is described as standing tall in a bed, being hairy underneath, gripped by a peasant's daughter, and making her eyes water (no. 23), and when a key hanging by a man's thigh is described in terms that may make readers blush (no. 42). Naturally, the ribald suggestions are devised to lead the solver away from the true solution. If some describe the vernacular riddles as a popular form, rather than the learned one they certainly are, it is surely because of this playfulness, as well as the association with everyday life that their solutions lend them. It is also because they are the one literary type in which servants and peasants are significant actors (see Tupper 1910: li, and cf. Tanke 1994; also Denno 2007 on themes of servitude), with the result that the riddles seem a continual exercise in deflation, turning the heroic diction that they share with the rest of the native verse tradition into something like mock epic. The deflationary rhetoric is well suited to the form: the pleasure to be derived from riddles lies in discovering that things described so artificially and obscurely are actually quite familiar; the pleasure to be derived from mock epic is also in recognizing the familiar and ordinary behind artificial language.

Brief mention may be made of inscriptions, which are found in runic and non-runic form.[26] Most are memorials or marks of ownership or authorship of the objects on which they are found, but two present substantial texts: the inscriptions on the Ruthwell Cross (see chapter 7) and the Franks Casket (figure 3; DOE: RuneAuzon). The function of the latter object, made probably in the first half of the eighth century, is mysterious, and all the more so because of its juxtaposition of scenes from religious history and Germanic legend
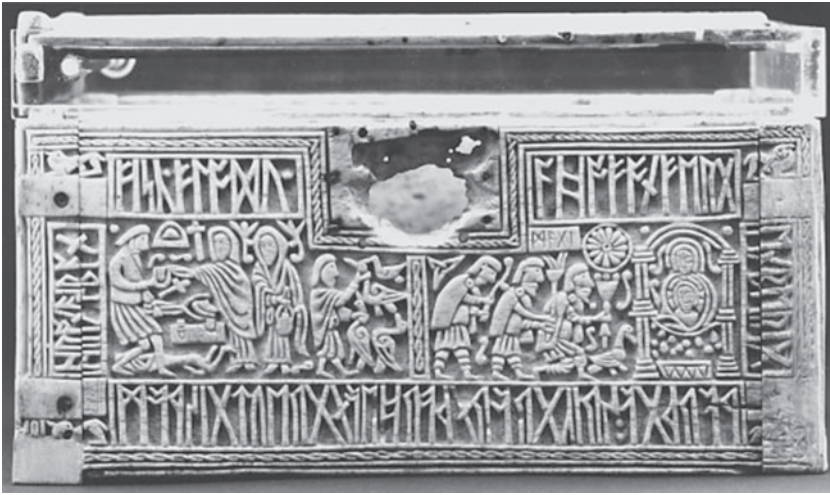
Figure 3 The Franks Casket (eighth century?), front panel, depicting the Adoration of the Magi (right, with MAGI in runes in a cartouche) and scenes from the story of Weland (left), showing Weland in his smithy (with a murdered prince's corpse underfoot) and either Weland or his brother capturing birds to fashion wings for their escape. The verses in runes in the border may be translated (not uncontroversially): "The flood cast up a fish on a mountain, the sea grew brooding where it swam onto the sand." To the end is added the word "whalebone." © The Trustees of the British Museum.

carved in bone with texts in runic and roman letters.[27] Two of the panels contain verses, one describing the stranding of the whale out of which, presumably, the casket was made, the other seeming to allude to a Germanic legend that has not been identified conclusively, elements of which are also depicted graphically on the panel. Our puzzlement about this panel is probably not entirely unintended, for only here has the inscription been purposely obfuscated, most of the vowels having been replaced by symbols that are not actual runes, but which resemble the runes for the last letter in the runic name for each vowel, for example a rune resembling s to represent ɪ, since the runic name for ɪ is *īs* 'ice'.[28] This obfuscation has been thought by some to reflect a taboo against sinister pagan themes (e.g. Francovich Onesti 1998: 301), though it seems likelier to us that all is in play – that the scenes depicted may belong to a legend chosen expressly for its obscurity, and the runic puzzle then is simply part of the guessing game.

