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Leeds Studies in English
School of English
University of Leeds
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The Controversy about Scribe C in British Library, Cotton MSS, Julius E. VII

Michèle Bussières

1. Introduction

The eleventh-century British Library manuscript Cotton Julius E. vii contains a collection of hagiographies in Old English.¹ All but four are by Ælfric, as are the Latin and Anglo-Saxon prefaces and a few homilies and didactic texts also included there. Since the prefaces and some of the hagiographical and homiletic material are unique to Cotton Julius E. vii, this is probably the only surviving version of an Old English legendary composed by Ælfric after his *Catholic Homilies* I and II.² It is therefore well-known to all Ælfrician scholars, and served as the basis for W. W. Skeat's edition of *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*.³ Two changes in the handwriting, occurring between folios 107 and 136, have attracted much attention: the intervention of a second scribe on folio 107^v is unanimously acknowledged, but whether the second break, on folio 117, is due to a third scribe taking over or to the main scribe resuming his work is still a matter of discussion. It is also worth noting that the changes just mentioned coincide with another double break: the two texts copied in folios 107-136 are the first two non-Ælfrician lives present in the manuscript and the second of these (*Mary of Egypt*) is out of place in the calendar.

One significant fact about the four non-Ælfrician texts is that they all belong to the romance type of hagiography: although different from each other, they all differ from the rest of the collection both in their style and deployment of narrative devices, notably their use of dialogue, their manipulation of point of view to arouse and control the reader's emotions,⁴ and their overall separation/reunion narrative shape.⁵ These features contrast significantly with the more staid narrative format favoured by the abbot of Eynsham, and render the circumstances of their inclusion worthy of investigation.

2. Scribes A, B, and C

2.1. *Distribution of the Work*

The facts under discussion are these: most of the manuscript is written by one main scribe (A) but on line 17 of folio 107^v another scribe (B) takes over and copies the first of the non-Ælfrician texts (*The Seven Sleepers*, Skeat XXIII, Ker 30); this scribe's contribution concludes at the end of folio 116^v. On folio 117^r another scribe takes up the copying of *The Seven Sleepers*, continues with *Mary of Egypt* (Skeat XXIII B, Ker 31), and finishes towards the middle of folio 136^r, leaving one and a half pages blank before scribe A begins a new text on the first folio of a new quire (folio 137, quire 19). N. R. Ker thought that the scribe responsible for folios 117-136 may have been the main scribe 'but the writing is more compressed than elsewhere'.⁶ Peter Clemons had no doubt that this was the work of a third scribe (C).⁷ As the existence of this scribe is under discussion in the present paper, he will be identified as A/C. An additional mystery is the omission of one of these texts from the table of contents included on folio 4^v, after the Latin and Anglo-Saxon prefaces: the title of *Mary of Egypt* is missing—hence the number XXIII B assigned to it in Skeat.

It is generally agreed that scribe A interrupted his work after completing the copy of *Apollinaris* (Skeat XXII, Ker 29) in the middle of folio 107^v; he then took a new quire and started writing *Abdon and Sennes* (XXIV / item 32, quire 19) while B was copying the beginning of *The Seven Sleepers*, starting on folio 107^v after *Apollinaris* and going on to the end of the following quire (number 15). Scribe A/C completed *The Seven Sleepers* and proceeded with *Mary of Egypt* on quires 16 and 17, adding a smaller quire of 4 folios (instead of the usual quaternion of 8 folios) to complete his copy, but leaving a long blank at the end. The double preface and table of contents were written on two leaves: this is generally thought to have been done before A/C had copied *Mary of Egypt*, hence the absence of any reference to that work in the table of contents.

Though this theory fits the facts, its weak point lies in the explanation for the omission of *Mary of Egypt* from the table of contents. Here is a work featuring a striking story of a heroine who abandons a life of unbridled profligacy and embraces one of extreme mortification; the narrative is complex and baroque in style, and whoever copied it clearly struggled with the text, for there are omissions, errors, and occasional absurdities—in short, had *Mary of Egypt* been copied by scribe A, he is unlikely subsequently to have forgotten it and omitted

the title from the folio 4 table of contents. Although neither Ker nor Clemoes spells it out, it seems clear that this omission is one cogent argument in favour of the intervention of a third scribe (C). D. Scragg leaves the question of scribe C's existence open, but points out that this text probably derives from another source than *The Seven Sleepers*, and may therefore have been found and added to the manuscript at a late stage, as an afterthought.⁸ As with the previous hypotheses, the only way to account for the omission of *Mary of Egypt* from the table of contents is to suppose that it was copied after most of the manuscript, including the table of contents, had been completed. Folio 4^v has several blank lines after the two columns of titles, space enough for scribe A to have added this very important text to the list. Although scribe C himself could also have added the title, the hypothesis of his belated intervention over a limited number of pages makes the accidental omission of the title more likely.

The present study is an attempt to find evidence for the existence of scribe C through a detailed examination of the script and spelling of the manuscript.

