Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript
Kevin S. Kiernan With a new foreword by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe
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The History and Construction of the Composite Codex

The *Beowulf* MS is today preserved at the British Museum in a thick, quarto-sized volume with an aging, brown calf binding. Tourists to the museum see the volume in its display case, and relatively few scholars have hindered the tourists by asking to study the codex at first hand. The curious neglect of the *Beowulf* MS, and of the composite codex that contains it, is directly attributable to the ancient prejudice of Old English scholars that *Beowulf* was originally composed in the 7th or 8th century. As we shall see, a thorough study of the composite codex that includes *Beowulf* is not irrelevant to a thorough study of the poem itself. In any case, a full description of the composite codex, known as Cotton Vitellius A. XV., is long overdue. The only other description of it is Max Förster's *Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* which very erroneously represents, among other things, matters of dating, foliation, and collation.[1] Kemp Malone has published a FS of the second half of Cotton Vitellius A. XV., but under the confusing new name of the Nowell Codex.[2] The truth is that many scholars have little idea what Cotton Vitellius A. XV. is, and

1. The main shortcomings of Förster's report on the codex are discussed in the following pages. Förster's investigation of the MS was finished in 1913 (*Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* p. 66), but the outbreak of World War I delayed its publication until 1919. In fairness, many of Förster's errors may be due to the hiatus, and to his inability to recheck the MS during the war years. There are, of course, brief catalogue descriptions of Cotton Vitellius A. XV., and fuller descriptions of parts of the codex, the most important of which are cited below.

2. The reason, he says, was to "avoid confusion." *Nowell Codex,* p. 12, n. 3. The full title of Malone's FS is *The Nowell Codex (British Museum Cotton Vitellius A. XV. Second MS*), but as the ensuing analysis will show, there were more than two original MSS combined in Cotton's composite codex.

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most have no idea what the Nowell Codex is, much less what its relation to Cotton Vitellius A. XV. might be. A basic value of studying in depth the construction of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. is that it necessarily clarifies the relation of parts of the codex to the whole. The most important result of the investigation is that it indicates that one part of the codex, *Beowulf,* was originally copied as a separate codex.

Cotton Vitellius A. XV.

The present binding is a 19th-century copy of the original, bearing on the front and back covers a gold impression of the Cotton family arms. On the spine is the following description, imprinted in gold capitals:

ANGLO-SAXON
VERSIONS AND POEMS:

FLORES SOLILOQUIORUM
S. AUGUSTINI,
NICODEMI EVANGELIUM,
ETC.,

BEOWULF, AND
JUDITH AND HOLOFERNES.

BRIT. MUS.
COTTON MS.
VITELLIUS A. XV.

The name Cotton Vitellius A. XV. dates from the 17th century, when the composite codex was assembled, and derives, as is well known, from the system of cataloguing used when the book belonged to the vast MS holdings of Sir Robert Bruce Cotton (1571–1631). The press in which the book was kept was surmounted by a bust of the Roman Emperor Aulus Vitellius; the book itself was kept on the first shelf (A), in the fifteenth position (XV). The Cotton collection became the principal MS collection of the British Museum, when the museum was founded by an Act of Parliament in 1753 (36 Geo. II, c. 22).

The history of the codex in the first third of the 18th century explains its unusual physical appearance and the need to replace Cotton's orig-

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inal binding with a 19th-century one.[3] The Cotton collection was presented to the British people in 1700 (12 & 13 William III, c. 7) by Sir Robert's grandson, Sir John Cotton. A committee of the House of Commons became the trustees of the library, with the speaker, Robert Harley, as the chief trustee. The trustees appointed a commission in 1703 to report on the state of the library, and Humfrey Wanley, whom Harley later chose to collect and preside over his own splendid library, was providentially chosen as a member of the commission.[4] Wanley's unparalleled expertise and thoroughness have preserved for us a trustworthy record of the original collection,[5] which sadly was about to be greatly diminished. Cotton House was then dilapidated, and Wanley reported that "in y^{e} Room above the Library . . . there are not only a good quantity of printed Books, but some Manuscripts; very many Originall Charters of different Ages, as high as y^{e} Conqueror's time, and a very great Number of Originall Letters & Writings of value which have already suffered great hurt, & will be utterly spoiled if care be not taken of them" (Bodleian MS Add. D. 82, fol. iii). A new building to house the collection was planned and endorsed by an Act of Parliament in 1706 (6 Anne, c. 30), yet nothing was done. By 1722, Cotton House was in such bad shape that the collection had to be removed to Essex House, Strand, where it remained for the duration of a seven-year lease, which was not renewed because Essex House was considered a firetrap. So Cotton's library was moved to another interim home, and another firetrap, ominously named Ashburnham House, in Little Dean's Yard, Westminster. A contemporary account bleakly records the disastrous result of this last move:

3. My account of the early history of the Cotton collection is based in part on Arundell Esdaile, *The British Museum: A Short History and Survey,* pp. 17–37 and 228–229; and on BL Add. MS 24,932, *A Report from the Committee Appointed to View the Cottonian Library,* pp. 7–15.

4. Wanley's report on behalf of this commission was prefixed to Robert Harley's copy of Thomas Smith's *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecæ Cottonianæ* and is dated 22. June. 1703. The book belongs to the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and is catalogued as MS Add. D. 82. Drafts of Wanley's report are in BL MS Harley 7055.

5. Mainly in his own catalogue, published in 1705, but also in the report from the commission of 1703, which was restricted in its scope primarily to corrections of foliations erroneously recorded in Smith's catalogue.

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> On *Saturday* Morning *October* 23, 1731. about two o'Clock, a great Smoak was perceived by Dr. *Bentley,* and the rest of the Family at *Ashburnham-House,* which soon after broke out into a Flame: It began from a wooden Mantle-Tree's taking Fire, which lay across a Stove-Chimney, that was under the Room, where the MSS. of the Royal and *Cottonian* Libraries were lodged, and was communicated to that Room by the Wainscot, and by pieces of Timber, that stood perpendicularly upon each end of the Mantle-Tree. They were in hopes at first to have put a Stop to the Fire by throwing Water upon the Pieces of Timber and Wainscot, where it first broke out, and therefore did not begin to remove the Books so soon as they otherwise would have done. But the Fire prevailing, notwithstanding the Means used to extinguish it, Mr. *Casley* the Deputy-Librarian took Care in the first Place to remove the famous *Alexandrian* MS. and the Books under the Head of *Augustus* in the *Cottonian* Library, as being esteemed the most valuable amongst the Collection. Several entire Presses with the Books in them were also removed; but the Fire increasing still, and the Engines sent for not coming so soon as could be wished, and several of the Backs of the Presses being already on Fire, they were obliged to be broke open, and the Books, as many as could be, were thrown out of the Windows.[6]

The *Beowulf* MS was presumably saved for us by being thrown from the window, for the present condition of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. shows that the Vitellius press was one of those that caught fire from the back. The fire left Cotton Vitellius A. XV. basically intact, but badly burned along its outer edges, and so in need of a new binding.

The codex stayed in its ruined binding until near the middle of the 19th century, when the British Museum began systematic repairs of the damaged Cotton books. Thus, the charred and brittle outer edges of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. were left unprotected for over a century, and many letters and words continued to crumble off from the time of the first transcripts in the late 18th century until the 19th-century binding prevented all further losses. The new binding is a remarkable piece of craftsmanship, as well as of preservation, even though the threads and folds of the original gatherings had to be sacrificed—if indeed they had not already been destroyed by the fire. In the present binding, each folio

6. Quoted from "A NARRATIVE of the Fire which happened at *Ashburnham-House, Oct.* 23, 1731. and of the Methods used for preserving and recovering the Manuscripts of the Royal and *Cottonian* Libraries" (BL MS 24,932, p. 11).

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is inlaid in a heavy paper frame to protect the brittle margins of the vellum. These paper frames, which less impressively preserve *three* variously inaccurate foliations of the codex, are not reproduced in any of the FSS, and it is hard to appreciate the binder's methods from the FSS previously published (but see Plate 7). The binder first made pencil tracings of the separate folio leaves on sheets of heavy construction paper. These tracings are usually quite visible in the MS, and occasionally, if one is looking for them, even in the FSS. After the tracings were made, the binder then cut out the center part of the paper, following the outline, but leaving from 1 to 2 mm. of paper within the traced line, so that the frame would be slightly smaller than the vellum leaf it was designed to hold. Paste was then applied to this marginal retaining space, and the folio was pressed into place. Finally, transparent paper strips were pasted on like Scotch tape along the edge of the vellum on the recto, thus to secure the mounted leaf from both sides. Uncatalogued archival records in the Department of Manuscripts of the British Library reveal that a man named Gough inlaid the separate folios and rebound Cotton Vitellius A. XV. in August 1845.[7]

In addition to protecting the edges of the vellum from further deterioration, the heavy paper frames also obviate the need to handle the vellum at all while reading the MS. The advantages of this method of rebinding far outweigh its shortcomings. The main drawback is that the retaining edges of the paper frames, which hold the folios in place on the versos, also cover letters and parts of letters, especially along the left margins. When the ink is dark enough, these covered letters can be read with certainty by holding the page up against strong light, but in many cases the ink is too faded, or the condition of the vellum too impaired

7. Sir Frederic Madden kept a meticulous record of the restorations of the Cotton collection in a slender (13 x 4 cm.) ledger book titled *Cottonian MSS., Repairing and Binding Account.* The first flyleaf reads, "List of the *Cottonian MSS.* with the progress made in repairing, binding and inlaying of the Collection, from the year 1839." Beside Vitellius A. XV. Madden has written, "G inlaid and rebound Augt. 1845." I am grateful to Assistant Keeper Dr. M. A. E. Nickson for locating this uncatalogued record for me, and to Assistant Keeper Janet Backhouse for identifying "G" as Gough from other uncatalogued records kept by Madden. Heretofore the binding was erroneously dated between 1860 and 1871, and the binder was unknown (see Förster, *Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* pp. 6–7, 10–11, and Malone, *Nowell Codex,* p. 11). The official binder of the British Museum from 1825 to 1865 was Charles Tuckett, who restored most of the damaged Cotton MSS.

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through shrinkage and scorching, to determine what the hidden letters are with absolute certainty. Still, there is something left to try to decipher; without the paper frames many of these uncertain letters would now be gone. A second shortcoming is that the threads and folds of the original gatherings, or what was left of them after the fire, had to be totally sacrificed to mount the folios individually. The absence of threads and folds greatly complicates the normally simple process of collation, but the probable composition of the original gatherings can be deduced by other means, which can also eliminate as impossible some overly mechanical guesswork by previous scholars.

As it now stands, Cotton Vitellius A. XV. is a composite codex assembled in the first half of the 17th century. It consists of two main Old English codices. The first, now called the Southwick Codex,[8] has four items:

1. *The Soliloquia of St. Augustine,* ascribed to King Alfred in the fragmentary colophon;
2. *The Gospel of Nicodemus* (acephalous);
3. *The Debate of Solomon and Saturn;*
4. Eleven lines of a *St. Quintin Homily* (the ending is lost).

The second codex is the one known as the Nowell Codex, and it consists of five articles, including *Beowulf:*

1. *The Life of St. Christopher* (the beginning is lost);
2. *The Wonders of the East* (illustrated);
3. *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle;*
4. *Beowulf;*
5. *Judith* (the beginning is lost, and the closing lines are copied in a rough imitation of insular script by an early modern hand).

What has not been fully recognized is that the Southwick and Nowell codices are, themselves, composite books. As far as I know, no one has ever noted the fact that the Southwick Codex is almost certainly made up of two originally separate and distinct books; and there are equally good reasons to believe that the Nowell Codex originally comprised

8. Malone was the first person to use this name to distinguish the group of 12th-century MSS, at the beginning of Cotton Vitellius A. XV., from the second group, which he called the Nowell Codex.

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three books, rather than one or two. While some scholars realize that *Judith,* in all probability, was a late addition to the Nowell Codex, the effect its addition had on the physical construction of the *Beowulf* MS, and the subsequent damage it caused to the *Beowulf* MS, have gone entirely unnoticed. Moreover, and most important of all, there is evidence that the *Beowulf* MS itself was in the earliest stages of its history a separate codex. The full implications of this must be discussed later, but it is worth suggesting now that if the *Beowulf* MS was at the start of its history a separate codex, it enjoyed a particular popularity at the time that it was copied. It indicates, surely, that *Beowulf* was understood and appreciated in the early 11th century and enhances the theory that *Beowulf* may be an 11th-century poem. The usual view is that *Beowulf* was copied carelessly and mindlessly, by scribes largely ignorant of the poem's meaning, as the fourth item in a basically prose codex. The new view tremendously enhances, as well, the textual authority of the *Beowulf* MS. In any case, a good understanding of the construction of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. must include a good understanding of the construction of the original codices that now constitute it. Much of the lost history of the Southwick and Nowell codices can be deduced from the physical evidence left to us in these MSS.

The Prefixed Leaves

The present "official" foliation of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. is inaccurate. Even in June 1884, when it was introduced,[9] this foliation was not entirely accurate, for it failed to renumber in proper sequence the folios in two transposed quires from *Alexander's Letter* in the Nowell

9. On a paper endleaf facing the last page of the *Judith* fragment a note in pencil reads, "209 Fols FW. June 1884 / Ex.^{d} S.S. / f. 1 removed Jan. 1913 (see note at beginning)." According to Dr. Backhouse "FW" was probably a minor clerk, charged with writing the foliation, and "S.S." an unidentified superior who subsequently examined the accuracy of the foliation. Malone erroneously identified "FW" as "G. F. Warner, i. e. George Frederic Warner, then an assistant in the Department of MSS; he was later made Keeper of MSS and still later was knighted." *Nowell Codex,* p. 13. Neither the initials nor the handwriting (specimens of which may be seen in BL MSS Add. 43,472, fol. iii, 43, 473, fol. i, and 44,875, fol. iii) is Warner's.

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Codex.[10] Today, in addition to this error, the 1884 foliation is inaccurate throughout the codex, for it counts in the foliation of the two Old English codices three prefixed leaves, the first of which was removed from the codex in 1913. The foliation used throughout this book is a corrected version of an older foliation written on the vellum leaves of the Old English MSS. This older foliation, which will be referred to throughout as the MS foliation, can still be clearly seen in the MS and in the FSS in the vicinity of the upper right corners, recto, of each leaf. When it was introduced, late in the 18th century, several leaves were out of place, but these errors are easily enough corrected without abandoning this basically true, and historically informative, foliation. For instance, the foliation 1–90 of the Southwick Codex is perfectly in order. The 1884 foliation, by counting the three prefixed leaves, throws this count off by three, yet in reality, because one of the prefixed leaves is now gone, the difference is two.

The (quondam) first prefixed leaf was a mutilated page from a 14th-century Latin *Psalterium*. It was removed from Cotton Vitellius A. XV., permanently confounding the ill-advised foliation of 1884, when the British Museum reconstructed the original *Psalterium* (now Royal MS 13 D. I*) from bits and pieces gathered together from various MSS, many of which once belonged to Cotton. Apparently, Cotton's bookbinder used pages, or rather parts of pages, from this *Psalterium* for scrap paper: from the looks of many of the fragmentary pages in Royal MS 13 D. I*, the MS was a regular source for pastedowns, flyleaves, and binding strips. In this case, the bottom third of a page, preserving parts of verses 28–32 and 42–45 of Psalm 104 (fol. 37 in the patchwork reconstruction of the *Psalterium*), was used as a flyleaf to Cotton Vitellius A. XV. The fire damage shows that it was placed in the codex sideways, with the verso on the outside, and with its left margin at the top (a 17th-century hand has written in this space, "Vitellius A. XV"). When the leaf was removed in 1913, the keeper of MSS, Julius P. Gilson, noted on the paper flyleaf that preceded it in the new binding: "a flyleaf (f. 1) taken out to be bound with Royal MS. 13 D. I*, the psalter

10. Notations on the paper frames of the new binding alert the reader of the MS to the dislocation of the gatherings. On the first folio of the first misplaced gathering a note reads, "Ff. 110–117 should follow f. 125"; and on this last folio a corresponding note reads, "ff. 110–117 should follow here." Since the 1884 foliation numbers are used, the notes must have been written in 1884 or later.

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to which it originally belonged. / Jan. 1913. / J. P. G." There was never any justification for counting this leaf as the first folio of a codex comprising Old English texts. Now that it is gone from the codex, the 1884 foliation that it lamentably inspired should be abandoned.

The second prefixed vellum leaf, fol. 2 of the 1884 foliation, has been the first prefixed vellum leaf since 1913. On the recto, it preserves an odd, and an oddly flawed, table of contents, which may well reflect the unsettled state of the codex in the 17th century, prior to binding. The list is entitled *Elenchus contentorum in hoc codice,* and is in the handwriting of Richard James, who was Cotton's librarian from c. 1628 to 1638.[11] In the following transcript expanded abbreviations are in italics, and later additions to the *Elenchus,* all in pencil, are in brackets:

1 Flores soliloquiorum Augustini Saxonicè Ælfredo interprete vt apparet ex pag. 56.
2 Summa expensaru*m* et militum quibus vsus est Edwardus [f.2.b.]
3 in expugnatione Caleti . in secundà facie primæ pag.
3 Fragmentum Saxonicu*m* quod forte continet aliquam partem historiæ sive legendæ Thomæ Apo*sto*li. pag. primà. habetur ibi mentio de Bocland. et cotagijs. [f.1]
[+]4 Dialogi de Chr*isto* et chr*ist*ianitate vbi interloquntur Pilatus et alij . sicut melius visum est Legendario. Sax. [f.57]
5 Dialogus inter Saturnum et Salomonem. Saxon. cum Legendis S*anc*ti Chr*isto*feri.
6 Defloratio siue translatio Ep*isto*larum Alexandri ad Ar*istote*lem cum picturis prodigiosorum. Saxonicè.
[7 Beowulf]
8 Fragmentum Saxon: de Iuditha et Holoferne. [f.199]
[+ Fragmentum est de Nicodemi Evangelio?]

James wrote numbers 1–6 and 8, leaving a gap between numbers 6 and 8 to indicate that he had failed to describe a text that appeared at this

11. According to the *DNB,* James probably became Cotton's librarian after 1628, after helping Selden with *Marmora Arundeliana* (p. 655). A contemporary account states that James "had so screwed himself into the good opinion of Sir Robert Cotton, as whereas at first he had only permitted him in the use of some of his books, at last, some two or three years before his decease [d. 1631], he bestowed the custody of his whole library on him." James Orchard Halliwell, ed., *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Sir Simonds d'Ewes,* pp. 39–40. Why Förster (*Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* p. 67) and Malone (*Nowell Codex,* p. 11) say that James became librarian c. 1635 is never explained by either.

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point. Either James had no idea how to describe *Beowulf* or the poem was temporarily out of the codex. The 7 and Beowulf were added in pencil in fairly recent times.[12] James's *Elenchus* is interesting both for what it includes and for what it excludes. In order to cite fol. 56 as the page containing the Alfredian colophon (number 1), James must have begun counting folios, or a foliation already on the MS must have begun, on the first folio of *The Soliloquia of St. Augustine.* Yet, according to the item James listed next (number 2), the *Summa expensarum* began on the verso of the *first* page. If James had really counted this leaf as the first folio of the codex, the Alfredian colophon would be on fol. 57, not fol. 56. It is also strange that what James describes as the first folio of the codex, the *Summa expensarum,* is in fact *listed* second. These difficulties can be resolved by assuming that the *Summa expensarum* is listed second because James found it after the *Soliloquia* when he first began describing the codex. Perhaps, then, he moved it to the beginning and noted its new position in the *Elenchus,* because it was not a Saxon text. At any rate, the *Summa expensarum* (transcribed below) is now the second prefixed leaf of the MS foliation, or fol. 3 of the erroneous 1884 foliation.

Number 3 in the *Elenchus,* the fragmentary *Legend of St. Thomas,* is no longer part of the codex. But it is hard to believe that James invented such an elaborate description for an imaginary text. At the time, James must have found the fragmentary *Legend* between the *Soliloquia* and the *Nicodemus* fragment, and so described it. The quire signatures of the Southwick Codex show that it was not a legitimate part of the Southwick Codex, but loose leaves often found their way in and out of Cotton's books.[13] James's comment, *pag. primâ. habetur ibi*

12. Evidently after 1913, for Förster does not mention them, but only says, "Hier sind vier Zeilen freigelassen." *Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* p. 67. There are two errors in Förster's transcript of the *Elenchus:* in item 3 he has *habitur* for *habetur* and in item 8 he has *Holoferno* for *Holoferne.*

13. Whitelock notes, for instance, that an 8th-century charter now in BL MS Cotton Augustus II. 3. "was at one time bound up with the Vespasian Psalter, and was taken out of it by the orders of Sir Robert Cotton." *English Historical Documents,* p. 453. Ker says that "Cotton was a chief offender in this kind of activity," noting that "leaves of manuscripts which he owned were taken out of the volumes to which they properly belonged and were bound up elsewhere." *Catalogue,* p. lxii.

Plate 2. Richard James's *Elenchus contentorum in hoc codice* is now the first prefixed leaf of BL MS Cotton Vitellius A. XV.

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[...]chus contentor[um]
in hoc codice

*

1 Flores soliloquiorum Augustini Saxonicè Ælfredo interprete ut apparet ex pag. 56.

2 Summa expensarū et milit: quibus usus est Edwardus 3 in expugnatione Caleti in secunda faciē primæ pag.

3 Fragmentum Saxonicū quod forte continet aliquam partem historiæ sive legendæ Thomæ Apli. pag. primâ habetur ibi mentio de Eoclande et Cotagus.

4 Dialogi de Xpo et Xpianitate ubi interloquuntur Pilatus et alij sicut melius visum est Lecondario Sax.

5 Dialogus inter Saturnum et Salomonem Saxon: cum Legendis Sti Xpoferi.

6 Defloratio sive translatio Eplarum Alexandri ad Aristotelem cum picturis prodigiosorum. Saxonicè

Fragmentum Saxon: de Iuditha et Holoferne

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mentio de Bocland. et cotagijs, may explain why the fragment was removed before Cotton Vitellius A. xv. was bound: it may have belonged more properly among Cotton's vast holdings of Anglo-Saxon charters. Or, the rest of the *Passio de Sancti Thomæ Apostoli* may have been located in another Cotton codex. The fact that f. 1 is written in pencil in the right margin indicates that, for a time, the fragmentary *Legend of St. Thomas* was the first prefixed leaf of the codex. Hence the *Summa expensarum* became the second prefixed leaf, as the folio number f. 2.b. in the margin would seem to confirm. It might be mentioned in passing that these folio numbers are not part of a true foliation, for whoever wrote them in the margin did not count the next fifty-six folios. Instead, he relied on James's statement that the Alfredian colophon was on fol. 56, and wrote 57 in the margin for the next item. If he had been counting folios he would have written fol. 59.

Beside number 4, *Dialogi de Christo et christianitate,* a later hand has made a cross-mark in pencil, and has noted at the foot of the page, *Fragmentum est de Nicodemi Evangelio?*. The last two words are blurred and faded, but the entire note can be read with certainty by holding the page up against strong light. The note and the folio numbers in pencil probably derive from the late 17th century, for the item had been identified as *The Gospel of Nicodemus* in time for Wanley's catalogue (1705), by which time the fragment from the *Legend of St. Thomas* was no longer part of the codex. The description in number 5 is a conflation of *The Debate of Solomon and Saturn,* from the Southwick Codex, and the *St. Christopher* fragment, from the Nowell Codex. Between them, James overlooked the eleven-line *St. Quintin* fragment, which ends the Southwick Codex. He had originally overlooked the *St. Christopher* fragment, too, but later, with a different pen and ink, he tacked on *cum Legendis Sancti Christoferi* after his description of the *Debate.* Thus Förster is misleading when he ascribes this phrase to "eine spätere Hand" (p. 67). There can be no doubt that the handwriting, which is very distinctive, is James's. Moreover, the phrase was inserted very soon after the *Elenchus* was made, for it is part of the description in the *Catalogue of the Cotton MSS. Circa 1635* (BL Add. MS. 36,789). Number 6 is an ingenuously combined description of *The*

Plate 3. An inverted palimpsest of a 14th-century Latin text is now the second prefixed leaf, recto, of Cotton Vitellius A. xv.