A text unparalleled in the Old English corpus is *Apollonius of Tyre* (ed. Goolden 1958; DOE: ApT), a translation of some unidentified version of the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*, itself probably rendered from an Alexandrian romance.[29] The story is in any case typical of this genre, with its shipwrecks, disguises, narrow escapes, concealed noble births, and coy *amours*, and thus the whimsy of *Apollonius* contrasts markedly with the sobriety of other Old English prose. It is even more peculiar that the text is found wedged between a selection from Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity II* and a list of English saints in a manuscript that Wormald (1999c: 208) has described as "a manual for the drilling of a Christian society" on principles laid down by Wulfstan (CCCC MS 201). Nothing could be further from Wulfstan's high seriousness, especially because for the archbishop (as for Chaucer's Man of Law, *Prol.* 77–89) the theme of incestuous relations between father and daughter that plays a prominent role in *Apollonius* seems to have been especially repugnant (see chapter 4). It may be that *Apollonius* was seen as edifying literature because virtue is rewarded and vice punished (see Archibald 1991: 87–96), but it is no less a wild anomaly in Old English for that. Unfortunately, a quire is missing from the manuscript, and thus about half the Old English version has been lost.

In fine, the material conditions in which Old English literature is preserved have a significance that readers accustomed to print culture may at first find difficult to comprehend. The technology of print both (1) standardizes texts and (2) demotes the material value of books. This means that, correspondingly, (1) modern readers may not perceive that every Old English manuscript, unlike a printed book, is unique, or that its layout and scribal variants are designed to convey interpretive information that is not found in most printed books (see, e.g., Robinson 1980); and (2) modern readers may not perceive that the sheer fact of a text's preservation in a manuscript attests to its usefulness within ecclesiastical settings, given that manuscript space was too precious to be squandered on texts of no practical use. The latter point means that readers must work hard to discard modern assumptions about the inherent worth of "the literary" and strive rather to interpret texts like augural formulas, charms, and riddles in terms of the service they performed for the Anglo-Saxon Church. This utilitarian principle is of particular importance in regard to the interpretation of texts that may at first seem wholly unrelated to the work of God's servants, especially the heroic poems that are of so much interest to modern readers.

Notes

1   Some have argued that there may have been a vernacular prose tradition before Alfred's day (see Vleeskruyer 1953: 18–22, Turville-Petre 1963: 75, and Fulk 2010b, 2012; more cautious is Bately 1988b), but in the past, grave doubts about this have been expressed (e.g. in Chambers 1925: 311, K. Sisam 1953b: 133 and n. 3, and Wormald 1977b: 102–4). See also the Introduction, n. 21.

2   Much linguistic evidence is collected in Fulk 1992, particularly in regard to Saxonization (i.e. the rewriting of poetic texts into the West Saxon dialect). The issues, however, are complex, and given the evidence of O'Brien O'Keeffe (1990) and others for scribal rewriting of poetic texts, many doubt whether a Late West Saxon version may be regarded as "the same text" as a posited antecedent Anglian one.

3   See, e.g., Bredehoft 2009 and a number of publications by Neidorf, both published and soon to appear (2013, forthcoming a, b, c).

4   An excellent concise introduction to the subject is Lendinara 1991: 273–5, to which the following account is indebted. There are also valuable essays on glossography in Derolez 1992 and Lendinara 1999.

5   For an account of the fundamentals of scholarship on Psalter glosses, with extensive bibliography, see Toswell 1997.

6   For a list of continuous and occasional glosses, and of glossaries, see Quinn and Quinn 1990: 145–86. The most extensive edition (though it is far from comprehensive) is that of Wright and Wülcker (1884).

7   Ed. Pheifer 1974 and Lindsay 1921; both ed. in facsimile by Bischoff et al. (1988). On the date of the Épinal manuscript, see T. Brown 1982 and Malcolm Parkes in Bischoff et al. 1988: 16.

8   Three studies of fundamental importance are K. Sisam 1953a and Dumville 1976 and 1977; for more recent references, see Fulk 2002.

9   For information on these and the royal lists mentioned above, see Quinn and Quinn 1990: 116–18.

10 For an extended study of the *Laterculus*, see J. Stevenson 1995a, and more briefly J. Stevenson 1995b and Siemens 2007.