2.2. Scribes A and C

2.2.1. Variations in C's Hand

Why was Ker so cautious in his attribution of folios 117-36? The answer may lie in the evolution that can be seen in the handwriting: in the first pages it is characterized by its emphasis on vertical lines, especially in folio 117^r where the writing is quite compressed, as Ker noted.⁹ In the first few folios copied by A/C, ascenders and descenders follow each other at close intervals, lending the hand a general spiky appearance. As B's hand is somewhat angular, with rather heavy ascenders and descenders, the compressed script of folio 117 could be interpreted as an attempt by A to smooth out the transition from B. In the following pages, the hand gradually relaxes and develops into something that could well be the main scribe's handwriting. This may well suggest that the source of Ker's hesitation was not so much the handwriting itself and more the difficulty posed by the table of contents.

As the general appearance of the script fails to provide a conclusive answer, it is necessary to look for supporting evidence, and this is provided by variable elements in scribe A's hand. While the shapes of some letters (for example, *y*) undergo apparently random changes, the variations in the shapes of

æ and s seem to follow a pattern, so that it is possible to compare their evolution with A/C's usage.

2.2.2. The Shape of æ in A and C

The second element of æ can produce a ligature with the following letter and when it does so it is taller than the first element.¹⁰ For the purposes of this study, a distinction is made between a 'low shape' of æ (figure 1 a) where e barely rises above surrounding letters, and a 'tall' shape, where e is distinctly taller (figure 1 b).

When æ is low, the first part of the combination, a, can be pear-shaped, as in Figure 1(a), or rounded, as in B's hand in Figure 2:

Figure 1

Scribe A, early style. (a) low æ with pear-shaped a, folio 41^r (b) tall æ, folio 24^r. This and the following illustrations derive from a microfilm reproduction of Cotton Julius E. vii. By permission of the British Library.

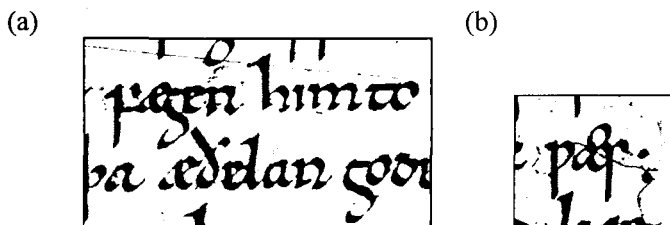


Figure 2

Scribe B, low æ with round-shaped a, folio 110^f

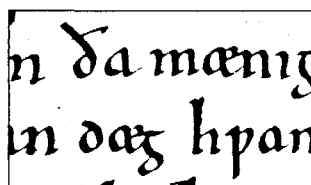


Figure 3

Scribe A, later style. (a) low $\underline{\text{æ}}$ with round-shaped $\underline{\text{a}}$ and tall $\underline{\text{æ}}$, folio 177^r (b) tall $\underline{\text{æ}}$ and low $\underline{\text{æ}}$ with round-shaped $\underline{\text{a}}$, folio 219^v (c) and (d) tall $\underline{\text{æ}}$ and several shapes of low $\underline{\text{æ}}$, folio 222^v

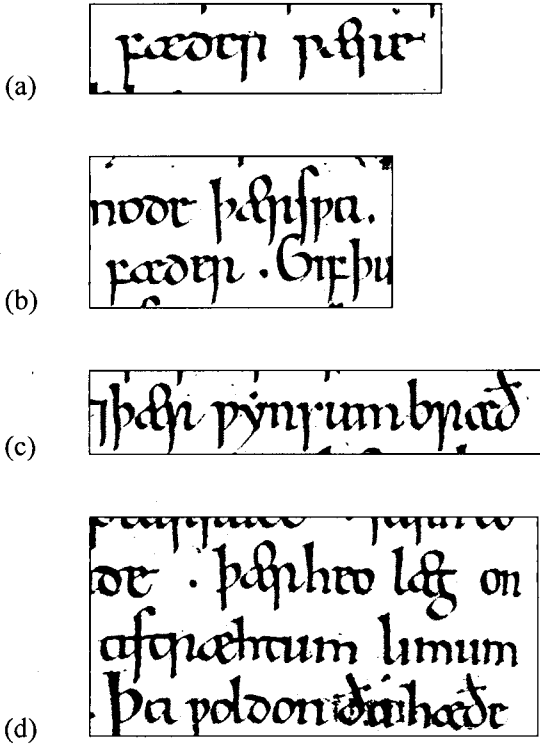
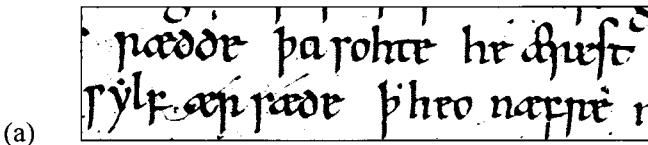
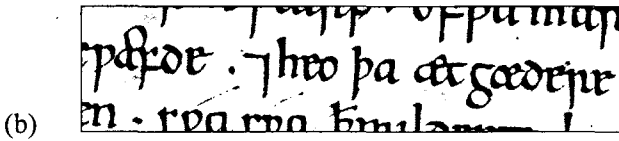


Figure 4

Scribe A/C. (a) low $\underline{\text{æ}}$ with round-shaped and pear-shaped $\underline{\text{a}}$, folio 135^r (b) tall and low $\underline{\text{æ}}$ with round-shaped $\underline{\text{a}}$, folio 136^r



