

The earliest manuscript of Bede's metrical *Vita S. Cudberti*

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In the years immediately preceding the Second World War, the Latin manuscripts of the National Széchényi Museum in Budapest were in the process of being catalogued by Dr Emma Bartoniek.¹ The collection includes a large number of fragments taken from bindings of printed books, and among these fragments is a single bifolium, written in Anglo-Saxon minuscule script of apparent eighth-century date, containing part of Bede's metrical *Vita S. Cudberti* (lines 95–128 and 340–75). Dr Bartoniek drew the fragment to the attention of Paul Lehmann, Professor of Medieval Latin in Munich, who twice visited Budapest to see it (July 1937, March 1938) and who in 1938 published a brief description and a collation of its text (it was Lehmann who first identified the text as a fragment of Bede's poem).² Bede's poem had only been published a few years previously, in a reliable scholarly edition with full *apparatus criticus*, by Werner Jaager, a student of Karl Strecker in Berlin.³ But Jaager was unaware of the existence of the Budapest fragment, which was earlier in date than any of the eighteen manuscripts on which his edition was based, and hence potentially of great importance for understanding the transmission of the text.⁴ Some twenty years after Lehmann's publication, Hans Hornung recognized that another bifolium, then temporarily in the keeping of the University Library in Tübingen, belonged to the same dismembered manuscript;⁵ this bifolium was formerly owned by Jakob Grimm and passed after his death to the Preussische Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, but was removed during the war first to Beuron and then to Tübingen; it has now been returned to the Staatsbibliothek of the Stiftung preussischer Kulturbesitz in

¹ E. Bartoniek, *Codices Manuscripti Latini I. Codices Latini Medii Aevi*, *Catalogus Bibliothecae Musei Nationalis Hungarici* 12 (Budapest, 1940). The Bede fragment is listed on p. 397 (no. 442).

² 'Mitteilungen aus Handschriften, V', *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, phil.-hist. Abteilung, Jahrgang 1938, Heft 4 (Munich, 1938), 4–6.

³ *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti*, ed. W. Jaager, Palaestra 198 (Leipzig, 1935).

⁴ Lehmann ('Mitteilungen', p. 4) ventured the opinion, unsupported, that the fragment was written c. 780 at York.

⁵ H. Hornung, 'Ein Fragment der metrischen St. Cuthbert Vita des Beda im Nachlass der Brüder Grimm', *Scriptorium* 14 (1960), 344–6.

Berlin.⁶ At about the same time as the fragment from the Grimm Nachlass was identified by Hornung, another bifolium of the same manuscript was identified in the University Library in Budapest and listed in vol. XI of *Codices Latini Antiquiores* (1959).⁷ More recently, Hartmut Hoffmann noted, almost in passing, that another leaf of the same manuscript was to be found in the Stadtarchiv in Munich.⁸ On closer inspection, Helmut Gneuss was able not only to confirm Hoffmann's identification of the leaf in the Stadtarchiv, but to discover there another entire bifolium from the same manuscript. The various *membra disiecta* may now be listed as follows:

Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Grimm-Nachlass 132, no. 1 + Budapest, National Széchényi Museum, Clma. 442 + Budapest, University Library, Fragmentum latinum 1 + Munich, Stadtarchiv, Historischer Verein Oberbayern, Hs. 733/16.

Because these *membra disiecta* are from what (on palaeographical grounds) is the earliest surviving manuscript of Bede's metrical *Vita S. Cudberti*, and because they preserve nearly thirty per cent of the poem, they deserve scholarly attention.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Size. First, the size of the leaves (it will be understood that, because the individual leaves were cropped in various ways to fit the bindings of the printed books in which they were to be re-used, their present sizes can only give an approximate notion of their original dimensions): 21.5 × 14.5 cm. (Berlin), 17.9 × 11.5 cm. (Budapest NSM, fol. 1), 18 × 15 cm. (Budapest NSM, fol. 2), 25.6 × 17.3 cm. (Budapest UB), 19.5 × 14.8 cm. (Munich bifolium) and 18 × 13.5 cm. (Munich leaf). By contrast, the written space on the various fragments, as might be expected, is virtually the same: 16.5 × 10 cm. (Berlin), 16.5

⁶ The Berlin fragment is described and illustrated in *Zimelien. Abendländische Handschriften des Mittelalters aus den Sammlungen der Stiftung preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin: Ausstellung* (Wiesbaden, 1975), pp. 16 and 25 (no. 13). See also R. Breslau, *Der Nachlass der Brüder Grimm I* (Wiesbaden, 1997), 86. 'Nachlass Grimm 132' is a collection of fourteen fragments, of which the Bede fragment is the first; hence the shelfmark 'Grimm-Nachlass 132, 1'.