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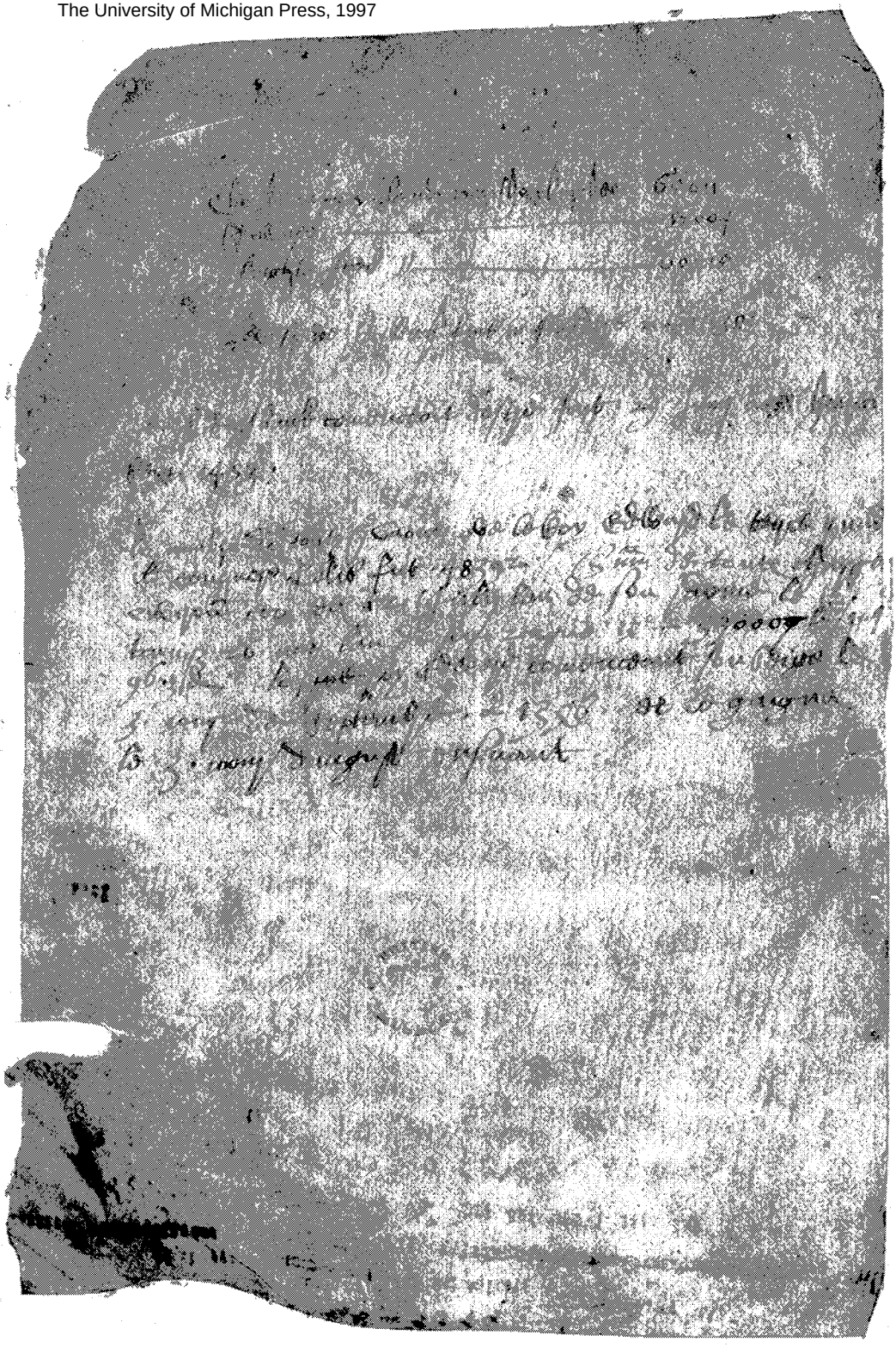

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Wonders of the East (cum picturis prodigiosorum) and *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle.* James thought that *The Wonders of the East* was part of *Alexander's Letter.* As noted above, a gap after this composite description shows that *Beowulf* was certainly part of the codex when James made his description, but that he was unable to describe it. Number 8 shows that *Judith* was already a fragment before Cotton Vitellius A. XV. was bound.[14] Despite the importance of this page as a document that preserves some of the early modern history of Cotton Vitellius A. XV., there is no reason why it should be foliated with the Old English texts. It should, of course, be included in all descriptions of the codex, perhaps as roman numeral i, but it should only be *counted* as—what it is—a prefixed vellum leaf.

Fol. 3 of the 1884 foliation, now the second prefixed leaf of the MS foliation, holds on the verso the *Summa expensarum* mentioned second in James's *Elenchus.* The recto has not been accurately described by Förster, who says; "zeigt auf dem unteren Seitenviertel ein paar Schriftzeichen (Federproben) des 14. (?) Jahrhunderts—auf dem Kopfe stehend" (p. 73). As Förster says, the page is upside down, but the marks on the page, which are mostly unreadable, were not made solely to test a new pen. The page is a palimpsest, and whoever erased the original text simply failed to obliterate all of the writing. Some of the erased material appears as rows of stains, sharply accentuated under ultraviolet light. With the page right side up the words *auxiliam/et,* several letters (notably *d* and *h*), and indistinctive strings of minims, can be read on the second line. About one-third of the way down the page on the left there is a blurry ink mass, the remains of what was once a historiated initial. Flecks of what appear to be gold show up in this area under strong light.

14. This may well seem obvious, yet Dobbie strangely casts doubt on it, suggesting that the loss at the beginning of the *Judith* fragment "before the fire is highly probable but cannot be proved." *Beowulf and Judith,* p. xiv. There is no doubt at all that the poem was in its present fragmentary state in the 17th century, for Franciscus Junius made a transcript of it sometime before 1651 (Bodleian MS Junius 105). As Dobbie himself says elsewhere, "Dating from at least eighty years before the fire of 1731, Junius's transcript shows the text of the poem in its undamaged state (except for the loss of folios at the beginning) . . ." *Beowulf and Judith,* pp. xxii–xxiii.

Plate 4. The second prefixed leaf, verso, contains some statistics in English and notes relating to the Hundred Years War in Anglo-Norman.

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James's overly simple description of the text on the verso of this leaf, *Summa expensarum et militum quibus vsus est Edwardus 3 in expugnatione Caleti,* has been little refined by subsequent scholars. Wanley is a bit more explicit but somewhat inaccurate when he says, *Nota de numero Parochiarum, villarum, feodorum & Militum in Anglia, & de expugnatione Caleti per Edwardum III.* Förster adds linguistic and paleographical details to Wanley's description, and an inaccurate date for Edward's victory at Calais: "Kurze Notizen von einer kleinen Hand des 16. Jahrhunderts in englischer und französischer Sprache, statistischen und historischen Inhalts. Erstere (engl.) behandeln die Zahl de Gemeindekirchen, der Zollerhebungsstellen und der Ritterlehen in England; letztere (franz.) die Eroberung Calais' durch Eduard III. (1383) u. a. m." (p. 74). Edward III died in 1377; his victory at Calais was in 1347. The general lack of interest in the contents of this page from James to the present is no doubt owing to the general dilution of the ink and to the sloppy Gothic scrawl and eccentric Anglo-Norman of the writer. The following transcript (with expanded abbreviations in italics) is given for its possible historical interest:

Cherche in yngland parish churches 65011
Subdued[?] _____ 52004
knight Hood //_____ 60214
Evesq*ue* de Norwich fuit in Flanders in l'an 1383
(Se)ige q*ue* Taylbault comducdoit d'estre fait 29 Juny a*nno* 31 Henrici Sexti 1453.
le numbre de toutz q*ue* vaont ove le Roy Edward le terce qua[n]d il conquer*oit* Calis fut 48392. Su*mmum* de toute charge environ*ment* ceo del 12 July l'an de son regnie le 12 tamq*ue* 26. may l'an de son regne 14—330007£/104 96.3d. [*sic*] le roy Edward comducdout son seige le 3. iour de septembre. a*nno* 1346. Il le gaigna le 3. iour d'august ensuant.

The abrupt transition after line 3 from English to unrefined Anglo-Norman makes a late 15th-century date for these notes possible. The events mentioned all fall within the broadest limits (1337–1453) of the Hundred Years' War. I read (with some misgivings) "Subdued" in line 2 for Wanley's *villarum, feodorum* and Förster's "Zollerhebungsstellen." Line 4 refers to the "crusade" in Flanders of Henry Dispenser,

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bishop of Norwich. Lines 5 and 6 refer to a siege that John Talbot, commander of the English forces, ordered to be made on 29 June 1453. Talbot fell at Castillon, the last battle of the Hundred Years' War, less than three weeks later.[15] The remaining seven lines record the number of troops that gathered with Edward III when he conquered Calais, the cost of his campaign on the continent from 12 July 1338 to 26 May 1340,[16] the duration of his siege of Calais (eleven months), and his final victory on 3 August 1347.

None of these three prefixed leaves should ever have been counted in the foliation of the Old English MSS that constitute Cotton Vitellius A. XV. Their incorporation into the foliation of 1884 has caused many unnecessary problems. Because the present official foliation conflicts with the MS foliation written on the vellum leaves, scholars need to cite both foliations simultaneously, if their citations are to be unambiguous. Yet, as suggested above, there is little point in renumbering the leaves of the Southwick Codex for the sake of three prefixed leaves, one of which is no longer in the codex. The leaves of the Southwick Codex are numbered unerringly from 1 to 90 in the MS. The continuation of this MS foliation in the Nowell Codex is not entirely accurate, however, for the first ten folios of the codex and two folios from *Beowulf* were out of order, and two quires from *Alexander's Letter* were transposed, when it was written on the vellum leaves. These disorders are easily rectified without abandoning the MS foliation, by renumbering only the twelve folios and the transposed quires that need renumbering. The great advantage of adhering to the MS foliation is that only those folios that are out of order will need double citations: for example, the first ten folios of the Nowell Codex will have to be cited as, 91(93), 92(94), 93(91), 94(92), 95(97), 96(98), 97(99), 98(100), 99(95), 100(96).[17]

15. See Desmond Seward, *The Hundred Years War: The English in France, 1337–1453,* pp. 259–262.

16. The figures are apparently accurate; George Holmes mentions that Edward III's debts in 1339 were estimated at £300,000, "several times his annual income." *The Later Middle Ages: 1272–1485,* p. 120.

17. Even with the consistent use of the 1884 foliation there has been lack of consistency and full confusion in representing the disorder of these first ten folios of the Nowell Codex. Rypins very sensibly presented in parallel columns the correspondences between the 1884 foliation in the right order, and the MS foliation in the consequent disorder (*Three Texts,* p. xi). Malone, on the other hand, puts the 1884 foliation into disorder, which means that the MS foliation was in the right order (*Nowell*

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Then, with the exception of the folios in the transposed quires and of the two folios from *Beowulf,* all other numbers from the MS foliation, throughout Cotton Vitellius A. XV., are right. The double citations, where they are needed, highlight the places where the Nowell Codex was formerly disordered.

The disadvantages of continuing to follow the 1884 foliation are manifold. The crowning annoyance is that the MS foliation must be used in tandem with it anyway, if one is to understand, however fuzzily, the pervasive discrepancy between the 1884 foliation and the foliation on the vellum leaves. The discrepancy is pointless, and it disappears with the rejection of the 1884 foliation and the reinstatement of the MS foliation. The salutary effect this will have on the foliation of *Beowulf* will illustrate the point. The two folios from the poem that were out of place when the MS foliation was written on the vellum leaves were numbered, according to their misplacement, 131 and 197. Folio 131 should have come after folio 146, and folio 197 after folio 188. If these two folios are renumbered as fol. 147A(131) and fol. 189A(197), the foliation numbers written on the *Beowulf* MS will be completely accurate. Moreover, the two new numbers will simultaneously provide the present locations of the two folios, and the former, erroneous locations which are properly left as gaps between folios 130 and 132, and 196 and 198. The total count of folios in the MS is unaffected, since the double citations for the formerly misplaced folios still use the MS numbers in parentheses.

The alternative provided by the 1884 foliation should be quite resistible. Its adoption requires a befuddling table of foliations to explain the numbers on the vellum leaves.[18] The table provided by Norman Davis

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Codex, p. 15). It is surely strange that the editor of the FS edition of the Nowell Codex would choose to present the facts in a manner that is visually reversed in the FS. Dobbie, not realizing that the folios are in the right order when the number sequence of the MS foliation is in disorder, translates the disordered MS numbers to disordered 1884 numbers. The result is an entirely new disorder (of twelve, rather than ten folios), for if one retranslates Dobbie's sequence to the truly corresponding numbers of the MS foliation, the sequence reads, 91, 92, 93, 94, *99, 100,* 95, 96, 97, 98, *101, 102* (*Beowulf and Judith,* p. xv, and n. 19, where Dobbie ingenuously explains his blunder). The use of the MS numbers in the right order in tandem with the same numbers in disorder eliminates all of these obfuscations.

18. Malone's table of four distinct foliations (and there are at least two additional foliations, overlooked by Malone) occupies the better part of a large folio page (*Nowell Codex,* p. 14).

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(pp. xvi-xvii) in the second edition of Zupitza's FS of *Beowulf* helps demonstrate the awkwardness of all such tables:

Old [MS]	*New*
129, 130	132, 133
132 to 146	134 to 148
131	149
147 to 188	150 to 191
197	192
189 to 196	193 to 200
198	201

These "correspondences," as Davis calls them, would be more tolerable, or at least more memorable, if the new numbers merely advanced the MS foliation numbers by three, as they do to the MS numbers in the Southwick Codex. Here in *Beowulf,* though, they advance the first two folios by three, the next fifteen folios by two, the first misplaced folio (131) by eighteen, the next forty-two folios by three again; the second misplaced folio (197) is itself five in advance of the new number, after which the new numbers advance the MS by four for eight folios, and finally by three for the last folio. No one using the 1884 foliation could be expected to remember which two folios had been originally misplaced in the *Beowulf* MS, or to have any clear conception of the reasons behind the wild discrepancies between the MS and the 1884 foliations.

A formal return to the use of the MS foliation is easily accomplished, mainly because it was never fully abandoned. Through ignorance of the 1884 foliation, most scholars still use the MS foliation. Zupitza used it, of course, in his FS edition, two years before the official foliation of 1884 was concocted. And since most editors used Zupitza, rather than the MS, to found their texts, the editors of the poem, even after 1884, follow the MS foliation. Whenever folios are mentioned in Holthausen, Wyatt, Chambers, Sedgefield, Klaeber, Wrenn, and Wrenn-Bolton,[19] the MS foliation numbers, alone, are used. Von Schaubert uses the 1884 foliation, but with the MS numbers in parentheses, and Dobbie, who in gen-

19. The comment in Wrenn-Bolton that the name Laurence Nouell appears "on folio 93r" (Wrenn, *Beowulf,* rev. Bolton, p. 9) is true according to the disordered MS foliation. A clearer citation, however, would use the double reference, fol. 91(93)r. The folio is the ninety-first in the codex, but was misplaced as the ninety-third sometime after Nowell wrote his name on it, and sometime before the MS foliation was made.

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eral follows the 1884 foliation, still frequently uses double references (for example, *Beowulf and Judith,* p. xiv), and gives a full table of correspondences (pp. lxvi–lxx). Since Zupitza's transliteration was reproduced by photolithography in Norman Davis's second edition, the MS numbers at the top of each page are reproduced as well. Rypins uses double references in his edition of the prose texts of the Nowell Codex, and Cook uses the MS numbers alone in his editions of *Judith.* Even Malone uses the MS numbers in his FS edition of the Thorkelin transcripts, and while he adopts the 1884 numbers in his FS of the Nowell Codex, the numbers on the FS itself furnish double references, and Malone is obliged to furnish a table of foliations as well (*Nowell Codex,* p. 14). Unfortunately, Ker conforms to the 1884 foliation in his *Catalogue,* though this foliation clearly violates his own system of showing flyleaves and postmedieval insertions by roman numerals (p. xxii). For the reasons outlined above, the foliation adopted in this book is the MS foliation written on the vellum leaves of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. It differs from the foliation on the MS only where it needs to correct errors. When the late 18th-century foliation was written on the MS, twelve folios in the Nowell Codex were out of place, and two quires were transposed. In these relatively few cases a new number is assigned, giving the proper numerical position of the folio, but the old, erroneous number is also given in parentheses. Double citations in these relatively few cases are useful, because they highlight the precise places where the Nowell Codex was formerly disordered. For purposes of reference, the Old English contents of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. may now be identified following this MS foliation, so corrected:

I. The Southwick Codex
  1. Folio 1: *The Soliloquia of St Augustine;*
  2. Folio 57: The *Nicodemus* fragment;
  3. Folio 83v: *The Debate of Solomon and Saturn;*
  4. Folio 90v: The *St. Quintin* fragment.

II. The Nowell Codex
  1. Folio 91(93): The *St. Christopher* fragment;
  2. Folio 95(97)v: *The Wonders of the East;*
  3. Folio 104: *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle;*
  4. Folio 129: *Beowulf;*
  5. Folio 199: The *Judith* fragment.

The use of the MS numbers unquestionably simplifies references to the MS or the FSS, and ease of reference is the only good reason for having

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a foliation at all. But it should be well understood that the foliation of 1884 is not only complicated, but wrong, and for the sake of clarity and accuracy it must be abandoned at once. The three prefixed leaves that it counts have been reduced to two, and neither is an Old English text.

History of the Multiple Foliations

A long monograph could easily be written on the history of the various foliations. Scholars have tried, at least since the early 18th century, to unscramble the errors of previous foliations of Cotton Vitellius A. XV., and yet it is an astonishing fact that the codex has never been accurately foliated in its entirety. The various foliations used for Cotton Vitellius A. XV. since the early 17th century need to be discussed in some detail to clear up some persistent misunderstandings. Scholars currently believe, quite mistakenly, that the Nowell Codex was unfoliated before the fire of 1731, and they recognize only three, or sometimes four, distinct foliations. In reality, there are at least six distinct foliations for Cotton Vitellius A. XV. There were two complete foliations made before the fire, the second of which tried, futilely, to correct the errors of the first. Scholars have not realized that these two foliations extended through the Nowell Codex before the fire, and that they furnish our only information about the *Beowulf* MS before it was damaged and rebound.

The first foliation, which is still partly extant in the Southwick Codex but was lost to the Nowell Codex in the fire damage to the upper right corners, was made in the first half of the 17th century, probably under the orders of Richard James, between 1628 and 1638. The second foliation was made in 1703 by a committee whose job was to correct the foliations of the Cotton MSS. The third is the restoration made after the fire, the "MS foliation" that can be seen on the vellum leaves of the Nowell Codex today; it was made after the Thorkelin transcripts by Joseph Planta, sometime between 1793 and 1801. The fourth foliation was probably made in August 1845, when Frederic Madden was keeper and the MS leaves had been placed in the paper frames of the new binding; it corrects some errors of the third foliation, and it can be seen in the upper right-hand corners of the paper frames. The fifth foliation was made sometime in the early 1870s, and it can be seen in the lower right-hand corners of the paper frames. The sixth foliation, like the

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fourth, is recorded in the upper right-hand corners of the paper frames: this is the so-called official foliation of 1884. These are the multiple foliations of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. There may have been other distinct foliations, and indeed there is some evidence that there were. It is a rather complicated story.

Only Förster has really considered the complications of the various foliations independently. Johannes Hoops's "Die Foliierung der *Beowulf*-Handschrift" is in large measure an attempt to correct the many flaws in Förster's account.[20] Malone and Dobbie rather uncritically accept Hoops as definitive, yet ignore his most valuable contribution, an astute defense of the MS foliation as preferable to the hopelessly inaccurate and obfuscating foliation of 1884.[21] Hoops's main error, an error promptly and ubiquitously received as fact, was his belief that the Nowell Codex was not foliated until after the fire. As Malone put Hoops's case, "We have reason to think that the leaves of the Nowell codex were not given numbers until after the great fire of 1731; certainly this codex shows no traces of an earlier numbering." But the reasons for believing that the Nowell Codex was unnumbered before the fire cannot be sustained. "For want of such a foliation," Malone continues, "Cotton's bookbinder made serious mistakes in ordering the sheets of the codex and Wanley's count of folios here is repeatedly inaccurate" (*Nowell Codex,* p. 12). Of course, one would not expect the Southwick and Nowell codices to be numbered continuously, from 1 to 206, until after they had been bound together as a single book, and so Cotton's bookbinder is hardly a relevant factor. On the other hand, one would expect Wanley's count of folios to be accurate, for he was a meticulous paleographer. And his count is not only accurate, it corrects errors in the foliation that preceded it. Leaves in the Nowell Codex were out of place when

20. Rypins had given a fairly good account of the problems four years earlier, in his edition of the prose texts of the Nowell Codex (*Three Texts*, pp. ix–xi), though he recognized only a "threefold foliation."

21. Marjorie Daunt, who did not comprehend the range of difficulties involved, characterizes Hoops's defense of the MS foliation as an insult to the British Library: "The 1884 numbering is regarded as the official pagination, and it would surely be a simple matter for future editors to accept the arrangement of the Keeper of MSS." "Old English Studies," p. 75. The editors have shown that it is not a simple matter at all. It might be added that the MS foliation is the work of another keeper of MSS, though the real issue is accuracy and convenience of reference.

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Wanley made his foliation, but the former arrangement of the leaves has no bearing on the accuracy of his count.

The reason the two earliest foliations of the Nowell Codex have not been recognized is that the fire destroyed all physical evidence of them in the MS. The upper right corner of the Nowell Codex suffered the most fire damage, and since this is where the earliest foliation was recorded, there is naturally no vestige of it left. The upper right corners of the Southwick Codex are comparatively well preserved, and so there is evidence in the MS of an early, if not the earliest, foliation. Förster claims (pp. 4–5) that the "ältesten Blattzahlen" derive from a hand of the late 16th or early 17th century, but in fact the forms of the numbers are not distinctive, and could have been used anytime between the late 16th century and the present. These numbers undoubtedly predate the fire, but Förster's implication that they predate the Cotton codex (1628–1638) is extremely misleading, for the numbers themselves simply cannot be dated. The only argument that can be used in favor of this position is James's reference to fol. 56 in his *Elenchus contentorum*. The reference to a folio number before Cotton Vitellius A. XV. was bound (the *Elenchus* was bound with it) would seem to suggest that *The Soliloquia of St. Augustine,* at any rate, was already numbered. On the other hand, James says that the next item in the codex was a fragment from a *Legend of St. Thomas the Apostle,* and if James is right, the codex could not have been numbered beyond the *Soliloquia* (and could not have been bound) until after the *St. Thomas* fragment was removed. If anything, the conflicting evidence argues against the view that the Southwick Codex was foliated before it was added to the Nowell Codex. After all, James might have simply counted the folios of the *Soliloquia* to mark the location of the Alfredian colophon, which must have been the most exciting feature of Vitellius A. XV. to Cotton.[22]

At any rate, we cannot be sure that the Southwick Codex was foliated in its entirety before it was combined with the Nowell Codex for Cotton's book, Vitellius A. XV., and so the oldest extant numbers in the Southwick Codex may well have continued through the Nowell Codex before the fire of 1731. Förster only distinguishes two extant sets of folio numbers on the vellum leaves of the Southwick Codex: the "ältesten

22. James does not date the codex, and his description could leave the impression that the MS was contemporary with Alfred.

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Blattzahlen," which he ascribes to the end of the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century; and the restoration of the "ältesten Blattzahlen," wherever it was needed, which he dates "wohl bald nach dem Brande von 1731" (pp. 5–6). The evidence is much more complicated than this. There are two main hands that account for most of the foliation numbers, and Förster is right that one hand, in the Southwick Codex, wrote in numbers sometime before the fire, and the other hand restored numbers lost by the fire both in the Southwick Codex and throughout the Nowell Codex. The restorer's numbers are usually quite distinguishable from the numbers that survived the fire in the Southwick Codex, both by form and by difference in ink. But the distinction is sometimes virtually lost by fading or blurring, and by the restorer's apparently freshening up some of the old numbers, producing hybrid forms. Other hands have written in numbers, too, which of course adds to the complications.

Some notion of the problems involved in distinguishing number forms (the difference in ink, reddish brown versus black, is normally unequivocal) can be indicated here, before moving on to the central issue of identifying distinct foliations. According to Förster the following numbers are all that remain of the "ältesten Zahlen" (p. 5), which were written in reddish brown ink: 3, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 47, 50, 52 (Förster supplies the 2, though it is perfectly clear in the MS), 54, 56, 67, 73, and 77. Förster inexplicably overlooks the following "ältesten Zahlen": 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 34, 36 (freshened up), 42, 57, 58 (beneath the tape), 65 (very faint), 70 (at the end of line 1), 80 (?), and perhaps 90 (freshened up). By this count nearly half of the original numbers in the Southwick Codex are still extant. The others were presumably destroyed in the fire along with the old foliation of the Nowell Codex. The restored numbers in the Southwick Codex are not as uniform as they normally are in the Nowell Codex. The first two folios of the Southwick Codex, for instance, seem to have been numbered or restored by a different hand entirely. Other notable idiosyncrasies in the restoration of the old foliation numbers in the Southwick Codex will be mentioned in passing.

Restored numbers (in black ink, unless otherwise noted) can be seen

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Plate 5. Fol. 3r of the Southwick Codex preserves both the old foliation number in reddish brown ink (barely visible in the charred corner) and a superfluous restoration number in heavy black ink.