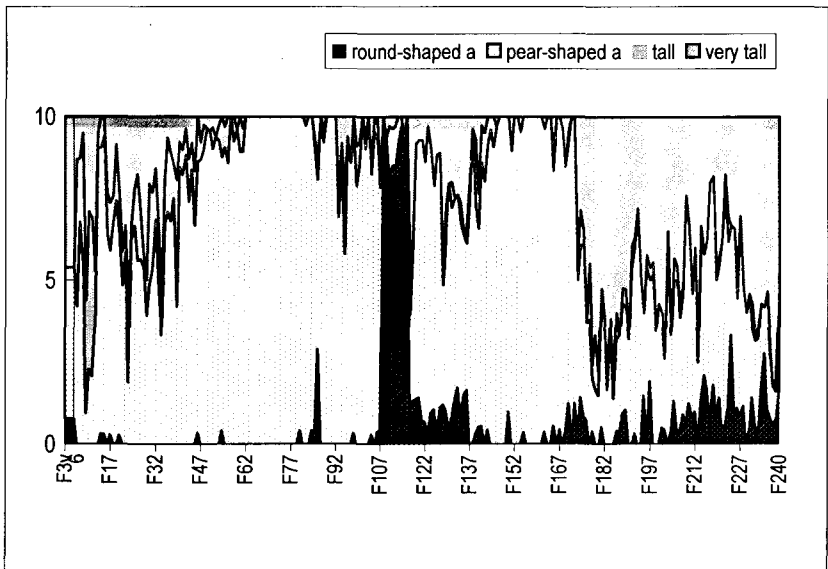


It can be seen that scribe A uses both low and tall æ forms throughout the manuscript but the first part of the ligature tends to become more rounded in the later part of his work, a shape that is not incompatible with what can be observed in A/C (Figure 4).

The following graph shows the relative frequency of tall æ, low æ with pear-shaped a, and low æ with rounded a on the recto of each folio. From top to bottom: a grey shading shows the percentage of very tall æ forms. The middle part, white with grey dots, refers to low æ with pear-shaped a, and the dark part at the bottom follows the variations in the proportion of low, round-shaped æ.

Graph 1

Shapes of æ



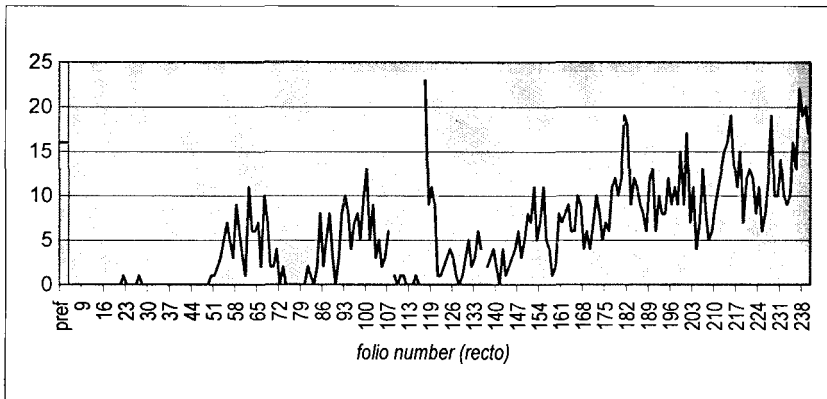
The tall column in the middle of the graph corresponds to the work of scribe B, whose $\underline{æ}$ is almost always low and round-shaped. Concerning scribe A, the graph shows that while tall $\underline{æ}$ is not unusual at the beginning of his work, low round-shaped $\underline{æ}$ is virtually absent not simply when he stops at folio 106, but also when he resumes on folio 137; the only exception (folio 86) is due to a correction by an unknown hand. Round-shaped $\underline{æ}$ appears fairly regularly after folio 170, while even in pear-shaped $\underline{æ}$, the \underline{a} becomes broader, with a top that is less pointed than in the earlier style. As in the prefaces (artificially enlarged in the graph and placed to the left of the axis), the shape of $\underline{æ}$ in folios 117-36 seems to undergo variations that are similar to those observed after folio 170.

2.2.3. Comparative Frequency of Low \underline{s} and Long \underline{s}

Since long \underline{s} and low \underline{s} forms are shaped differently, their comparative frequency is rather easier to study than variations in the shape of $\underline{æ}$. In the following graph, the black line shows the number of long \underline{s} forms in the recto of each folio. As before, the preface has been enlarged and placed on the left of the axis. A blank indicates the breaks from one scribe to another and folio 136 has been omitted since it is partly blank.

Graph 2

Frequency of Long \underline{s}



Long ſ is virtually absent from the first fifty pages; it then crops up irregularly between folios 50 and folios 170-80; its frequency then increases quite significantly. The number of long ſ forms in the Anglo-Saxon preface is consistent with A's usage towards the end of the manuscript. B's work is characterized by the scarcity of long ſ forms, but the real break occurs on folios 117-19, when scribe A/C begins working: these folios, particularly f.117, show a high frequency of long ſ forms, which then drops sharply. The use of low and long ſ in the rest of A/C's work is quite similar to the pattern identifiable between folios 50-106 and 137-80. This corresponds with the point made earlier: A/C's hand is most different from A's in the first two or three folios, and then becomes quite close to A's hand.

