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Ælfric's Scribes

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Many of Joyce Hill's advances in Old English scholarship have been concerned with Ælfric's use of sources. This essay in her honour investigates some of the ways in which his scribes transmitted the work that he produced from his inherited materials. In the same way that she investigated the meat that went into the sausage machine, I intend to follow the work of the retailers, passing on the finished product to his customers, the readers. The transmission of text has been studied by others in some depth, and I shall concentrate here on more minute linguistic details, especially spelling, to gauge whether we can judge if Ælfric's wish to be treated as an authority whose word was to be respected was fulfilled in the decades that followed his death. I concentrate entirely on the eleventh century because after 1100 there is no doubt that scribes altered texts in ever more significant ways as social circumstances and exigencies of copying changed.

Generally in the homilies Ælfric's scribes are faithful to the sense of what he wrote. Whereas Wulfstan's homilies were reused in a wide variety of ways, often becoming fodder for the multitude of composite homilists of the eleventh century, there are relatively few examples of Ælfric's homilies being cut up and used in conjunction with non-Ælfrician material.¹ This is in part due to the nature of the material itself. Wulfstan wrote pieces for general use, whereas many of Ælfric's homilies depend upon a particular pericope and are homilies in the strict use of the word. Obviously, the Lives of Saints, the biblical translations and the Latin *Grammar* are even less susceptible to dissection and re-use than the homilies. But when we look at the detail – and spelling obviously comes under that heading – it is surprising to find just how faithful his scribes are to what we may assume was the text transmitted from his scriptorium at Cerne Abbas.

We may begin by looking at Ælfric's own spelling choices, available in small measure in the marginal comments that are assumed to be in his own

handwriting in London, BL, Royal 7 C. XII.² The corpus of words here is small, and few of them have spellings that vary significantly in late Old English. One of those that does is *cirlice* at the foot of fol. 76r. In the late tenth and early eleventh century there are four regular spellings of the word for 'church', *cyrc-*, *cyric-*, *circ-* and *ciric-*, out of more than a thousand surviving instances of the word and its compounds. Of these, the first two are by far the most frequent, *y*-spellings outnumbering *i*-spellings by eight to one, and there is no sign that the variation changes as the century progresses. Almost exactly the same number of monosyllabic as of disyllabic forms occurs in both spellings throughout the period. The fact that Ælfric, in the single instance recorded, uses the less usual vowel perhaps means little, but it is worth testing the forms found in Ælfrician manuscripts. Malcolm Godden, in his glossary to both series of the *Catholic Homilies*,³ lists 123 instances of the word and its compounds, yet only four of them are disyllabic, and only two of those have *i*. Clearly the manuscripts on which the glossary is based neither agree with the one recorded Ælfric form nor with the general rule for the eleventh century. The base manuscripts of the standard edition of the *Catholic Homilies* by Clemoes and Godden are Royal 7 C. XII for the First Series and Cambridge University Library Gg. 3. 28 for the Second, both of which Peter Clemoes believed were manuscripts which were copied at Cerne Abbas.⁴ Neither Clemoes nor Godden cites minor spelling variants in their apparatus, but many of these may be found in the Manchester electronic database of script and spellings at <http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/mancass/C11database/>. The database is currently being populated, but at the time of writing this essay, it records only three examples in Ælfrician texts of the spelling favoured by Ælfric himself, and only another twelve examples with *i* but with only one syllable. Of these fifteen, thirteen occur in two closely related manuscripts, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 340/342, and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 198,⁵ and while these two also have the occasional *cyrc-* spelling also, every other copy of the *Catholic Homilies* (involving large numbers of eleventh-century scribes and manuscripts in the case of the First Series) use *cyrc-*. Although the use of *-y-* is perhaps not significant, because *i*-spellings are so rare in the period, the almost universal appearance of the monosyllabic form shows a remarkable degree of uniformity given the degree of spelling variation normally found in eleventh-century texts. It also suggests that the majority of eleventh-century copyists were faithful to the forms in Cerne Abbas manuscripts.

