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The Date of the Oxford Manuscript  
of *La Chanson de Roland*  
(Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Digby 23)

The dates assigned to this manuscript by different scholars range from 1100 to the 1170s. The discrepancies in part reflect the difficulties of dating in the twelfth century: there are many undated manuscripts (like this one), but there are less dated and datable materials surviving from the first half of the twelfth century than from the second. Our sources for dating English manuscripts in the first half of the twelfth century are entries in the precisely dated Mortuary Roll of Abbot Vitalis of Savigny (1122-23), Episcopal Professions at Canterbury, and other original documents<sup>1</sup>. To these may be added such generally datable material as the St Albans Psalter (c. 1123-55)<sup>2</sup>, books associated with William of Malmesbury (c. 1125-9)<sup>3</sup>, books from Cirencester which contain inscriptions identifying the abbots of the house at the times they were copied (c. 1137-74)<sup>4</sup>, and other books datable from their content<sup>5</sup>. The earliest manuscript of English origin which was precisely dated by the scribe is from 1167<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The principal dated materials are discussed by N. R. Ker, *English Manuscripts in the Century after the Norman Conquest*, Oxford 1960, pp. 16-22.

<sup>2</sup> On the evidence for dating this manuscript see O. Pächt, C. R. Dodwell & F. Wormald, *The St Albans Psalter*, London 1960, pp. 275-80; R. M. Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Alban's Abbey 1066-1235*, Woodbridge 1982, pp. 25-6.

<sup>3</sup> On these manuscripts see N. R. Ker, «William of Malmesbury's handwriting», *English Historical Review* 59 (1944): 371-6; R. M. Thomson, «The 'Scriptorium' of William of Malmesbury», in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. by M. B. Parkes & A. G. Watson, London 1978, pp. 117-42; id. «More Manuscripts from the 'Scriptorium' of William of Malmesbury», *Scriptorium* 35 (1981): 48-54.

<sup>4</sup> Most of these are included in A. G. Watson, *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 700-1600 in the Department of Manuscripts, the British Library*, London 1979, nos. 864, 879 and plates; id., *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 435-1600 in Oxford Libraries*, Oxford 1984, nos. 798-802 and plates. On this group see Ker, *English MSS after the Conquest*, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> Specimens of such datable manuscripts are reproduced by Watson, *Dated MSS British Libr.*, and *Dated MSS Oxford*.

<sup>6</sup> Oxford, Christ Church, MS lat. 88; Watson, *Dated MSS Oxford*, no. 760.

Bédier<sup>7</sup> and Stengel<sup>8</sup> assigned Digby 23 to the 1170s, but in the introduction to the facsimile of the manuscript published in 1933 Samaran argued for the second quarter of the twelfth century<sup>9</sup>. In 1970 Marichal refined on Samaran's argument, and suggested that the manuscript was copied closer to 1125 than to 1150<sup>10</sup>. In 1973 Short mounted a meticulous argument for a date in the late twelfth century, but his argument was summarily dismissed by Samaran in a subsequent note<sup>11</sup>. It seems to me that the meticulous attention to detail in Short's work deserved more careful consideration, and that Samaran's arguments were not so strong as his conviction would suggest.

Short based his hypothesis that the manuscript was copied in the later twelfth century on the presence of what he called the «*de monogram*» (figs. 4, 5)<sup>12</sup>. Unfortunately he confused this ligature with «biting» (a phenomenon which is more common in the late twelfth century), nevertheless, he produced a large amount of incontestable evidence that this ligature appears frequently in charters, especially between 1150 and 1180. Short admitted some earlier instances, but he did not go back far enough, since the ligature appears much earlier — for example, in a Durham book given by Bishop Carileph who died in 1096<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, this ligature appears much more frequently in undated

<sup>7</sup> J. Bédier, *La Chanson de Roland: Commentaires*, Paris 1927, p. 66; id., *Romania* 64 (1938): 156. Bédier is following Gautier and G. Paris.

<sup>8</sup> *Photographische Wiedergabe des HS Digby 23*, ed. E. Stengel, Heilbronn 1878.

<sup>9</sup> *La Chanson de Roland, reproduction phototypique du MS Digby 23 de la Bodleian Library d'Oxford*, éd. par A. de Laborde, SATF 74, Paris 1933, pp. 28-32. The date «1130-40?» had previously been proposed by the editors of the New Palaeographical Society, *Facsimiles of Ancient MSS &c*, ed. by E. M. Thompson, et al., 2 series, London 1913-30, plate 39.

<sup>10</sup> Marichal's arguments are reported in *Annuaire 1969-70 de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études*, IV<sup>e</sup> Section: *Sciences historiques et philologiques...*, *Extraits des rapports sur conférences* (1970): 363-74.

<sup>11</sup> I. Short, «The Oxford Manuscript of the *Chanson de Roland*: A Palaeographic Note», *Romania* 94 (1973): 221-31; C. Samaran, «Sur la date approximative du *Roland* d'Oxford», *ibid.*: 523-7.

<sup>12</sup> The ligature with 'capital' **D** can be seen at the beginning of line 6 in fig. 4 (from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 23, fol. 38), and with **d** in 'deseured' in line 2 of fig. 5 (from fol. 36<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>13</sup> The form occurs in the excerpts from St Augustine's letters in a late-eleventh-century hand on the inserted leaf (fol. 9) in Durham, Dean & Chapter Library, MS B.II.21. On this manuscript and the rest of Carileph's books, see R.A.B. Mynors, *Durham Cathedral Manuscripts to the End of the Twelfth Century*, Durham 1939: this manuscript is no. 34.

books than Short's paper suggests. It appears in manuscripts assigned on other criteria, both palaeographical and non-palaeographical, to the eleventh century, to the first half of the twelfth century, to the mid twelfth century<sup>14</sup>, and later. It is almost always used in these books as a space-saver, especially at the end of a line<sup>15</sup>.