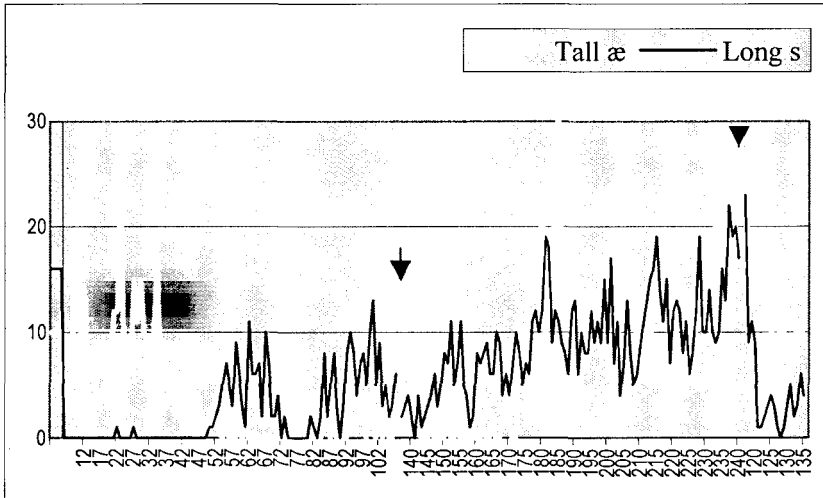
B almost always prefers low to long ſ. However, A/C probably wanted to imitate the general appearance of his hand rather than the shape of individual letters, and long ſ serves this general purpose as it allows him to compress his writing and stress verticality.

2.2.4. æ and ſ in A and A/C's Work

Graph 3 shows the numbers of long ſ forms per folio and adds the numbers of tall æ (thick white line) forms, with A/C's work placed at the end. Changes in A's use of long ſ roughly coincide with variations in low and tall æ, so we may divide the work of scribe A into 3 phases: from folio 5 to around folio 80, tall æ and long ſ seem to be mutually exclusive; from folio 80 to the vicinity of folio 175 (discounting B's work and the controversial A/C passage), those two shapes appear together, with long ſ forms seldom exceeding 10 per page and tall æ forms usually fewer than 5 per folio; finally, from around folio 175 to the end of the manuscript, both shapes are quite numerous, with æ showing the greater increase, with its number often exceeding that of long ſ.

Graph 3

Tall æ and Long s



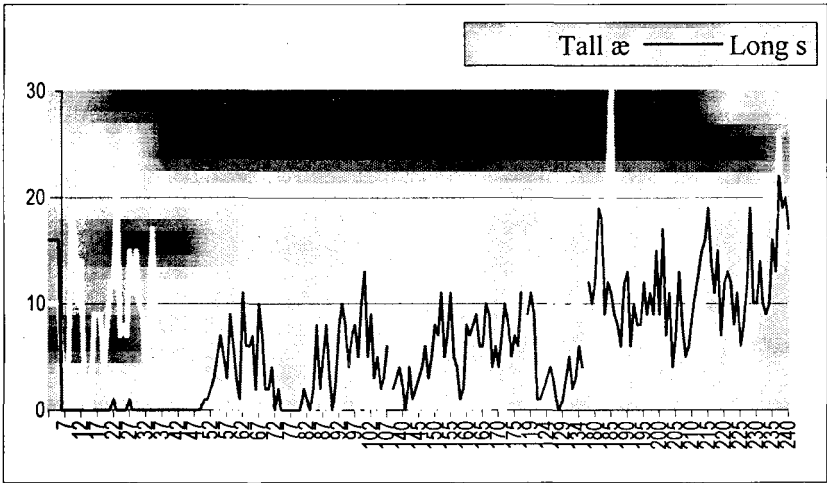
Between folios 175 and 190, tall æ is more widespread than long s, and that is also the case in A/C's work after folio 120. That may lead to the following hypothesis: supposing A and C were one scribe, he might have copied folios 117-136 somewhere around folio 175, disguising his script in folios 117-20 to make the transition from B smoother.

Eustace (another non-Ælfrician text) begins on folio 169^v and comes to an end at the bottom of folio 179^v, where it is followed by the title and the first few lines of the lengthy *Life of Saint Martin*. Graph 4 is an attempt to see how folios 117-36 (copied by A/C) would fit into the general pattern of A's use of long s and tall æ forms. D's work has been suppressed and folios 117 and 136 have been discounted because the handwriting of the former is probably deliberately distorted and because the latter is partly blank; folios 118-35 have been inserted after folio 179 (hypothesis a) and after 169 (hypothesis b), with a blank indicating the beginning and end of each insertion.

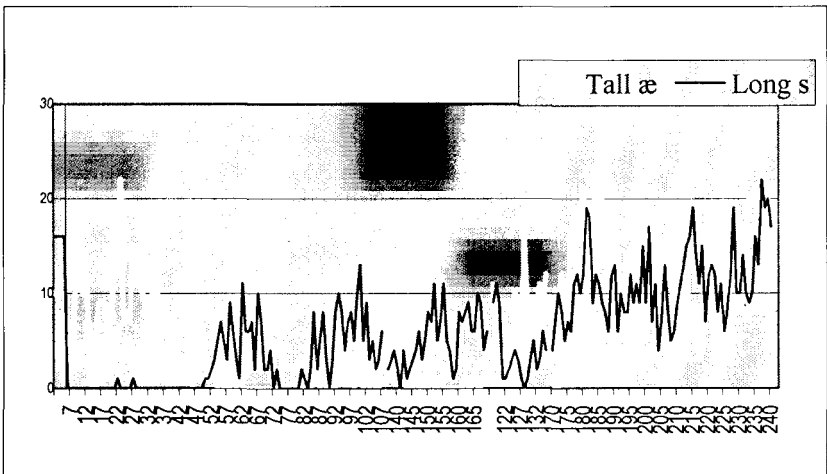
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Graphs 4 (a) and (b)