What it also shows, however, is that the Cerne Abbas scribes were not faithful to Ælfric's own preferred spelling, assuming that the single instance is indeed his usual form. Ælfric as a grammarian was sensitive to all aspects of language, including spelling, as may be seen from his comments on Latin spelling found in the grammar. I quote two:

þes *que* is sceort mid þrym stafum gewriten oððe getitelod,
and se langa *quae*, þe is FEMININUM of *quis*, sceal beon
mid feower stafum *q, u, a, e* awriten.

[This *que* is short, written or inscribed with three letters, and
the long *quae*, which is the feminine of *quis*, should be
written with four letters, *q, u, a, e*.]⁶

þes *uae* sceal beon awriten mid þrim stafum, and se sceorta
ue, ðe is CONIUNCTIO, hæfð twegen stafas.

[This *uae* should be written with three letters, and the short
ue, which is a conjunction, has two letters.]⁷

Sadly not all the copyists of the *Grammar* seemed always to be reading, in the full sense of the word, what they wrote. The scribe of London, BL, Harley 3271 wrote *que* as the feminine of *quis*, despite having its four letters spelt out for him, and wrote the short *ue* with three letters as *uae* despite being told that it has only two.

Rather than recording scribal failure to follow Ælfric's instructions, however, this single manuscript highlights how faithfully Ælfric's scribes generally reproduced the copytext, copying errors aside. Harley 3271 is the only one of a dozen surviving eleventh-century copies of the *Grammar* that I have so far found that did not get these Latin spellings right. But what of English words? Were Ælfric's copyists quite so punctilious when it came to copying the homilies in general as they appear to have been in their attitude to *cycr*? We should now extend the search to words with a wider range of possibilities. In an article on eleventh-century spelling published a decade and a half ago,⁸ I suggested some lines of enquiry, beginning with the spellings *þar* and *hwar* in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 178 which John Pope claimed were amongst those that distinguished the manuscript in that they were 'unlike those that prevail in the other manuscripts of the first half of the eleventh century' but were not in themselves 'a deviation from West Saxon'.⁹ My point was that we might consider where these spellings came from in what is a 'substantially unchanged'¹⁰ copy of

an Ælfric collection, although not a product of Ælfric's own scriptorium, and from that where the spellings were introduced, whether they were first used by the scribe of that manuscript or whether copied by him from his exemplar. The spelling database lists eighteen examples of the word *hwar*, only one of them in Corpus 178 (*De falsis diis*). Other examples are in manuscripts ranging in date from c. 1000 to the third quarter of the century and known to have been written in centres as far apart as Canterbury and Worcester. The spelling seems therefore not to be particularly localised or date specific. But when we add the evidence of *par* words, we find that out of a total of 126 instances so far recorded in the database, twenty-three are recorded from Corpus 178, and only two from other copies of Ælfric homilies.¹¹ This indicates that Pope was right to pinpoint the unusual nature of the spelling of Corpus 178 in this regard, but it is unusual not in comparison with eleventh-century manuscripts generally but solely in comparison with other Ælfric manuscripts. It also suggests, by implication, the regularity of spelling of all other Ælfric manuscripts in this respect.

To take a rather different example, although the texts suggest that Ælfric used the genitive plural pronoun *heora*, he appears not to have used the analogous dative *heom* which many writers from the end of the tenth century choose as a less ambiguous spelling than *him* which they then can reserve for the singular. His scribes show different attitudes to the form. In the *Catholic Homilies*, the Cerne Abbas scribes of Royal 7 C. XII and CUL 3. 28 never use it, but it is widely used in manuscripts of the 'Canterbury' group,¹² where it also appears in non-Ælfrician items, including copies of the Vercelli homilies which were originally written before *heom* became fashionable and which therefore must have come to them in copy-texts, like the Ælfric ones, without *heom*.¹³ Other manuscripts with a mixture of Ælfric and non-Ælfric material show a similar free use of *heom*, e.g. Oxford, Bodleian Library Hatton 113/114 and Junius 121 (largely by a single scribe of the second half of the eleventh century from Worcester) and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 419/421 (written at the same period but in Exeter). The sole manuscript containing Ælfric items alone to have regular use of *heom* is Cambridge University Library li. 4. 6 (mid-eleventh-century of unknown provenance), whereas there are a number of manuscripts, such as Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 188, and London, BL, Cotton Vitellius C. v, in which it never appears. The conclusion, it seems to me, is that from this single frequently-recorded word alone, we can identify those scribes like that of Corpus 188 who are faithful to their copy-text and those who, like the copyists of the manuscripts of the Canterbury group, are willing to impose their own forms or follow an