Since the **de** ligature appears over such a wide period of time, its presence in Digby 23 cannot be used alone as a criterion for dating. The increase in the number of surviving instances of this ligature between the 1140s and the 1180s reflects first and foremost the increase in the number of surviving documents, and this situation represents a crucial weakness in Short's hypothesis.

Samaran's opinion that Digby 23 should be assigned to a date in the second quarter of the twelfth century has prevailed for forty years. What are the arguments of Samaran and Marichal for this date?

Samaran's first two criteria are drypoint ruling and «l'aspect générale de l'écriture». He then adduces details which are scattered somewhat sporadically throughout the manuscript: the use of **N** and **R** in minuscule, the presence of the ligatures of **NT**, **&** and **de** within words, the use of other ligatures, the absence of accentuated **i**, the use of **e** with cedilla, and the proportion of upright **d** forms to round-backed **d** forms<sup>16</sup>. He compares the Digby hand with that of the Salisbury *titulus* in the Mortuary Roll of 1122-3<sup>17</sup>, and with that of the poem «Cheualier mult estes guariz» (which relates to the crusade of 1147) in Erfurt, Stadtbibliothek, MS Amplon. 8° 23, fol. 88<sup>18</sup>.

Marichal emphasizes the following criteria: the forked shafts of **b**, **h**, **k**, **l**, **i**, **u**, **p**; the duct of **s**, the round-backed **d**, the

<sup>14</sup> For example, St Gall, Stiftsbibl., MS 864, (s.xi); Hereford, Cathedral Libr., MS O.1.IV (given to Cirencester Abbey during the period when Serlo was prior, 1131-47); a copy of Lawrence of Durham preserved in Durham University Library, Cosin MS V.III.1 (s.xii med.).

<sup>15</sup> As in the Cosin manuscript of Lawrence of Durham, and in the gloses of Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Auct. D.2.1.

<sup>16</sup> In *La Chanson de Roland*, facs. ed. Laborde, pp. 28-32.

<sup>17</sup> *Rouleau mortuaire du B. Abbé de Savigni*, facs. éd. par. L.V. Delisle, Paris 1909, pl. XLIV, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Facs. in W. Schum, *Exempla codicum Amplonianum Erfurtensium*, Berlin 1882, p. 7 and pl. VI, no 12.

exaggeration in the letters **a**, **w**, **z**, the approach stroke to **e** and **r**, the use of the tironian *et* sign, and the frequent use of accents. He pursues these details through the plates in N.R. Ker's *English Manuscripts in the Century after the Norman Conquest*, the Mortuary Roll, and Warner & Ellis's *Charters in the British Museum*<sup>19</sup>.

When one examines these arguments for dating the manuscript one is struck by the fact that the different arguments lean heavily on different details. At first sight the different arguments of Samaran and Marichal acquire cumulative force because all the different details seem to add up to the conclusion that the manuscript was copied at some time in the first half of the twelfth century. But Samaran places it in the second quarter of the twelfth century, whereas Marichal ascribes it to the end of the first quarter. Short's argument too was based on details. Did he merely pick the wrong ones? or does the real importance of his contribution lie in the fact that he shews how dangerous this kind of approach can be? If his details are wrong, how do we know that those of the others are right? As Short himself says:

«At the same time our study may serve to emphasize the fragility of any attempt at a precise dating of such 12th century vernacular MSS as that of the *Chanson de Roland* by concentrating on a comparative study of individual letter forms in English book hands»<sup>20</sup>.

Samaran attached special importance to the aspect of the handwriting, but this attention to aspect has led to different conclusions. To Samaran and Marichal that element of aspect which derives from the formation of the letters suggested the first half of the twelfth century, whereas to Stengel and Short that element of aspect which derives from the size of the handwriting suggested the second half of the twelfth century. Each scholar then looks for details to support the initial impression made by the aspect. Aspect is a dangerous criterion: the scribe of Digby 23 was copying a French text, and strictly speaking the aspect of his handwriting is comparable only with that of the handwriting of scribes copying other French texts, like those of

<sup>19</sup> *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études* (1969-70); 364-8.

<sup>20</sup> Short, *Romania* 94: 231.

the *Alexis* in the St Albans Psalter, and the poem in the Erfurt manuscript. Moreover the aspect of the Digby scribe's handwriting is clearly affected by the practical difficulties he encountered in tracing his letters on the slippery surface of poor quality parchment. The problem of dating Digby 23 is to find genuine parallels which are dated and datable. The closest parallel would be another manuscript by the same scribe, but nobody has yet found an Oliver to go with this Roland. In order to assign a presumed date to a specimen of handwriting one must first classify it, and identify the script or category of script to which it belongs (the model which the scribe had in his mind's eye as he wrote). Only then can one determine the criteria which are appropriate for dating manuscripts in that script. The first requirement of datable parallels is that they belong to the right type of handwriting.

There are two clues which help us to identify such parallels to Digby 23. The first lies in the 'codicology' of the manuscript. The *précellence* of the Oxford text of *La Chanson de Roland* is in direct contrast to the insignificance of the manuscript as a book. It is a small book written on poor quality parchment, and there are discrepancies in ruling. When working through collections of medieval manuscripts one frequently encounters small books written on poor quality or unbleached parchment, written in small (sometimes minute) hands, and with virtually no decoration. Most of these books contain texts or commentaries which are associated with the schools<sup>21</sup>. Such manuscripts range in date from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, and it