(a) A/C's Work Inserted after Folio 179



(b) A/C's Work Inserted after Folio 169



Both hypotheses are acceptable and (a) seems quite satisfactory, as it shows no significant break: supposing folios 117-35 were written by A, the

shapes of s and æ are more consistent with those around folio 170 than towards the end (compare with graph 3), which contradicts the hypothesis of *Mary of Egypt* having been copied when the manuscript was near completion. The presence of another non-Ælfrician text (*Eustace*) in folios 169-80 might suggest that those two non-Ælfrician texts at least, and possibly all four, were found together by the medieval editor of the collection but were this hypothesis to be corroborated, it would require further research into the transmission of those texts, which is beyond the scope of the present study. In an article discussed at greater length below, Roland Torkar suggests the opposite—that is, he makes the case for the separate transmission of *Mary of Egypt*.¹¹

As there are many changes in the shapes of æ and s forms throughout the manuscript, the long s/tall æ pattern does not provide conclusive evidence. Nevertheless, it does show that the evolution of æ and s in A/C is coherent with the general trend to be observed in the later part of the manuscript, particularly around folios 170-80.

3. Orthography

3.1. Previous Studies

In 1971, Roland Torkar published an article about spellings of the possessive first and second person singular *minre/minra*/*pinre/pinra*: they are sometimes spelt *mire/mira*/*pire/pira* in three of the non-Ælfrician texts, the exception being *Mary of Egypt*. Torkar concluded that the latter probably had a different origin from the other three and that the four had been added to the Ælfrician *Lives of Saints* for the first time in Cotton Julius E. vii, which does not quite exclude the possibility that *Mary of Egypt* might have been copied at the same time as *Eustace*, but makes it less likely.¹²

Torkar's article, like Scragg's examination of the origin of the Vercelli sermons, is based on the idea that scribes preserve the orthography of their exemplar.¹³ However, some scribes may also have changed the orthography deliberately, although this is more likely to have happened at a later period than that of Cotton Julius E. vii.¹⁴ Given the frailty of human nature and considering that eleventh-century spelling standards admitted of some variation, one may also suppose that a scribe might occasionally differ from his exemplar, for example if he had been trained in a slightly different tradition than that of the text he had to copy, or if he had just completed a lengthy task with

spelling conventions that differed from standard West Saxon.¹⁵

Whatever the case, a change in orthography can be explained in two ways: it may be due either to the use of a different exemplar if it appears at the beginning of a new text or set of texts, or to the intrusion of a new scribe if it corresponds to a change in script.

It is possible to gain an insight into scribe A's spelling habits by examining alternative spellings of the same words in a sample of folios. Among the alternative spellings thus collected, two are relevant to the problem of C's existence: the use of accents and certain <æ> spellings.

3.2. Accents

3.2.1. General Description

The use of accents in medieval script is notoriously erratic. In Cotton Julius E. vii, Ker notes, they 'are mainly on long monosyllables'.¹⁶ It is true that some monosyllabic nouns (*lic*, *wif*, *lac*, etc), verbs (*stod*, *wat*, etc), prepositions (*to*, *ut*), pronouns (*hi*, irrespective of gender or number) often bear an accent, but so does the short conjunction *ac* and occasionally the verb *beo* in the third person singular, so accents are not simply used as indicators of vowel length: their role is more complex. Their greater frequency in the first few texts suggests that they may be of use to the scribe himself: they are a sign that he is copying carefully and deliberately; their presence on words such as the ubiquitous conjunction *þa* or on two successive elements in a sequence of monosyllables seems to indicate that he is making sure as he goes along that he has not omitted any word, however insignificant. One-letter words such as *a*, 'always', or *æ*, 'law', are almost always accented (besides, *æ* is written between two dots), a usage that is helpful to both scribe and reader. In many cases, accents seem to warn the reader of some difficulty or against a careless reading, as with the pronoun *hi*, which can be plural or feminine singular, or with words that are quite similar and often occur in the same texts (*lic* and *lac*, for instance); negative prefixes are often highlighted in the same way.

Another problem is that the notion of monosyllable is somewhat elusive in medieval script, as separations between words will vary with the period and the scribe. In scribe A's work, the width of gaps between words is not always the same: he tends to write monosyllables in clusters, leaving a very narrow (and

occasionally no) gap between the words; an isolated monosyllable will be placed close to the polysyllable that comes next; such clusters will then be followed by a wider gap. Prefixes and suffixes may be written separately or not. In B's script, separations between words tend to be more regular, although monosyllables may occasionally be placed rather close to the following word. Letters within words are more widely spaced than in A; nevertheless, as the space between words tends to be quite narrow, the general impression is that the page is more crowded than with the main scribe. On the other hand, A/C spaces out words in a way that is very similar to A's usage. Like A, in a few cases, he writes an accent on two successive elements of a cluster of monosyllables.