⁷ E. A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, 11 vols. and Supplement (Oxford, 1934–71; 2nd ed. of vol. II, 1972)[hereafter abbreviated as *CLA*] XI, no. 1589 (where, however, the shelfmark of the fragment in the National Széchényi Museum in Budapest is erroneously given as '441'; see above, n. 1). See now L. Mezey, *Fragmenta Codicum in Bibliothecis Hungariae I.1. Fragmenta Latina Codicum in Bibliotheca Universitatis Budapestinensis* (Wiesbaden, 1983), p. 29 with pl. I. The shelfmark of the fragment in the University Library is: Fragmentum latinum 1.

⁸ H. Hoffmann, 'Bernhard Bischoff und die Paläographie des 9. Jahrhunderts', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 55 (1999), 549–90, at 557. As Hoffmann notes, it is curious that Bernhard Bischoff himself had never seen the Bede fragment – preserved right under his nose, as it were, in the Munich Stadtarchiv.

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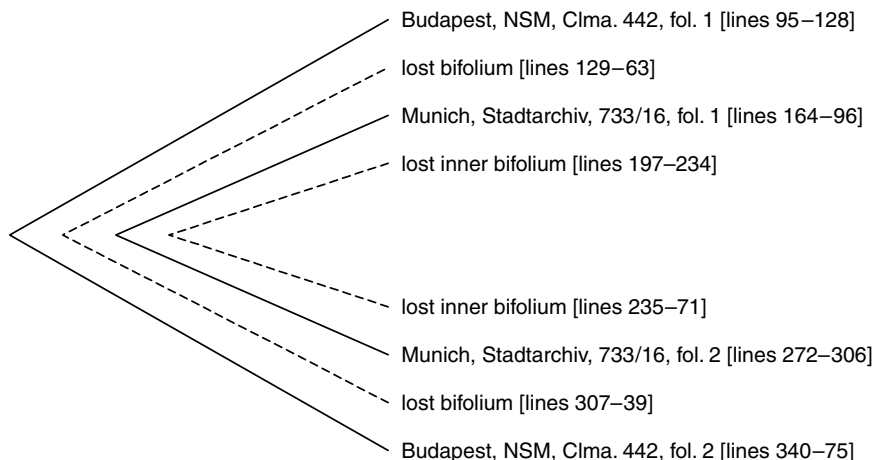


Fig. 1. The second quire of F (reconstructed)

× 10.5 cm. (Budapest), 16.5 × 10.5 cm. (Munich). All surviving leaves were apparently ruled for nineteen lines.

Arrangement of leaves. Of the surviving fragments, that in Budapest, NSM, Clma. 442 is evidently the outer bifolium of a quire; since the text which it carries on 1r begins at line 95 of the poem, there was presumably a previous quire containing the prefatory prose *Epistola ad Iohannem* plus the first ninety-four lines of the poem.⁹ For two of the remaining quires (nos. II and IV), the survival of the outer bifolia allows the calculation that these were quires of eight, an arrangement which is normal in manuscripts of this period. Of the (hypothetical) second quire, two bifolia survive: Budapest, NSM, Clma. 442, which was evidently the outer bifolium of the quire, and Munich, Stadtarchiv, 733/16, fols. 1–2. The arrangement of the second quire, together with the calculated disposition of text, is shown in fig. 1. Of the third quire, nothing remains but the single sheet in Munich, Stadtarchiv, 733/16, fol. 3; but, given the preservation of the last leaf of quire II and the first leaf of quire IV, the amount of text in question could have been accommodated in a quire of ten, as illustrated in fig. 2. Finally, the fourth quire was framed by the bifolium which survives in Budapest, UL, Fragm. lat. 1, and had as its inner bifolium that which survives in Berlin as Grimm-Nachlass 132, 1; the disposition of text in quire IV can be

⁹ The hypothetical first quire *could* have been a quire of four, with the *Epistola* occupying the first folio, lines 1–32 the second, lines 33–64 the third, and lines 65–94 the fourth (including rubrics). Given such an arrangement, and given that the last folio of the manuscript (Budapest, UL, fol. 2) is blank following the conclusion of the poem, it could be argued that the original manuscript consisted solely of four quires and contained nothing but Bede's *Vita metrica S. Cudbercti*.