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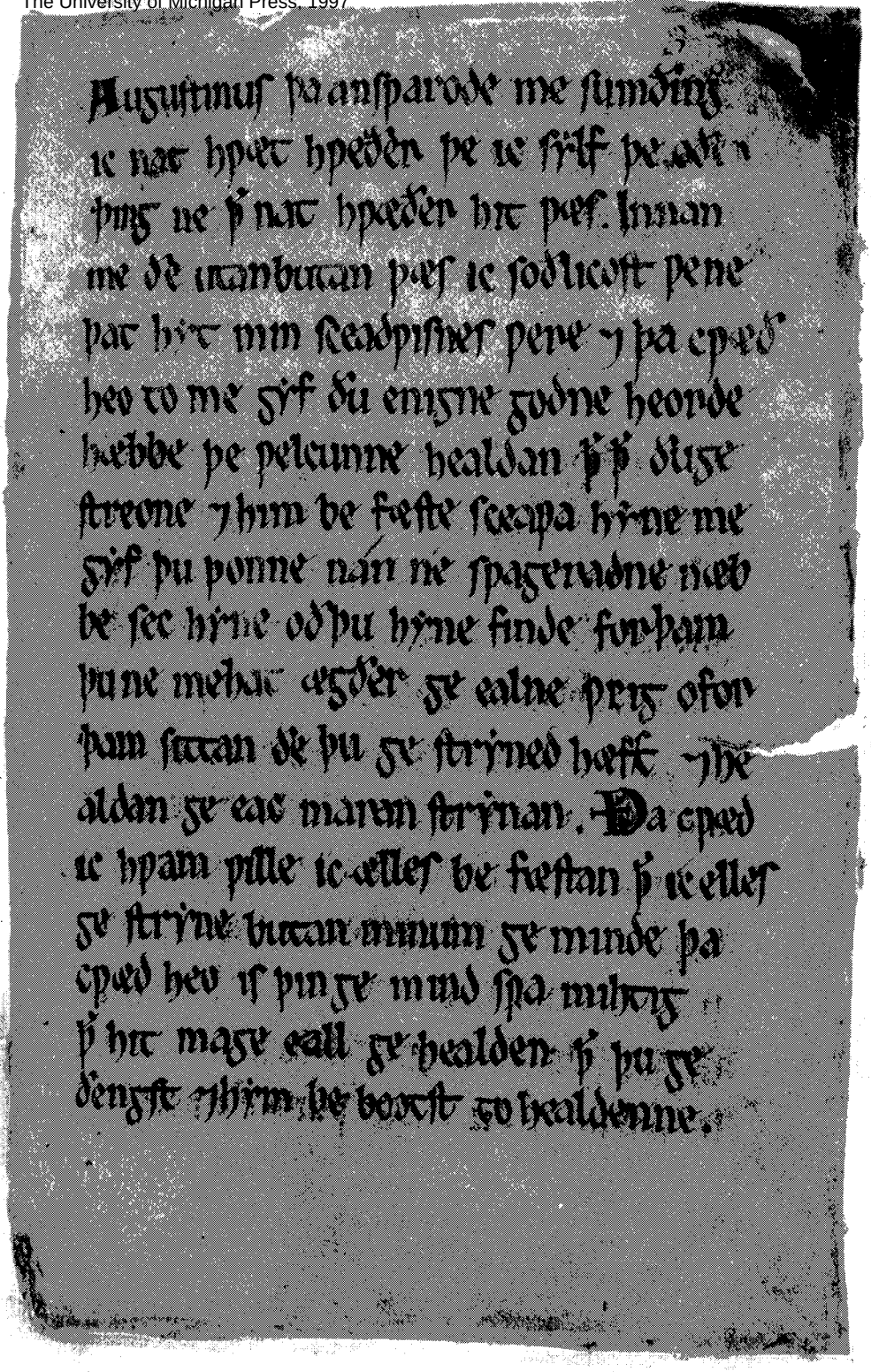

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on fols. 1, 2, 3 (even though the original 3 is extant), 4, 5, 6 (original 6 extant on the brittle edge), 18–22, 25 (beneath the tape), 30, 32 (the original is extant, and the superfluous restoration, in pencil at the end of line 3 is not in the hand of the main restorer), 33 (same as 32), 35, 38 (another superfluous restoration in pencil, at the end of line 7), 43–46, 48, 49, 51 (in pencil at the end of line 4), 53, 59, 60, 61–65, 66 (written very large, in pencil, in the center of the top margin, and then again at the end of line 2), 68 (like 66: moreover, the number 62, in yet another hand, is written in pencil at the end of lines 3–4), 69 and 71 (like 66 and 68, though possibly in another hand, and though the corners are intact no original numbers can be seen), 72 (over the original?), 74, 75 (written twice—in two different hands—once at the beginning and once at the end of line 1), 76, 77 (though the original is extant), 78–87, 88 (corner intact, but no original number visible), 89, and 90 (over the original?). It is clear that we have more to deal with here than the "ältesten Zahlen" and a restoration made soon after the fire. I would say that the penciled numbers 32, 38, 51, and 62 (on fol. 68), are by the same hand, and I would hypothesize that these numbers were made after the fire (because of their locations, away from the corners), but before the main restoration (because the number 62 is an error that was corrected before the main restoration was made). Thus, the possibility of a seventh distinct foliation, before the main restoration was written on the vellum leaves, cannot be ruled out.

Six different foliations of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. as a whole, including two before the fire which have never been recognized, can be definitely documented. The first foliation to include the Nowell Codex was made in the first half of the 17th century, most likely by the order of Richard James, between 1628 and 1638. The earliest extant reference to the first foliation of the Nowell Codex was made by Franciscus Junius, who made a transcription of the *Judith* fragment sometime between 1628 and 1650. At the head of the first page of this transcript (now Bodleian MS Junius 105), Junius noted the folio on which the fragment began:

> *Fragmentum historiæ Judith, descriptum ex Cottonianæ bibliothecæ MS^to codice, qui inscribitur* VITELLIVS A. 15. *paginâ 199.*

The note tells us that when Junius made his copy, the *Judith* fragment was already in Cotton's possession as a fragment, the Southwick and

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Nowell codices had already been bound together as Vitellius A. XV., and, most notably, the two codices had already been foliated consecutively.

Junius's transcript, and by extension the first complete foliation of Cotton Vitellius A. XV., can be dated with confidence between 1628 and 1650. Junius lived in England from 1620 to 1650, but since the contents of the composite codex had not been settled until Richard James became librarian for Cotton, the *terminus a quo* must be moved up to 1628. Junius returned to England as an octogenarian in 1674, and died at Oxford in 1677, but the handwriting of the transcript is that of a young man.[23] Moreover, there is proof that Junius had worked extensively with Cotton Vitellius A. XV. during his first stay in England: in his edition of the Gothic and Anglo-Saxon Gospels, which he published in Amsterdam in 1665, he mentions his transcript of *The Soliloquia of St. Augustine* (Bodleian MS Junius 70) and his collation of *The Gospel of Nicodemus* (Bodleian MS Junius 74).[24] In all, then, it seems safe to conclude that, since Junius refers to it between 1628 and 1650, the first complete foliation of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. was made between 1628 and 1638, when Richard James was Cotton's librarian, and after the contents of the composite codex had been settled.[25]

The next reference to this first complete foliation of the codex was made in the year 1703 as part of the report on the state of the Cottonian

23. The argument is Dobbie's, *Beowulf and Judith,* pp. xxii–xxiii, n. 7.

24. See Junius's address to the reader (n. pag.) in *Quatuor D. N. Jesu Christi* EVANGELIORUM *versiones perantiquae duae, Gothica scil. et Anglo-Saxonica.* According to his first biographer, however, Junius expressly returned to England in 1674 to work with Anglo-Saxon MSS at the Cottonian Library; it is obvious that Junius, even as an octogenarian, had enormous energy, and the possibility that he transcribed the *Judith* fragment after 1674, though remote, should not be ruled out altogether. See Johannes Georgius Graevius, "Vita Francisci F. F. Junii."

25. As Förster points out (*Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* p. 6), the foliation was not written by James himself, but it is not to be supposed that James foliated all of Cotton's books by himself. The *Catalogue of the Cotton MSS. Circa 1635* (BL Add. MS. 36,789), done during James's tenure but not by James, contains a rough copy of the *Elenchus contentorum,* combining items 3 and 4 and leaving no space for *Beowulf* between items 6 and 8 (fol. 29v). The earliest Cotton catalogue, *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum in Bibliotheca Roberti Cottoni, 1621* (BL Harley MS 6018), does not mention Vitellius A. XV., though, as C. E. Wright suggests, it "may be concealed under the word 'Saxon.'" "The Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries and the Formation of the Cottonian Library," p. 199.

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Library. In that year, the trustees of the library commissioned the antiquaries Matthew Hutton, John Anstis, and Humfrey Wanley, along with the Cotton librarian, Thomas Smith, to inspect the contents of the library, and to correct Smith's *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecæ Cottonianæ* (1696). A primary duty of this commission was to correct foliations and to provide them where they were lacking. Wanley, of course, wanted to do much more, but the draft of his letter "To M^{r} Speaker" (that is, Robert Harley, the chief trustee), dated 29 May 1703, and preserved in BL MS Harley 7055, clarifies the main duty:

> If the Books in the Library were only to have their Leaves Number'd and to be Compar'd with D^{r} Smith's Catalogue, (as some of the Inspectors do Apprehend) the work will be at an end, as soon as they can find all things in their Places, which the Doctor ha's specified. But I understand your Honors Commands otherwise. . . . Sir, I am fearful that there may arise some differences in Opinion among the Inspectors, as to what is *Wanting* in D^{r} Smith's Catalogue. The Act of Parliament ha's most judiciously observed one thing, viz. *the not Numbering the Leaves of Every Book.* (fol. 25)

Wanley was soon to discover that his more elaborate conception of his job was not going to be encouraged by the beleaguered librarian and cataloguer, Thomas Smith. A note in Wanley's hand, dated May 31, on fol. 21 of BL MS Harley 7055, reads:

> We attended on D^{r}. Smith in Obedience to the Commands of the Trustees for his Assistance at the Cottonian Library in order to the Inspection of the Books, &c. contained therein: The D^{r} said that he could not go along with us now, but would be there next Saturday by 10 a clock: at which time he would Agree that we should Inspect the Books: that is, compare the Numbers inscribed in them, with his Printed Catalogue; but would not then permit us to Examine the Books, as to the Tracts they comprehend, or allow any access to the Charters at all, saying that the former would take up more time than his hea[l]th would permit, & that the Latter ought not to be done 'till a Library-keeper be appointed.

Smith had no intention of helping Wanley humiliate him. The final report on the state of the library (Bodleian MS. Add. D. 82) shows that both Wanley and Smith had to bend a little. The "Books, Charters,

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Coins, & other Rarities contained in the said Library" (fol. i) were all duly inspected, despite Smith, but the other inspectors managed to rein Wanley's more elaborate plans for perfecting Smith's catalogue. Wanley had to report, on behalf of the group, that the inspectors did not

> conceive it to be required by y*our* Hono*rs* That we should compare all these Tracts with D^r^. Smith's Catalogue to Correct such Mistakes in it as might occurr, or to Insert the Titles of such Tracts as are omitted; because this seems to be a Work of time: But only to observe y^e^ Volume each Book is written in; the Number of Leaves it contains; and whether the Book be of paper or Parchm*ent*, or both.

Fortunately, Wanley himself rectified these shortcomings in his own catalogue, published two years later.

The study of the first foliation of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. was not made by Wanley, however. Apparently, Matthew Hutton was in charge of checking the foliations of the Vitellius MSS, for there is a list of these MSS on fol. 87 of BL MS Harley 7055 that is not in Wanley's hand. A note by Frederic Madden in the upper left margin of this folio reads, "This is in D^r^. Matthew Hutton's handwriting. FM." For Cotton Vitellius A. XV. Hutton makes the following notations:

> A. 15. fol. 205. preter 1 fol. in indic. male numerat.
> pergam.
> fol. 154 bis numeratus

Hutton's comments tell us that Cotton Vitellius A. XV. was a parchment codex containing 205 folios and a table of contents (that is, James's *Elenchus contentorum*); that the first foliation was inaccurate *(male numeratus)*; and that fol. 154 (in *Beowulf*) had been numbered twice. The most astonishing comment is that, by Hutton's count, the codex contained 205 folios, rather than 206. Surprisingly, the first foliation numbered 206 leaves, and the *Judith* fragment began on fol. 199 because fol. 154 had been numbered twice. In other words, a folio was missing from the codex when Hutton checked the accuracy of the first foliation. As we shall see, Hutton was right.

The second foliation is implied in Hutton's corrections of the first, which give the important information that a folio was missing in the

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17th century. However, since the corrections of Smith's catalogue had been limited to observing "y^{e} Volume each Book is written in; the Number of Leaves it contains; and whether the Book be of paper or Parchm*ent*," the second foliation numbers were not subsequently recorded in Smith's corrected catalogue. Only the number of leaves (205) was noted.[26] The first real application of the second foliation numbers came two years later, in Humfrey Wanley's mighty *Antiquæ Literaturæ Septentrionalis Liber Alter, seu Humphredi Wanleii Librorum Vett. Septentrionalium, qui in Angliæ Bibliothecis extant, nec non multorum Vett. Codd. Septentrionalium alibi extantium Catalogus Historico-Criticus, cum totius Thesauri Linguarum Septentrionalium sex Indicibus.*[27] For obvious reasons, this important book is better known as Wanley's Catalogue. As N. R. Ker says in the opening paragraph of his own catalogue, Wanley's "catalogue of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts is a book which scholars will continue to use, or neglect at their own peril. His opinion on any given matter will always be worth knowing" (*Catalogue,* p. xiii).

Nonetheless, scholars have persistently neglected the foliation numbers Wanley gives for the Nowell Codex. Their reason for doing so was the assumption (which we now know was wrong) that the Nowell Codex was unfoliated before the fire, and that Wanley was somehow incapable of counting the folios correctly himself. Malone, for instance, uses Wanley's seemingly inaccurate foliation as evidence that the Nowell Codex was unfoliated before the fire: "For want of such a foliation, Cotton's bookbinder made serious mistakes in ordering the sheets of the codex and Wanley's count of folios here is repeatedly inaccurate. The 90 leaves of the Southwick Codex, however, were early numbered. . . . By virtue of this foliation, Cotton's bookbinder made no mistakes in ordering the sheets of the Southwick codex and Wanley's count of folios here is uniformly accurate" (*Nowell Codex,* p. 12; cf. Hoops, p. 4). As a matter of fact, Wanley's count of folios was accurate when it was made, and this first full record of the second foliation provides some

26. The notation, in Wanley's hand, is made on p. 83 of Harley's copy of Smith's catalogue: it reads, *Cod. membr. in 4to constans folijs 205.* Since the descriptive phrase, *in 4to,* does not depend on Hutton, Wanley's count of folios may also be independent.

27. It was published as volume two of George Hickes, *Linguarum Vett. Septentrionalium Thesaurus Grammatico-Criticus et Archaeologicus.* Both volumes were reissued in 1970 in the FS series *English Linguistics: 1500–1800.*

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valuable information about the state of the codex before the fire. Wanley's use of the second foliation in his catalogue confirms that there were only 205 folios in the codex at the time; indicates that there was a blank leaf between the Southwick and Nowell codices before the fire, which was replaced by a blank paper sheet when the new binding was made; proves that the first 10 folios of the Nowell Codex were already out of order before the fire; and shows that the missing folio came from *Beowulf.*

Wanley says that the *St. Christopher* fragment began on fol. 92 and that the *Judith* fragment began on fol. 199, while the MS foliation numbers the same section, from the beginning of the *St. Christopher* fragment to the beginning of the *Judith* fragment, 91 through 199. This discrepancy confirms Hutton's count of 205 folios, rather than 206, and shows that the missing folio came from the Nowell Codex, but before the *Judith* fragment. The first step in understanding the relation between the second foliation, used by Wanley, and the MS foliation is the realization that Wanley must have counted a blank leaf after the Southwick Codex: he says for the last page of the Southwick Codex, *fol. 90^{b}. Fragmentum de SS. Jesu Christi martyribus* (that is, the eleven-line *St. Quintin* fragment); but then, for the first page of the Nowell Codex, he says *fol. 92. Legenda de S. Christophoro Martyre.* One cannot seriously argue that Wanley miscounted a folio here, for if there was not a blank vellum leaf separating the two codices, the last page of the Southwick Codex and the first page of the Nowell Codex would be facing pages. Wanley would not have written 90^{b} for the left facing page and 92 for the right facing page.

It is admittedly uncharacteristic for Wanley to have counted a blank leaf in his foliation. He says in his report on the state of the Cottonian Library in 1703 that many of the erroneous foliations "seem to be occasioned . . . by their numbring Blank Leaves having nothing at all written upon them (which we conceive to be done amiss, since such leaves are of no use or value)" (Bodleian MS Add. D. 82). But Wanley had a good reason for counting the blank leaf at the start of the Nowell Codex. The discovery by Hutton that fol. 154 had been numbered twice in the first foliation meant that Junius's reference to fol. 199 as the first page of the *Judith* fragment was wrong by one. Junius had left all of his MSS and transcripts, including his transcript of the *Judith* fragment, to the Bodleian Library, Oxford, where Wanley had been assistant

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librarian until December 1700. As a librarian, Wanley would have recognized the value of maintaining the start of the *Judith* fragment at fol. 199. Edward Thwaites, who had published the first edition of *Judith* in 1698, and who was in charge of printing Wanley's catalogue,[28] may have provided other incentives. It is certain that Wanley had these two considerations in mind, at any rate, when he described Cotton Vitellius A. XV., for to his description of *Judith* he adds, *Quod descripsit cl. Junius, è cujus Apographo illus typis edidit Edwardus Thwaitesius, in libro suo supra laudat.*

After one realizes that Wanley counted a blank leaf, for whatever reason, between the Southwick and Nowell codices, his strange foliation of the Nowell Codex makes sense. The first ten folios of the Nowell Codex were out of order, one must remember, when the MS foliation was made in the late 18th century, and Wanley's foliation shows that these folios were already out of order before the fire, when the second foliation was made. To illustrate the accuracy of Wanley's foliation the following table shows how Wanley's numbers (fol. 92 and fol. 98v) for the beginnings of the *St. Christopher* fragment and *The Wonders of the East* reflect the former disorder of the first ten folios of the Nowell Codex:

Wanley	*MS*	*Textual references*	
fol. 92	91	*Christopher,*	pp. 5–6
—	92	"	pp. 7–8
—	93	"	pp. 1–2
—	94	"	pp. 3–4
—	95	*Wonders,*	pp. 8–9
—	96	"	pp. 10–11
fol. 98v	97v	*Christopher,*	p. 9; *Wonders,* p. 1 (on the verso)
—	98	*Wonders,*	pp. 2–3
—	99	"	pp. 4–5
—	100	"	pp. 6–7

Like the uncorrected MS foliation, Wanley's second foliation indicates that there were six and one-half folios in the *Christopher* fragment,

28. See J. A. W. Bennett, "Hickes's 'Thesaurus': A Study in Oxford Book-Production." Thwaites's first edition of *Judith,* in his *Heptateuchus, Liber Job, et Evangelium Nicodemi: Anglo-Saxonice. Historiae Judith Fragmentum; Dano-Saxonice,* was based on Junius's transcript, rather than on the MS. Note that Thwaites calls the language of *Judith* "Dano-Saxon."

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rather than four and one-half, as there should have been. The two extra folios were the two (95 and 96 of the uncorrected MS foliation) misplaced from *The Wonders of the East*. But since Wanley began on fol. 92, he was right that *The Wonders of the East* began on fol. 98v. Wanley's numbers are one in advance of the corresponding MS numbers (91 and 97v) because he counted the blank leaf preceding the *St. Christopher* fragment. For the same reason, he says that *Beowulf* begins on fol. 130, rather than 129. He does not give a folio number for the beginning of *Alexander's Letter,* but the count of folios between the start of *The Wonders of the East* and the start of *Beowulf* is the same as the count in the MS foliation: in other words, two folios are missing between 98v and 130, which correspond to the two extra folios between 92 and 98v. Obviously, up to and including the start of *Beowulf,* Wanley's second foliation and the uncorrected MS foliation correspond, once an allowance of one folio is made for the blank leaf that must have separated the Southwick and Nowell codices when Wanley made his description.

What is most interesting, and most important, about Wanley's second foliation is what it implicitly tells us about the state of the *Beowulf* MS prior to the fire. The missing folio, first reflected in Hutton's count of folios for Cotton Vitellius A. XV., must have come from *Beowulf,* since Wanley records that *Beowulf* began on fol. 130, and that the *Judith* fragment began on fol. 199. Unless a folio was missing from *Beowulf,* the *Judith* fragment should have begun by Wanley's foliation on fol. 200, or one folio in advance of the MS foliation. By Wanley's second foliation, then, *Beowulf* before the fire consisted of only sixty-nine folios, rather than seventy.[29] This remarkable feature of Wanley's foliation has always been ignored in the past, because all of his foliation appeared to be inaccurate. Now that we know, from Hutton, that Cotton Vitellius A. XV. was lacking a folio before the fire, and that Wanley's apparently inaccurate foliation accurately reflects the disorder of the Nowell Codex before the fire, we know also that the missing folio came from *Beowulf.* Two facts may be immediately deduced regarding the whereabouts of this missing *Beowulf* folio. The first is that it must have been included

29. Thorkelin, who saw the MS after the fire and before the MS foliation was made, comes up with the same number (*foliis LXIX constante*) on the page prefacing his transcript (*Thorkelin Transcripts,* p. C). Evidently it was Thorkelin who discovered the missing folio, since his transcription is complete.

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somewhere in the bound codex, since none of the seventy *Beowulf* folios has escaped the general fire damage along the top and right sides that was sustained by *all* folios in the codex. The second fact is more revealing: the missing folio must have been with the *Judith* fragment, since Wanley, by his folio numbers, accounts for all of the folios prior to the *Judith* fragment.

With this help, the mystery of the missing *Beowulf* folio can be solved. The folio from *Beowulf* was not inserted in the *Judith* fragment, or Junius, presumably, would have transcribed it by mistake, and certainly Hutton would have counted it, and come up with 206 folios for Cotton Vitellius A. XV. instead of 205. The only place for it, then, is at the end of the codex, after the *Judith* fragment, where Hutton could regard it as a flyleaf, not to be counted in the foliation. Hutton does not count the flyleaves (that is, the three prefixed leaves) at the beginning of the codex either. The folio from *Beowulf* that served as the ending flyleaf of Vitellius A. XV. in Cotton's original binding can be identified by means of the fire damage it incurred in its position at the end of the codex in 1731. The last page of the *Judith* fragment is scorched and burned, and the only page from *Beowulf* that is more scorched and burned is the last page, or fol. 198v of the MS foliation. Further proof that the last folio of *Beowulf* followed the last folio of the *Judith* fragment at the time of the fire will be considered later, and will include an explanation of how and even why the *Beowulf* folio was deliberately misplaced. But to put off any possible skepticism now, it may be noted in passing that the small hole burned through line 17 on fol. 206v of the *Judith* fragment corresponds to the larger hole burned through the same area on fol. 198v of *Beowulf*. There can be no doubt that fol. 198 was at the end of the codex at the time of the fire, as Wanley's second foliation allows one to deduce.

The third foliation is the MS foliation in the Nowell Codex, the restoration of the old foliation (still partly extant) in the Southwick Codex. The common belief[30] that this foliation was written on the MS leaves soon after the fire is wrong. It was not done until sometime after 1787, because fol. 147A(131), from *Beowulf*, was not misplaced until 1787, when the Thorkelin transcripts were being made. The folio was in its

30. See Förster, *Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* p. 6; Hoops, "Die Foliierung," p. 5; and Malone, *Nowell Codex,* p. 12.

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proper place for the first transcript, but was out of place for the second. Hence the MS foliation must be dated after the second Thorkelin transcript. It is interesting to note, however, that the last folio of *Beowulf* was no longer a flyleaf at the end of the codex by 1787. It seems safe to assume that it was Thorkelin himself who discovered the misplacement of the last *Beowulf* folio and restored it to its proper place, for as far as we know he was the first person after Wanley to read *Beowulf* with any comprehension. The third or MS foliation can be dated with some confidence between 1793 and 1801. This foliation was first officially used in 1802 by Joseph Planta, then the principal librarian of the British Museum, in *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library, Deposited in the British Museum.* Planta tells us in his preface that the curators of the museum directed him, in 1793, to begin work on the catalogue, and that his "first care . . . was to cause all of the volumes to be regularly paged" (p. xiv).

Planta's description of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. (pp. 380–381) was hastily dismissed by Förster as a servile copy of Wanley's description (p. 72). It is true that Planta bases his description on Wanley's, and he is somewhat misleading about his dependence on Wanley. His description of *Beowulf,* for instance, is drawn verbatim from Wanley, yet Planta deliberately hides his debt by saying, *Hunc Cl. Wanleius 'Poeseos Anglo-Saxonicæ egregium exemplum,' nuncupavit.* Still, Förster overlooks the fact that Planta makes new observations of his own and, more important, that Planta changed Wanley's foliation numbers. Planta was following the new MS foliation. Here is Planta's description, with the new folio numbers in the right margin:

Vitellius, A. XV.

Codex membran. in 4to. foliis constans 206.

1. Notulæ de numero parochiarum, villarum, feodorumque militum in Anglia; et de expugnatione Caleti per R. Edwardum III. Folio rejectanes verso.
2. Flores ex libro soliloquiorum D. Augustini Hipponensis Episc. selecti, et Saxonice versi, per Ælfredum regem. Tractatus iste

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Plates 6a and 6b. The corresponding holes burned through fol. 198v17 of *Beowulf* and fol. 206v17 of the *Judith* fragment show that fol. 198 was misplaced at the end of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. at the time of the fire, 1731.