<sup>21</sup> The following examples have been chosen at random: Avranches, Bibl. mun., MS 221 (Aristotle's *De anima* and *Physics*); Durham, Dean & Chapter Library, MSS C.IV.7 (commentaries on *De inventione*, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, on Plato's *Timaeus*, and on Boethius's *De arithmetica*) and C.IV.10 (commentaries on Sedulius, and on Boethius's *De consolazione philosophiae*): see Mynors, *Durham Cathedral MSS*, nos 10, 79, 80); Köln, Dombibl., MSS 201 (the earliest scholastic commentary on Priscian) and 197 (Manegold of Lautenbach); Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MSS Auct. F.6.9 (commentary on Juvenal, from St Victor, Paris: see *Bodleian Library Record* 4: 124), Laud lat. 49 (Porphyry, Aristotle with Boethius's commentaries, and Cicero's *Topics*), and Laud lat. 67 (commentaries on Porphyry and Priscian); St Gall, Stiftsbibl., MS 868 (commentaries on Juvenal, Persius and Horace from the schools of Liège: see B. Bischoff, «Living with the Satirists» in R. R. Bolgar, *Classical Influences on European Culture AD 500-1500*, Cambridge 1971, pp. 83-94, esp. p. 85); Troyes, Bibl. mun., MS 1101 (William of Conches). Dodwell and Thomson (see note 3) compare handwriting in the St Alban's Psalter with that in a school book, London, Brit. Libr., MS Harley 2624.

is often difficult to assign them to any particular part of this period on palaeographical criteria alone. The parallels for the size of Digby 23, and for the quality of its parchment are to be found in these scholars' books. Moreover, *La Chanson de Roland* is now bound up in Digby 23 with a scholars' book, a copy of Chalcidius's translation of Plato's *Timaeus* produced in northern France in the first half of the twelfth century<sup>22</sup>. The references to Chalcidius immediately following the Roland text on the last page, and revealed by ultra-violet light<sup>23</sup>, suggest that the two manuscripts have been bound together since the thirteenth century. The pages of both independent parts of Digby 23 are the same size and were so in the thirteenth century; if the formats had not been compatible they would not have been bound together.

The second clue is the size of the handwriting: that in Digby 23 is smaller than that found in manuscripts associated with the major monastic scriptoria of the first half and of the mid twelfth century. Moreover, the handwriting exhibits the kind of clumsiness which arises when a scribe tries to write a small model large rather than the reverse. The Digby scribe is much happier when writing to a smaller module, which he does from time to time, especially near the foot of a page (fig. 4)<sup>24</sup>. Some scholars have been led to associate his handwriting with the second half of the twelfth century because smaller hands seem to be more common then, and more datable examples<sup>25</sup>, or examples which can be closely related to precisely dated documents, survive from this period. However, small hands are not confined to the second half of the twelfth century and later.

<sup>22</sup> For an opinion on the origin and date of the manuscript based upon the decoration see O. Pächt & J. J. G. Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library Oxford*, I, Oxford 1966, no. 475. The book was bequeathed to Osney Abbey near Oxford by Master Henry de Langley about 1263: A. B. Emden, «A Biographical Register: Additions and Corrections», *Bodleian Library Record* 6 (1961): 677.

<sup>23</sup> *La Chanson de Roland*, facs ed Laborde, pp 23-7; also *Romania* 55 (1929): 401-10. The reading was confirmed in 1975 by Dr R. W. Hunt (personal communication) who also pointed out that the discolouration of the flyleaves confirms that both parts had been bound together before the present seventeenth-century Digby binding.

<sup>24</sup> Compare fol. 27 lines 17-28, and contrast fol. 44<sup>v</sup> with fol. 48. The mysterious *aoi* also appears in different sizes.

<sup>25</sup> For example, Mynors, *Durham Cathedral MSS*, no. 123 Further examples in Watson, *Dated MSS British Library*, and *Dated MSS Oxford*

In Oxford, Jesus College, MS. 50<sup>26</sup>, the handwriting on the opening page (fig. 1) exhibits features which can be assigned to the first half or to the middle of the twelfth century. Later in the manuscript a second scribe takes over. One could be forgiven for thinking that this completion took place much later, but on fol. 98 (fig. 2) the first scribe returns, although his handwriting has become smaller since its size has been determined by the ruling prepared by the second scribe. The large 'early' hand and the small 'later' hand are contemporary. We are, therefore, looking for small hands which can belong to any period in the twelfth century.

The books containing scholarly texts and commentaries not only provide parallels for the format and parchment of Digby 23 but also offer the closest parallels to the handwriting (cf. figs. 3, 6). Many of the details adduced by Samaran and Marichal for date are in fact characteristic features of the handwriting found in such books: the coexistence of round-backed and upright **d**, the ampersand used as a ligature for *et* in words alongside the tironian sign used for *et* as a word, the two forms of **a** (with and without headstroke), the duct of **s**, the admission of capital forms; in some of these small hands the **de** ligature appears frequently, presumably as a space-saver<sup>27</sup>. The size of the handwriting varies considerably from book to book, even in a small sample<sup>28</sup>, but in some books the hands are close to the size of

<sup>26</sup> The manuscript contains a copy of the *Panormia* of Ivo of Chartres. It was subsequently owned by Sir John Prise, see below, note 51.

<sup>27</sup> Fig. 3 from Oxford, Jesus College, MS 26, fol. 18<sup>r</sup> (part); fig. 6 from idem, fol. 94: on the manuscript see below. The principal features which are typical of such hands are the frequent use of abbreviations and the large number of variant forms: in particular headless **a** and **a** with headstroke (as in fig. 3, line 5 «natura»), the high proportion of round-backed **d** to upright **d** forms (esp. in fig. 6), the two **s** forms including that in which the headstroke was formed with a flattened upward curve (as in fig. 3 line 2 «inseperabiles»), the tironian sign for *et* (as in fig 3, line 1) and here as a ligature within a word (as at the end of line 5), *e* with cedilla (as in fig. 3, line 6 «celorum»). The **de** ligature appears in the hands in Köln, Dombibl., MS 201 (attributed to s. xi ex.); Durham, Dean & Chapter Libr., MS C.IV.7 (s. xii in.); Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Laud lat. 67 (s. xiii). On the appearance of these small informal hands in manuscripts of English vernacular texts in the twelfth century, see M. B. Parkes, «On the Presumed Date and Possible Origin of the Manuscript of the *Orrmulum* . . .», in *Five Hundred Years of Words and Sounds: A Festschrift for Eric Dobson*, ed. E. G. Stanley & D. Gray, Woodbridge 1983, pp. 115-27.