Fig. 2. The third quire of F (reconstructed)

calculated as that shown in fig. 3. The quire arrangement of the manuscript can (hypothetically) be given as follows: I⁴, II⁸, III¹⁰, IV⁸.

Script. As we have stated, the script of the rubrication is Insular half uncial, that of the main text of the poem is Anglo-Saxon set minuscule (see pl. I). That is to say, it exhibits pen-lifts between minim strokes, and a consistent avoidance of the ligatures characteristic of Anglo-Saxon cursive minuscule (the only exception is the occasional use of the **et** ligature; note also the **eg** ligature on pl. I, line 5). The letters on the whole are carefully spaced, and there is no attempt at horizontal compression. The characteristic letter-forms are: the open (**u**-shaped) form of **a**, occasionally varied by a more angular form distinguished by a slanting diagonal line which connects the curved bottom member of the letter with the top of the upright member (see pl. I, 7th line up: *aquilam*); round-backed (uncial) **d**; **e** which tends to be (and often is) theta-shaped (see pl. I, 5th line up: *uenere*); **g** which is long and angular, topped by a short horizontal stroke and having the appearance of a flat-topped figure **3**; occasional use of capital **N** in the context of minuscule script; a downward tick on the right-hand end of the lower stroke of **t**; and **y** with a long, curved descender. The ascenders of **b** and **l** show angular clubbing, and the letters **r** and **s** have long descenders. The aspect of the script suggests to us a date in the second half of the eighth century, perhaps nearer its end than its beginning.

The crucial question regarding Anglo-Saxon script of this sort is: was it written by an Anglo-Saxon in England, or at an Anglo-Saxon centre on the Continent, either by an Anglo-Saxon scribe who had emigrated (say, as part of the Bonifatian mission) or by a scribe trained by Anglo-Saxons? The question is not easy to answer in the present state of our knowledge of continental

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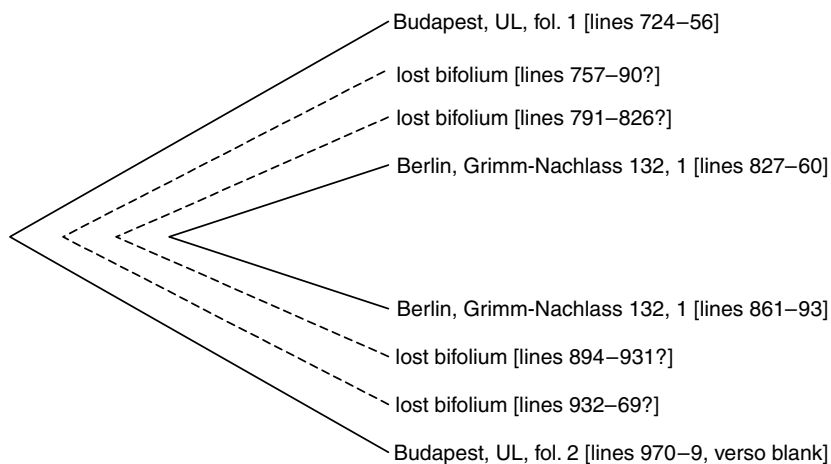


Fig. 3. The fourth quire of F (reconstructed)

forms of Anglo-Saxon script. Bernhard Bischoff, whose knowledge of these matters was unrivalled, himself offered (slightly) conflicting opinions. When asked in 1960 about the script of the Grimm Nachlass fragment by Hans Hornung, Bischoff adduced as comparable the script of a manuscript in Wolfenbüttel (Helmstadt. 496a),¹⁰ which according to the entry in *CLA* (perhaps drafted by Bischoff himself) was possibly written at Fulda, *c.* 800.¹¹ Some thirty years later, however, in describing the Bede fragment in his catalogue of ninth century manuscripts, Bischoff had revised his opinion slightly, and now thought that it was written in ‘southern England or in the area of the Anglo-Saxon mission in Germany, *s.* viii/ix’.¹²

The (minor) vacillation in Bischoff’s opinion over thirty years is entirely understandable. Yet during the thirty years in question there has been considerable progress in understanding the script of Anglo-Saxon centres in Germany, especially Fulda.¹³ In light of this progress, one might say that certain features

¹⁰ As quoted in Hornung, ‘Ein Fragment’, p. 344, n. 2. ¹¹ *CLA* IX, no. 1381.