archetype whose scribe has imposed his own forms.¹⁴ Neither *heom* nor *hwar* / *þar* can, in Pope's words, be considered 'a deviation from West Saxon' but their use can tell us much about the scribes who used them and their training. And this surely is the point to be stressed. Terms such as late West Saxon and even late Old English are inadequate now to describe the late period of Old English as we understand it, given the electronic means at our disposal. We are able to be – and should be – more discerning, to try to identify strands and differences within what used to be called late West Saxon, and to discover just how much we can learn about the transmission of texts within the eleventh century.

Another common word which has an interesting distribution of forms is the genitive plural demonstrative *þara* / *þæra*. The former is the more common spelling in the tenth century, the latter becomes the more frequent later, but both are used throughout Old English. In Ælfric manuscripts, *þæra* is by far the more frequent form. Most scribes have at least one instance of *þara*, although I have found none in Corpus 188 and none so far in Vitellius C. v.¹⁵ What is interesting is that when an instance of *þara* occurs in one manuscript, it appears in the same context in another, sometimes in up to four manuscripts at the same point, suggesting that the spelling is carried over from the exemplar.¹⁶ But the overall preponderance of *þæra* forms suggests again that Ælfric's scribes were heavily influenced by the spellings that they found in their copy-texts. There is no such consistency, however, in another demonstrative form which is regular in Ælfric: the feminine genitive and dative singular of *þes* written as *þyssere* or *þissere*. It is probable that Ælfric himself used this expanded form rather than the earlier *þysse* / *þisse*,¹⁷ and the latter occur only very rarely in any copy of Ælfric texts. But the true inconsistency here is between thorn and eth on the one hand and between *i* and *y* on the other, both of which are understandable given that they are effectively different shapes of the same letter rather than different letters in late Old English, and between trisyllabic forms and the disyllabic *þysre* / *þisre*. The very occasional *þysse* may simply be a miscopying of *þysre* by a scribe used to seeing the earlier form.¹⁸

It would be tedious in an essay like this to continue to cite a long series of examples, and I content myself with just two. The word *naht* 'nothing' is only spelt in this way in Ælfrician manuscripts, never *noht* which is otherwise fairly widespread in eleventh-century manuscripts. Furthermore, after a preposition the word is inflected as *nahte* in every one of hundreds of examples, except for a single instance of *naht*, whereas in non-Ælfrician texts, the inflected and uninflected forms are often confused.¹⁹ Again, the consistency of Ælfric's scribes

is notable. In the case of *betwux* 'between', there are numerous choices of spelling available, but this is again the regular spelling in hundreds of instances in Ælfric manuscripts. Of the alternatives, only two appear more than once: *betux*, which occurs at the same point in the same text in both Royal 7 C. XII and CUL Gg. 3. 28 on two occasions, each time in one further manuscript (with *betwux* in five other manuscripts),²⁰ and *betweox* which appears fifteen times, all but four occurring in two or three copies of the same text at the same point. Again, it would seem that we may be dealing with scribes copying very precisely from one another here, something for which they are not notorious in the period. The fact that *betwux* occurs only once, though it is otherwise a common eleventh-century spelling, and other spellings like *betwix* never, shows just how strong a tradition there is in the *Catholic Homilies* of exact copying of very common words which normally have a high degree of spelling variation.