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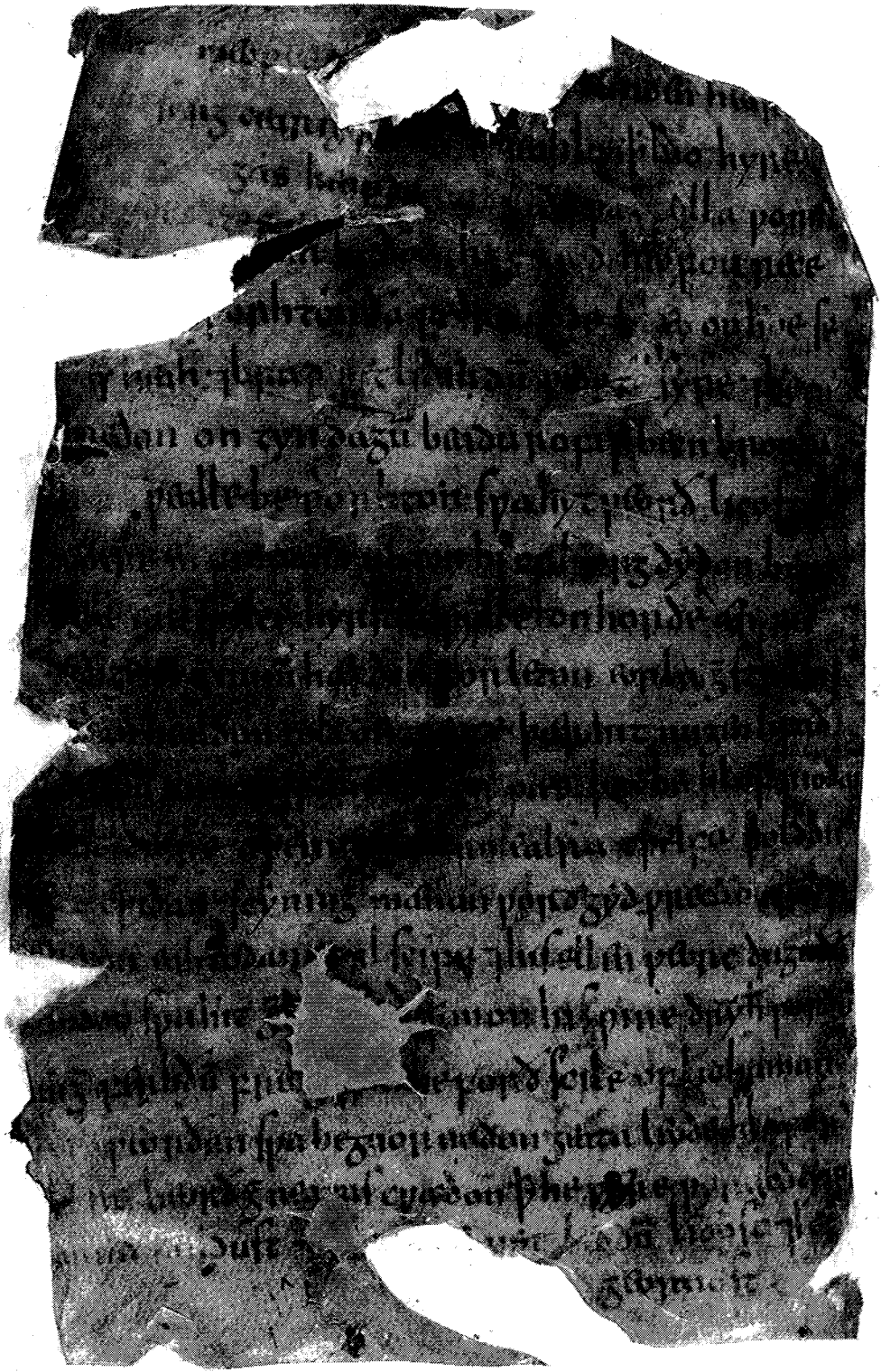

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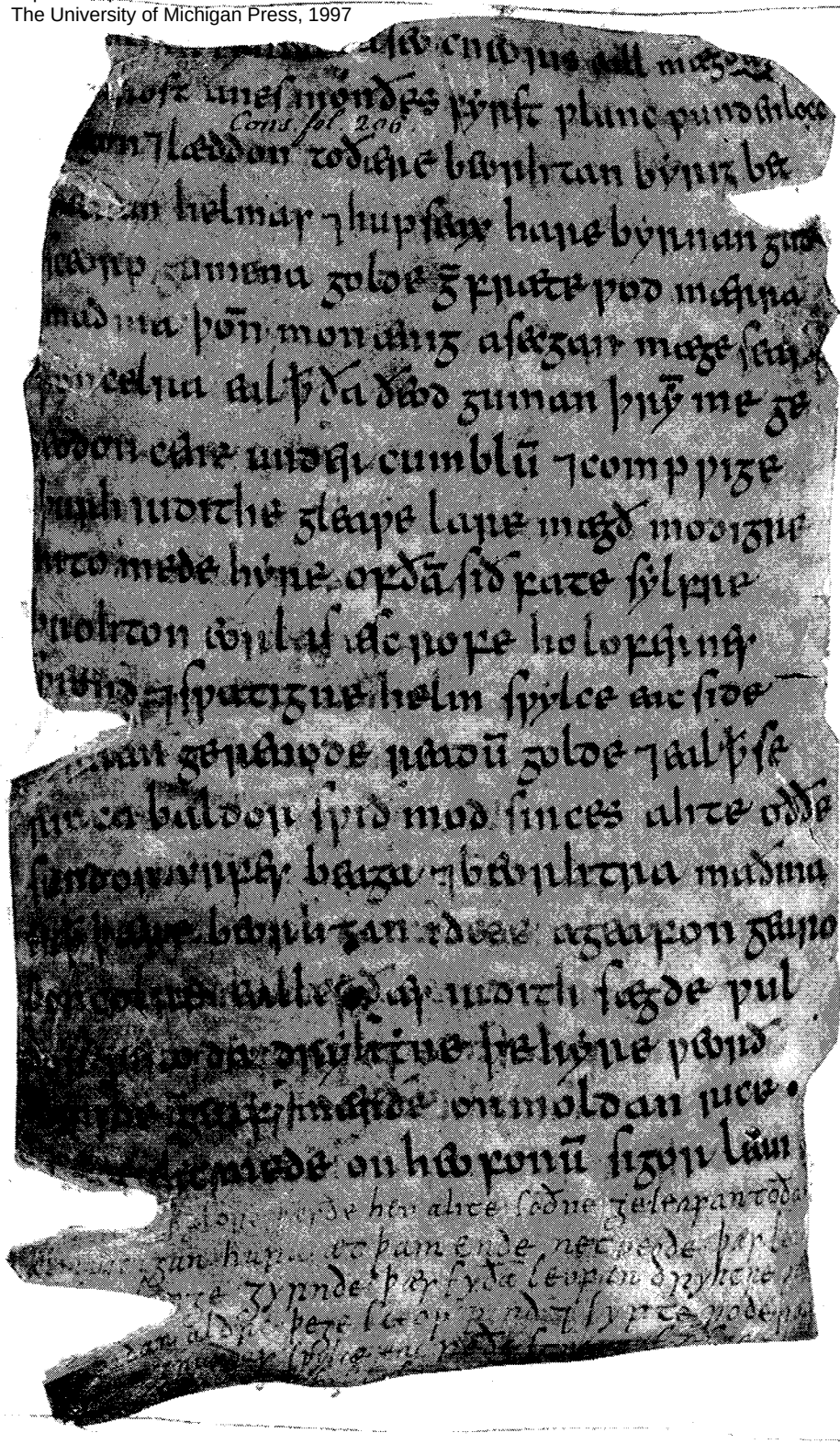

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quondam fuit ecclesiæ B. Mariæ de Suwika, ut patet ex fol. 2. literis Normanno-Saxonicis, post conquæstum scriptus. 1.

3. Pseudo-Evangelium Nicodemi, Saxonice, capite, mutilum; cujus exemplaris variantes lectiones apographo suo, ex codice Cantabrigiensi descripto, attexuit Cl. Junius, ut videre est pag. 96 — Extat ad calcem Heptateuchi a Thwaitesio editi. 57.
4. Dialogus inter Saturnum et Salomonem; Saxonice. 83b.
5. Fragmentum de SS. Jesu Christi martyribus; Saxonice. 90b.
6. Legenda de S. Christophoro martyre; Saxonice; capite et calce mutila. 91.
7. Descriptio fabulosa Orientis, et monstrorum quæ ibi nascuntur; cum figuris male delineatis; capite et calce mutila; haud diversa ab illa (Latinis exceptis quæ in hoc codice desunt) quam exhibit codex qui inscribitur. Tib. B. V. 51. 95.
8. Alexandri ad Aristotelem de situ Indiæ, &c epistola; Saxonice. 104.
9. Tractatus poeticus, quo descripta videntur bella quæ Beowulfus quidam Danus, ex regia Scyldingorum stirpe ortus, gessit contra Sueciæ regulos. — Hunc Cl. Wanleius "Poeseos Anglo-Saxonicæ egregium exemplum," nuncupavit. 129.
10. Fragmentum poeticum historiæ Judithæ et Holofernis, Dano-Saxonice, ante conquæstum scriptum: quod descripsit Cl. Junius; e cujus apographo illud typis edidit Edw. Twaitesius ad calcem Heptateuchi. 199.

This description is unquestionably based on an independent study of the MS, despite the heavy reliance on Wanley. The new foliation of the last five articles, that is, of the Nowell Codex, is enough to prove this. In his preface, Planta says of the method in his catalogue, "The folio of each article has been entered; and the number of folios in each volume has been noted, both in the catalogue and at the end of the volume, in hopes thereby to prevent all future mutilation, or at least to lay it open to detection" (p. xv). These remarks make it possible to ascribe the MS foliation to Planta: the total number of folios in Cotton Vitellius A. XV. is duly noted, both in his catalogue *(foliis constans 206)* and at the end of the MS, on the last page of the *Judith* fragment *(Cons. fol. 206)*. The number 206 is written by the same hand that wrote the MS foliation in the Nowell Codex, and since *Beowulf* fol. 147A(131) was not misplaced until 1787, the foliation must be associated with Planta.

What is remarkable about the foliation, as it appears in the catalogue, is that at first glance it suggests that the first ten folios of the

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Nowell Codex had been put in their right order: according to Planta, *The Wonders of the East* begins on fol. 95, rather than 97, as the uncorrected MS foliation says. The following table can elucidate this misleading feature of Planta's catalogue.

Planta's catalogue	*MS*	*Textual references* (with folios out of order)
fol. 91	91	*Christopher,* pp. 5–6
—	92	" pp. 7–8
—	93	" pp. 1–2
—	94	" pp. 3–4
fol. 95	95	*Wonders,* pp. 8–9
—	96	" pp. 10–11
—	97	*Christopher,* p. 9; *Wonders,* p. 1
—	98	*Wonders,* pp. 2–3
—	99	" pp. 4–5
—	100	" pp. 6–7

Obviously, Planta did not realize when he wrote the MS foliation that the first ten folios of the Nowell Codex were out of order. With the first two and the next two folios of the *St. Christopher* fragment transposed, and with the last page lost in the middle of *The Wonders of the East,* Planta's claim that the *St. Christopher* fragment had lost its beginning *and ending (capite et calce mutila)* makes sense. Similarly, with the two folios from *The Wonders of the East* misplaced, this text would seem to begin as a fragment *(capite . . . mutila)* on fol. 95.

The last three foliations of Cotton Vitellius A. XV.—the fourth, fifth, and sixth—are all recorded on the paper frames of the 19th-century binding. The fourth foliation is written in pencil in the upper right corners, recto, of the frames; it corrects most of the errors of the third, Planta's MS foliation.[31] It renumbers the first ten folios of the Nowell Codex from 91–100, but with the folios in their right order: for clarity, the third and fourth foliations should be used in tandem, with the MS numbers in parentheses, when citing these ten folios. The double references, 91(93), 92(94), 93(91), 94(92), 95(97), 96(98), 97(99), 98(100), 99(95), 100(96), will provide the proper sequence of these

31. As Daunt points out in her review of Hoops, "In the extreme right-hand top of the page, in some cases a number appears half cut away by the trimming of the page—where it can be seen . . . it appears to be the same as the pencilled numbering just described." "Old English Studies," p. 75.

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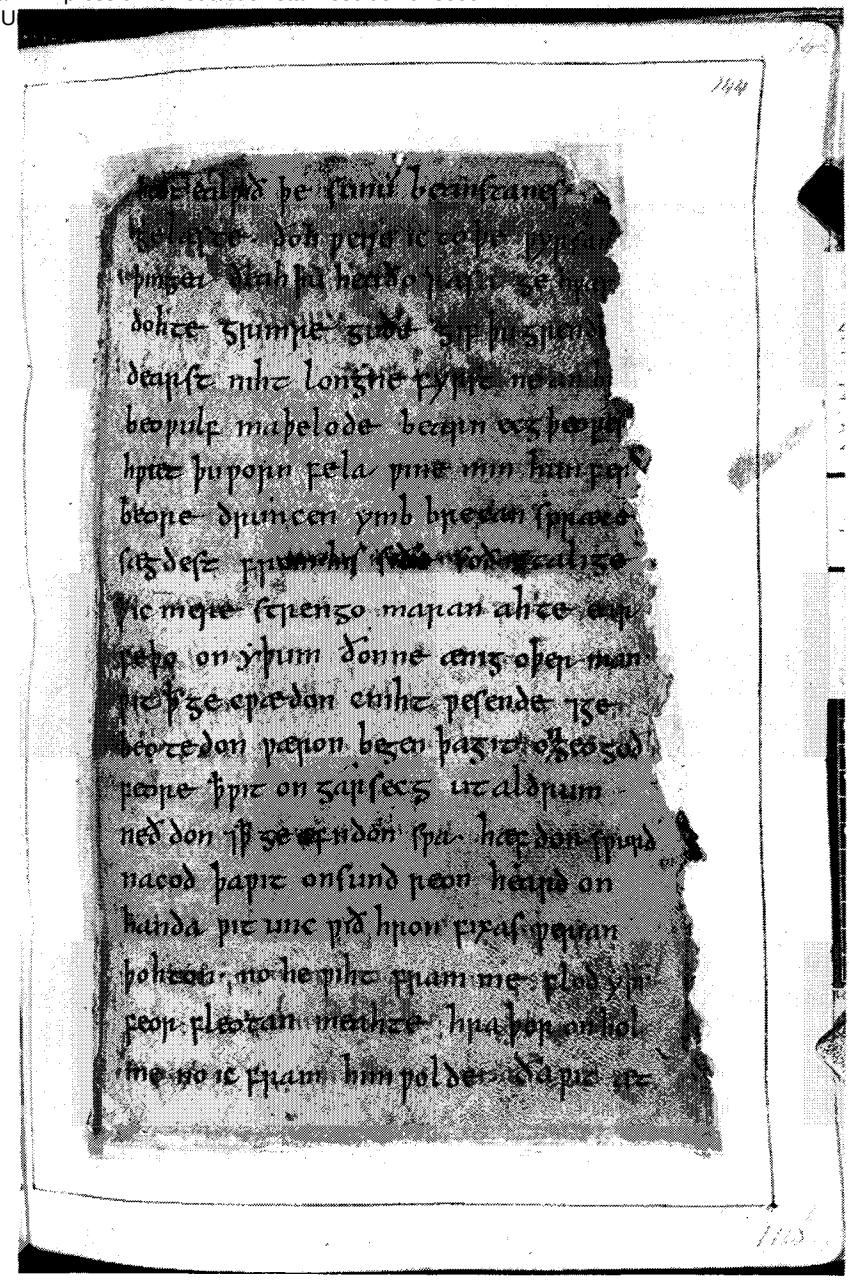

Plate 7. MS fol. 142r reduced. The protective paper frames of Gough's 1845 binding record the fourth foliation, crossed out in the extreme upper right corner; the fifth foliation in the lower right corner; and the sixth foliation, inside the ruled border of the upper right corner.

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folios, preserve the fact of their former disorder, and simultaneously explain the erroneous MS foliation. The two misplaced folios from *Beowulf,* 131 and 197, were back in their proper places for the fourth foliation, but the fourth foliation does not renumber them, no doubt to prevent having to refoliate *Beowulf* from fol. 130 onward. The double references, 147A(131) and 189A(197), achieve the same result, but have the advantage of simultaneously indicating the present, correct locations and the former, incorrect locations. The fourth foliation does not correct the transposition of the two gatherings from *Alexander's Letter.*

The discovery of the proper order for the first ten folios of the Nowell Codex was made in two stages sometime in the interval between the writing of the third foliation on the MS and the writing of the fourth foliation on the paper frames of the new binding. Before the MS leaves were set in the paper frames, two different hands wrote catchwords in the lower right corners, verso, of folios 92(94) and 98(100). Malone, as far as I know, is the only scholar to have interpreted the purpose of these catchwords at all, and he is certainly wrong about them. He says of the catchword on fol. 92(94)v: "Lower margin: At the extreme right, some interpolator wrote *forðon* in a modern imitation of the insular hand; after it he set a point and the figure 96, but the 6 has been crossed out and a 1 set over it. The next folio in the MS as it now stands is 91, old foliation, but 96, official foliation. This folio begins with *forðon.* The interpolation was obviously made after the adoption, in 1884, of the present foliation of the MS" (*Nowell Codex,* pp. 33–34). Malone's explanation does not bear scrutiny. No one at the British Museum would be writing on the vellum leaves of the MS as late as 1884. The leaves had long been mounted in the paper frames by then, and if the catchwords were written as late as Malone maintains, they would have been written on the paper frames, not on the vellum. Malone did not realize that the *purpose* of the catchword was to identify the folio that should, but did not, follow fol. 92(94) when the catchword was written. That folio was the first misplaced folio of the MS foliation, fol. 93(91). Thus the catchword predates the 1845 rebinding, and indeed made it possible to rebind the folio in its proper place in 1845. The correction

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Plates 8a and 8b. The catchwords in the bottom right corners of fols. 92(94)v and 98(100)v identified the proper sequence of the first ten folios of the Nowell Codex.

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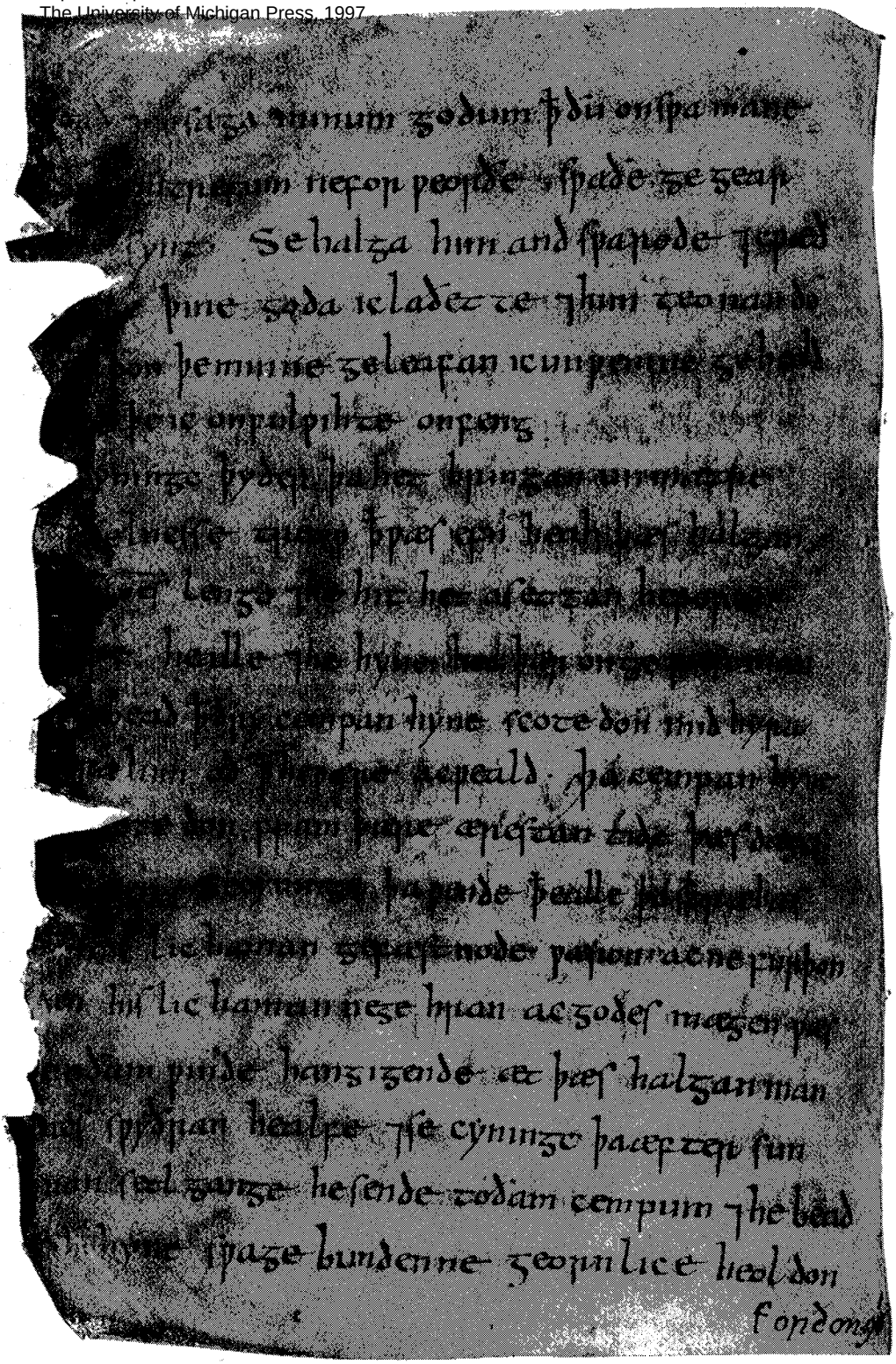

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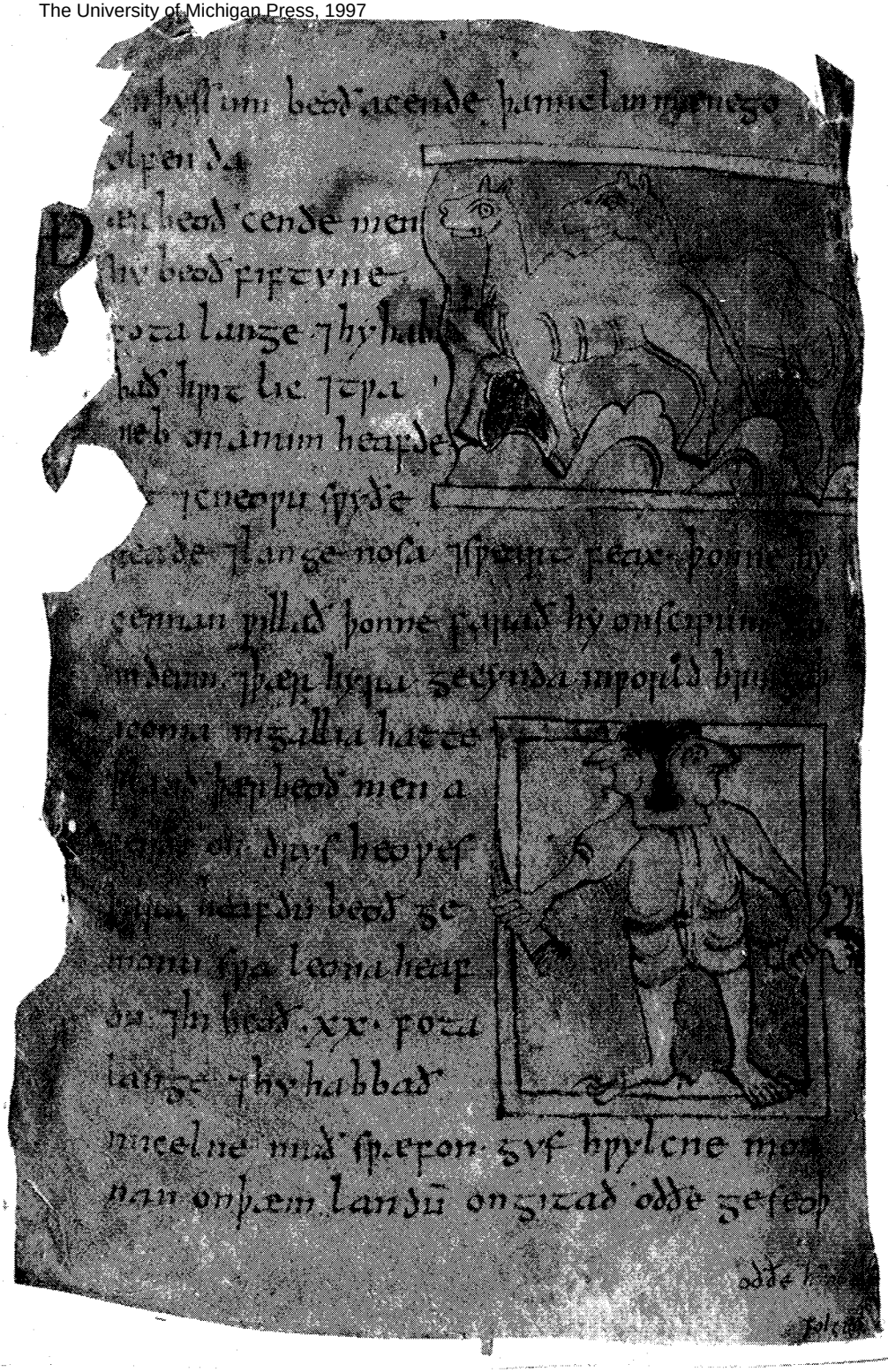

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was made in two stages, as the difference in ink shows. One interpolator, mistakenly thinking that the folio should precede fol. 96 of the MS foliation, wrote 96 in the lower right corner. The number seems to be in the same hand as the MS foliation itself. A second interpolator, still using the MS foliation, corrected 96 to 91, and wrote in *forðon* before the number to indicate that this page had to be placed before fol. 93(91) to correct the order of the folios.

Yet another interpolator (compare the handwriting with *forðon*) performed the same service for the other misplaced folios in the sequence. Malone says of the catchwords on fol. 98(100)v: "The catch-words in the right-hand corner anticipate the first words of the next page. . . . I read /odðe him h[w]i[lc]/ for the first line, /folgian/ for the second" (*Nowell Codex,* p. 36). His reading, however, is incorrect. Some of the letters are badly faded, but they can still be made out with confidence. The interpolator incorrectly copied *oððe him hwilc man folgiende* as *odðe him man folgiande,* his major error being the omission of *hwilc.* His other two errors are spelling mistakes, the first of which (*odðe* for *oððe*) is supported by the way the Old English scribe crossed his *d*'s with a single stroke. These catchwords were demonstrably written before 1845, when the vellum leaves were inlaid in the paper frames, for the *n* in *man* and the *g* of *folgiande* are partly covered by the paper frame. Although the catchwords on folios 92(94)v and 98(100)v were written by two different people, they were obviously written before the fourth foliation, since the fourth foliation benefits from them by ordering and numbering the first ten folios of the Nowell Codex correctly. The catchwords showed that fol. 93(91) should follow fol. 92(94), and that fol. 99(95) should follow fol. 98(100). With these as guides, it was possible for Gough to put the first ten folios of the Nowell Codex in their proper order when he inlaid and rebound Cotton Vitellius A. XV. in August 1845.

The fifth foliation is written in pencil in the lower right corners, recto, of the paper frames. It is quite likely that the fifth foliation was never intended by the archivist who made it to supersede the fourth foliation. It seems strange, at any rate, that it would have been written in the lower right corners if it was meant to be considered the official foliation at any time. Possibly, the fifth foliation stems from an archivist's desire to keep an *additional* record of the leaves in Cotton Vitellius A. XV., which included the three prefixed leaves as well as the two blank

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paper leaves that were placed in the codex when the MS was rebound in the 19th century. As we have seen, the second blank paper leaf, after fol. 90, may well have replaced a blank vellum leaf from Cotton's original binding, for Wanley apparently counted a vellum leaf here in his foliation. If the first paper leaf, after fol. 56, also replaced an original vellum leaf, there would be a good explanation for the purpose of the fifth foliation. Hoops (p. 7) and Malone (*Nowell Codex,* p. 12) believed that the blank paper leaves were inserted in the codex at the time of the new binding to emphasize that sections of the original MSS were missing at these points. This explanation, however, fails to account for the lack of a paper leaf before the *Judith* fragment. It also fails to explain why an archivist then counted a blank leaf, representing an indeterminate number of lost folios, as a single folio.