¹² B. Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts (mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen)* I. *Aachen–Lambach* (Wiesbaden, 1998), p. 73 (no. 347). The assumption of a Southumbrian origin derives from knowledge that the majority of those Anglo-Saxons who went to Germany to assist Boniface were from Southumbria, not from any distinctive feature of the script.

¹³ See now H. Spilling, ‘Angelsächsische Schrift in Fulda’, *Von der Klosterbibliothek zur Landesbibliothek*, ed. A. Brall (Stuttgart, 1978), pp. 47–98, esp. 53–8, and H. Köllner, *Die illuminierten Handschriften der Hessischen Landesbibliothek Fulda* I (Stuttgart, 1976). See also an important study of a fragmentary manuscript in Anglo-Saxon set minuscule which poses problems very similar to those posed by the Bede fragments: J. Crick, ‘An Anglo-Saxon Fragment of Justinus’s *Epitome*’, *ASE* 16 (1987), 181–96.

of the Bede fragments point, on balance, to an origin in an Anglo-Saxon centre in Germany, in particular the upright and regular appearance of the script,¹⁴ an impression created notably by the descenders of **p**, **r** and **s**.¹⁵ Also indicative of continental origin are the theta-shaped form of **e**, the flat-topped **3**-shaped form of **g** and the ticked-form of the **t**.¹⁶ A number of manuscripts in Anglo-Saxon set minuscule from Fulda can be cited as parallels,¹⁷ and Herrad Spilling, who has done most to elucidate the development of script at Fulda, was in no doubt that the Bede fragments were written there.¹⁸ In our opinion, then, Bischoff's original instinct to compare the script of the Bede fragments with a manuscript written at Fulda *c.* 800 was probably the right one; but more work is needed on the script of Anglo-Saxon centres in Germany before such an impression can be regarded as definitive.

Decoration. As we noted earlier, the text is rubricated with chapter-headings in Insular Half-Uncial, written in red. The verse-chapters then begin with a decorated initial, the finials of which typically end in animal or human shapes, and are coloured in green, yellow, red and pink. The initials are surrounded with dots in red ink.¹⁹

Provenance. Although the various fragments originally belonged to the one manuscript, they derive, as binding leaves, from various printed books. The leaves from Budapest, NSM, Clma. 442, were taken from a book by Egolph Altheer, *Das Leben der Durchleuchtigsten Königin Magdalena, Ertzhertzogin zu Össterreich und des Königlichen Stifts zu Hall im Innthall Stifterin*, printed at Innsbruck (Ynßprugg) in 1625.²⁰ The bifolium from Budapest, UL, was taken

¹⁴ Spilling, 'Angelsächsische Schrift', p. 93: 'Als charakteristisch für Fuldas Schrift hatten sich aufrechte Haltung, Regelmässigkeit und bewusste Ordnung erwiesen.'

¹⁵ Cf. the remarks of Bernhard Bischoff in his *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. D. Ó Cróinín and D. Ganz (Cambridge, 1990), p. 94 (speaking of the last phases of the Anglo-Saxon script in Hesse and in the Main region): 'Shortly before and about 800 the script is mostly straight with long descenders.'

¹⁶ Cf. discussion by Crick, 'An Anglo-Saxon Fragment', p. 185.

¹⁷ Cf. *CLA IX*, nos. 1397 and 1409, and Supplement, nos. **146, 1732 and 1788.

¹⁸ 'Angelsächsische Schrift', p. 58: 'Jüngere Handschriften aus dem Fuldaer Skriptorium lassen jedoch keinen Zweifel daran, in welche Richtung die Schrift um die Jahrhundertwende strebte. Besteht zwischen den Fragmenten von Bedas metrischer Cuthbert-Vita, ehemals einer Handschrift von hohem Niveau, und den ersten Seiten der Wolfenbütteler Handschrift eine Familienähnlichkeit. . .'