<sup>28</sup> Among the examples cited in note 21, St Gall, Stiftbibl., 868 has 99 lines of script on a page of approximately 180 mm in height; Oxford, Bodl. Libr., Laud lat. 67 has 88 lines on a page of 210 mm; Durham, Dean & Chapter



that in Digby 23. However, during the course of the twelfth century the size of the handwriting used in academic books became more stable, particularly in well-produced books. Scribes also began to introduce features of style, and these innovations culminated in the emergence of a new category of script. The pattern of this development can be followed in a few datable manuscripts which exhibit some of the most relevant criteria for assessing the date of the handwriting of Digby 23.

Some time between 1146 and 1149 Prince Henry, son of Louis VI of France, presented certain books to the monastery of Clairvaux<sup>29</sup>. I shall concentrate on two of these in particular: Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 2266, a copy of Gilbert de la Porré on the Pauline Epistles *sine textu*, and Montpellier, Faculté de Médecine, MS 231, a copy of Ivo of Chartres's *Epistolae*. Both books have the inscription «Henricus regis filius», although that in the Troyes manuscript has been erased. Doubtless these books were produced for Prince Henry before 1146 when he entered the monastery, but even if we accept the more cautious date of 'before 1149' (when he left Clairvaux to become bishop of Beauvais), these books are still the earliest datable examples known to me in which a small 'academic' hand has been stabilized to a new 'intermediate' size. The handwriting of Troyes 2266 (fig. 7) reflects an early stage in the development towards the new category of script. The scribe formed his letters with precision, made the minim strokes longer than is usual in academic hands, and placed them symmetrically. He borrowed certain letter forms and stylistic features from the larger, more formal book hands<sup>30</sup>. Alongside these more formal features

Libr., C.IV.7 has one hand with 67 lines and another with 42 lines of script on a page of 215 mm.

<sup>29</sup> On Prince Henry's books see now C. F. R. de Hamel, *Glossed Books of the Bible and the Origins of the Paris Booktrade*, Woodbridge 1984, pp. 5-7. I discussed these books with Dr de Hamel in 1975 while he was preparing his thesis. The manuscripts bearing the Prince Henry inscription appear to have been overlooked in the preparation of the relevant volumes of the *Catalogue des manuscrits portant les indications de date de lieu ou de copiste*, ed. C. Samaran & R. Marichal, since they are neither recorded in the notices, nor included in the lists of doubtful or rejected manuscripts.

<sup>30</sup> The ampersand (as in col. b, line 3) is more common than the tironian sign (as in col. b, line 2), **a** with headstroke is more common, even within words (as in col. b, line 2 «humilitate») than the headless form (col. line 5 «uocatus»), word-separation is fully developed and accurate, the attention to details at the tops of ascenders and the feet of minims and other letters is meticulous. The



Exceptiones  
 ecclesiarum  
 regularum. parti ex epistola romano  
 pontifici. parti ex gestis con-  
 cilioꝝ catholicorū epōꝝ. parti  
 ex tētib; orthodoxorū partum.  
 partim ex institutionib; catholi-  
 corū regū. non nullo labore in  
 uno corpore adunare curavi.  
 ut q̄ scripta illa ex qb; ista excepta  
 sūt ad manū habē non possūt. hic  
 salū accipiat. qd̄ ad cōmodum  
 cause sue ualere p̄speret.  
 A fundamento itaq; xp̄iane reli-  
 gionis id est fidei incedentes. sic

Fig. 1

malum meum redundare  
 constat. qui eam coniunxit  
 inuitam qd̄ pari tenore de-  
 iuro est et iam sentiendum.  
 Nouellariū constitutio. xxx.  
 vii. De separatione coniugii  
 non ob causam fornicatiōis.  
 ¶ Iquis per uorem ancillam  
 mulierem duxerit uxore  
 libam eam. ēē. putas ut exōt-  
 rio si libera mulier seruo per uore  
 iuncta sit. p̄ eaq; uitalis repta sit  
 dicens: om̄ino nuptias n̄ cōsti-  
 tisse int̄ libū enī et ancillā. serui  
 et libā mulierē. nuptias cōstiti  
 n̄ possūt. Qd̄ si alludicate et cō-  
 uenēcia dñi seruus et ancilla  
 matrimonii cōpērent cū libā p̄-  
 na forte enī dñi ancillā suā  
 ut libā uiro iūgenio coniunxit.

Fig. 2

si cōtinuocē p̄st ad filiū scām. Quis p̄r filius ipse  
 s. sic inseparabel ē. ita inseparabilē opent. Nā q̄ in  
 intellectu dñi cap. q̄ ipsum intellectū suū. q̄ cū uult  
 capere. n̄ dūm cap. Si autē hē iā cap. attendat. dūgnē  
 nich meo ēē in sua natā mell. uideat in libꝝ  
 ibi uideat ulla lineamēta format. n̄ dret coglox. spō-  
 sam gūduatē. partū distantiā. motū distensionē. ali-  
 qd̄ p̄ loꝝ inualla motionet. et aliq̄ etim. Nich ē  
 re istoz inuenim̄ in eo. q̄ in natura n̄ra nich mell' in

Fig. 3

a spremers colps iunt ocis qualiter  
 t ut pins de reins tut sun eleue perces.  
 q nasset sun elme sil unt nasset el chef  
 e sun osbere rumpit y desmailet.  
 p armi lecois nasset de .iiii. espiez  
 s de sulur ocient sun destur.  
 o r est grant doel quant la roeuesque chiet. 401.  
**T** ut pins de reins quant se sent abatur.  
 d e .iiii. espiez parmi lecois ferut.  
 l snelement liber resailit sus.  
 R oll regardet puis si li e curut.  
 e dist un mot ne sun nez ueneue.  
 l a bon uassal ne nert ut recieut.  
 l i trait alinace selpee de acer brun.  
 e n la grant pisse mil colps  
 fierit y plus  
 p uis le dist carles qui nen esparignat nul.  
 t els .iiii. ceiz i taveuet encur lui  
 a l quant nasset at quant parmi ferut.  
 s iout diceis ki les chefs unt poite.  
 e odit la geste e cil ki el camp fut.  
 l iber cilie por qui ds fait uercur  
**L** e fist la charre el muster de loun.  
 k ranc ne set nel ad pd entendut.  
 l i quens nait geneemet secumbat.  
 o as lecois ad tressuet y mult chate.  
 e n la teste ad edulor y grant mal.  
 R umpit e li ceplez por co que il cornat.