3.2.2. *Distribution of Accents*

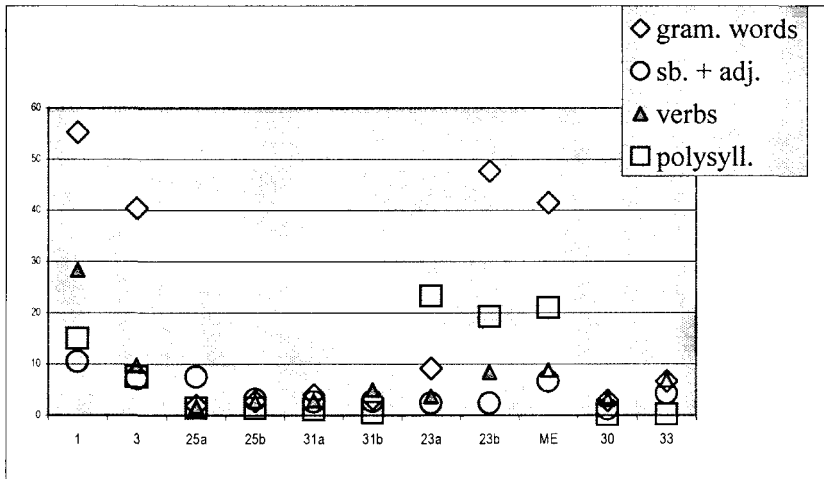
In order to identify each scribe's idiosyncrasy in the use of accents, it is necessary to break down accented words into different categories. Monosyllables fall into three groups: (i) 'grammatical words' (broadly defined), including monosyllabic pronouns, deictics and numerals, conjunctions, prepositions and prepositional adverbs and also adverbs expressing time or frequency; (ii) monosyllabic forms of substantives and adjectives; (iii) monosyllabic verb forms; (iv) all polysyllabic words, including the polysyllabic forms of the three categories mentioned above. However, prefix/prepositional adverb + monosyllabic forms of the verb (often written separately) are treated as a sequence of two monosyllables, as are compound nouns formed with two monosyllabic elements.

The graph below shows the average number of accents for each category of words in 100 lines of text; the accents and the total number of lines were counted from the microfilm of the manuscript. The texts examined here are 4 samples of A's work and the 4 non-Ælfrician texts. As the number of accents falls very sharply after the first few texts, two samples are taken from the beginning of the manuscript (Skeat I, III, Ker 4, 6) and are followed by two long texts copied by A in the second part of the manuscript (*Maccabees* and *Martin*: Skeat XXV, XXXI, Ker 34-36, 42); these have been subdivided into 2 equal parts—(a) and (b)—so as to see whether there were significant variations within one given text. The first of the 4 non-Ælfrician texts has been subdivided according to the script: (a) was copied by B, and (b) by A/C. The text numbers used here are from Skeat, written in Arabic numerals, but *Mary of Egypt*, XXIII B in Skeat, is indicated by its initials so as to avoid any confusion with the second part of the *Seven Sleepers*.

Graph 5

Accents

Note that the first three groups (grammatical words, substantives and adjectives) include only monosyllabic forms of those words:



One first notes the wide difference between the earlier and the later Ælfrician texts. In the first text (*Nativitas Domini*), the large number of accented verbs is due to the repeated accentuation on the oft-recurring verb form 'is', another sign that initially A seems to be afraid of skipping short words. On the other hand, there is practically no change within either of the longer Ælfrician texts (25 and 31); the only noticeable difference (between 25a and 25b) is easily accounted for: in the first part of *Machabees*, Ælfric discusses the relation between the Old Law and the New Law so the word 'æ' recurs many times, hence the greater number of accented monosyllabic substantives.

B's work (23a) differs from A, with a large number of accents falling on polysyllables. At first sight, A/C's use of accents seems to differ from both A and B. Is this a clue confirming the existence of C? The data can be read quite differently. The fairly constant number of accents on polysyllables in 23a, 23b and ME suggests they might simply have been copied from the exemplar. Now, if only accents on monosyllables are taken into account, one notes a general frequency and a distribution per category which are very similar to the beginning of the manuscript: if A does indeed tend to add accents when faced with a new or

challenging task, then the difficulty of grappling with the *Seven Sleepers* and *Mary of Egypt* (both of which are far more complex in style than Ælfrician texts and than the other two non-Ælfrician texts) would be enough to justify a return to his former usage, supposing that he had been copying those folios.

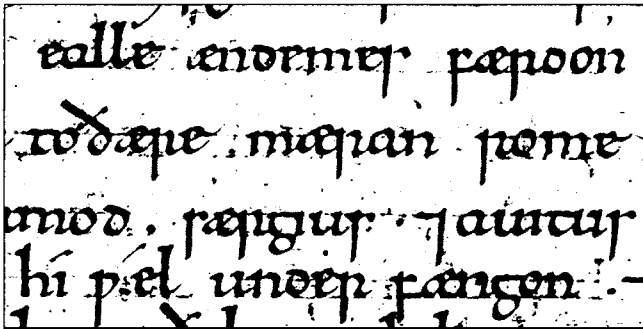
3.3. <æ> spellings

3.3.1. Frequency of <æ> for <e>

In the first few texts, many <æ> spellings occur in words that one would normally expect to be spelt <e>. <æ> is often found before nasals or liquids (*fængon*, III, l. 351, *færde* III, l. 36, *wær* – in the sense of man – II, l. 155), before palatal g (*twægen* V, l. 144, *hægn*, V, l. 90), in verbs that alternate æ/e (*cwæðað* V, l. 240), after w (*swæfne* V, l. 461 and several of the examples quoted above) and in many other cases (*gebædum* IV, l. 9, *æhtnysse* IV, l. 255).