¹⁹ On the decoration, see A. Fingernagel, *Die illuminierten lateinischen Handschriften deutscher Provenienz der Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin, 8.–12. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1991) I, 120–1.

²⁰ Magdalena (1532–90) was daughter of the Austrian emperor Ferdinand I. There is a copy of the book in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Res. Biogr. 690; it measures 14.5 × 9.3 cm, but contains no manuscript fragments in its binding.

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from a copy of *Mirabilia, historia et descriptio urbis Romae*.²¹ The leaves from the Grimm Nachlass now in Berlin derive from a copy of Macchiavelli's *Historia Florentina* printed at Strasbourg (*Argentoratum*) in 1610;²² they were subsequently acquired by Johannes Hassenpflug (1785–1834) of Hanau, from whom they were acquired in turn by Jakob Grimm. It is not known what book the leaves now in the Stadtarchiv in Munich derive from; they were given to the Historische Verein in 1867 by one Major-General Kleemann, but their whereabouts before that date are unknown. From these disparate pieces of information it would appear that the original Bede manuscript was broken up c. 1600; but where it was preserved in medieval and post-medieval times is unknown.

THE TEXT

The Latin text of Bede's metrical *Vita S. Cudbercti* purveyed by these fragments (which, for convenience, we shall henceforth refer to as F) helps to throw some light on the origin of the manuscript, if not on its medieval and post-medieval provenance, because it is possible to situate their text within the transmissional history of the poem. Briefly, the detailed *apparatus criticus* of the poem which was compiled by Werner Jaeger allows us to distinguish several separate manuscript-classes or recensions.²³ Broadly, Jaeger distinguished between two basic groups of manuscripts, which he called 'x' and 'y'; within these two groups he included various subgroups, such that 'x' includes the recensions α and β , and 'y' the recensions γ and δ (which is simply a subgroup of γ). The manuscripts belonging to Jaeger's group 'y' form a recension which apparently originated in tenth-century England – all manuscripts of this group are of English origin and of tenth- or eleventh-century date – perhaps at Canterbury (judging from

²¹ The book was printed at Rome, but its date and publisher are difficult to establish, for the reason that this information is not given in the book and that there were so many early printings of the (twelfth-century) treatise *Mirabilia Romae*, which is probably in question here. See L. Hain, *Repertorium Bibliographicum in quo libri omnes ab arte typographica inventa usque ad annum MD*, 2 vols. in 4 (Stuttgart, 1826–38) III, 414–15 (lists, as nos. 11175–84, ten copies of *Mirabilia Romae* printed before 1500); and see also W. Copinger, *Supplement to Hain's Repertorium Bibliographicum*, 2 vols. in 3 (London, 1895–1902) II, 406 (no. 4053 has the title *Mirabilia vel potius historia et descriptio urbis Romae* (Rome, 1492), which closely resembles that of the Budapest volume). However, given that the two certainly identifiable books from which Bede leaves were taken date from the early seventeenth century, it seems likely that the copy of *Mirabilia Romae* did so as well. The copy of the book from which the Bede fragment was taken now has the shelfmark Inc. 855 in the Budapest UL.

²² N. Macchiavelli, *Historiae Florentinae libri octo* (Argentorati, 1610).

²³ See *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti*, ed. Jaeger, pp. 33–44, with discussion by M. Lapidge, 'Prolegomena to an Edition of Bede's Metrical *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*?' *Filologia Mediolatina* 2 (1995), 127–63.

the origins of the principal manuscripts), and which shows (for example) updating of the original Northumbrian forms of personal names to Late West Saxon forms as well as the intrusion of various spellings which are non-Bedan (insofar as they are proscribed by Bede in his *De orthographia*); the text of the 'y'-group has also been tinkered with, and occasionally mangled. The 'x' group includes two distinct recensions. Of these, the β -recension consists of four manuscripts, all from Durham and all written later than *c.* 1100. In spite of the late date of the manuscripts of the β -recension, however, the text which they transmit is highly accurate, and there is reason to suspect that they all derive ultimately from a Northumbrian exemplar which preserved the text of Bede's poem in his native land. This leaves us with the α -recension, which consists of three manuscripts of continental origin:²⁴

M = Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 19451 (Tegernsee, s. xi^{2/4})²⁵

G = St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 265 (St Gallen, s. ix^{med})²⁶

G₁ = St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 263 (St Gallen, s. ix²)²⁷