I end with reference not to individual words but to a more general linguistic feature, the use of double letters in the *Catholic Homilies*. One of the notable features of the language of Corpus 178 which Pope drew attention to is the doubling of *o* in *good* to distinguish it from *God*, but what he did not say is that the scribe is remarkably fond of doubled letters, both consonants as well as vowels, especially in word-final position, e.g. a fondness for *-ss* in *hiss*, *buss*, *-nyss*, and of *n* in *inn* (preposition), *mann*, and *menn*, but always within the scope of what Pope would say is usually considered to be late West Saxon. Scribal alternation between single and double consonants is not generally a remarkable feature of late Old English, and the scribe of Corpus 178 is different only in the consistency of his usage. But there are a few instances of consonant doubling which are perhaps part of the copying tradition in Ælfric texts, notably the doubling of *d* before *r*. If we take the example of the plural of 'mother' which in Ælfric is usually *moddru(m)* (also *moddra-*), we find currently in the database seventeen instances with *-ddr-*, all in the *Catholic Homilies*, and only five with *-dr-*. This seems to me indicative of a strong tradition in Ælfric manuscripts to copy this word exactly as it appears in the copy-text, especially given the propensity of eleventh-century scribes to alter double to single consonants at will and vice versa. The same phenomenon can be observed with other words in which we find *d* doubled before *r*. *Goddra*, *goddre*, inflected parts of 'good', occur forty-five times in the database, only four of them not in the *Catholic Homilies*, and one of those is in a copy of Ælfric's *De temporibus anni*. On the other hand, the much more common instances of *godr-* occur in a wide variety of texts and manuscripts, only half of them in copies of Ælfric. The same is true of *deaddra* 'of the dead'

which occurs eighteen times in the database, only two of them not in Ælfric, and these two are in the Corpus 198 and Bodley 340 copies of Vercelli homily I within what is, of course, basically an Ælfrician collection. The very frequent examples of *deadra*, on the other hand, occur in a wide variety of texts, Ælfric and non-Ælfric. It is hardly necessary to continue to quote more examples.²¹ The point is simply that not only do instances of doubling of *d* before *r* seem particularly common in Ælfric manuscripts, but a great many copies of the *Catholic Homilies* continue the practice observable in the two earliest manuscripts, Royal 7 C. XII and CUL Gg. 3. 28, of having this consonant doubled.

The subject of spelling in Ælfrician texts and manuscripts requires a monograph rather than a brief essay, and such a monograph both deserves to be written and soon perhaps will be written, given the electronic materials now being made available. But I trust that the contents of this essay already allow some important conclusions to be drawn. It is natural, perhaps, to assume that the language of the majority of Ælfrician manuscripts, particularly those most closely associated with the master himself, represents Ælfric's usage. This may well be true of some aspects of language, inflections probably and syntax and lexical choice certainly. But before we assume that regular spelling choices in the manuscripts, such as the very widespread use of doubling of *d* before *r*, are those of Ælfric himself, we should remember *cyr-* / *ciric-*. Ælfric's scribes, although for the most part very consistent in their copying, are not necessarily transmitting his spellings. It is also clear from the evidence above that Ælfric's scribes had a very different attitude to the material they copied than did copyists of other material. Those who transmitted anonymous homilies certainly made no attempt to reproduce the spellings before them,²² but then they also made less attempt to be faithful to the matter than Ælfric's scribes seem to have been, and the same is true of non-homiletic material. Why then were his scribes apparently so careful? It may be that they regarded his word as an authority, as he apparently wished, but it may have more to do with the circumstances of copying than their attitude. It is probable, for example, that most of the many surviving manuscripts containing full or nearly full sets of the *Catholic Homilies* were made in major centres and were written by well-trained scribes. It may also be important that many of these copies are in large, sometimes very large, manuscripts copied by a single scribe: Corpus 162, Corpus 188, Corpus 419/421, Trinity B. 15. 34, Vitellius C. v (as originally written), Hatton 113/114, Bodley 340/342, and, for the most part, CUL Gg. 3. 28. A scribe copying a large body of text derived from a single source which is ultimately by a single author and therefore probably in a

uniform language is more likely to retain any consistency that he finds, remaining true to his copy-text, than one faced with a diversity of source material in different linguistic forms upon which either he feels drawn (or has been trained) to superimpose a single system or which he is confused by.²³ This speculation may perhaps be tested by looking more closely than hitherto at manuscripts like Royal 7 C. XII which are written by more than one scribe, to ascertain how much variation there is between individuals who are obviously working together in a single scriptorium with similar material.