If, on the other hand, the blank paper leaves replaced blank vellum leaves, there would be a reason why no blank paper leaf was inserted before the *Judith* fragment (there was no blank vellum leaf to replace), and there would be a reason for numbering the blank leaves as single folios in the fifth foliation (to represent the former existence of blank vellum leaves). Nor is it hard to explain how two blank paper leaves could have come to replace two blank vellum leaves when the codex was rebound in the 19th century. After the fire, when each leaf of the MS was mounted in the paper frames, the mounter substituted paper leaves for the vellum leaves because he did not see the need to mount empty vellum, especially since the MS foliation did not count them anyway. This interpretation of the origin of the two blank paper leaves also explains the origin of the fifth foliation, which, by counting five folios that had never been counted before, and were not Old English texts, would seem only to be creating problems where no problems existed. The officials at the British Museum wanted to record, as precisely as possible, the state of the codex before the new binding: the count in the lower right corners achieved this purpose without directly supplanting the MS foliation of the Old English texts. Surely, the officials who made the count knew the significance of the blank paper leaves, or they would not have been counted as single folios. These officials, whoever they were, were not amateurs, and it is unreasonable to believe that they would have counted modern paper leaves in the fifth foliation if these leaves merely represented an indeterminate number of lost folios.

If the fifth foliation was indeed only meant to supplement the MS

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foliation, it nevertheless came to have full status as a "neue foliierung" or "neue zählung" in Alfred Holder's paper on the collation he made in 1876 of *The Wonders of the East* and *Alexander's Letter.* It was abandoned in 1884, but not before it had caused some major confusion among scholars. Somehow, Förster managed to confuse it with the 1884 foliation. He says that this "Blätterzählung, die auf der unteren rechten Ecke des Papierrahmens angebracht ist, wurde erst nach 1884 eingeführt" (p. 10). Thus Förster considered the fifth foliation the last, and because he distinguishes only three distinct foliations, he refers to it as the third foliation, instead of the second. Since Förster's description of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. is the only full description of the MS there is, the various foliations of it have been very poorly understood indeed.

The sixth foliation has already been discussed in some detail in the section on the prefixed leaves. Like the fifth foliation it counts the three prefixed leaves, and like the fifth foliation it has been pervasively inaccurate since the first prefixed leaf was removed from the codex in 1913. Unlike the fifth foliation it does not count the two blank paper leaves, but if these leaves replace blank vellum leaves, as the evidence suggests, the sixth foliation only shares the inaccuracy of the fifth foliation. The sixth, then, tells us nothing about the codex that cannot be told in more efficient ways, and it hides important facts about the history of the codex that only the MS foliation clearly reveals to any extent. A return to the Old English MSS can now be facilitated by a return to the MS foliation preserved on them.

The Southwick Codex

The Southwick Codex takes its name from a decidedly threatening notice of ownership, written in a late 13th- or early 14th-century hand, on fol. 2r of *The Soliloquia of St. Augustine.* Part of the notice appears to have been destroyed along the bottom right margin, which is scorched, shrunken, creased, and covered by tape; but in fact the passage can be read in its entirety by holding the leaf up against strong light.

Plate 9. The notice of ownership for the Southwick Codex is in the bottom margin of fol. 2r.

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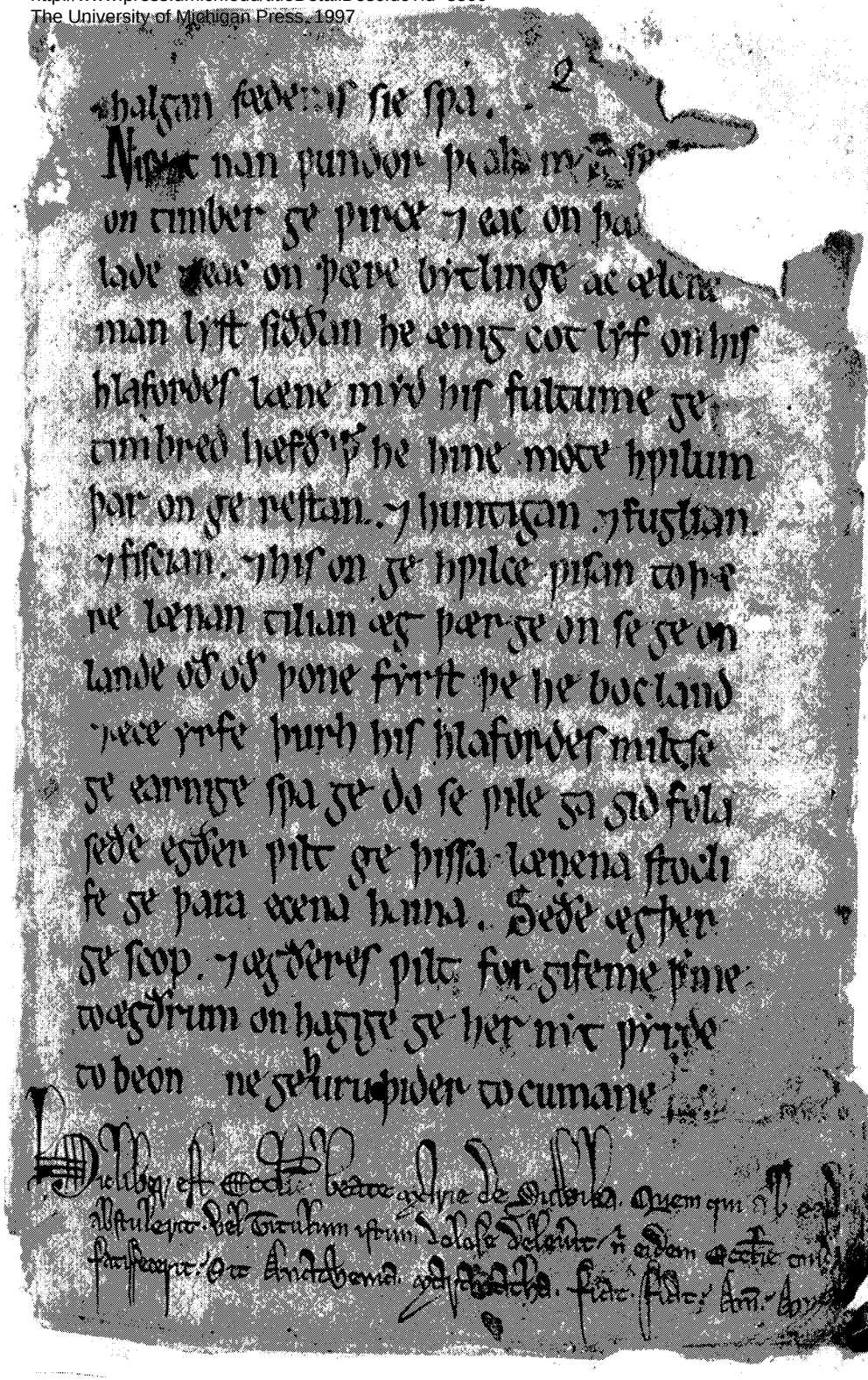

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The notice, for the first time transcribed in its entirety, stoutly proclaims:

> Hic liber est Eccl*es*ie beate Marie de Suwika. Quem qui ab eadem abstulerit. vel Titulum istum dolose deleu*er*it n*isi* eidem Eccl*es*ie condigne satisfecerit' Sit Anathema. Maranatha. Fiat. Fiat' Am*en*' Amen.[32]

The curse makes it perfectly clear that *The Soliloquia of St. Augustine,* at any rate, belonged at the time to the Augustinian priory of St. Mary in Southwick, Hampshire. Since the other three texts (the *Nicodemus* fragment, *The Debate of Solomon and Saturn,* and the *St. Quintin* fragment) were all copied by the same scribe, it is reasonable to assume that all four texts belonged to St. Mary's Priory, and to refer to this part of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. as the Southwick Codex. Moreover, there are rust marks from a previous binding on the first and last pages of this codex, which indicate that these four texts were bound together as a separate book before Cotton had them rebound at the beginning of Vitellius A. XV. But there are still other indications that the *Soliloquia* and the other three texts were, at an earlier stage, parts of two distinct codices.

Förster (p. 38) and Ker (*Catalogue*, p. 279) both date the script of the Southwick Codex in the mid-12th century, but they disagree over the number of scribes who copied the texts. Förster (pp. 24–25) maintained that one scribe copied the *Soliloquia,* and that a second scribe, with a remarkably similar script,[33] copied the other texts. Ker, while acknowledging that the script in the last three texts "has sometimes a more irregular appearance" than it has in the *Soliloquia,* categorically states that "there is no change of hand" (*Catalogue,* p. 208). Both positions are defensible, and, it seems to me, they share the truth. Förster

32. My transcript differs from those of Ker and Förster, who differ in some minor respects from each other, in pointing and in capitalization. Moreover, *condigne* and *eadem* are not conjectural restorations; they can be read with certainty along the burned and taped edge by holding the page up to the light. Förster read *cond*::::, and remarkably suggested *condigne* in his note (*Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* p. 54, n. 1). Ker read *tandem,* confusing *co* and *ta* (but this scribe uniformly draws a large loop over his *a*'s).

33. "einen so einheitlichen Eindruck im Schriftduktus und in den Buchstabenformen, dass man zunächst nur einen Schreiber annehmen möchte."

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perhaps overplays the significance of slight variations in certain letterforms, and Ker underplays their significance by ignoring them and stressing the similarities of other letterforms. Both agree on the relative uniformity of the script in the *Soliloquia* as compared to the relative variety of letterforms in the following texts. Förster explains this difference as a difference in age between the two texts: "Hierzu stimmt auch die Beobachtung, dass die Schrift von [the first scribe] gleichmässiger und einheitlicher ist, wie das bei einem geübten Kopisten zu erwarten steht, während der jüngere Schreiber . . . mehrfach seine Buchstabenformen variiert, weil sie ihm noch nicht so fest in der Feder sitzen" (p. 25). The conflict between Ker's and Förster's views may be easily reconciled by assuming that the same scribe copied all of the texts of the Southwick Codex, but at two different times in his life. If Förster's deductions are acceptable, we may conclude that the scribe copied the *Nicodemus* fragment, *The Debate of Solomon and Saturn,* and the *St. Quintin* fragment, for one codex as a young man, and that he copied the *Soliloquia* for another codex as an older man, after his script had become more established and uniform.

The bad physical condition of the first page of the *Nicodemus* fragment supports this conclusion. The page is so thoroughly soiled and worn that it must have served as an outside cover for some time before the Southwick Codex, as it now exists, was assembled. Pages, or even gatherings, could have fallen out of the codex between the *Soliloquia* and the *Nicodemus* fragment, of course, but this would not explain how the first page of the *Nicodemus* fragment could come to be exposed to so much wear and tear. Besides, there is proof that the Southwick Codex was put together in a fragmentary state, for the rust marks at the end of the codex show that the *St. Quintin Homily* was already an eleven-line fragment at the time of the earlier binding. The fact that the codex was assembled and bound in a fragmentary state suggests that there was an intermediate owner of the texts between the Southwick priory and Sir Robert Cotton. However, evidence from medieval sheet signatures shows that the codex was already in its present, fragmented state, during the 13th century. There are also quire signatures, made in roman numerals, that corroborate the evidence from the sheet signatures.

The sheet and quire signatures make it possible to identify with relative certainty what is left of the original gatherings. Both series of signatures have been erroneously dated by Förster, who held that the quire

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signatures were probably contemporary with the MS (second quarter of the 12th century), and that the sheet signatures could be dated about a quarter of a century later (pp. 12 and 19). The quire signatures appear as roman numerals centered in the lower margins of the first folio of each quire. They were drawn with a rudimentary pencil, varying in color from reddish brown to almost black. The following table provides an account of the gatherings based on these signatures.

Quire	*Folios*	*Number of sheets*	*Comments*
I	1–8	4	Signature, below and to the right of the taped tear, overlooked by Förster.
II	9–16	4	Overlooked by Förster.
III	17–24	4	
IIII	25–32	4	
V	33–40	4	The first side of V is elongated, and starts with an awkward loop, but it is not an arabic 5, *pace* Förster.
VI	41–48	4	First side of V elongated, but no loop.
VII	49–56	4	Note V, with both loop and long side.
VIII	57–64	4	Same V as V and VII.
Ix	65–74	5	Overlooked by Förster (long I, short x).
[X]	75–82	4	No signature now visible.
xI	83–90	4	Overlooked by Förster (short x, long I).

The quire signatures themselves prove that *The Gospel of Nicodemus* was already a fragment when the quires were numbered, and thus the quire signatures cannot possibly be contemporary with the MS, as Förster maintains. *The Soliloquia of St. Augustine* now comprises the first seven gatherings. The Alfredian colophon on what is now the last page of the *Soliloquia* (fol. 56v) reads, *[H]ær endiað þa cwidas þe ælfred kining alæs of þære bec þe we hatað on,* but the sentence breaks off at the end of the folio. Something like *læden Soliloquiorum Augustini* is needed to complete the sentence, and surely the sentence was finished on a folio that once followed fol. 56. But it does not make sense to assume that a medieval binder folded on an extra leaf at the end of the seventh quire for the sake of a few words. If another quire did not originally follow the *Soliloquia,* the scribe would have simply ruled an extra line at the bottom of fol. 56v to complete the colophon. Thus, at least a gathering is lost after the *Soliloquia.*

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Förster did not realize that anything was missing after the *Soliloquia,* apparently because he did not realize that the colophon was a fragment. He did know, of course, that *The Gospel of Nicodemus* was a fragment, which makes it all the more surprising that he considered the quire signatures contemporary with the MS. According to the signatures, there is nothing lost between the last quire of the *Soliloquia* (VII) and the first quire of the *Nicodemus* fragment (VIII). Thus it seems clear that the quire signatures were made after material was lost between what are now quires VII and VIII. Förster unaccountably resists this conclusion, and argues instead that a single, folded-on leaf, containing the beginning of *The Gospel of Nicodemus,* was lost. Perhaps the best argument against this unreasonable conclusion is that a medieval bookbinder would not ordinarily begin a quire with a folded-on leaf. Half-sheets are frequently used in medieval MSS, but they are stitched into the middle of quires, usually in pairs between the second and third, or third and fourth sheets, to prevent them from falling out easily. Binders naturally avoided the most vulnerable places, the centers of quires and between quires, whenever they stitched in half-sheets. We may safely conclude that the quire signatures were made after the texts were copied, and after material had been lost both at the end of the *Soliloquia* and at the beginning of *The Gospel of Nicodemus.* The reason the quire signatures were made after the texts were copied seems obvious. A later medieval binder was arranging loose gatherings for a new binding, and probably for a newly constituted codex as well, one that for the first time combined the *Soliloquia* with the *Nicodemus* fragment, *The Debate of Solomon and Saturn,* and the *St. Quintin* fragment.

The sporadic use of sheet signatures in some of the quires should be associated with this new, medieval binding, too, for the same pencil that was used for the quire signatures was also used for the sheet signatures. The roman numerals I, V, and X of the quire signatures cannot be dated paleographically, but the medieval arabic numerals used for the sheet signatures can be dated with some degree of accuracy, because of the development of the forms in the course of the Middle Ages. Sheet signatures can be found, in whole or in part, in quires II, III, IIII, V, VI, VIII, and X. Their forms and their positions vary somewhat from quire to quire. In general, the sheets are signed alphabetically, *a* through *d,* and numerically, according to the number of the quire, in the lower left margins of the first four folios of the quires. Thus, fols.

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9r, 10r, 11r, and 12r of the second quire are signed, respectively, *a7, b7, c7,* and *d7.* The figure 7 was the standard form of the arabic number 2 in the 13th century. In III, the sheet signatures were written in the lower *right* margins: *b3* on fol. 18r, *c3* on fol. 19r, and *d3* on fol. 20r; *a3* is missing on fol. 17r because the corner of the vellum has broken off. The medieval arabic 4, prevalent throughout the Middle English period, resembles an 8 with its bottom loop open—ȣ. The sheet signatures for IIII are in the lower left margin, with the arabic 4 placed beneath, rather than beside, the letters: *a*/ȣ (fol. 25r), *b*, with only the tip of the ȣ still extant beneath it (fol. 26r), *c*/ȣ (fol. 27r), and *d*/ȣ (fol. 28r). For quire V there are vestiges of *a* in the lower right corner of fol. 33r, and of *b* at the edge of the tape on fol. 34r; fol. 35r is signed clearly with a *c*, and fol. 36r with a *d*, also in the lower right corners without accompanying numbers. Quire VI is fully signed by letter and number, after the manner of II, *a6-d6* on fols. 41r–44r.

There are no sheet signatures in quire VII, though Förster thought he saw *a, b,* and *d,* in the lower right margins of fols. 49r, 50r, and 52r (the bottom margin of fol. 51, where *c* might have been, is cut away). In VIII there are no visible sheet signatures on the first two folios; but in the bottom left margin of fol. 59r there is a *c,* and on fol. 60r a *d.* Since there are no arabic numbers whatever, I am mystified by Förster's claim that "bei keiner andern Lage ist die Signierung so gut erhalten wie hier; denn wir haben sowohl auf fol. [57r] die ältere Lagenbezeichnung mit der römischen VIII unten auf der Mitte des Randes wie die wohl jüngere Bezeichnung mit *a8, b8, c8* und *d8* auf den Blättern [57r, 58r, 59r, and 60r]."[34] The two systems of signatures are preserved together much more clearly in quires II and VI. There are no sheet signatures in quires IX and XI. Quire X has no quire signature or sheet signature visible on the first folio, but the next three folios, 66r–68r, are fairly clearly marked *bØ, cØ,* and *dØ.* The figure *Ø* was the common

34. To avoid further confusion from the use of multiple foliations, the MS foliation is used, here and elsewhere, in place of the one Förster adhered to; whenever this change is made, the numbers will be bracketed.

Plate 10. Both the sheet (a6) and the quire (VI) signatures of the Southwick Codex are well preserved in the bottom margin of fol. 41r.

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me ys [illegible] þu wille. Ða cwæð heo, ðon
ne cræft ⁊ sece me eft seldun þu wis asma
ead helde [illegible] þe wisses licie ⁊ gif he
be engum wisra þinga awiht secge þonne
secge wune þæt . . .

Her endiað þa blostman þære forman
bocum.

Her onginð seo gadorung þære blostme
na þære æfteran bec . . .

Ða cwæð ic. eala, la, ... seron wiht nu ...
tige þ wit ne spræcon æfter ðam þe wit nu
ær gehete. Ða cwæð heo. uton gesecan hit.
uton fon on ... forewearde. Ða cwæð ic.
uton wes. Ða cwæð heo. uton gelyfan þ god
si on uncrum fultume. Ða cwæð ic georn
ne wolde ic þ wit hit gelyfdun gif ic
geweald hæfde. Ac me þincð þ se geleafa
ne si on uncrum onwealde. þe me we þ we

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sign for the arabic numeral 10 throughout most of the Middle English period.

Förster dates the sheet signatures in the third quarter of the 12th century, but he is probably about a century too early. Förster based his dating on the forms of the arabic numbers 2, 6, 8, and 10, which according to him were "die charakteristischen Formen des 12. Jahrhunderts" (p. 19). He based his conclusion on G. F. Hill's tables of facsimiles in "On the Early Use of Arabic Numerals in Europe,"[35] but Hill's tables do not, in fact, support Förster. First of all, a 12th-century date for the sheet signatures can be doubted on general principles. As Hill points out in his introduction, "The numerals are first found in MSS. of the tenth century, but they cannot be said to have been at all well known until the beginning of the thirteenth. During all this early period there is, perhaps naturally, considerable uncertainty in the forms, as a glance at Tables II and III will show" (p. 11). Förster's contention that the forms of the 2, 6, 8, and 10 were characteristic forms of the 12th century is simply not true. Hill's Table II lists 12th- and 13th-century forms. There is not a single example of the 7-like 2, and this absence alone is enough to dismiss Förster's dating of the sheet signatures. The 7-like 2 is truly characteristic of the 13th century, as Hill's Table III, numbers 1–12 (p. 30), will amply illustrate. The forms 6, 8, and 10 are also characteristic of the 13th century, as the same table makes clear. The facsimiles in this table show that the arabic numerals used for the sheet signatures in the Southwick Codex were the standard forms for these numbers throughout the 13th century. It is significant that all of the facsimiles from this table are taken from English MSS. Hill's Table V (p. 32) mainly relies on English examples from the 13th and 14th centuries. Number 6 of this table lists forms for 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 10—that is, all of the numbers used in the sheet signatures—that are virtually identical to the forms in the Southwick Codex. In other words, the sheet signatures can be safely dated, on the basis of the arabic numbers, in the late 13th century, or even in the early 14th century.[36] The medieval

35. Hill later expanded the study, as *The Development of Arabic Numerals in Europe, Exhibited in Sixty-Four Tables.*

36. See also the early MS forms under the date 1275 (row c), in David Eugene Smith and Louis Charles Karpinski, "The Spread of the Numerals in Europe," *The Hindu-Arabic Numerals,* p. 143. None of the letterforms (*a-d,* and *e* on fol. 13r, by mistake) is specifically 12th century, and even if the letters were distinctive forms, they

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signature of ownership, on fol. 2r of the *Soliloquia,* is also dated in the late 13th or early 14th century; it now seems certain that the sheet signatures, the quire signatures, and the signature of ownership can all be dated at the same time—late in the 13th or early in the 14th century, when two 12th-century, fragmented codices were being bound together in a new composite codex, now known as the Southwick Codex. The front page of the *Nicodemus* fragment was in bad shape because this codex had lost its initial gathering(s) at some point in the intervening century between the date of the MS and the date of the rebinding and was exposed to unusual wear and tear. The *Soliloquia* was naturally placed first in the new codex, because the Southwick priory was an Augustinian house. The late-medieval binder made the sheet signatures first, so that all loose sheets would be properly placed within the separate quires, and these were usually numbered by quire, as well. After the order of the sheets was determined, the order of the quires was established, and the quire signatures were made, by roman numerals, in the proper sequence on the first folios of each quire. After the book was bound, a signature of ownership was written on fol. 2r of the new codex.

A few minor details relating to the scribe of the Southwick Codex may be mentioned before moving on to the Nowell Codex, and the central topic of this book, the *Beowulf* MS. The name *petrus* (with a *wynn*-like *p*), is written at the foot of fol. 12r. The name was written with a very sharp pen point, considerably sharper than the pen used to copy the text, but the handwriting appears to be the scribe's caroline script (the *r* has no descender, but the scribe frequently writes his *r* in this manner). Perhaps the scribe who copied the two parts of the Southwick Codex at different times in his life was named Peter. We can see a bit of his personality at the foot of fol. 16v, where he doodles while he waits for a new quire. He treated his copy of the *Soliloquia* specially, highlighting on the first twenty-one folios parts of the text (most frequently the abbreviations for *ond* and *þæt,* and the letters *i, ð,* and *þ*) in bright red ink, and carefully tracing over *petrus* and his doodle in red, as well.

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could not outweigh the much stronger evidence from the arabic numerals. They may, or may not, be feeble attempts to copy the letterforms of the MS, but in any case they do not provide any compelling paleographical information, despite Förster's dating of them in the third quarter of the 12th century (*Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* p. 19).

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The Nowell Codex

The second main codex of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. is known as the Nowell Codex, after its earliest known owner, Laurence Nowell (1520–1576), the 16th-century "Saxonist" who compiled the first Anglo-Saxon dictionary.[37] Nowell has written his name and the date, 1563, at the top of the first folio of the Nowell Codex. The codex, as we have seen, consists of five Old English texts, two of which, the first and the last, are fragments: the *St. Christopher* fragment; *The Wonders of the East; Alexander's Letter to Aristotle; Beowulf*; and the *Judith* fragment. The first three texts are in prose, and the last two are, of course, poems. The Nowell Codex, as a whole, has been extensively described by Förster, Malone, and Sisam, and, in much less detail, by Rypins, Dobbie, and Ker.[38] All of these descriptions have overlooked, underestimated, or misrepresented important features of the codex that have crucial bearing on the original, as opposed to the present, construction of the codex. The attempt to rectify these shortcomings is not, in this case, simply an academic duty, for the results intimately involve one's understanding of the *Beowulf* MS, and ultimately, of *Beowulf* itself.

Scholars are not yet in accord over the original construction of the Nowell Codex. Förster, Dobbie, Ker, and Malone each give different accounts of the original gatherings, and all but Malone fail to realize that the *Judith* fragment was a late addition to the codex. The confusion can no doubt be traced to the fact that all five texts were copied by two scribes. The first scribe copied the three prose texts and *Beowulf,* up to line 1939; the second scribe copied the rest of *Beowulf* and *Judith*. This fact, taken alone, suggests that all five texts were copied together for a single codex. The fact that the hands change in the middle of the fourth text, *Beowulf,* suggests that the copying of the texts was continuous, another reason for assuming that the five texts, or at least the first four, were inseparable parts of the same codex. Moreover, the two hands are contemporary, and so there is no reason to assume that there was a hiatus after the first scribe stopped copying. As a matter of fact, the second scribe's handwriting is distinctly more archaic than the first

37. Preserved as Bodleian MS Selden supra 63; it has been edited by Albert H. Marckwardt, *Laurence Nowell's Vocabularium Saxonicum.*

38. Sisam's essays "The Beowulf Manuscript" and "The Compilation of the Beowulf Manuscript" are reprinted in *Studies,* pp. 61–96.