Fig. 4

a icel mot iun al altre ad elme  
 p ar tel amour as les u' deitres  
**O** uer sent que la mort mult languisset.  
 a n' douf les ois en la teste li tannent.  
 l ois pert y la uene tice.

Fig. 5

eū conſecrū. Uerū q̄ conſurat⁹ ⁊. ut⁹ reas conſura p̄ maneat  
 i potestate ſe dñi ſui. Si ū h̄ q̄ libi ſ̄ aū legitimol annos. aut  
 p̄ h̄ m̄ ſic ſup̄ t̄tato: conſurati ſ̄. ⁊ ad ḡdus eccleſtaſticos p̄ue  
 nerunt. In h̄ uide ḡdib; p̄ ſeuerare cogant̄. Si ū ſeru q̄ ſup̄  
 t̄tato m̄ conſurat⁹. ⁊ ad ḡdus eccleſtaſticos p̄uenit. dño ſuo  
 p̄legē em̄ det. ⁊ ei reddat. i ſuo ḡdu p̄ maneat. h̄ d̄e reuelā  
 dis puellis obſeruandū. <sup>ſi ueliam cel. dominiorib; era  
 tib; c̄p. vi.</sup> in q̄ lib; minore etate. t̄ reli  
 gionis cōſura. t̄ r̄gionis debita uestē. i utq; ſeru filius.  
 aut un̄. aut abo parentes d̄dunt. aut ēte nolentib; t̄  
 uelentib; eē ſuſceptā. H̄o mor uisā i filius abdicauit.  
 t̄ t̄ corā ſe. corā eccleſā. palāq; i aduētū eorū filios talia  
 habē p̄miserunt. ad ſeculare habitū reuēti ipſi filius q̄  
 q; penit̄ a lucebit. h̄ uicti qd conſurā. aut religioſā uestē  
 aliqñ habuerunt. mor ad religionis cultū. habitūq; re  
 uocent̄. ⁊ ſub ſtrenua diſtinctione h̄ remōi obſeruantie  
 iſeruire cogant̄. Parentib; filios ſuos cōdixere religioi  
 n̄ ampliq; uſq; ad decimū etatis annū licentia pot̄t eē. Post  
 aū cū uoluntate parentū. an ſue deuotioiſ ſit ſolitariū uocū.  
 erit filius licetā religionis aſſumē cultū. Quiſq; ſcū t̄ obliga  
 tione conſurect̄ ſc̄laris uſus aſſūptione deſectus fuit.  
 at̄t̄ ḡiſſe t̄ iſt̄ ḡtione. ex̄municatioiſ cenſurā accipiat.  
 ⁊ religioi ſep̄ im̄beat. <sup>ſc̄laris ab uenſis. c̄p. x.</sup> **V**irginel q; an̄ xii. annos i ſc̄laris m̄d̄

Fig. 6

se minime coluisse idola. si  
 iacta habuissent. Humilians  
 hominum ab iucio arguit.  
 et iudeos a lege ostendens  
 iuris; modis ostendit iusticiā  
 numquā ex opib; . s; ex sola  
 cessare. Circa finem moralis  
 tamen illi tractationi qua  
 dicitur grām. sepe intēret.  
 p̄ts quatuordecim eptas scri  
 o ecclias. quatuor ad p̄sonas.  
 difficilior. in qua & apt̄s uide  
 ita ē. non qđ ab apto p̄ma  
 uat̄s romanoy qui tunc  
 bant.

one p̄participib; unctus. Apts. i. missus. Ecce digni  
 tas ad quā p̄mot̄ ē humilitate paulus. et seruus.  
 In quo & grām commendans. recte dicere pot̄. grā  
 di sum id qđ sum. p̄feram n̄ sibi met sumens ho  
 nozem. s; adō uocatus. ut ab hominib; uocat̄ apt̄s  
 priuilegio nominis. segregat̄ ab uō synagoge. et  
 a doctrina phariseorum. quāuis phariseus locū  
 doctois hñs int̄ iudeos. In quo commendat grām  
 remouens a lege que n̄ potest iustificare. ut se  
 gregatus ab aliis apt̄s. dicente spū scō. Segregate  
 in barnabā & saulum. in op̄ in qđ assumpsi eos.  
 ut sc̄t p̄dicent nomen meū in gentib;. Vñ & hic  
 ait. in euanglium p̄dicandum. Cūgtium ē bona  
 annuntiatio de fide & morib; ad salutē. hoc est  
 negocium suum qđ commendat auctore. tempore.