This point leads me to my final conclusion, which is that we need to know much more than we do at present about the exigencies of copying, the training of scribes, their practices and their education. We have learned a great deal about these subjects in recent years, particularly in lengthy and thoughtful introductions to editions of prose texts,²⁴ but more is possible, I suggest, with careful and fuller study of an enormous resource which remains to us and which has been for too long neglected. It is traditional, in editing Old English texts, to assume that the most important goal is to establish what the author wrote and then to neglect what his successors did with it. This is the pattern of Early English Text Society volumes, a series that has published many of the most important editions of recent years, and it is one that is now old-fashioned in both editing and critical terms. What happens to a text is just as interesting, ultimately, as where it came from (Joyce Hill's sources), though I would be the last to deny the importance of source studies in themselves. What I am arguing is that an editorial policy which ignores common spelling variants has damaged our ability to see some part of transmission history.²⁵ Though I doubt if spelling can tell us more about manuscript relations than textual studies can, it is a very valuable source of information in its own right. And it should be stressed that this information should be seen as totally independent of studies of phonology. Minor spelling variation in common words can probably tell us little if anything about the history of sounds, although a wider study of spelling can certainly improve our understanding of phonological developments and their chronology. If this essay opens up a new route in the editorial process and in the study of scribes and their idiosyncrasies, it will have justified its inclusion in this volume, and will take the work of its honoree forward in new and exciting ways.

NOTES

¹ See my 'The Corpus of Vernacular Homilies and Prose Saints' Lives before Ælfric', *ASE*, 8 (1979), 223-77, *passim*, and, for the *Catholic Homilies*, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series: Text*, ed. by Peter Clemons, EETS, s.s. 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), and *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series: Text*, ed. by Malcolm Godden, EETS, s.s. 5 (London: Oxford University Press, 1979). For other brief comments on the textual integrity of Ælfric's work, see Malcolm Godden, 'Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition', in *The Old English Homily and its Background*, ed. by P. E. Szarmach and B. Huppé (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1978), pp. 97-117 (pp. 110-11), and Jonathan Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, Durham Medieval Texts, 9 (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994), pp. 34-35. For details of all Ælfric homilies combined with anonymous material, see Mary Swan, 'Ælfric as Source: The Exploitation of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* from the Late Tenth to Twelfth Centuries' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 1993). My thanks to Mary for drawing my attention to this reference.

² *Ælfric's First Series of Catholic Homilies: British Museum Royal 7 C. XII, fols. 4-218*, ed. by Norman Eliason and Peter Clemons, EEMF, 13 (Copenhagen, 1966), pp. 19-20.

³ Malcolm Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, EETS, ss 18 (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2000).

⁴ That Royal 7 C. XII is a product of Ælfric's own scriptorium is suggested by the marginal annotations by Ælfric himself. Clemons has suggested that the textual purity of CUL Gg. 3. 28 (his K) is 'of such a high order that probably it was itself a product of Ælfric's scriptorium', *The First Series*, p. 147.

⁵ For their relationship, see Kenneth Sisam, 'MSS. Bodley 340 and 342: Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*', in *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 148-98.

⁶ *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, ed. by Julius Zupitza, 2nd edn with a foreword by Helmut Gneuss (Berlin: Weidmann, 1966), p. 265, ll. 7-10. Not all the variants are in Zupitza's collation.

⁷ Zupitza, *Grammatik*, p. 279, ll. 8-10.

⁸ 'Spelling Variations in Eleventh-Century English', in *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Carola Hicks (Stamford: Watkins, 1992), pp. 347-54.

⁹ *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, ed. by John C. Pope, EETS, o.s. 259-60 (London: Oxford University Press for the EETS, 1967-68), p. 178.

¹⁰ Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, p. 62.

¹¹ One of the instances is in Royal 7 C. XII, but in an interlinear insertion on fol. 131v. Clemoes' edition (*The First Series*, p. 394) indicates in the apparatus that the hand is not that of the text, but neither here nor in the EEMF introduction (Eliason and Clemoes, *British Museum Royal 7 C. XII*) is the hand identified. I would judge it to be almost contemporary with the principal hand of the manuscript.

¹² The 'Canterbury' group are manuscripts which derive their text from that sent by Ælfric to Archbishop Sigeric; see Clemoes, *The First Series*, pp. 67-68.

¹³ To my knowledge, there is no use of the spelling as early as the early 990s when the *Catholic Homilies* were composed.

¹⁴ Not all scribes conform to one of these two patterns, of course. The scribes of what is now the double manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 85/86 use a variety of unusual (probably south-eastern) spellings, except in the single Ælfric item in the manuscript which is written in what is for that manuscript remarkably standard spellings. Some scribes, then, changed their copying habits from one item to the next.