Of the various recensions, the text preserved in F belongs (as one might expect from the date of its script) to Jaeger's 'x'-group, not to his 'y'-group. Thus in line 195, F reads *tandem sistitque famemque repellit* with 'x' against the entire 'y'-group (which here reads *tandem locat hunc mensamque reponit*); and in 857 F likewise has the form of the line found in 'x' (*inde rapit grandem modico de rupe salutem*) against that found in 'y' (*inde partem modicam telluris et ipsam*).²⁸ Of manuscripts of the 'x'-group, F is most closely affiliated with the α - (or: continental) recension rather than with the β - (or: Durham) recension, as may be seen in line 191, where F has the reading *Decembri* (MGG₁) shared with α against *Decembris* attested in all other witnesses (including β); or in 671, where F has the reading *quo* with α against *qui* in recensions β , γ and δ . These readings indicate clearly that F and its text belong in general with copies of Bede's poem produced in southern Germany and Switzerland from the ninth century onwards.

The *editio princeps* or first printed edition of Bede's metrical *Vita S. Cudbercti*

²⁴ Two further manuscripts of continental origin (H₁ and P) share many features with the three manuscripts of the α -recension; since each of these manuscripts was written on the Continent but subsequently owned in Anglo-Saxon England, they may provide evidence of the nature of the α -recension text before it was transformed into that represented by the 'y'-group: see Lapidge, 'Prolegomena', pp. 155–7.

²⁵ See C. E. Eder, *Die Schule des Klosters Tegernsee im frühen Mittelalter im Spiegel der Tegernseer Handschriften*, Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktiner-Ordens und seiner Zweige 83 (1972), 6–155, at 57 and 90.

²⁶ See A. Bruckner, *Scriptoria Medii Aevi Helvetica: Denkmäler schweizerischer Schreibkunst des Mittelalters*, 14 vols. (Geneva, 1935–78) III, 89. ²⁷ *Ibid.* II, 89.

²⁸ The following readings of F also associate its text with that of the 'x'-group: 671 *pandetur* (*pandes* $\gamma\delta$), 818 *renitet* (*retinet* γ), 831 *renitebat* (*retinebat* γ).

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was published at the beginning of the seventeenth century by Heinrich Canisius (c. 1550–1610).²⁹ Canisius's edition was based on a single manuscript of the poem, St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 263 (G₁ among Jaeger's sigla). When the poem was set in type and at page proof stage, however, a colleague of Canisius, Marcus Welser (1558–1614) of Augsburg,³⁰ a well-known humanist scholar and patron of learning, supplied Canisius with a list of collations derived from an ancient but fragmentary manuscript (*antiquissimae . . . membranae*) of the poem. Canisius immediately recognized the importance of Welser's collations, and printed them as an appendix to vol. V of his *Antiquae Lectiones*.³¹ Welser does not state where he found the fragmentary leaves; but, given Welser's links with Fulda, and the fact that the sixteenth-century catalogue of the library of Fulda recorded the existence of a copy of the metrical *Vita S. Cudbercti* there,³² Jaeger conjectured that Welser's text had come from Fulda.³³ In any event it is possible to compare the text of the present fragments (F) with those collated by Welser and printed as an appendix to Canisius's edition of the poem.³⁴ Collation suggests clearly that Welser's text belongs to Jaeger's 'x' family.³⁵ But collation in this case is far from straightforward, given that the manuscript on which Canisius based his edition – St Gallen 263 (G₁) – is an eccentric and unreliable witness (though clearly a member of the α -recension

²⁹ H. Canisius, *Antiquae Lectiones*, 6 vols. (Ingolstadt, 1601–4) V, 689–723.

³⁰ See *Deutsche biographische Enzyklopädie*, ed. W. Killy and R. Vierhaus, 12 vols. in 14 (Munich, 1995–2000) X, 427. It is interesting that Welser, among his many activities, established a printing press (called *Ad insigne pinus*) which issued some ninety volumes, mostly on Christian antiquity. He could have acquired the Bede fragments in his role as printer.

³¹ *Antiquae Lectiones* V, 1062–3: 'Tam vita S. Cudberti typis excusa erat, cum ecce a Velsero nostro antiquissimae adferuntur membranae, in quibus haec ipsa vita exarata erat. Conferre cum Editione nostra placuit; tum ut locis non sanis nonnulla medicina fiat, tum ut quaedam lacunae expleantur' (p. 1062).