Figure 5

Examples of <æ> corrected to <e>, spelt <e> in Skeat's edition: *endemes* (first line), *wel* (last line), *Eugenia*, ll. 314, 317, f. 14^r.



After text V, the number of <æ> spellings falls quite sharply but they do not disappear: every text copied by A (except XX, which is very short) contains a few; they are seldom corrected. Although none of these spellings are particularly surprising in an eleventh-century manuscript, we can infer from the variants given by Skeat and the normal usage in other works by Ælfric that those words were

originally spelt <e>.¹⁷ This is corroborated by the many corrections to be found in texts I-V: the first part of the æ ligature has been erased, changing it into e. In such cases, the word is spelt <e> in Skeat: *fengon* and *ferde* in the examples given above.

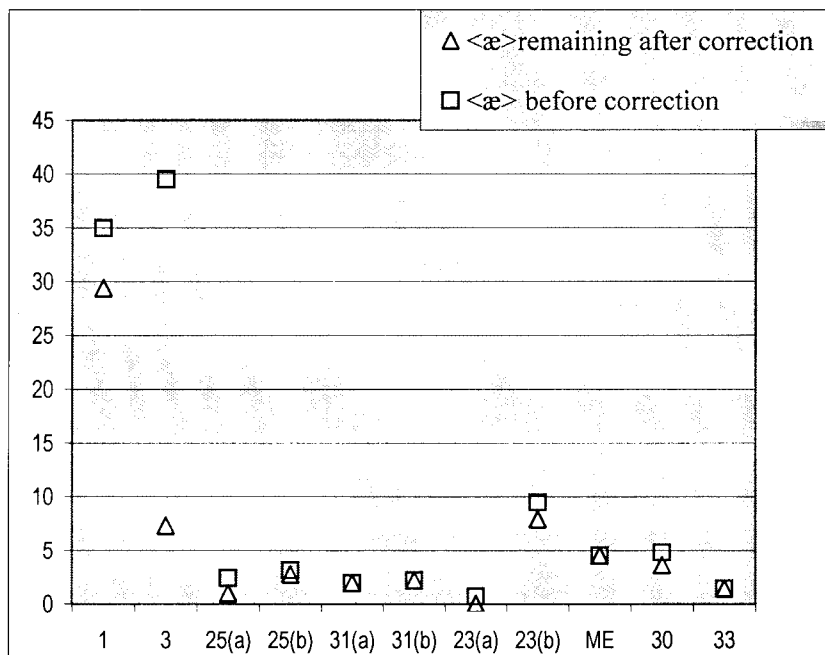
The Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies Database Project does not record the <æ> spellings of Cotton Julius E. vii that were corrected in the manuscript, since they are not printed in Skeat. Even then, a spot-check made with this tool suggests that while some <æ> for <e> spellings are quite widespread, particularly those in verbs that alternate e and æ forms, others are rare and can be taken as typical of Cotton Julius E. vii. It is the case with *wæstenum* and *þægn* in *Alban* (XIX.139, 204), and also with others, such as *twægen*, *swæfen*, *gebædhus*, *færde* (from *feran*), and so on.¹⁸ For example, *þægn/ðægn* has 4 occurrences in the MANCASS Database Project, two of which come from *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, one from *Eugenia*, but in the manuscript, four similar spellings of the same word have been corrected in the next three texts and three of them do not appear in Skeat.¹⁹

3.3.2. Distribution of <æ> for <e>

The graph below shows the average number of <æ> spellings, before and after correction, in 200 lines of text. No account has been taken of endings that look like æ changed into e because we believe it to be a different type of case altogether – probably an a that was erased and replaced with e some time after the manuscript had been completed. As with graph 4, spellings and lines numberings derive from the microfilm (but in quotations line numbers refer to Skeat's edition) and the same texts have been selected.

Graph 6

<æ> for <e>



The graph shows that in the later texts copied by A <æ> spellings before correction remain stable at an average of about 2 or 3 for every 200 lines. They practically disappear when B copies the first part of the *Seven Sleepers* (23a): 2 examples in the nearly 600 lines for which he was responsible, both corrected and both in highly untypical words (*hremmas*, and *hæt*, the past tense of *hatan*, XXIII, ll. 77, 315) but as soon as A/C starts working, <æ> spellings crop up again in familiar words, as with *swæfne* and *twægen* (both spelt <e> in Skeat), XXXIII, ll. 523, 756; or *gebædhus*, *twægen*, and *ðægnas* in XXIII B, ll. 115, 518, 631. In other words, the <æ> spelling, which seems to be characteristic of scribe A, is also a distinctive trait of scribe A/C. The unavoidable inference is that C has no separate existence.