11 Ed. Plummer 1896: 1.364–87; trans. Webb and Farmer 1983: 185–208.

12 Ed. and trans. A. Campbell 1967; studies by Lapidge (1990), A. Orchard (1994b: 263–8), and Gallagher (2009).

13 See Tyler 2005a, 2005b. A second manuscript of the *Encomium* was discovered in 2008 in the library of the earl of Devon and sold at auction by Sotheby's on December 3 of that year. It adds significant further details to the other manuscript, which was made perhaps two years earlier. See the Sotheby's auction lot: http://www.sothebys.com/en/catalogues/

ecatalogue.html/2008/western-oriental-manuscripts-l08241#/r=/en/
ecat.fhtml.L08241.html+r.m=/en/ecat.lot.L08241.html/31/.

14   *Vita Ædwardi*, ed. and trans. Barlow (1992).

15   Listed in Quinn and Quinn 1990: 132–4, 138–44; also N. Ker 1957: 520, 523; and for an annotated bibliography, see Hollis and Wright 1992: 257–310. In the DOE database such brief texts are generally to be found under the headings "Notes" and "Prog." There is a collection of prognostics edited in Cockayne 1864–6, vol. 3. Old English prognostics have enjoyed more critical attention in the recent literature than formerly: see, e.g., Epe 1995, Bremmer and Chardonnens 2001, Liuzza 2004a, 2004b, and especially Chardonnens 2007a, 2007b, and Liuzza 2010.

16   DOE: Charm 1–22 and MCharm 1–12. For collective editions and studies, see Cockayne 1864–6, vol. 3, Grendon 1909, Storms 1948, and *ASPR* 6.116–28. Pettit (1999) edits a previously unprinted charm (or charms) in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Barlow 35. For bibliography on the charms, see Hollis and Wright 1992: 239–56 and 271–310; and for studies, Grattan and Singer 1952, B. Griffiths 1996, and Jolly 1996.

17   Hollis (1997) argues that cattle-theft charms may have had a legal function, since they are found in legal manuscripts, an idea pursued in much greater detail by Rabin (2010).

18   *For a Sudden Stitch* 23–6 (*ASPR* 6.122; DOE: MCharm 4). There is an illustration of elves afflicting a man with their "shot" in the Eadwine Psalter, reproduced as the frontispiece to Grattan and Singer 1952.

19   That clerics should have believed many of the same things about magic as the laity is argued by Meens (1998b), against the influential view of Flint (1991) that churchmen simply accommodated lay superstitions to their own purposes.

20   The "mysteries" of Tatwine and Eusebius are edited by Glorie (1968: 165–208 and 209–71), with translation. An edition by Andy Orchard of the Anglo-Latin and Old English riddles, with translation, should appear shortly in the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library series.

21   Ed. Glorie (1968: 273–343), with German translation.

22   On Alcuin's enigmatic *carmina*, see Sorrell 1996; and on a riddle from the age of the monastic reform, see Porter 1996b, 1996c.

23   Some of the essays in Wilcox 2000a argue that there is humor to be found in other poems, but if that is the case, it is certainly humor of a different sort. On connections among the different Anglo-Saxon riddle traditions, and between riddles and other types of texts, see A. Orchard 2005, Bitterli 2009.

24   DOE: Rid 1–95. Rather than the *ASPR* edition, most scholarship on the riddles relies on the edition of Williamson (1977), whose numeration is followed here. In the latter, the former's Riddles 1–3 are

treated as one, as are 68–9 (Williamson's 66), 75–6 (Williamson's 73), and 79–80 (Williamson's 76), whereas the former's 70 is divided in two (Williamson's 67, 68). For translations, see Williamson 1982 and Crossley-Holland 1993.

25 *ASPR* 6.109 (DOE: LRid), but with corrections by Parkes (1972). Also ed. A. Smith (1978). For an explication of the vernacular rendering, see T. Klein 1997.

26 DOE: Inscr 1–60 and titles with the prefix "Rune." On runic inscriptions, see Elliott 1989 and Page 1999; on non-runic, Okasha 1971 and supplements.

27 Neuman de Vegvar (2008: 141) argues that the casket's images set forth "an idealized vision of rulership, a set of cultural paradigms most closely paralleled in the Old English wisdom literature."

28 As discovered by Ball (1966). For bibliography and illustrations, see Francovich Onesti 1998; also Elliott 1989: 138–9 and plates XIX–XXIII.

29 For a synopsis of scholarship and an annotated bibliography, see Hollis and Wright 1992: 89–116. Goolden 1958 gives a Latin text *en face*, Archibald (1991: 112–79) a complete Latin text with translation.