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scribe's, which weakens any case there might have been for presuming that a hiatus in copying had occurred after line 1939 of *Beowulf.*

The 11th-century provenance of *Beowulf,* of course, tremendously enhances the importance of the 11th-century MS. A careful study of the physical makeup of the Nowell Codex shows that the *Beowulf* part of the codex may have been originally a separate book. Indeed, there is compelling physical evidence, which will be considered in detail in Part 3, that the unique MS of *Beowulf* was still undergoing revision in the 11th century, and consequently that the MS, or at any rate part of it, may represent something very close to an autograph. As we shall see, the extant MS may be the first MS in which *Beowulf,* as we now know it, was put together as a single poem from two originally distinct stories. The copy of the poem was proofread by both scribes, and the text was certainly altered after the copy was made. These momentous issues cannot be well discussed without a clear conception of the physical construction of the Nowell Codex as a whole.

It is far more difficult to determine the original gatherings of the Nowell Codex than it was for the Southwick Codex, because the Nowell Codex has no sheet or quire signatures. However, it is important to know how the Nowell Codex, and particularly how the *Beowulf* MS, was originally put together, for a knowledge of the actual construction of the MSS furnishes some revolutionary insights into the composition of *Beowulf* itself. The presumptive gatherings of the Nowell Codex have never been sufficiently described, and in fact there are major disagreements over their construction among Ker, Förster, Dobbie, and Malone. The reason for such wide divergence of opinion is twofold: in the first place, since all pages of the codex have been remounted in paper frames, the threads and margins are all modern, and so a collation cannot be achieved simply by examining the folds of the vellum sheets, which by virtue of the modern frames no longer exist; in the second place, the scholars mentioned above, particularly Förster and Dobbie, have not used all available resources in their attempts to determine the original gatherings. Absolute certainty in this matter cannot be expected, but some guesswork, which was never verified, can certainly be eliminated, and strong probabilities are always preferable to weak possibilities and impossibilities.

Despite the destruction of the original threads and margins (whether by the fire or by the modern bookbinder is uncertain), "the collation can be ascertained," as Ker says, "from the ruling, the arrangement of hair

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and flesh sides, the dislocation of quire 4 before quire 3, and the variation in the number of lines in different quires" (*Catalogue,* p. 282). Yet the usefulness and reliability of these methods of collation vary. The ruling, for instance, is of very little value in the case of the Nowell Codex. The normal insular practice was to rule an entire gathering in one simple process: the gathering (usually a quire of four sheets) was punctured along the outer margins, through all four sheets at once, at the required intervals for text lines and bounding lines; the rulings were then made using the prick marks for guides.[39] The particular shape, the angle of entry, and the linear configuration of prick marks can be enormously useful in determining original quires, since all leaves of a particular quire will share the same features, but the prick marks of the Nowell Codex were destroyed along with the outer margins in the fire of 1731. The rulings themselves are far less trustworthy, partly because the fire damage caused shrinkage at the edges of the vellum, and the measurements of the rulings are affected. The rulings in the Nowell Codex are unreliable for other reasons, too. Anglo-Saxon scribes sometimes ruled through two or more sheets at a time. Since they made rulings with a hard-point instrument, the indentations on the outside sheet could carry through to the inside sheets. Thus, if only one ruling was made for all four sheets, the outermost sheet would have the heaviest ruling, while the innermost sheet would have the lightest. The scribes of the Nowell Codex, however, invariably made more than one ruling for each quire, or else renewed particularly light inner rulings. In either case, the result affects the strict correlation of the rulings within a quire. Without the prick marks, we have no way of knowing the cause of various discrepancies. For example, if the awl was pushed through the vellum sheets on a slight angle, as often happened in MSS with surviving prick marks, the rulings of inner sheets when separately ruled would of course differ from the rulings of the outside sheets. Even in the highly improbable event that the prick marks were exactly identical from sheet to sheet, the rulings would not be, nor should one expect them to be: the scribe, who was not a machine after all, would naturally place his ruler sometimes slightly above, or below, or on top of, the prick marks, and these minor divergencies would vary from one side of a sheet to the

39. For a general discussion see Ker, *Catalogue,* pp. xxii–xxv; for a detailed study of the methods of ruling see Leslie Webber Jones, "Pricking Manuscripts: The Instruments and Their Significance." Ruling as a method of collation is interestingly applied by Dorothy K. Coveney, "The Ruling of the *Exeter Book.*"

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other. As a result, the measurements for one side of a sheet often vary slightly from those on the other side. Discrepancies of this nature within uncontested quires of the Nowell Codex unfortunately vitiate the rulings, in the absence of prick marks, as definitive evidence of the original gatherings.

A related method for determining the original gatherings, the variation in the number of lines in separate gatherings, can also be risky. Eight leaves in the midst of *Beowulf* (fols. 163–170) are ruled for twenty-two lines per page, while on either side the folios are ruled for twenty lines per page. It is reasonable to assume from the unique ruling that fols. 163–170 constitute an original gathering, but it should be remembered that consecutive leaves, not necessarily constituting a quire, could be ruled for extra lines after binding. Indeed, extra lines have been added elsewhere in the Nowell Codex, in this way, after the original rulings were made. There is even a quire in *Beowulf* that was originally ruled for twenty lines of text to the page that has four consecutive pages (fols. 174v–176r) with twenty-one lines of text. Not too much reliance should be placed on a criterion so susceptible to alteration. In any case, only one quire (fols. 163–170) can be tentatively identified from the unique number of twenty-two rulings per page, while no quires at all can be firmly identified from ruling alone, since all the prick marks are gone.

The other two criteria mentioned by Ker for determining the original gatherings in the absence of the original threads and margins are quite reliable, yet one method, the dislocation of quires, can only be used to identify two quires. The second test, as we shall see, can be applied pervasively, yet for some reason has only been applied to one quire. This test checks the arrangement of hair and flesh sides of the vellum leaves, to see if pairs of leaves, which are presumed to be two halves of an original sheet, are in fact conjugate. For anyone unfamiliar with vellum MSS, checking the arrangement of hair and flesh sides of the vellum leaves is the least obvious method for determining the original gatherings. A brief explanation of the method will perhaps be useful. Each sheet of vellum has a hair and a flesh side. It is usually quite easy to distinguish between them, at least when the vellum is of the rather thick variety used in the Nowell Codex. A hair side generally has a yellowish tinge and is smoother and shinier than a flesh side, which has a whitish tinge and a rougher texture. The heat from the Cotton fire has often made the color distinction between hair and flesh more brown and gray

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than yellow and white, but the distinction remains evident in most cases. Moreover, the distinction is often aided by the appearance of groups of "hair dots" on the hair sides, showing that the hide has been shaved on these sides. This aid must be used cautiously, however, for on particularly thin parchments, these dots will sometimes show on both sides, and in such cases it is very difficult to distinguish hair side from flesh.[40] But with the exception of a group of deeply soiled folios at the beginning, which is almost surely a gathering, it is relatively easy to distinguish hair from flesh throughout the Nowell Codex.

Because of the frequently marked difference in color and texture between hair and flesh sides, scribes tended to arrange the sheets of quires, and then the quires themselves, so that a hair side would face a hair side and a flesh side would face a flesh side. This procedure has the satisfying aesthetic effect of obscuring the contrast in color and texture of the hair and flesh sides, for no matter where a reader opens a book arranged in this way, the facing pages are always of the same general color and texture. Fortunately, neither of the scribes of the Nowell Codex followed this procedure, for if they had, the arrangement of hair and flesh sides would be worthless as evidence of where one quire ended and another began. The second scribe's way of arranging the sheets of a quire is especially informative: he always places the sheets with the hair side facing outward, so that within the quire hair faces flesh, except in the center, where the two flesh sides of the center sheet face one another. Hair faces hair only *between* the second scribe's quires. Because of this characteristic arrangement, the last three quires of the Nowell Codex are very easy to establish. The first scribe's methods are less transparent. He is evidently more concerned with achieving uniformity between facing pages, but there is usually enough minor variation within quires to make the collation of hair and flesh sides a valuable tool for understanding the original construction of his quires, and consequently of the Nowell Codex as a whole.

The value of this test can be illustrated by applying it to two groups of leaves in the first scribe's section of the MS that are already firmly established as quires. There has never been any doubt that folios

40. The same problem occurs occasionally in the *Exeter Book*. According to Coveney, "it is very difficult to decide in one or two instances whether . . . the surface of the parchment is flesh or hair. The oiliness and transparency of the skin alluded to above causes the hair dots to show on both sides of some leaves, and both have the appearance of showing the hair dots." "The Ruling of the *Exeter Book*," p. 55.

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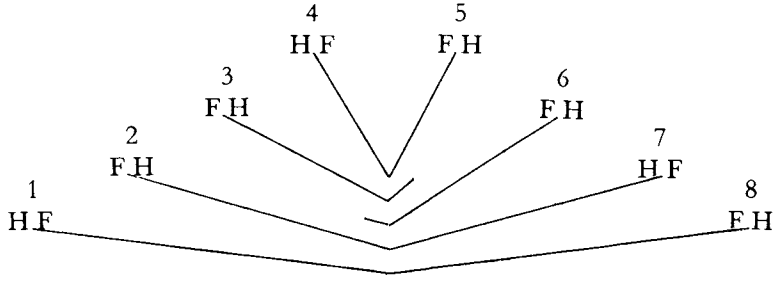
107(115)–114(122) and 115(107)–122(114) from *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle* are two original quires, because the two sets of folios (as the double references signalize) were bound in the wrong order, and in fact are still in the wrong order in the MS today. As all commentators have recognized, these two groups of folios must have been original quires to have been transposed in this way. What is interesting is the way these two quires were originally constructed. The arrangement of hair and flesh sides in both quires is identical. It shows that both were originally constructed as three-sheet gatherings, with two half-sheets folded on between the second and third sheets. This is evident because only three pairs of leaves in each quire—the first and eighth, the second and seventh, and the fourth and fifth—are conjugate. It is certain that the third and sixth leaves in both quires were half-sheets when the gatherings were stitched together, for in both quires the third and sixth leaves are nonconjugate. The following diagram illustrates the construction of these two expanded gatherings, based on the arrangement of hair (H) and flesh (F) sides.



There is nothing unusual about expanding a gathering in this manner. In fact, Ker says that "the use of a pair of half-sheets in place of one sheet is common. The half-sheets are usually the third and sixth or the second and seventh leaves in the quire, rarely the first and eighth or the fourth and fifth leaves, which would be more likely to fall out" (*Catalogue,* p. xxiv).

The arrangement of the whole sheets follows the normal insular practice, whereby a hair side is placed on the outside of the quire, and within flesh faces flesh, and hair faces hair. The inserted half-sheets throw this arrangement off, so that hair faces flesh between the second and third and fifth and sixth leaves. This would seem to suggest that these two quires were originally constructed as three-sheet gatherings, and were expanded afterward, when it became clear how much parch-

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ment was needed to finish copying *Alexander's Letter*. A precise understanding of the construction of these two quires leads directly to a much more important understanding of the construction of contiguous gatherings. Förster, Dobbie, and Malone, for reasons that will be discussed in a moment, describe the immediately preceding group of folios (101–106) as an anomalous three-sheet gathering, and my examination of the arrangement of hair and flesh sides confirms their guess. The six leaves form three conjugate pairs. Yet a three-sheet gathering is no longer, strictly speaking, an anomaly in view of the original construction of the two transposed quires. This throws the presumptive construction of the prose section of the Nowell Codex into an entirely new light. Scholars have always assumed that the gathering following the transposed quires was a four-sheet quire, which makes *Beowulf* an inseparable part of the prose codex that precedes it, since *Beowulf* begins on the seventh leaf of this four-sheet quire. Now there is no reason to make this assumption. On the contrary, there is good reason to believe that the last gathering of the prose codex was another three-sheet gathering, which was all that was needed to finish *Alexander's Letter*. The exciting corollary of this conclusion is that the *Beowulf* part of the Nowell Codex once existed as a separate codex.

The following table of quires provides at a glance the most probable construction of these three distinct parts of the Nowell Codex.

	Quire	*Number of sheets*	*Folios*
Prose:	1 st	5	91(93)–100(96)
	2 d	3	101–106
	3rd	3 (+2 lvs.)	115–122 (117 + 120 folded on)
	4th	3 (+2 lvs.)	107–114 (109 + 112 folded on)
	5th	3	123–128
Beowulf:	6th	4 (+2 lvs.)	129–139 (133 + 136 folded on)
	7th	4	140–147A(131)
	8th	4	147–154
	9th	4	155–162
	10th	4	163–170
	11th	4	171–178
	12th	5	179–188
	13th	5	189A(197)–198
Judith:	14th	4	199–206

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An exhaustive study of the arrangement of hair and flesh sides throughout the Nowell Codex justifies this description of the original quires.[41] The arrangement of hair and flesh sides in the fifth and sixth quires also permits them to be described as two four-sheet gatherings, but the particular arrangement favors one three-sheet and one five-sheet gathering. If the fifth quire is described as a four-sheet gathering, the arrangement of hair and flesh shows that it was originally a natural quire, which, as we have seen, is unprecedented in the prose part of the Nowell Codex. On the other hand, if the sixth quire is so described, the hair-flesh correspondence shows that it was originally a three-sheet gathering, which was expanded to a quire by the insertion of two leaves, which is unparalleled in the *Beowulf* part of the codex. If the Anglo-Saxon binder was at all consistent, the fifth quire was a three-sheet gathering that ended the prose codex, and the sixth was a quire expanded to a five-sheet gathering that began the poetic codex, *Beowulf*. The two originally separate codices were combined early in their history, most likely in the scriptorium in which they were copied, but perhaps by Laurence Nowell or a previous owner in the 16th century.

Other corroborating indications that *Beowulf* once existed as a separate codex, and thus was not mechanically copied along with three unrelated and undistinguished prose texts, will be discussed in due course. For now it is enough to note that the particular hair-flesh pattern of the sheets in the fifth and sixth gatherings supports the contention that *Beowulf* begins with a new gathering. It is lamentable, of course, that the hair-flesh pattern is ambiguous at this one crucial point, but the corroborating evidence helps resolve the ambiguity by strongly supporting the view that the *Beowulf* MS was once a separate codex. In most other cases, the arrangement of the hair and flesh sides is not at all ambiguous, and the criterion can be used with confidence to eliminate some improbable and impossible guesswork regarding the original quires. For this reason it is surprising that scholars have not used the test, or, in the case of one quire, have used it where it is not even needed. Only Ker and Malone indicate that they have checked into the matter at all, but it is evident that neither thoroughly examined the hair and

41. Note that the two transposed quires from *Alexander's Letter*, the third and fourth, are here put in their proper order. To correct the MS foliation, consequently, double references are necessary: that is, 107(115)–114(122) and 115(107)–122(114).

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flesh patterns to see if their accounts of the original gatherings were sustained by the pairings of the leaves.

While Ker rightly asserts that, in part, "the collation can be ascertained from . . . the arrangement of hair and flesh sides," he applies the method only to the solitary *Judith* quire: "Hair outside all sheets in quire 14" (*Catalogue,* p. 282). The implication would seem to be that this arrangement of the sheets was unique in the codex, yet the two preceding gatherings (the last two gatherings in *Beowulf*) are also arranged in this way. It would have made more sense for Ker to identify the fourteenth quire by means of the ruling (which is unique in the codex in distance from top line to bottom), or by means of the variation in the line numbers between this quire (which has twenty lines to the page) and the preceding quire (which has twenty-one lines to the page). But, really, there is no need to make any special argument for the eight leaves of the *Judith* fragment: one assumes that they constitute a natural quire of four sheets. If Ker had checked the hair and flesh patterns throughout the Nowell Codex, he would have realized that his account of the gatherings was wrong in at least two places. Malone gives the impression that he has investigated the sheet arrangement more carefully than Ker, for he says, quite rightly, that "the sheets of the codex do not show a consistent pattern in the arrangement of hair and flesh sides." Yet the results of Malone's investigation are no more enlightening than Ker's, for Malone merely quotes Ker: "As Ker points out (p. 282), all sheets of the fourteenth gathering have the hair side out. . . . But this sequence is varied more or less in the other gatherings" (*Nowell Codex,* p. 16). It is odd indeed that Malone uses the same example as Ker, especially since Malone correctly believed that the *Judith* fragment was a modern addition to the Nowell Codex (ibid., p. 119).

At any rate, the real impact of determining the hair-flesh patterns does not come by confirming the single-quire construction of the *Judith* fragment, about which no one ever had any doubts anyway. The impact comes when the test can be used to invalidate established descriptions of the gatherings, and confirm alternative descriptions. For example, Förster (and Dobbie, who followed his suggestion) explained the former misplacement of the two *Beowulf* folios—147A(131) and 189A(197)—by assuming that they had been single leaves that were folded on to

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four-sheet quires.[42] As single leaves, they could have fallen out of the codex and been misplaced by Cotton's bookbinder. The explanation is perfectly reasonable, but the arrangement of the hair and flesh sides in the putative gatherings in question proves that it is wrong. According to Förster, the seventh gathering consisted of fols. 140–147, with fol. 147A(131) folded on between the last two folios of the quire. It is obvious that Förster did not check the hair-flesh correspondences, for if he had he would have seen that fols. 140 and 147, the "outside sheet" of this supposed quire, are not conjugate. Similarly, Förster says that the twelfth quire consisted of fols. 182–189, with fol. 189A(197), the second misplaced folio from *Beowulf,* folded on between the last two folios. In this case three of the four "sheets" (the outside, the third, and the center sheet) are not conjugate pairs of folios, and so could not have been sheets at all. Many other supposed gatherings in Förster's table (for example, his eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh) are invalidated on the same grounds.

The test can be put to more positive use, as well. Förster (and Dobbie and Malone, who followed his suggestion) explained the former disorder in the first ten folios of the Nowell Codex by assuming that they constituted an original five-sheet gathering. As in the case of the two misplaced *Beowulf* folios, the disorder of the first ten folios of the Nowell Codex was permanently recorded by the old foliation written on the vellum leaves of the MS. Today, with the folios back in the right order, this foliation reads: 93, 94, 91, 92, 97, 98, 99, 100, 95, 96. Förster's idea was that "diese falsche Blätterzahlung erklärt sich am einfachsten so, wenn wir annehmen, dass die ebengenannten 10 Blätter . . . eine Lage zu 5 Bogen bildeten, deren 4 erste Bogen zur Zeit der Renaissance-

42. Dobbie (*Beowulf and Judith,* p. xv, n. 21) is a bit misleading about his dependence on Förster's account of the gatherings. The principal difference between them is that Dobbie curiously numbers the lost gatherings, though he has no way of knowing for sure how many gatherings were lost. Even in this difference, however, Dobbie is following Förster's conjectures (*Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* pp. 22–23). Dobbie says that "the principal point of difference" is that he describes the first two extant gatherings as five- and three-sheet gatherings, while Förster describes them as two four-sheet quires. In fact, Förster originated the theory that the first extant gathering was comprised of five sheets to explain the misplacement of the first ten folios reflected in the MS foliation (see Förster, *Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* pp. 7–8).

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Paginierung in falscher Reihenfolge lagen, nämlich als *c. d. a. b.,* und deren 5. Bogen *e,* statt in der Mitte, zwischen die beiden letzten Blätter der Lage geraten war" (pp. 7–8). Förster was unhappy with this explanation, though, for he provides another unlikely "Erklärungsmöglichkeit" in a footnote (p. 8, n. 1), and then disregards both explanations in his discussion and table of gatherings, where he describes the first two gatherings of the Nowell Codex as normal four-sheet quires (pp. 21, 22–23). One can only surmise that Förster ultimately rejected his explanation for the misplaced folios because it left him with what he viewed as an anomalous three-sheet gathering for the second quire. Yet as the table of gatherings on p. 126 illustrates, a three-sheet gathering in the prose texts need not be considered anomalous. If Förster had made a collation of hair and flesh sides, he would have discovered that the second gathering could not have been a four-sheet quire, for only the center sheet of this proposed quire has conjugate pairs of folios.[43] The second gathering (fols. 101–106) is in fact a three-sheet gathering: the two outer sheets (101 and 106, and 102 and 105) have the hair sides out, while the center sheet (103 and 104) has the flesh side out, so that hair faces hair in the center of the gathering.

This roundabout way of confirming the five-sheet construction of the first gathering of the Nowell Codex is to some extent necessary. All ten folios of this presumptive first gathering are unusually dirty, and the sixth, seventh, and eighth folios are not only dirty, but napped on both sides, making collation very uncertain indeed. However, the two outside sheets (leaves 1 and 10, and 2 and 9) definitely have the hair side out, which strongly supports the deduction that the ten isolated folios must constitute a five-sheet gathering. The third, fourth, and fifth leaves (or folios) also definitely have the hair side out, and while they cannot be collated with certainty with the soiled and napped surfaces of the sixth, seventh, and eighth leaves, the best guess is obviously that the first ten folios of the codex constituted a five-sheet gathering, with hair facing out for all five sheets. In any case, the hair-flesh test rules out the possibility that the first two gatherings were four-sheet quires, shows that

43. Ker also describes the first two gatherings of the Nowell Codex as four-sheet quires (*Catalogue,* p. 282), while Malone correctly describes them as five- and three-sheet gatherings. Ker's summary description is cited in Zupitza (*Beowulf,* p. xvii).

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the second gathering was comprised of three sheets, and provides strong evidence that the first gathering was comprised of five sheets.

Förster's insight, that the disorder of the first ten folios could best be explained by a separate gathering whose sheets had been jumbled, was staunchly championed by Malone after Förster himself had abandoned it. According to Malone, the disorder of the folios "is hardly explicable unless the first gathering had ten leaves" (*Nowell Codex,* p. 15n). However, Förster's and Malone's explanation of how the sheets were jumbled to produce the disorder is unnecessarily complicated and improbable. As Malone argues the case (ibid., p. 15), Cotton's bookbinder found the five sheets in disorder and mistakenly rearranged them in the following way: he made sheet 4 the outside sheet; next to it, he placed sheet 3, and then sheets 1 and 2; but instead of placing sheet 5 in the center of the gathering, after sheet 2, he instead slipped it in immediately before the last two folios of the gathering. This theory indeed explains the disorder of the folios, but at the expense of Cotton's bookbinder, who is obliged to behave as though he were not a bookbinder at all. Professional bookbinders do not make stitching problems for themselves by slipping in a folded sheet out of alignment with the other folds of a gathering. If all the sheets were still whole, a bookbinder would naturally place them properly, for a bookbinder, one inside the other. He might well mix up the order of the sheets, so that sheets 3 and 4 would precede sheets 1 and 2, but he would not randomly slip in sheet 5 outside the main fold of the gathering.

Fortunately, there is no need to make Cotton's bookbinder behave as an amateur to explain the disorder of the first ten folios, or to maintain the view that the ten folios constituted a gathering. The outside folds of gatherings in an unbound codex are exposed to wear and tear, while the inside folds are relatively protected. Before Cotton had the Nowell Codex bound with the Southwick Codex as Vitellius A. XV., the first gathering of the Nowell Codex would have been particularly vulnerable to wear and tear. Note the worn condition of the first folio, 91(93) of the *St. Christopher* fragment. If the folds of the first two sheets of this gathering broke, the first two and the last two folios of the gathering would become loose leaves. If this is what happened, Cotton's bookbinder wisely placed the four loose folios together within the gathering from which they came. The original gathering, thus disordered, subse-

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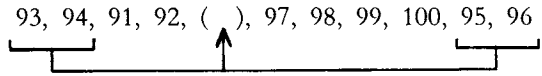
quently was numbered by Joseph Planta from 91–100 on the vellum leaves, in the late 18th century. When the misplaced folios were put back in their proper places in the 19th century, the resulting disorder in the number sequence on the vellum leaves revealed where the bookbinder had placed the four loose folios:



The most important result of determining the sheet arrangement of the original gatherings of the prose texts is, of course, that it opens the possibility that *Beowulf* once existed as a separate codex. It shows that three-sheet gatherings were the norm, not the exception, in the prose texts, and that even if one disregards the original three-sheet makeup of the expanded third and fourth quires, the second gathering is a precedent for describing the fifth as another three-sheet gathering. Though the first gathering, of five sheets, is now anomalous in the prose section of the Nowell Codex, it may not have been unique before the *St. Christopher* fragment lost its beginning. Förster observes that the length of the Latin source, the *Passio S. Christophori,* indicates that about ten folios, or five sheets, have been lost at the beginning of the Old English translation (pp. 76–77). We may thus conclude, with Förster, that a five-sheet gathering has been lost at the beginning of the prose codex. We may also conclude that the three prose texts were inseparable parts of the same codex. Unlike *Beowulf,* neither of the two complete prose texts could have begun new quires. The *St. Christopher* fragment ends on the recto, and *The Wonders of the East* begins on the verso of fol. 95 (97); and though *Alexander's Letter* starts a new folio (104r), it starts only three leaves before the transposed quires, which proves that it begins within a gathering. But the *Beowulf* codex *can* be separated from the prose texts that precede it, and the advantage of doing so should be obvious. Suddenly the poem is no longer the fourth item in an otherwise undistinguished Anglo-Saxon anthology, which Sisam calls a "Liber de diversis monstris, anglice" (*Studies*, p. 96). It becomes instead a poem that 11th-century Anglo-Saxons appreciated enough to copy as an individual book.