4. Conclusion

Taken in isolation this common feature could not be used as conclusive evidence but it should be noted that no other trait seems to characterize scribe C and distinguish him from scribe A. It is true that his work comprises barely a thousand lines, but that of B is even less and yet it evinces some characteristic spellings: endings in *ng* are almost always written with a *c* placed after the *g*, as with 'pingc' l. 38, 'hengc' l. 75 in the *Seven Sleepers*. This spelling is virtually non-existent in the rest of the manuscript (there are perhaps two or three instances) and it is totally absent from A/C; he also occasionally omits initial *h*, not only before *r* ('ryðera', l. 34) but also before vowels ('æþengylde', l. 31).²⁰ These omissions do not appear in Skeat, as the missing letter has been added by a later corrector, whose work is the subject of an article by Geoffrey Needham.²¹ As for the hand, we have seen that it is indeed different from that of Scribe A in folio 117 (a change that can easily be explained in terms of an attempted imitation of scribe B's hand on the opposite folio), but in the following folios it becomes impossible to distinguish A from C.

In the absence of any element, either in the hand or the orthography, that might characterize scribe C, the typical <æ> spellings that are shared by both A and C in Ælfrician and non-Ælfrician texts alike, but do not appear in B's work, must lead us to the conclusion that A and C are one and the same scribe.

Unfortunately, this insight fails to throw any light on the insertion of *Mary of Egypt* in the manuscript: the tall *æ* and tall *ſ* pattern examined in the present study suggests that *Mary* may have been copied at the same time as other non-Ælfrician texts, while Torkar concluded from the *minra* / *mira* spellings that it came from a different source and was probably copied later. That question must remain unresolved for the moment but a comparison between the surviving copies of these texts might provide a lead for further investigation.²²

NOTES

I wish to acknowledge my debt to Professor D. Scragg for the use of orthography as a tool to research the history of a manuscript and to thank the British Library for their generosity in granting access to their resources and allowing me to use reproductions from the manuscript.

¹ Neil R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1957, p. 567). Cotton Julius E.vii is Ker's number 162.

² Peter Clemoes, 'The Chronology of Ælfric's Works', in *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of their History and their Culture Presented to Bruce Dickins.*, ed. by Peter Clemoes (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1959), pp. 212-247. British Library, Cotton MSS, Vitellius D. xviii and Otho B. x, which have a fairly large number of texts in common with Cotton Julius E vii (mixed with other works by Ælfric and a few non-Ælfrician texts), were both badly damaged in the 1731 fire.

³ *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. by Walter W. Skeat, EETS o.s. 94, 114 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1966), I, pp. vii, 553; II, pp. lxii, 474.

⁴ Hugh Magennis, 'Style and Method in the Old English Version of the Legend of the Seven Sleepers', *English Studies*, 66 (1985), 285-295; 'Contrasting Features in the Non-Ælfrician Lives in the Old English *Lives of Saints*', *Anglia*, 104 (1986), 316-348; 'St Mary of Egypt and Ælfric', in *The Legend of Mary of Egypt in Medieval Insular Hagiography* ed. by Erich Poppe and Bianca Ross; as well as his preface to *The Anonymous Old English Legend of the Seven Sleepers*, ed. by Hugh Magennis, Durham Medieval Texts (Durham: Department of English Studies, 1994).

⁵ Michèle Bussièrès, 'Time, History and Story-telling in Ælfric's Lives of Saints' (unpublished master's thesis, Université Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand, 1994), pp 31-41.

⁶ Neil R. Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 210.

⁷ Peter Clemoes, 'The Chronology', p. 219, note 2.

⁸ Donald G. Scragg, 'The Corpus of Anonymous Lives and their Manuscript Context', in *Holy Men and Holy Women*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), pp. 209-230.

⁹ Neil R. Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 210.

¹⁰ Neil R. Ker, *Catalogue*, p. xxxiii.

¹¹ Roland Torkar, 'Zu den Vorlagen der Æ. Handschrift Cotton Julius E vii', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 72 (1971), 711-15 (p. 715).

¹² Torkar, 'Zu den Vorlagen der Æ. Handschrift Cotton Julius E vii', pp. 711-15.

¹³ Donald G. Scragg, 'The Compilation of the Vercelli Book', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 2 (1973), 189-207.

¹⁴ For different approaches to spelling from different scribes, see Roy Michael Liuzza: 'Scribal habit: the evidence of the Old English Gospels', in *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Mary Swan and Elaine M. Traherne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.143-65.

¹⁵ Donald G. Scragg, *A History of English Spelling* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), pp. 15-51 about spelling standards in the Anglo-Saxon period.

¹⁶ Neil R. Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 210.

¹⁷ Some of the variants given by Skeat also show <æ> spellings, but not in the same places as Cotton Julius E. vii, for example *ontende* spelt *ontænde* in MS CCCC 198 and Cotton Vitellius D. xvii (*Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, V, p. 134, note 20).

¹⁸ MANCASS (*Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies*) *C11 Database Project: an inventory of script and spellings in eleventh century English*, Director: Professor Donald Scragg, Co-Director: Dr Alex Rumble, <<http://www.art.man.ac.uk>>

¹⁹ III.269, 358; V.90, 306; only the third is spelt <æ> in Skeat. These examples include various case forms of *þegn* but not the verb *þegnian*.

²⁰ Conversely, on two successive lines, the words *ræd/rædan* ('counsel', 'to decide') begin with an intrusive *h*, later erased (XXIII.319 and 320).

²¹ Geoffrey Needham, 'Additions and Alterations in Cotton MS. Julius E VII', *Review of English Studies*, 9 (1958) pp. 160-64.

²² This study was originally part of my unpublished doctoral thesis (Université de Poitiers, 2005) under the supervision of Professor Stephen Morrison. Many thanks are due to him for his generosity, encouragement and advice.