¹⁵ The manuscripts which have most *para* spellings are mid-century or later: Cambridge, Trinity College B. 15. 34 and Hatton 113/114.

¹⁶ If this seems to be a far-fetched conclusion from an example of a word which occurs very frequently with both spellings and where the reproduction of one form or another in copies of the same text might be thought to be coincidental, consider the rare spelling of the word for 'disciple' as *leornigncniht*, lacking a medial *n*. Out of around 400 instances recorded in the database, the majority in Ælfric texts, there are only six that lack *n*, and of these, two appear at the same point in the same Ælfric homily in Corpus 198 and in London, BL, Cotton Cleopatra B. xiii. For links between these two manuscripts textually, see Clemoes, *The First Series*, pp. 137-44, and *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. by D. G. Scragg, EETS, o.s. 300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the EETS, 1992), pp. xxxiii-xxxiv. There are a great many more isolated examples which to me prove the point as effectively. Godden's glossary cites the word *dolchswapu* 'wound' occurring once in Royal 7 C. XII, against seven instances of *dolh-* (*Introduction*, p. 700). What he does not note is that at the same point, the otherwise very orthodox Corpus 188 scribe also writes *ch*, although nine other copies have the usual *-h*. Godden also cites one instance (out of eight) of an inflected form of *hlihan* 'laugh' with *-hg-*: *hlihgað* (p. 726). Again, because variants are not cited, there is no mention of the fact that this unusual spelling occurs at the same point in four manuscripts: Royal 7 C. XII, CUL Gg. 3. 28, CUL Ii. 4. 6 and Hatton 114. We have surely reached a point where coincidence is unlikely.

¹⁷ Clemoes and Eliason disagree about whether the note on fol. 164v of Royal 7 C. XII, which contains the word *byssere* is by Ælfric (*Ælfric's First Series*, p. 19, note 8, final paragraph), but there is little doubt that a word in Ælfric's hand on fol. 64r now partially cut off by a binder was the trisyllabic form (*Ælfric's First Series*, p. 18, note 8).

¹⁸ This may be particularly true of the scribe of Bodley 340/342 who copies *þysse* regularly in his non-Ælfrician items.

¹⁹ The single example is in Corpus 162. I ignore instances of *nahte* as plural and as part of the verb *nagan*.

²⁰ There are two other examples of *betux* separately elsewhere.

²¹ Comparable is *midd(e)re* 'middle', where almost all examples with *-dd-* are in Ælfric. In the case of *næddr-* we have a word which occurs with a variety of vowel spellings and inflections, as well as variation between *-dd-* and *-d-*; although many non-Ælfrician scribes spell the word with *-dd-* throughout the period, it is noticeable that in the very large number of instances with *-d-*, only nine are in the *Catholic Homilies*.

²² One has only to look at the items in the Vercelli Book, in particular two copies of Vercelli homily II, in Vercelli II itself and in Vercelli homily XXI, which are likely to have been drawn from the same exemplar at not too distant a time. See Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, pp. 357-62.

²³ We may compare the Vercelli homilies in the Vercelli Book, in a variety of spellings, and the more uniform copies of them in Bodley 340 and Corpus 162.

²⁴ John Pope's edition of Ælfric homilies is an excellent early example. His review of manuscripts is very full in describing the spelling habits of particular scribes, and some of his comments are undoubtedly the starting-point for further investigation of specific Ælfric scribes (cf. his highlighting of occasional idiosyncrasies in Corpus 188 on pp. 260-61). He also hints at the use of specific spellings for identifying the origin of manuscripts, cf. his comments on *heom* in the third stage of Vitellius C.v and CUL li. 4. 6 on pp. 32-33.

²⁵ Lack of benefit of full collation of the *Catholic Homilies* and the Vercelli homilies led Pope slightly astray in his account of the distribution of *heom* in late Old English. He describes the spelling as appearing 'with some frequency in the course of the eleventh century' (p. 33) but we now know that it was already common at the close of the tenth, as witnessed by Corpus 162, Bodley 340/342 and the Lives of Saints manuscript London, BL, Cotton Julius E. vii.