³² See K. Christ, *Die Bibliothek des Klosters Fulda im 16. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1933), pp. 143, 258 and 301; cf. G. Schimpf, *Mittelalterliche Bücherverzeichnisse des Klosters Fulda* (Frankfurt, 1992), p. 153. Note, however, that there is no mention of Bede's poem in the earliest booklist from Fulda, dating from the late eighth century, ptd and discussed by Schimpf, *ibid.* pp. 5–11.

³³ *Bedas metrische Vita Sancti Cudberti*, ed. Jaeger, p. 46: 'Bei den Beziehungen Welsers zur Fuldaer Bibliothek darf man vermuten, dass es sich um eine Fuldaer Handschrift handelt.' It is not clear on what evidence Jaeger based this conjecture, and the life of Welser by Christoph Arnold which is prefixed to Welser's works (*Marci Velseri . . . Opera Historica et Philologica, Sacra et Profana* (Nürnberg, 1682)) contains no mention of his links with Fulda.

³⁴ The comparison is time-consuming, because Welser's reported readings are given (understandably) according to page and line number of Canisius's edition, rather than the line numbering which Jaeger's edition has made standard.

³⁵ This is the conclusion reached by Jaeger (*Bedas metrische Vita Sancti Cudberti*, p. 46): 'Wenn man auf Grund der noch übrigen wenigen Varianten, die mit dem Texte nur einiger Handschriften gleichlauten, die Welsersche Handschrift einer Familie zuweisen darf, so der Familie x. Folgende Lesarten finden sich ausschließlich oder überwiegend in x: 152 *olivi*, 197 *Quod tantum besternae superessent*, 304 *at altus*, etc.

of Jaager's 'x'-group).³⁶ It is thus the case that many of the (correct) readings recorded by Welser from his *antiquissimae membranae* are simply those shared by manuscripts of higher authority than G₁, such as M and G, rather than readings unique to Welser's *membranae*.³⁷ However, F on two occasions shares a unique reading with Welser's text: the spelling *itener* in line 165 and the reading *seuere* in line 738:

F: dum sata, quae proceres summi **seuere**, rigarem
cett.: dum sata, quae proceres summi **seruere**, rigarem

Here the reading *seuere* (perf. of *sero*, 'to sow' rather than of *sero*, 'to link up, to braid'), shared uniquely by F and Welser's *antiquissimae membranae*, is very likely to be correct: the polyptoton, in which *seuere* picks up the past participle *sata* of the same verb, is characteristically Bedan, whereas the form *seruere* (perf. of *sero*, 'to link up'), preserved by the remaining manuscripts and printed by Jaager, makes less sense in context. The distinctive reading *seuere*, therefore, is an indisputable link between F and Welser's *antiquissimae membranae*.

The question, however, is whether the *membra disiecta* which make up F are identical with Welser's *antiquissimae membranae*. The link suggested by the unique reading *seuere* could be supported by evidence of other kinds: F may have been written at Fulda, and Welser is thought to have links with Fulda; F was broken up to provide binding leaves by c. 1600, and Welser had access to his *antiquissimae membranae* by no later than 1604; and so on. However, several facts need to be weighed against this evidence. First, according to Welser's collation, his *antiquissimae membranae* preserved line 283 as follows: 'et super **haec** uates conuiuia solibus inquit', whereas F (here fol. 2 of Munich, Stadtarchiv 733/16) reads unambiguously 'et super **ut** uates conuiuia solibus inquit'. Such a discrepancy could simply represent a slip on Welser's part. More serious is the evidence of the quire arrangement of F, as we have reconstructed it in figs. 1–3. According to our reconstruction, the final quire of the manuscript ended with Budapest, UL, Frag. lat. 1, fol. 2, which contains the conclusion of the metrical *Vita S. Cuthberti* (lines 970–9) on its recto, with its verso blank, a fact which permitted the conjecture that the sole contents of F was Bede's poem. The manuscript collated by Welser, however, contained three other poems by Bede: 'quae [*scil.* the *antiquissimae membranae*] etiam continebant Bedae carmen de virginitate: Et

³⁶ On G₁ as belonging to the 'x' family, see Jaager, *Bedas metrische Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, p. 33, as belonging to the α -recension, *ibid.* p. 36, and on its unreliability as a witness, *ibid.* p. 35.