Fig. 7

deti ē. Pr̄m̄ ē ois hō. Nam ē nullo male agend̄ ē. Ip  
 si duo existentes. Labia. i. garruli dolosa. ut decipiat  
 Nā locuta s̄icōr. i. multiplici corde. Cor duplex dicit̄  
 qñ aliud cogitat hō. et aliud recedit. Disp̄dat. Q̄ si. sp̄i  
 muna p̄uitate conueniunt. s; dñs ē c̄c̄ disp̄dat. n̄ bi  
 co hoies. s; labia dolosa. i. dolos; vniuēsa. ne qđ p̄uocet  
 se exceptū. et linḡ. mag; i. sup̄bā. hypōc̄tar. et phylolo  
 phoy. et suppon̄ q̄t̄ magniloq̄. qđ dicit̄ h. et magnifi  
 cābim̄. li. n. et dicem̄. Labia. n. a. n. f. hoc uē faciūt q̄ loq̄  
 citate tēgentes. adō se extollūt n̄ ponāt sp̄oestate  
 sua qđ se adō accepisse n̄ putāt. am̄. Q̄. n̄. dñs ē.  
 id; nulli v̄ḡle. subicim̄. s; p̄ miseria. part̄ atē. Q̄ si.  
 dñs ē. q̄ s̄nt̄ dñs. s; c̄c̄. dñs p̄r̄ dic̄ h. p̄ miser. iopū.  
 i. p̄ passionē et mortē tollēdā. p̄ p̄r̄ mis. i. paup̄ta  
 tem sp̄ualit̄ bonoy q̄ n̄c̄sē q̄ n̄ h̄nt̄ doctōrē. et  
 p̄ genu. p. qđ ē de mat. p̄ q̄ mēt̄ auxiliū. erugā

Conclō; qđ h̄r̄ continet qđ dicit̄;  
 s; ip̄s; decernit̄ uanitate. q  
 tate tēpalit̄ q̄ dñr̄. dicit̄;  
 tanq̄ rota uolunt̄. n̄ ad h̄  
 re n̄ s̄nt̄ qui ea sequunt̄ de  
 ventator impioy rex sapie  
 Sedm̄ atē. Q̄ si. n̄a impy; s; fi  
 n̄ imp̄ozalib; s; sic stellat̄ cel  
 habitahe. et hoc. f. a. s̄. t. c̄c̄  
 facti eos. ut n̄ s̄nt̄ s̄nt̄. s;  
 atum; s̄. n̄.

**V**isus qđ. Uel̄ in finē p̄  
 mo ostēdit̄ q̄nto caritat̄ au  
 onē. et desiderat̄ p̄ q̄ finem  
 b̄t̄ q̄nto et desiderio sc̄i q̄ h̄  
 et aduentū iq̄ certis de salm

Fig. 8

the characteristic letter forms of the less formal scholarly hands appear as variants, and in some cases have been modified: the headstroke of the letter *s* appears as a horizontal stroke rather than as a flattened upward curve<sup>31</sup>.

In Troyes 2266 this new 'intermediate-sized' script has been used for a continuous commentary; later it was used for writing the gloss in glossed books. The ruling of copies of the Psalter and of the Pauline Epistles accompanied by the commentaries of Peter Lombard was based on the size of the new glossing hand rather than that of the text: the gloss was written on each ruled line whereas the text was written on alternate ruled lines<sup>32</sup>. When this had happened the process of stabilizing the size of the new script was complete. This newly developed category of script was not reserved for glosses but was also used for copies of other texts such as that of the *Sentences* (Oxford, St. John's College, MS 49) owned by Hilary, bishop of Chichester, who died in 1169<sup>33</sup>.

Prince Henry's gift to Clairvaux indicates that Gilbert de la Porré and Ivo of Chartres seem to have been «on the twelfth-century book list», and therefore we should look for early copies of these authors in England to see if we can find any parallels to these manuscripts, which may be datable. These include:

Oxford, Balliol College, MS 36 (Gilbert on the Psalter *sine textu*) which was copied after 1117 and before 1166 since it was given to Lincoln Cathedral by Robert de Chesney who died in 1166 (fig. 8)<sup>34</sup>;

Hereford, Cathedral Library, MS O. 2 IV (Gilbert on the Pauline Epistles *sine textu*) which belonged to a «Magister Aluredus» (before 1160)<sup>35</sup>.

overall impression is that the calligraphic qualities of the larger hands have been brought into sharper focus by the reduction in size.

<sup>31</sup> For example, the number of round-backed *d* forms (as in col. b, line 14), the tironian *et* signs and the frequent use of 'capital' *s* at the ends of words. For the other two *s* forms see col. a, line 9 «sepe inteseret», where that in «sepe» has a flatter headstroke.

<sup>32</sup> On these developments in layout see de Hamel, *Glossed Books*, pp. 14-27.

<sup>33</sup> Watson, *Dated MSS Oxford*, no. 870 and pl. 65; see also *An Exhibition of Manuscripts to Commemorate the 400th Anniversary of Archbishop Laud*, Bodleian Library, Oxford 1973, no. 4.

<sup>34</sup> Watson, *Dated MSS Oxford*, no. 737; de Hamel, *Glossed Books*, esp., pp. 18, 32; R. A. B. Mynors, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College, Oxford*, Oxford 1965, p. 26; I am not convinced that the manuscript was copied in France. On Chesney, see below, note 47.

<sup>35</sup> On Magister Aluredus, see below, note 52.

Both manuscripts are close parallels to the first Prince Henry book: the gloss has been written as a continuous commentary with *lemmata* from the text, and the method of indicating citations is the same. In Balliol College 36 a series of unusual signs in the margins indicates the different series of psalms according to the classification of Cassiodorus, and these signs are found in other copies of Gilbert on the Psalter<sup>36</sup>. The handwriting of Balliol College 36 (fig. 8) represents a further stage than that of Troyes 2266 in the history of the development of the new category of script. The informal quality of academic handwriting is much more obvious, and the characteristic letter forms — headless **a**, round-backed **d**, and the **s** where the headstroke has been formed with an upward curve — appear much more frequently; the ampersand is rarer<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore the letters **f** and **s** occasionally exhibit the short descenders which are more common in document hands and annotating hands in books<sup>38</sup>. However, in spite of this informality, the details of calligraphy which earlier scribes had drawn from the larger, more formal book hands, have become more obtrusive. This is most noticeable in the finishing of ascenders with 'fork' and serif, and in the feet on minims and on letters<sup>39</sup>.