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The *Beowulf* Codex

There are many reasons for assuming that *Beowulf* originally existed as a separate codex. Humfrey Wanley, who discovered *Beowulf* in the early 18th century, and who published the first description of it in his monumental *Catalogus Historico-Criticus,* speaks of the poem as if it were a separate book.[44] His testimony is of special value because he was an expert paleographer, and because he studied the codex before the fire of 1731, when the original gatherings were still intact. Wanley realized that Cotton Vitellius A. XV. was comprised of more than two Old English codices, as his prefatory remark, *Cod. membran. ex diversis simul compactis constans,* clearly reveals. Moreover, he limits the Nowell Codex to the prose texts, when he says at the end of his description of *Alexander's Letter, Hoc autem exemplar cum 3 superioribus, veteri manu scriptum, fuit peculium doctiss. viri Laurentii Nowelli. a. d. 1563.* Finally, he begins his description of *Beowulf* itself with the phrase *In hoc libro.* There does not seem to have been any doubt in Wanley's mind that *Beowulf* began a new codex. When one looks for confirmation of this, it is not hard to find. No one has yet noted that at the bottom of fol. 129r, the first page of *Beowulf,* was written the name of the composite codex, *Vi(tellius) A 15.* The *-tellius* is entirely rubbed off, but *Vi-* and *A 15* are still quite readable, even in the FSS. The signature tells us that *Beowulf* was separable, if indeed it does not tell us that the poem was actually separate from the codex before it was bound, for there would be no point in writing the name of the composite codex in

44. Wanley took a special interest in *Beowulf,* and he discovered it long before he was appointed, in 1703, to the commission that was to report on the state of the Cotton MSS. Sisam points out that "he tells Hickes as soon as he lights on the Beowulf manuscript, for Hickes replies (20 August 1700) 'I can find nothing yet of Beowulph.'" *Studies,* p. 276. In fact, Wanley did some research on the poem. C. E. Wright recounts that Wanley wrote to Eric Benzelius, a Swedish scholar, on the discovery of *Beowulf:* "Lastly, Wanley comes to the story of his discovery of a 'Tract in the Cottonian Library (omitted in Dr. Smith's Catalogue) written in Dano-Saxon Poetry, and describing some Wars between Beowulf a King of the Danes of y^{e} Family of the Scyldingi, and of some of your Swedish Princes'. 'Pray, Dear Sir', adds Wanley, 'have you any Histories about such a King, & such Wars?'" "Humfrey Wanley: Saxonist and Library-Keeper," p. 109.

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the middle of a gathering. We may surmise that *Vitellius A. 15* was written on the first page of *Beowulf* as instructions to Cotton's binder to include the poem in the composite codex.

The first page of *Beowulf* has left other telltale marks of its former existence as an outside cover. The bottom right-hand corner is especially soiled, and many letters have been lost—and where they are not lost, the ink is badly diluted—in this area of the page. Apparently the damage was caused by sweat and friction, from gripping the MS by the corner; the area of the damage is restricted to the space that a thumb would occupy. The damage was not done by modern users of the MS, for both Thorkelin transcripts confirm that readings in this area of the page were already illegible in 1787. The ruling of the folio also suggests that it was an outside cover. If *Beowulf* really began in the midst of a four-sheet quire, as all previous scholars maintain, fol. 129 would have been the second half of the second sheet of a quire consisting of fols. 123–130. But when the outside sheet (fols. 123r and 130v) of this quire was ruled, the indentations would have carried through to the second sheet, leaving secondary rulings on fols. 124r and 129v. There can be no doubt whatever, though, that primary rulings were made on the recto, not on the verso of fol. 129. The rulings are unusually clear, as one might expect them to be on the outside sheet of a gathering: they were drawn with an awl onto the recto face so firmly, in fact, that the awl cut through the vellum along the right vertical bounding line. The split in the vellum can be clearly seen in the FSS.[45] In the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary, there is no reason to doubt that fol. 129r began a new gathering.

One conceivable objection to this conclusion can be found in Malone's explanation for the misplacement of fol. 147A(131), which depends on the view that *Beowulf* was an inseparable part of the prose codex. It

45. Malone is mistaken when he says that in the Nowell Codex there is only a vertical bounding line marking the left-hand margin of the text, and that "there is no corresponding boundary for the text in the right-hand margin." *Nowell Codex,* p. 16. Right and left margins can frequently be seen, even in the FSS, on folios in the first scribe's part. The writing space between his margins is usually about 10 cm. The second scribe's right margins are more difficult to see, even in the MS, and the scribe is rarely bound by them. The writing space between his margins is about 11.5 cm.

Plate 11. Fol. 129r, the first page of the *Beowulf* MS.

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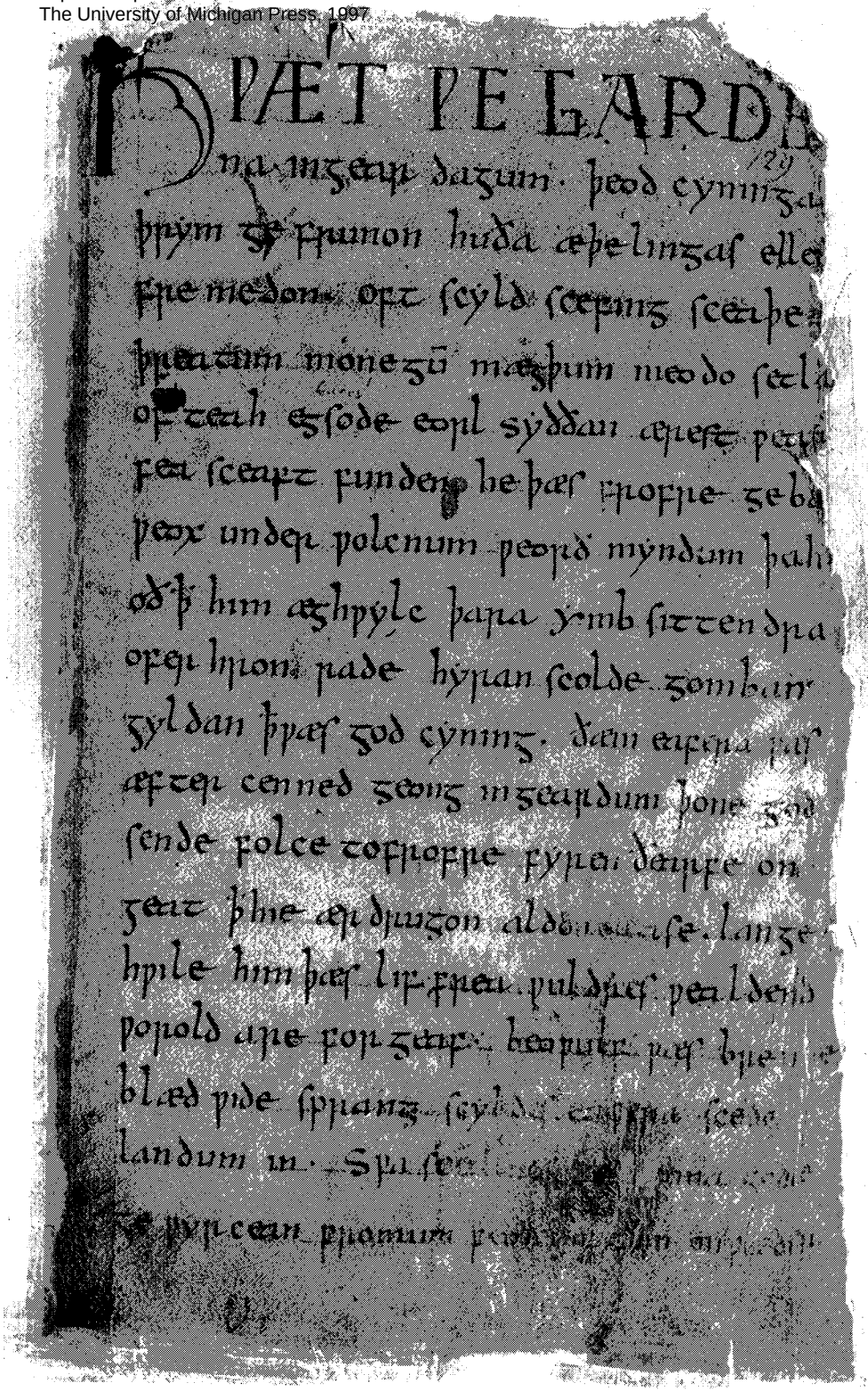

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can, however, be proved that Malone's explanation is wrong. First, Malone argues from the assumption, reasonable in itself, that the fifth, sixth, and seventh gatherings were natural, four-sheet quires composed, respectively, of fols. 123–130, 132–139, and 140–147A(131). Thus, by this traditional description of the gatherings, fols. 129 and 130, the first two folios of *Beowulf,* were part of the last gathering of *Alexander's Letter.* But the second stage of Malone's argument, and his proof that his description is right, is unacceptable. According to Malone, "Cotton's bookbinder seems to have found the outside sheet . . . of the seventh gathering [that is, fols. 140–147A(131)] loose and folded the wrong way: that is, in such a way that fol. [147A(131)] made the first two pages, fol. [140] the last two pages of the sheet. The binder took this sheet, so folded, for the outside one of the sixth gathering, which thus in his hands came to have five sheets or ten leaves, whereas the seventh gathering was reduced to three sheets or six leaves. In this way fol. [147A(131)] came to stand between fols. [130] and [132]" (*Nowell Codex,* p. 15). This theory explains how fol. 147A(131) came to stand between fols. 130 and 132, but it raises other, far more mysterious questions. Two of the most pressing are: how does one fold a sheet of parchment the wrong way, after it has been folded in another way for many hundreds of years? And, why would a professional bookbinder use the sheet as the outside sheet of what was already a natural quire, while ignoring the fact that the next gathering needed a sheet to make it a natural quire? So far, then, the only "proof" that *Beowulf* did not begin a separate codex depends on a whimsical bookbinder and an impossible fold.

Fortunately, there is no need to try to answer these questions, for there *is* proof that fol. 147A(131) was not misplaced until 1787, when Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin was making the second transcript of *Beowulf.* Thorkelin himself, or his hired copyist before him, was responsible for the misplacement, but that either of them folded the outside sheet of the seventh gathering the wrong way, making it the outside sheet of the sixth gathering, is unlikely in the extreme. Presumably, all that happened was that fol. 147A(131) came loose from the codex, and Thorkelin or his scribe put it back in the wrong place. In 1805, the error had a highly amusing effect on Sharon Turner's account of the poem between fols. 130 and 132, for the misplacement of fol. 147A(131) between them interposed Grendel's attack on Heorot at an unusually

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inauspicious time. Turner's ingenuous translation is the delightfully funny victim:

> The song of the poet said,
> He who knew
> The beginning of mankind
> From afar to narrate. (fol. 130v)
> "He took wilfully (fol. 147A[131]r)
> By the nearest side
> The sleeping warrior.
> He slew the unheeding one
> With a club on the bones of his hair."[46]

But fol. 147A(131) had only been misplaced for eight years in 1805, for the Thorkelin transcripts show that the folio was not misplaced for the first transcript, but was for the second. The first transcript, known as A, attempts to reproduce the insular script of the MS, but does not attempt a facsimile in pagination. Scholars have overlooked the fact that A's procedure in this respect makes it clear that fol. 147A(131) was not out of order before 1787.

The virtue of A's procedure here is that, because his handwriting was tiny, each of his sheets contains much more than a single folio of the MS: in short, the order of the folios could not be subsequently rearranged in A, because A's pages do not correspond with the folios of the MS. In A, fol. 147A(131) is where it belongs, following fol. 146. It begins in the middle of line 1 of A (p. 25), and ends in the middle of line 4 (p. 26). Obviously, the text of fol. 147A(131) could not have been moved to this position after Thorkelin returned to Denmark, as has been supposed.[47]

46. *The History of the Manners, Landed Property, Government, Laws, Poetry, Literature, Religion, and Language, of the Anglo-Saxons,* p. 402. "With a club on the bones of his hair" is Turner's rendering of *bat banlocan* (742a)!

47. Förster says, "Die richtige Anordung dieses Blattes . . . gab zuerst der Isländer THORKELIN (1815), so dass TURNER in der 3. Auflage (1820) seiner Geschichte diesen Fehler verbessern konnte." *Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* p. 9n. But Turner would not have made the mistake in the first place if Thorkelin or his scribe had not misplaced fol. 147A(131). In 1817 J. J. Conybeare, while collating his interleaved copy of Thorkelin's edition with the MS, discovered the misplacement of this folio and noted on the blank leaf facing p. 9: *"reccan - finis fol: 130 / Cwœth - init fol 132. / Inseri videtur fol ex alio /loco q^{d} incip feng hrade & nume/ratur 131."* He wrote on the leaf facing

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The same conclusion can be reached by looking at page 4 of A. The text of fol. 130 ends on line 2, and the text of fol. 132 begins on line 3. We may also conclude that the old foliation written on the vellum leaves of the MS was not made until after the A transcript, since fol. 147A(131) was not yet dislocated.

Thorkelin's transcript, known as B, shows that the folio had become misplaced by the time he copied the MS. Thorkelin copied the MS in 18th-century longhand, but he follows the pagination of the MS. By this procedure, he was able to rearrange the order of the folios, since his pages correspond to the folios of the MS. Moreover, two details in B show that fol. 147A(131) was out of place when the second transcript was made. Thorkelin, who otherwise never uses catchwords in B, has written the word *fyrst* at the bottom of his copy of fol. 132v (p. 6a). This is the first word of fol. 133r (p. 7a). The unique occurrence of a catchword here tells us that fol. 133 did not follow fol. 132 at the time: fol. 147A(131) must have been originally misplaced between these two folios, rather than between fols. 130 and 132. A second detail in B confirms this. Thorkelin numbered his transcript leaf by leaf, rather than page by page, so that his first leaf corresponds to fol. 129 of the MS, leaf 2 corresponds to fol. 130, and so on. The only exception occurs on the third leaf (fol. 132), which is numbered 3 on the recto, but 4 on the verso. The reason is now obvious. Thorkelin removed leaf 4 of his transcript, and placed it where it belonged, after leaf 18 (fol. 146). Unfortunately, he did not make the same correction in the MS, but for some reason merely moved the misplaced leaf back one folio. My guess is that Thorkelin was still in England when, in collation with A, he realized that a folio in his transcript was out of place. Then, in collation with the MS, he would have found the loose leaf, fol. 147A(131), at the point of the discrepancy between his transcript and A. Not knowing yet where the misplaced leaf belonged, he simply moved it back one folio, in order to continue his collation with the MS.

In any case, the Thorkelin transcripts prove that the misplacement of fol. 147A(131) has no bearing on the original construction of the

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p. 61, "*Sweg. terminat paginam /male locatam.*" Conybeare also noted the misplacement of fol. 189A(197) on the leaves facing pp. 197 and 231. Conybeare's copy of Thorkelin is now owned by Whitney F. Bolton, who has generously allowed me to borrow it.

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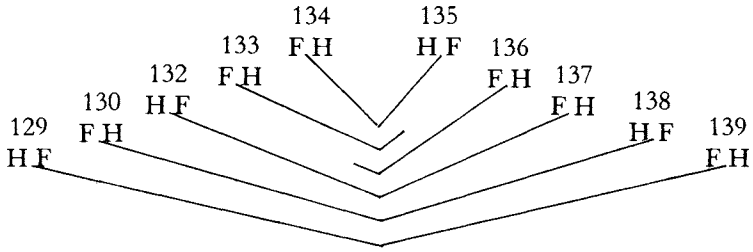
gatherings. Malone's explanation for the misplacement, which he uses as proof that the first two folios of *Beowulf* belonged to the last gathering of *Alexander's Letter,* is definitely wrong, for the leaf was first misplaced *after* fol. 132. Since the misplacement of fol. 147A(131) dates from the B transcript in 1787, we must assume that the leaf came loose from the codex because the fold of the sheet to which it belonged broke. With Malone's argument gone, there is no longer any reason to believe that the first gathering of *Beowulf* was not comprised of ten leaves (fols. 129–139), or that *Beowulf* did indeed begin with a new gathering. The pattern of hair and flesh sides of this first gathering of the *Beowulf* codex indicates that it was originally arranged as a four-sheet quire, but that two half-sheets were then folded on, at even intervals, between the third and fourth sheets. For convenience of reference, the following diagram illustrates the construction of the gathering.



Before the two half-sheets (fols. 133 and 136) were folded on, the four-sheet quire was arranged following the normal insular practice, with the hair side on the outside of the quire, and within the quire with flesh facing flesh, and hair facing hair. Thus, the pattern was thrown off only where the half-sheets were inserted (so hair faces flesh between fols. 133 and 134, and between 136 and 137). Note that the MS foliation of the gathering shows by omission where fol. 147A(131) was formerly misplaced.

The probability that the *Beowulf* MS first existed as a distinct codex, unconnected with the prose texts of the Nowell Codex, should not be surprising. After all, it has nothing of significance in common with the prose texts that now precede it, despite Sisam's familiar characterization of the Nowell Codex as an English *Liber Monstrorum. Beowulf* may have been added to the prose codex in late Old English times because

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some Anglo-Saxon anthologist perceived a loose connection in the lore about monsters, yet it is sad to think that the same person did not also perceive how far apart *Beowulf* stands from the prose texts in all other respects. Its poetic style, its substantive subject matter, its Northern sources, its originality, and its overall aesthetic superiority, are all reasons for believing that *Beowulf* was not copied at the same time, or for the same collection, as the prose texts. It has more in common with the *Judith* fragment, which formerly was undoubtedly part of another codex, than it has with the *St. Christopher* fragment, *The Wonders of the East,* or *Alexander's Letter. Judith,* as we shall see, was almost certainly added to the codex in early modern times, and *Beowulf* may have been, too; but even if it was added in Old English times, there is no compelling evidence that it was done for any other purpose than to protect it from exposure. The real objection to the thesis that *Beowulf* was the fourth item in a decidedly eccentric *Liber Monstrorum* is the implication that 11th-century Anglo-Saxons had no sophisticated appreciation for an original epic written in their own tongue. At least our imaginary anthologist might have given *Beowulf* pride of place, for even the dullest anthologist would realize that Grendel outmonstered anything *The Wonders of the East* had to offer, much less *Alexander's Letter* or St. Christopher's curious pedigree.[48]

The fact that *Beowulf* was copied at a different time, and with a far different attitude on the part of the first scribe than he had when he copied the prose texts, is susceptible to paleographical and codicological proofs of varying weights. The first can be seen in the different styles of the capital letters in the respective parts of the Nowell Codex. If the scribe were truly copying continuously from the *St. Christopher* to *The Wonders of the East* to *Alexander's Letter,* and then on through *Beowulf,* the style of the capitals, all made by the same scribe, would pre-

48. "According to the *Old English Martyrology,*" Sisam points out, "'he had a dog's head, and his locks were extraordinarily long, and his eyes gleamed as bright as the morning star, and his teeth were as sharp as a boar's tusks.'" *Studies,* p. 66. But we do not know if St. Christopher was characterized as one of the Cenocephali in this text. Sisam argues that "the incipit of the same text which Wanley preserves from the burnt eleventh-century MS. Otho B X says: *se wæs healfhundisces mancynnes*" (ibid.), but in fact Wanley nowhere says that these two versions were identical. Certainly the explicit that Wanley preserves from Cotton Otho B. X. (*Catalogus historico-criticus,* p. 191) is different from the ending in the Vitellius text.

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sumably remain fairly constant. Significantly, the style of the capitals does remain constant through the prose texts, but it changes notably at the beginning of *Beowulf.* If one compares the line of capitals at the beginning of *Alexander's Letter* (fol. 104r1) with the line of capitals at the beginning of *Beowulf* (fol. 129r1), the difference will be immediately apparent. Aside from the most striking change, from uncial majuscule to capital majuscule,[49] the major difference is that the letters in the *Beowulf* line are drawn with more care, more evenness, more technical draftsmanship, than those in the line from *Alexander's Letter.* It is perhaps worth noting that the loops of three capitals from *Alexander's Letter* have been filled in with the paint used for the illuminations of *The Wonders of the East*—an *H* and a *C* (fol. 104r1 and 8) with orange, and an *O* (fol. 105v2) with red paint. Nothing of the sort occurs in *Beowulf,* despite the otherwise obvious effort to highlight the capitals. More important, the sharp distinction between the style of the capitals in all three of the prose texts and in *Beowulf* can be sustained. Most of the capitals in the prose texts are much smaller and thinner than the boldly drawn capitals in *Beowulf:* the *H*'s and *Đ*'s are usually made with particular care and skill (see, for example, those on fols. 129r1, 135v7, 141r15, 145r8, and 150r8). There are no capitals drawn with special care or skill in the prose texts. Another basic difference is that in *Beowulf* the capitals frequently occur in groups, while in the prose texts they ordinarily occur in isolation. A striking difference in letterform can be seen by comparing the two kinds of capital *M* used in the prose texts with the entirely different capital *M* used in *Beowulf,* or by comparing the *U* used in *Alexander's Letter* with the corresponding *V* in *Beowulf.* The latter example, especially, reflects the general distinction between uncial and capital majuscule maintained between the two codices.[50]

But the most interesting and enlightening paleographical proof of the integrity of the *Beowulf* codex can be seen in the quantity and quality of the corrections in *Beowulf.* The poem was carefully proofread by

49. The only exception is uncial *H,* but the draftsmanship of this letter is far more accomplished in *Beowulf.*

50. The scribe's exemplar may be the influence responsible for the invariable use of a cursive capital *M* in *Alexander's Letter.* A full comparison of all the capitals in the Nowell Codex can easily be made with the aid of Malone's convenient table of occurrences (*Nowell Codex,* pp. 21–23).

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both scribes, and about 180 intelligent corrections were made. By contrast, there is no evidence that the prose texts were proofread by the first scribe, and what few corrections there are tend to show that the scribe was utterly uninterested in the accuracy of his copy. The mass of corrections in *Beowulf* will be considered in detail in Part 3. In view of the first scribe's interest in *Beowulf,* as reflected in his large number of corrections, it is instructive at this point to characterize his marked lack of interest, amounting at times to outright negligence, in the prose texts.

The prose texts were very carelessly copied. They are marred by many scribal blunders, some of an egregious nature, which were left uncorrected despite the fact that the most cursory proofreading would have surely exposed them. In effect, there is no evidence that the scribe proofread his copy of the prose texts after it was made, with the possible exception of *Alexander's Letter.* Lengthy dittographs and omissions occur with almost ostentatious regularity. A few examples of the scribe's negligence on fol. 91(93), alone, of the *St. Christopher* fragment will suffice to show his attitude toward this text. He makes two dittographic errors on the verso. The first is insignificant: he wrote *liges* twice, once at the end of line 8, and again at the beginning of line 9 (the first has been mostly scraped off, whether by the scribe or a subsequent reader is impossible to tell). The second dittographic error is considerably more serious, for it involves rewriting nearly a line and a half of text, judging by the length of the erasure on lines 19 and 20. The traces suggest that the immediately following passage (*ond for þæs eges fyrhto he wæs swa abreged)* was the dittographic material erased. The length of the blunder needs to be stressed. A simple dittograph of a word, or even a few words, need not indicate a general lack of attention, but a long dittograph does, for each rewritten word increases the chances of the scribe's noticing his error. In this case the scribe began a new folio continuing the dittograph, and so there is no evidence that he ever did awaken to his error. Still another serious blunder occurs on the recto. Between lines 6 and 7 there is a contextual lacuna, where King Dagnus is proposing various tortures for St. Christopher. The gap creates an exceedingly unusual torture: *he het settan on his heafde þry weras,* "he ordered that three men be placed on his head." Fortunately, the Latin source restores the sense of the passage: *rex jussit . . . mitti in caput ejus cassidem igneam. Tunc dixerunt tres,* "the king ordered to be placed on his head *a fiery helmet. Then* the three (men) said." But the scribe could

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have made the restoration himself, if he reread his copy with the intention of correcting it.[51]

If possible, the scribe was even more heedless of his exemplar when he copied *The Wonders of the East.* The text is riddled with errors, nearly all of which have gone uncorrected. The two lonesome corrections (on fols. 101r5 and 102v11, the latter of which may not be a correction) hardly display the scribe's sense of duty. Elsewhere, on fol. 100(96)v2, he wrote *beabe* instead of *beame,* and though he noted his mistake, he underdotted the first *b* instead of the second, and even then failed to write in the correction. Some of the few "erasures" are more likely (one hopes) accidental abrasions: for example, on fol. 100(96)r6 the *st* of *stefne* is partially rubbed away, but *efne,* "even, likewise," makes no sense here. In addition to other errors there are three contextual lacunas on fol. 102r, which can be tentatively restored by reference to a variant version of *The Wonders of the East* in Cotton Tiberius B. v.[52] Obviously, a scribe who skips material on a previously illustrated page is easily found out: the honest men from *The Wonders of the East* who are said to live on the highest mountain between Media and Armenia are conspicuously situated instead on top of the text describing the bearded huntresses; similarly, most of the text that was supposed to accompany the picture of the bearded huntress on fol. 102v is on the recto, while the text that should flank the next illustration partly flanks, instead, the bearded huntress.[53]

51. The scribe may have skipped a line in his exemplar. The Old English for *cassidem igneam* and *tunc* may well have taken up an entire line. The usual translation for *tunc* in this text, for example on fol. 91(93)r12, is *þære ylcan tide. Helm* is the natural translation of *cassidem,* and *fyrsmeortendum* translates *ignitos* in Alfred's *Orosius.* Thus, a reasonable conjectural restoration for the skipped line would be *fyrsmeortende helm þære ylcan tide.* The error could have been caused by the similarity, in insular script, of *fyr-* and *þry.*

52. This is only a stopgap measure, since the Tiberius version differs markedly from the Vitellius text. The Latin source is also extant (see Rypins, *Three Texts,* pp. 101–107).

53. It might be noted in passing that two readers of *The Wonders of the East,* in Middle English times, wrote pseudoglosses above some words on fol. 99(95)v. That the codex was being read with some comprehension in Middle English times raises the possibility that *Beowulf,* too, was read, and could have inspired some Middle English poet. The possible continuity of Old English traditions in isolated areas has not been adequately explored.