³⁷ Jaager (*Bedas metrische Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, p. 46) noted six readings which in his view were unique to Welser's *membranae*: 479 *aptior*, 526 *quod nil*, 560 *suetae*, XXXIII [rubric] *illi*, 774 *feribat*, and XXXVIII [rubric] *post .IX. sit*. Unfortunately, none of these six readings happens to be in a line preserved on one of the fragments of F.

The earliest manuscript of Bede's metrical Vita S. Cudbercti

paraphrasim in Psalmum 83. & 112,³⁸ evidently referring to a copy of the Hymn to St Æthelthryth (later recycled, with minor alteration, by Bede in his *Historia ecclesiastica* IV.18), and his poetic paraphrases of Ps. LXXXIII and CXII.³⁹ There is no trace of these poems among the *membra disiecta* of F.⁴⁰ More telling, however, is the fact that the text of the metrical *Vita S. Cudbercti* as preserved in Welser's *antiquissimae membranae* was acephalous, beginning only at what Canisius calls 'the sixth chapter', which in the edition of Jaeger corresponds to the rubric preceding line 164.⁴¹ One might assume that a discarded manuscript to be used for binding purposes would be broken up first into its constituent quires, and hence that in Welser's *antiquissimae membranae* the rubric of ch. VI began a new quire, the previous quire(s) having already been lost. That is to say, if Welser's *antiquissimae membranae* are identical with our F, one must assume that they began with what is now fol. 1 of Munich, Stadtarchiv 733/16 (which does indeed begin with line 164),⁴² which, in our reconstruction of quire II (see fig. 1) was the third, not the first, of four bifolia in the quire. Given that the first and last leaves of the quire are the conjoint bifolium which is now Budapest, NSM, Clma. 442, it is difficult to see how the first folio of the quire in Welser's *membranae* could have been missing when the last folio, with which it is conjoined, was evidently present, inasmuch as Welser recorded variant readings from it.

On balance, then, it would appear that although the text of Welser's fragments was identical, or very nearly so, to that of F, the physical arrangement of the leaves of F precludes the possibility that they are Welser's *antiquissimae membranae*. Nevertheless, their textual affiliations with the *a*-recension of Bede's

³⁸ Canisius, *Antiquae Lectiones* V, 1062. Note that, in two manuscripts of the *a*-recension, M (Munich Clm. 19451) and G (St Gallen 265), Bede's metrical *Vita S. Cudbercti* is indeed followed by the hymn to St Æthelthryth and then by the two metrical psalms (Ps. XLI and CXXII). Neither of these manuscripts, insofar as they are intact and preserve complete copies of the *Vita S. Cudbercti*, can be identical with Welser's *antiquissimae membranae*, in which the text of the poem was acephalous; rather, they show that in an early phase of the continental transmission of the metrical *Vita S. Cudbercti*, it was accompanied by three shorter poems by Bede.

³⁹ Ed. J. Fraipont, CCSL 122, 449–50 (the text of the two metrical psalms, not of the hymn to St Æthelthryth).

⁴⁰ It could of course be argued that the three poems began a new quire (quire V in our reconstruction), in which case their absence from the leaves of F (that is, those which have so far been identified) would be insignificant.

⁴¹ Canisius, *Antiquae Lectiones* V, 1062: 'sunt autem membranae a Velsero missae acephalae quarum initium est sextum caput. Priora desiderantur'.

⁴² Fol. 1 of Munich, Stadtarchiv 733/16 begins precisely with line 164, not with the prose rubric; but the leaf has been severely cropped at the top, and judging from page layout elsewhere in the manuscript (with ruling for nineteen lines), at least three lines – which could have included the prose rubric – have been lost by cropping.

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metrical *Vita S. Cudberti* indicate fairly clearly that they were written in an Anglo-Saxon centre on the Continent rather than in England. They are thus an important new witness to the earliest phase of the continental transmission of Bede's poem.⁴³

⁴³ We are very grateful to Birgit Ebersperger for undertaking some literary detective work on our behalf, and to Mechthild Gretsche, for helping to eliminate a number of errors.



I Munich, Stadtarchiv, Historischer Verein Oberbayern, Hs. 733/16, 2v; rubric and lines 291–306