The handwriting of Digby 23 seems to belong to some stage in this development towards the new category of script. Digby 23 was copied by a scribe who was much clumsier than those of the manuscripts we have just been considering, and this fact is capable of two explanations. The first is that the scribe could not handle the script, and hence that his clumsiness renders his work idiosyncratic. Such scribes can exist at any period, including the twelfth century<sup>40</sup>. The second explanation is that the

<sup>36</sup> For example, in Paris, Bibl. nat., MS lat. 14418 copied before 1160 (from St Victor, Paris); on such indications see further R. H. & M. A. Rouse, «*Statim invenire: Schools, Preachers and New Attitudes to the Page*», in *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, ed. by R. Benson & G. Constable, Cambridge (Mass.) 1982, pp. 201-25.

<sup>37</sup> Headless **a** is visible in col. a, line 1 «male», col. b, line 7 «ita», and the **s** form in col. a, line 11 «Quis». By contrast with the scribe of the specimen in fig. 7, the scribe here has used abbreviations more frequently, and there is a greater variety of letter forms.

<sup>38</sup> For example, the **s** in col. a, line 14 «propter miseria», col. b, line 10 «eos».

<sup>39</sup> For example, the ascenders of **l** and **b** (col. a, line 10 «extollunt», line 15 «bonorum»), the foot on **p** (col. a, line 2 «decipiant», line 5 «prauitate»), and on **s** (col. b, line 16 «certis»).

<sup>40</sup> An example of comparable clumsiness in the handwriting of a manuscript

scribe's handwriting was clumsy and inconsistent because he was grappling with a new and comparatively unfamiliar quality of style — an element of calligraphy — in the handwriting: his work appears immature because it reflects the kind of confusion associated with the early stages of that development in the academic hands, which I have just described. If his work is idiosyncratic, then no other parallels will exist, but if his handwriting reflects confusion appropriate to a stage in the development of a new style, then it is likely to belong to a period which precedes that illustrated by the two datable examples discussed above.

The use of drypoint ruling in Digby 23 reinforces the second explanation. Balliol College 36 (before 1166) is ruled both in pencil and in drypoint. According to Dr Ker drypoint ruling was used in the 1170s, but he regards its use at that time as obsolescent — even archaic<sup>41</sup>. We should not abandon too readily the possibility of an idiosyncratic scribe, but I think it is possible to combine the two explanations when considering the kind of person who was most likely to have copied this manuscript.

I have suggested that the palaeographical parallels to Digby 23 belong to the milieu of the schools. The Oxford text of *La Chanson de Roland* is a version which circulated in England and Normandy. The Normans took considerable interest in the schools. In the eleventh century Odo of Bayeux supported clerks at the schools of Liège, two of whom became dignitaries in the English church: Thomas, subsequently archbishop of York, and Samson, subsequently bishop of Worcester<sup>42</sup>. In the first decade of the twelfth century French *magistri* taught in England: Albinus of Angers at Lincoln, Theobald of Étampes at Oxford, and Geoffrey of Le Mans et Dunstable<sup>43</sup>. Scholastic activity was much

containing a French text is Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS 381, fol. 2. This is a fragment from a late-twelfth-century manuscript containing the French version of the Vision of St Paul by Adam de Ros (J. Vising, *Anglo-Norman Language and Literature*, London 1923, no. 17, p. 43).

<sup>41</sup> Ker, *English MSS after the Conquest*, pp. 42-3.

<sup>42</sup> On the Norman interest in the schools see D.C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, London 1964, p. 130: on Samson see V.H. Galbraith, «Notes on the Career of Samson, bishop of Worcester (1096-1112)», *English Historical Review* 82 (1967): 86.

<sup>43</sup> R.W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism*, Oxford 1970, pp. 163-4; idem., *St Anselm and his Biographer*, Cambridge 1966, pp. 241 et seq.; id., «Master Vacarius and the Beginning of an English Academic Tradition», *Medieval Learning and*



more advanced on the continent, and many Anglo-Normans must have studied abroad. In 1113 the canons of Lâon found it profitable to seek subscriptions for the cathedral restoration fund among the *alumni* of Lâon in England<sup>44</sup>. In 1136 John of Salisbury left England for the schools of France<sup>45</sup>. The nature of the evidence about the schools in England in the first half and middle of the twelfth century suggests that they were not sufficiently developed as institutions to produce their own identifiable styles of manuscripts. Nevertheless, the evidence pointing to French dominance in these schools suggests that manuscripts coming out of this milieu are likely to reflect palaeographical developments which had taken place in France.

Literary historians have found incontestable allusions to the story of this poem in works by Hugh of Caen and Raoul le Tourtier (both 1109), Raoul of Caen (1112-18), William of Malmesbury (1125) and Ordericus Vitalis (1135)<sup>46</sup>. Earlier allusions are possible but not uncontested, later allusions abound. Thus in the first half of the twelfth century the story of Roland was already well known in educated Anglo-Norman circles. There is nothing incongruous in the suggestion that the Oxford manuscript of *La Chanson de Roland*, a text which lays great emphasis on *France dulce la bele*, should belong to the milieu of the French dominated schools in England during the first half of the twelfth century.

However, although the scribe may have received his training in the schools, there is no need to assume that he still belonged to a school when he copied the manuscript. In the mid twelfth century there were a number of *magistri* in England. For example, those who appeared in Oxford for a time included Robert Pullen, Robert de Chesney (who owned Balliol College 36, and who was a canon of St George's in the Castle at the same time as Geoffrey of Monmouth) and Robert of Cricklade<sup>47</sup>. The name

*Literature. Essays Presented to R. W. Hunt*, ed. by J. J. G. Alexander & M. T. Gibson, Oxford 1976, pp. 257-86, esp. 266-73.

<sup>44</sup> Southern, *St Anselm and his Biographer*, p. 84, n.

<sup>45</sup> R. L. Poole, *Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought and Learning*, London 1920, pp. 98-115; Southern, *Medieval Humanism*, pp. 62-3, 158-80.

<sup>46</sup> See the references collected by P. Le Gentil, *La Chanson de Roland*, Paris 1967, pp. 24, 38-9; also *The Ecclesiastical History of Ordericus Vitalis*, ed. by M. Chibnall, iv, Oxford 1973, xxiv and 36.

<sup>47</sup> On the careers of Robert Pullen, Robert de Chesney, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Robert of Cricklade, and their activities in Oxford see A. B. Emden,

«Magister Aluredus» appears in a book which offers one of the closest palaeographical parallels so far found to Digby 23. This is Oxford, Jesus College, MS 26 (fig. 6), a copy of the *Panormia* by Ivo of Chartres (the author of the second Prince Henry book) with documents added in the main hand, which would date the manuscript to between 1119 and 1124<sup>48</sup>. The size of the page is almost identical with that of Digby 23, and such difference as there is may well be explained by the fact that Jesus College 26 is in its original binding. The scribe used the same kind of handwriting as the Digby scribe, and their treatment of certain details is remarkably similar<sup>49</sup>. The scribe of Jesus College 26 experienced similar difficulties with the new calligraphic features. Like the Digby scribe he is happier when writing smaller and more compressed (lines 17-22), but unlike the Digby scribe he makes no attempt to achieve a stable intermediate size. On fol. 170<sup>v</sup> names of relationship in French and English have been added to the tables of consanguinity, so that we can compare a fragment of French to reduce the problem of aspect; unfortunately they cannot be reproduced clearly enough for illustration. In so far as it is possible to tell from such small specimens the language of the English is 'southwest-midlandish', and that of the French is not incompatible with that of the Roland text<sup>50</sup>. «Magister Aluredus» also owned two other books: Hereford Cathedral Library, MS O. 2 IX (the copy of Gilbert de la Porré on the Pauline Epistles cited above), and Oxford, All Souls College, MS 82, a copy of Virgil's works<sup>51</sup>. His three books reflect interests current in the schools: Canon Law, Theology and Literature. The most plausible identification of the owner is with

*A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, Oxford 1957-9, *sub nominibus*; R. W. Southern, «From Schools to University», in *The History of the University of Oxford*, ed. by T. H. Aston, I, *The Early Oxford Schools*, ed. by J. I. Catto, Oxford 1984, pp. 1-36, esp. pp. 6-8 and 27.

<sup>48</sup> Watson, *Dated MSS Oxford*, no. 797. The handwriting of the main scribe is not unlike that in two other datable manuscripts Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MSS Auct. F.3.14 (before 1125: Watson, *Dated MSS Oxford*, no. 57) and Bodley 561 (after 1124-37: *ibid.*, no. 99).

<sup>49</sup> For example, the form of the letter e (as in fig. 6 line 19 «erit» and «religionis»), and in the treatment of minims.

<sup>50</sup> I am indebted to Prof. N. Davis and Mr C. A. Robson for these opinions. On the vernacular forms of these names see N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon*, Oxford 1957, no. 355.

<sup>51</sup> On the books see N. R. Ker, «Sir John Prise», *The Library*, 5 series, 10 (1955): 1-24, esp. 17.

the master Alured who witnessed certain charters of Henry II between 1155 and 1158. In 1158 one Alured, a King's chaplain, became bishop of Worcester; he died in 1160<sup>52</sup>.

It is just such a person who could have produced Digby 23: someone trained in the schools, who found service as chaplain or clerk in a bishop's *familia*<sup>53</sup> or a baronial household; a man who had left the schools before the new developments in script had been fully accomplished, and who, once away from the environment of the schools, developed a personal style of handwriting in isolation, the basis of which reflects an early stage in the tradition.

I suggest that the very problems which arise when trying to date the hand of Digby 23 themselves provide a clue to its date. The shortage of genuine parallels suggests that the manuscript belongs to that period when genuine dated and datable parallels are hard to find — the first half of the twelfth century. Moreover, we lack evidence to assess the impact of personal idiosyncrasy on handwriting at this period. Again by contrast with the second half of the twelfth century and later, there are very few instances of surviving personal holographs: of the distinctive hands of known individuals only those of William of Malmesbury, John of Worcester, Eadmer and Ordericus Vitalis come to mind<sup>54</sup>. Nevertheless, the handwriting of the Oxford text of *La Chanson de Roland* does resemble that in two datable parallels: it shares a number of features with the handwriting of Jesus College 26 (between 1119 and 1124), but its size and proportions more frequently resemble those of the handwriting in Troyes 2266 (before 1149). The handwriting of Digby 23 be-

<sup>52</sup> On Magister Aluredus see L. V. Delisle, *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie*, Paris 1909, Introduction, p. 356; *The Cartulary of Cirencester Abbey*, ed. C. D. Ross, I (1964), p. 54, no. 67; and on the bishop see R. W. Eyton, *Court, Household and Itinerary of King Henry II*, London 1878, p. 35; *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, ed. by W. J. Millor, H. E. Butler, & C. N. L. Brooke, I, London 1955, letters 98-9 and pp. 173, 174 and 266 n.

<sup>53</sup> For discussion of such a *familia* see A. Morey & C. N. L. Brooke, *Gilbert Foliot and his Letters*, Cambridge 1965, pp. 211 et seq.

<sup>54</sup> On the handwriting of William of Malmesbury see Ker, *English Historical Review* 59 (1944): 371-6; Thomson, in *Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, pp. 117-42; id., *Scriptorium* 35 (1981): 48-54. On John of Worcester see now Watson, *Dated MSS Oxford*, no. 775 and plates, and the references cited there. On Eadmer see Southern, *St Anselm and his Biographer*, pp. 367-74. On Ordericus Vitalis see *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Chibnall, II, Oxford 1969, frontispiece, and p. xxxix and the references cited there.

longs to the same pattern of development, but at a stage which appears to fall somewhere between those represented by the other two manuscripts. The limits established by the dates furnished by these parallels, 1119-1149, support the presumed date for Digby 23 in the second quarter of the twelfth century, first suggested by the editors of the *New Palaeographical Society* over seventy years ago.

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