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Two stages of correction need to be considered in *Alexander's Letter.* The text has definitely been proofread, though not, evidently, by the scribe. The proofreader was a medieval spelling reformer, who went through *Alexander's Letter* rather fecklessly modernizing archaic spellings.[54] Presumably, then, this proofreader was not the scribe, since the words he alters are not errors. The possibility that the scribe himself was the spelling reformer cannot be ruled out, though it seems highly unlikely. On the one hand, the scribe may be responsible for the purely orthographical changes of *heofones* to *heofenes* on fol. 104r16; on the other hand, he is almost certainly not the alterer of *sægdon* to *sædon* on fol. 120r2, again reflecting later orthography, since in *Beowulf* he changes *sæde* to *sægde,* and in this case the form of the *g* identifies the correction as his (see fol. 130v19). Other erasures producing later orthographical forms can be seen in the changes of *heht* to *het* (fol. 118v2), *biwriton* to *biriton* (119r1), by someone for whom *w* before *r* was no longer pronounced or written, *burhg* to *burh* (119r9—cf. *sorhge* in *Beowulf,* fol. 184v18), and *usic* to *us* (108r5 and 19). The most systematic spelling reform, however, is the change of *mec* to *me* in nearly a dozen instances, by someone who apparently found *mec* annoyingly archaic (fols. 105r6, 118r2, 108v15, 16, and 17, 109r4 and v4, 5, and 7, 110r2, and 116v12). He apparently meant to make the same alteration on fol. 107r8, in the phrase *mec nænigre,* but erased the following *n* by mistake. If this explanation is right, even our spelling reformer worked mechanically.

The scribe made many errors in his copy of *Alexander's Letter,* and he left many of them uncorrected, but he himself also made many corrections. For example, he skipped an entire MS line between fols. 122 and 123, but he corrected his omission by ruling in an extra line at the bottom of fol. 122v. His errors by dittography can once again be used to characterize his general attitude toward the text he was copying. On fol. 108r16 about nine letters have been erased after the word *swa,* and the traces suggest that he had written *mid minne,* here, the same phrase that follows the erasure. On fol. 117r17 seven letters, by Rypins's count, have been erased before *ealne.* The error has been completely obliter-

54. Cf. the spelling reforms carried out by the "corrector" in the Junius MS, particularly in *Christ and Satan.* There is a good discussion in Robert Emmett Finnegan, ed., *Christ and Satan: A Critical Edition,* pp. 59–60.

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ated except for the first letter, the abbreviation for *ond.* What happened, it seems, is that the scribe began a dittograph of the preceding phrase, *ond minne here,* but noted his error before recopying *here,* showing that his inattention was only a momentary lapse. He was not always so easily roused. On fol. 108v1–2 an entire line and part of the next of dittography had to be erased.[55] The lapse of attention is quite long. Another extensive dittograph that has not been noticed at all—or, at any rate, has not been erased—occurs on fol. 115r14–16, where the scribe has unknowingly written two times, *ond ic swiðe wundrade þa gesælignesse þære eorðan.* This long dittograph was no doubt induced by the coincidence that *ond ic* follows *eorðan* in the passage, and thus the scribe inadvertently recopied what came after the first *ond ic.* That such a lengthy dittograph was written at all shows that the scribe was inattentive; that it was never detected, and therefore never erased or crossed out, is a potent indication that the scribe never proofread *Alexander's Letter.*

The signs of extensive proofreading in the *Beowulf* codex, next to the lack of proofreading in the prose texts, provide persuasive, if implicit, testimony that the *Beowulf* codex was not always joined to the prose codex that now precedes it. As we shall see, the second scribe, in addition to proofreading his own copy, also proofread the part of *Beowulf* copied by the first scribe, for many corrections in this section of the poem are made in his hand.[56] Surely the second scribe would have proofread the prose texts as well if *Beowulf* at the time were merely the fourth item in an English *Liber Monstrorum.* As for the first scribe, the vast number of corrections in *Beowulf* and even the nature of the errors themselves show that he regarded *Beowulf* highly and made every effort to produce an accurate copy. The scribe's prevailing alertness is attested by the lack of any long dittographs of the type that are frequently found in the prose texts, and by the removal of all short dittographs in the course of later proofreading, if not while he was actually copying. His

55. A dittograph can be presumed here, for if the scribe had omitted material at this point he would have been able to rule an extra line at the bottom of the preceding folio, as he does for his omission between fols. 122 and 123.

56. See Tilman Westphalen, *Beowulf 3150–55: Textkritik und Editionsgeschichte.* This brilliant study contains an excellent discussion of the scribal corrections (pp. 99–108), in which Westphalen convincingly distinguishes the two scribes' corrections on paleographical grounds. He provides a summary outline on pp. 107–108.

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written corrections and erasures show that he was generally very attentive, not only to the mechanical job of copying correctly, but also to the more aesthetic aspects of grammar, syntax, sense, and even of meter and alliteration. Moreover, differences in ink and in the sharpness of the quill point show that the proofreading by both scribes was not done all at once, but rather that both read the same copy more than once. When combined with all the other evidence that *Beowulf* was initially a separate codex, the intelligent, conscientious proofreading of *Beowulf* alone, by both scribes and in several stages, and the scribes' manifest efforts to copy accurately in the first place, are the best confirmation of all that *Beowulf* was a special poem in the early 11th century, and that it was copied in our extant MS as a separate codex.

The first quire of this *Beowulf* codex has already been discussed in detail and diagrammed. The remaining seven quires of *Beowulf,* the seventh to the thirteenth of the Nowell Codex, are here described for purposes of reference. The makeup of these gatherings is not controversial, and the arrangement of hair and flesh sides, with one explicable exception, confirms the accounts of these gatherings given by Ker and Malone. The twelfth and thirteenth, as mentioned earlier, are five-sheet gatherings, with hair sides placed outward for all five sheets in both gatherings (fols. 179–188 and 189A[197]–198). The rest of the gatherings are natural, four-sheet quires, with enough minor departures from the normal insular sheet arrangement (that is, hair facing hair, and flesh facing flesh) to make the identification of the quires, by conjugate pairs of folios, virtually certain. The tenth and eleventh quires (fols. 163–170 and 171–178) have their sheets arranged identically, with hair outside the gathering, so that flesh faces flesh between sheets 1 and 2; but the order is reversed with sheets 3 and 4, so that hair faces hair between them, while hair faces flesh between sheets 2 and 3. The unusual pattern clearly identifies the two quires, which is additionally confirmed by the anomalous ruling for twenty-two lines per page in the tenth quire. The ninth quire (fols. 155–162) follows the normal insular practice without variation, while the eighth (fols. 147–154) has hair outside the first two sheets, but then follows the normal practice. All of the sheets in this account of the gatherings are comprised of conjugate pairs of folios.

The only problem arises in the seventh quire (fols. 140–147A[131]): sheets 1, 2, and 4 have conjugate pairs, but sheet 3 (fols. 142 and 145)

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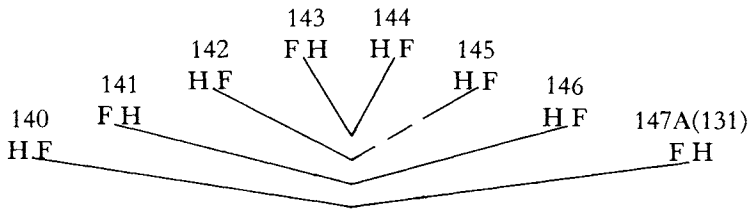
does not. But the evidence in this case does not suggest that the present, four-sheet quire was expanded from an original, three-sheet gathering. The arrangement of hair and flesh sides indicates that the quire was composed in the normal way, with hair on the outside for the first sheet, and with flesh facing flesh and hair facing hair inside. The pattern only breaks down on the sixth leaf, fol. 145, and for this reason I would suggest that the original leaf must have been replaced, and that the replacement leaf was folded on (perhaps inadvertently) with the hair side up, instead of the flesh side. It is very hard to distinguish hair from flesh on this leaf, anyway, for the vellum is of a finer quality than any other folio in the quire, and the hair dots appear on both sides of the thinned vellum. If the scribe was able to distinguish hair from flesh, he may still have placed the hair side up deliberately, because he had to draw a large capital on the recto, and ink generally looks better against a smooth, shiny hair side.

The following diagram illustrates the hair-flesh pattern of the sheets and highlights the thesis that fol. 145 was a replacement.



If the thesis is correct, the replacement of fol. 145 is a remarkable instance of responsible proofreading, for if the scribe merely made a mess of the page in the course of copying, he might have cut the page out, but he would not have to replace it. As Ker points out, "perfect quires, in the sense that no part of the text is missing, often contain an odd number of leaves, probably, as a rule, because the scribe made a mess of one of the leaves and excised it" (*Catalogue,* p. xxiv). Thus, if fol. 145 is a replacement, it indicates that the scribe noticed a major blunder on the original leaf, which could most easily, or most neatly, be corrected by replacing the entire leaf. A possible explanation can be deduced from the crowding of letters in line 6 of the recto, which holds more letters than any other line on the page, and from the runover of the text into line 7 at the end of the fitt. If the scribe had been writing

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normally, line 6 would contain thirty to thirty-one letters, instead of thirty-six; and if he followed his normal practice, *aldre gedigest* would have been written on a single line, and the fitt number X would have taken up another whole line.[57] The crowding and the overrun support the conjecture, therefore, that the scribe had to replace fol. 145 because he had skipped an entire line of text when he made his first copy. This of course is pure guesswork, but it would explain the one irregular leaf in the sheet arrangement of the seventh quire.

This collation of the sheets in the Nowell Codex confirms that the gatherings of the prose codex and the gatherings of the *Beowulf* codex are fundamentally different. The characteristic gathering of the prose codex was made up of three sheets, though two were expanded to natural quires by folding on extra leaves. The characteristic gathering of the *Beowulf* codex was a natural quire, though the first was expanded to a five-sheet gathering by folding on extra leaves. The last two gatherings of the *Beowulf* codex are uncharacteristic in several respects: they are five-sheet gatherings from the start, their sheets are all arranged so that hair side faces outward, and they are ruled for twenty-one lines to the page, instead of the normal twenty. The sheet arrangement, as the *Judith* quire shows, is an idiosyncrasy of the second scribe. The five-sheet gatherings and the additional rulings can both be used as circumstantial proof that fol. 198, the last folio of *Beowulf,* was formerly the last page of the codex. Scholars who know the MS, and particularly the physical state of fol. 198, will not doubt this, but enough confusion has been expressed in print to make a restatement of the facts highly desirable.

The second scribe's departure from the first scribe's format of using natural quires ruled for 20 lines to the page is easily explained. As Ker points out, "the variation from the normal number [of sheets in a quire] is usually explicable. If, for example, a scribe had matter for two and a half eight-leaf quires he would probably prefer to fit it into two ten-leaf quires" (*Catalogue,* p. xxiv). Ker's example, of course, fits the circumstances quite well. The second scribe had slightly more text left to copy than would easily fit in two five-sheet gatherings, as the extra rul-

57. Cf. fols. 134r, 138r, 141r, and 169v. The only other times the scribe runs the text over into the line of the fitt number are on fol. 142v (but here only four extra letters are involved, and there is no crowding in the previous line) and on fol. 151v.

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ings indicate, but considerably less than would justify the use of three natural quires. The last two gatherings show that the scribe needed 840 lines (forty pages, each ruled for 21 lines) to finish copying *Beowulf.* If he had kept to the format established by the first scribe, three natural quires ruled for 20 lines to the page would provide him with 960 lines (forty-eight pages), which was much more than he needed. He would have had six blank pages left over at the end of the third quire, after he had finished copying *Beowulf.* This surplus would have been fine if he had something else to copy after *Beowulf* (*Judith*, for instance), and so the peculiar construction of the last two gatherings of *Beowulf* is reason enough to conclude that the last page of *Beowulf* was once the last page of a codex. *Judith,* whose only extant part is written on a natural quire ruled for 20 lines to the page, is a later, probably 16th-century, addition to the present, composite codex known as the Nowell Codex.

That the second scribe labored to squeeze the ending of *Beowulf* into two five-sheet gatherings is scarcely open to doubt, in view of the crowding of the text onto 198v. It is perfectly evident that the scribe had no more vellum available after the end of this page. His letters, which are normally well spaced, and formed with broad, bold strokes, are suddenly tightly packed together and considerably smaller. On fol. 172v, where he first begins to copy *Beowulf,* he fits between twenty-four and thirty-one letters on each line; now, on fol. 198v, he fits between thirty-four and forty-four letters per line. And the crowding of the letters is still not enough, for the scribe is also obliged to make use of abbreviations at a rate, and of a sort, unprecedented in the codex. For example, on lines 17–18 he writes *-dryh̄ wordū hergē ferhðū freogē þon̄* as an abbreviated form of *-dryhten wordum herge ferhðum freoge þonne.* Even after all of the squeezing and clipping, *-geornost,* the last word of the poem, does not fit and spills over into a twenty-second line. Obviously, no crowding would have been necessary if a fresh quire ever followed the last gathering of *Beowulf* when the second scribe finished the poem.

The bad condition of fol. 198v can also be cited as evidence that it once served as an outside cover, as Holthausen was the first to observe.[58] The page suffered extraordinary damage in medieval times, and again in modern times from the fire and from the water used to put out the

58. In his edition, *Beowulf nebst dem Finnsburg-Bruchstück,* p. x.

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fire. Zupitza had tersely noted in his FS transliteration that "almost all that is legible in this page [was] freshened up in a late hand" (p. 144); more recently, Westphalen has painstakingly vindicated the claim with his remarkable theory, based on a careful paleographical study, that the second scribe himself freshened up the page about ten years after he had originally copied it. As Westphalen realized, the page must have been exposed to unusual wear and tear to require later restoration.[59] Westphalen thus made the obvious deduction that the page must have been at one time the back cover of the MS. A discriminating, late medieval bookworm provides the culminating proof. He fortunately ate no words, but he did take a large meal, eating a tunnel from just above the *t* of *eahtodan* on fol. 198v16 back through all ten folios of the thirteenth gathering. Since the *Judith* quire contains no wormholes, the thirteenth gathering must have been exposed on the outside when the worm discovered *Beowulf.*

The *Judith* Fragment

Insufficient and inaccurate conceptions of the physical construction of the Nowell Codex, and of the *Judith* fragment's present position in the composite codex, have led to unwarranted conclusions about the original length of the poem. Almost certainly, *Judith* once was part of another codex entirely, and certainly it did not always follow *Beowulf.* Earlier scholars, because they ignored the physical state of the last gathering, and especially the last page of *Beowulf,* assumed that *Judith* always followed *Beowulf* in the codex.[60] Förster, for example, believed that *Beowulf* and *Judith* were once inseparable, and that when intervening gatherings fell out, *Judith* not only lost its beginning, but *Beowulf* may have lost its conclusion (p. 82). We now realize from fol. 198v that *Beo-*

59. The second scribe's extended interest in the *Beowulf* MS is impressive testimony of his interest in the poem itself. It is hard to believe that the same man who carefully watched over the physical condition of the MS had copied the poem carelessly and without comprehension ten years before. On the other hand, there is no good reason to doubt that the MS was used frequently after the poem was copied, and that the scribe, who stopped its physical deterioration, had a clear notion of the value of preserving it.

60. Rosemary Woolf takes the extreme view that *Judith* may have been copied as a fragment immediately after *Beowulf* ("The Lost Opening to the *Judith,*" p. 170).

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wulf is complete, that the *Beowulf* and *Judith* MSS were always separable, and in fact were once separate, and that losses at the beginning of *Judith* had no effect on *Beowulf.* There is, however, no agreement yet on whether the *Judith* fragment is a late addition to the composite codex, or whether it was merely shifted from the beginning of the codex to the end, or even, as Ker suggests, from the end to the beginning, and then back to the end again.[61] Nor is there agreement on how much has been lost at the beginning of *Judith.* The extant fitt numbers have given the editors of *Judith* reason to believe that three entire gatherings, or about three-quarters of the poem, have been lost; yet aesthetic arguments strongly suggest that the poem is virtually complete. There is paleographical and codicological evidence that has not been brought forth that the *Judith* fragment, as a fragment, was indeed a late addition to the codex; more important, there is paleographical evidence that dismantles the only good case that *Judith* lost a major part of its original text.

One clear indication that *Judith* was formerly unassociated with the *Beowulf* codex is that the allotted writing space for the two MSS differs noticeably. What makes this especially valuable as evidence is that the number of lines per page in *Beowulf* varies in different quires from twenty lines, to twenty-one lines, to twenty-two lines, and yet the written space between the first and last rulings, regardless of the number of lines per page, is uniformly between 17 and 18 cm., usually about 17.5 cm. This shows that even when the scribes departed from the normal number of lines (twenty), they took care, for aesthetic reasons, to make the written space of all pages throughout the *Beowulf* codex a uniform size. In the case of the *Judith* fragment the written space between the first and last rulings is between 16 and 16.5 cm. The difference is distinct, and can hardly be fortuitous: *Judith* was not ruled to fit the same format as the *Beowulf* codex. The same marked discrepancy exists between the prose codex and the *Judith* fragment, which is reason enough to reject the idea that *Judith* was formerly bound at the beginning of the Nowell Codex. It seems quite safe to conclude, with Malone,

61. Ker recognized that "Judith was not always in its present position," but apparently it did not occur to him that it might be a late addition; he argues instead that, "since arts. 1–4 are inseparable, it must have come originally before art. 1 or have been shifted from the end to some other position before the worm got to work" on the last quire of *Beowulf* (*Catalogue,* p. 282).

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that the monastic scriptorium that produced the prose codex and the *Beowulf* codex also produced a poem about *Judith*, which was combined with the former MSS "by Nowell or by some earlier owner . . . because the Judith fragment was obviously written by the scribe who wrote *Beowulf* 1940 [*sic*]–3182" (*Nowell Codex,* p. 17).

The precise manner in which the *Judith* fragment was added to the Nowell Codex in early modern times can even be reconstructed. We know that more than the extant quire still existed into the 16th century, for some early "Saxonist" copied the closing lines of *Judith*, in an awkward imitation of the insular script, on the bottom margin of fol. 206v. We know, too, that the original page from which the transcript was taken cannot have been lost accidentally, or we would have no transcript. The closing lines of the poem were deliberately removed, for reasons that will be speculated upon in a moment. At any rate, the extant quire was not simply tacked on at the end of *Beowulf,* as is usually assumed. Whoever added the *Judith* fragment to the Nowell Codex ripped off the outside sheet of the thirteenth gathering of *Beowulf,* and placed it as a protective covering on the outside of the *Judith* quire. In this way, the last page of *Beowulf,* fol. 198v, came for a time to be the last page of the Nowell Codex and was regarded as a flyleaf by Hutton and Wanley in 1703 and 1705. It still was the last page of the codex at the time of the Cotton fire in 1731, and consequently was burned more severely than the last page of *Judith.* Thus, there are two reasons, one medieval and one modern, for the extraordinary damage on fol. 198v. First it was an outside cover of the *Beowulf* codex, in Old English times, and as a result deteriorated enough to need to be freshened up by the scribe some time after he had originally copied the poem. In early modern times, it became the last page of the Nowell Codex, and so became the first page to face the Cotton fire.

With the notable exception of Westphalen, scholars have ignored the evident fire damage to fol. 198v. Even Westphalen, however, in his exhaustive study of the folio, does not address the problem of the fire damage directly, and it is briefly dismissed in a footnote. Still, Westphalen describes the folio as scorched, and correctly attributes the three great holes to burning, and to this extent his comments are far more accurate and revealing than any previous account (pp. 38–39, n. 52). Ker, for example, merely refers to "marks of exposure," while most other commentators vaguely allude to the "badly damaged" condition

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of the folio, but never mention the fire damage. On the other hand, Westphalen's fantastic explanation for the fire damage cannot be taken seriously. His suggestion that the codex popped open during the fire, burning and scorching fol. 198v, while the facing page, fol. 199r, somehow remained shielded from the tremendous heat, can be dismissed without ceremony. Fortunately, the codex remained tightly closed during the fire, so that the flames only destroyed the outer margins of the folios. If the codex had opened, Westphalen would have lost his subject. The flames also destroyed the back cover of the original binding and began to eat away at the last page of the codex, which, surprisingly enough, was fol. 198v at the time.

The proof that fol. 198, the last folio of *Beowulf,* followed fol. 206, the last folio of the *Judith* fragment, at the time of the fire is that some of the fire damage to fol. 198 has carried through to fol. 206. When the outside sheet of the thirteenth gathering was made the outside sheet of the *Judith* fragment, the binder lined up the top lines, so that the twenty lines of fol. 206 roughly correspond to the first twenty (of twenty-one) lines of fol. 198, and damage on line 17 of fol. 198v corresponds to damage on line 17 of fol. 206v of the *Judith* fragment, despite the discrepancy in the rulings. Specifically, there is a large hole, about 2 cm. in diameter, burned through fol. 198 between lines 16 and 18. When the Thorkelin transcripts were made, the hole was pretty much confined to line 17 (to judge from the Thorkelin readings), but bits of parchment subsequently crumbled away, until the hole extended to lines 16 and 18.[62] A glance at fol. 206v quickly reveals that fol. 198 followed it at the time of the fire. On line 17 of fol. 206v there is a corresponding hole burned through the parchment between *ealles* and *ðæs.* The fire had burned through fol. 198 and began to burn fol. 206 at the same point. There are other burn marks in the area of this second hole that further correspond with the primary hole on fol. 198: on fol. 206v16 there are burn marks on the *t* and the *a* of *beorhtan,* and just below the *t* there is a thin crack surrounded by scorched parchment, which shows through on 206r16, beneath the *e* of *scyne.* In addition, between lines 17 and 18 on the verso there are two tiny scorch marks that have not burned holes, but still have left marks on the recto (see Plates 6a and 6b). In view of

62. With the new binding, transparent paper was pasted over the hole on fol. 198 to prevent any further crumbling.

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this evidence, there can be no question that the last page of *Beowulf* was misplaced at the end of the Nowell Codex at the time of the fire, and that the *Judith* fragment was bound in before it.

The outside sheet of the thirteenth gathering is comprised of fols. 189A(197) and 198. When the sheet was pulled from the thirteenth gathering to provide a cover for the *Judith* fragment, a tear was made in the parchment where the stitching held the sheet at the fold. If one looks in the lower right-hand corner of fol. 189A(197)v, one side of the tear can be seen; the other side can be seen in the lower left-hand corner of fol. 198r. The discovery that this sheet was placed around the *Judith* fragment in the original binding of Cotton Vitellius A. XV. opens the way to other, more important, discoveries. For instance, when fol. 198 became the last folio of the Nowell Codex, fol. 189A(197) became at the same time the last folio of the *Beowulf* codex. After the fire, when fol. 198 was put back in its proper place at the end of *Beowulf,* fol. 189A(197) remained out of place, as the folio number, 197, written on the vellum leaf, shows. We now know why fol. 189A(197) was the penultimate leaf in *Beowulf* when the MS foliation was written in the MS after the fire.[63] We also know why fol. 198 is in worse condition than we would expect from the normal wear and tear it suffered as an outside cover in Old English times. The knowledge of how, precisely, the *Judith* fragment was added to the Nowell Codex thus provides us with some useful information about the history of the *Beowulf* codex.[64]

Some useful conclusions can also be reached, somewhat more tentatively, about the history of the codex to which *Judith* formerly belonged. The addition of the *Judith* fragment to the Nowell Codex must now be

63. Förster (*Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* p. 23) and Dobbie (*Beowulf and Judith,* pp. xiv–xv) assumed that fol. 189A(197) was a single folded-on leaf, which came loose and was misplaced. Malone correctly describes fols. 189A(197) and 198 as the outside sheet of the thirteenth gathering, but then the only way he could explain the misplacement was by assuming that Cotton's bookbinder found the sheet loose, and decided to bind it alone at the end of the gathering (*Nowell Codex,* p. 16).

64. Remarkably, there is no evidence that fol. 189A(197) was out of place when the Thorkelin transcripts were made, yet we know that it was the penultimate leaf in *Beowulf* from the MS foliation, which was written afterward. The leaf was out of place, but Thorkelin and his scribe were still able to transcribe it where it belonged on the basis of the fitt number, XXXVII (v11).

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assigned to early modern times, and before Cotton Vitellius A. XV. was bound in the early 17th century. Clearly, the use of the outside sheet of the thirteenth gathering as a protective covering for the *Judith* fragment is not the work of a medieval bookowner. We may reasonably assume that it is the work of a 16th-century collector of "Saxon remains," for whom the preservation of a biblical fragment, even from the Apocrypha, was more important than the textual continuity of a cryptic, but obviously secular, treatise like *Beowulf.* No doubt a scribe associated with this early collector copied out the closing lines of *Judith,* imitating the insular script, at the bottom of fol. 206v, before the extant quire from *Judith* was placed within the sheet taken from *Beowulf.* Malone reverses this proposed chronology, dating the early modern hand "*circa* 1600" (*Nowell Codex,* p. 12), yet dating the addition of the *Judith* fragment to the Nowell Codex "in Nowell's time or a bit earlier" (ibid., p. 119). But Malone did not know, of course, that the outside sheet from the thirteenth gathering was made a cover for the *Judith* fragment. He naturally assumed that the *Judith* fragment was merely tacked on at the end of *Beowulf.* Now, the manner in which the *Judith* fragment was added to the codex is persuasive evidence that the early modern hand that completes the poem for us should also be dated in Nowell's time, or a bit earlier. It is highly unlikely, at any rate, that whoever added the *Judith* fragment to the Nowell Codex would have bound more than the extant quire within the sheet from *Beowulf.*

It is possible, of course, as Ker, Malone, and Dobbie all argue, that the closing lines of *Judith* were once written on a single leaf, and that this single leaf was the last leaf of the codex to which *Judith* formerly belonged. It is much more probable, however, that *Judith* was followed by another text in its original codex. As Ker elsewhere admits (*Catalogue,* p. xxiv), single leaves are rarely placed outside of quires, where they might easily fall out. A single leaf at the end of a codex would be particularly vulnerable. Besides, the second scribe has shown us, in the last two gatherings of *Beowulf,* what he would have done if all he had

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Plates 12a and 12b. Fols. 189A(197) and 198 constitute the outside sheet of the last gathering of the *Beowulf* MS; when this sheet was pulled from its gathering to furnish a cover for the *Judith* fragment, the sheet was torn where the lower stitching held it to the fold.

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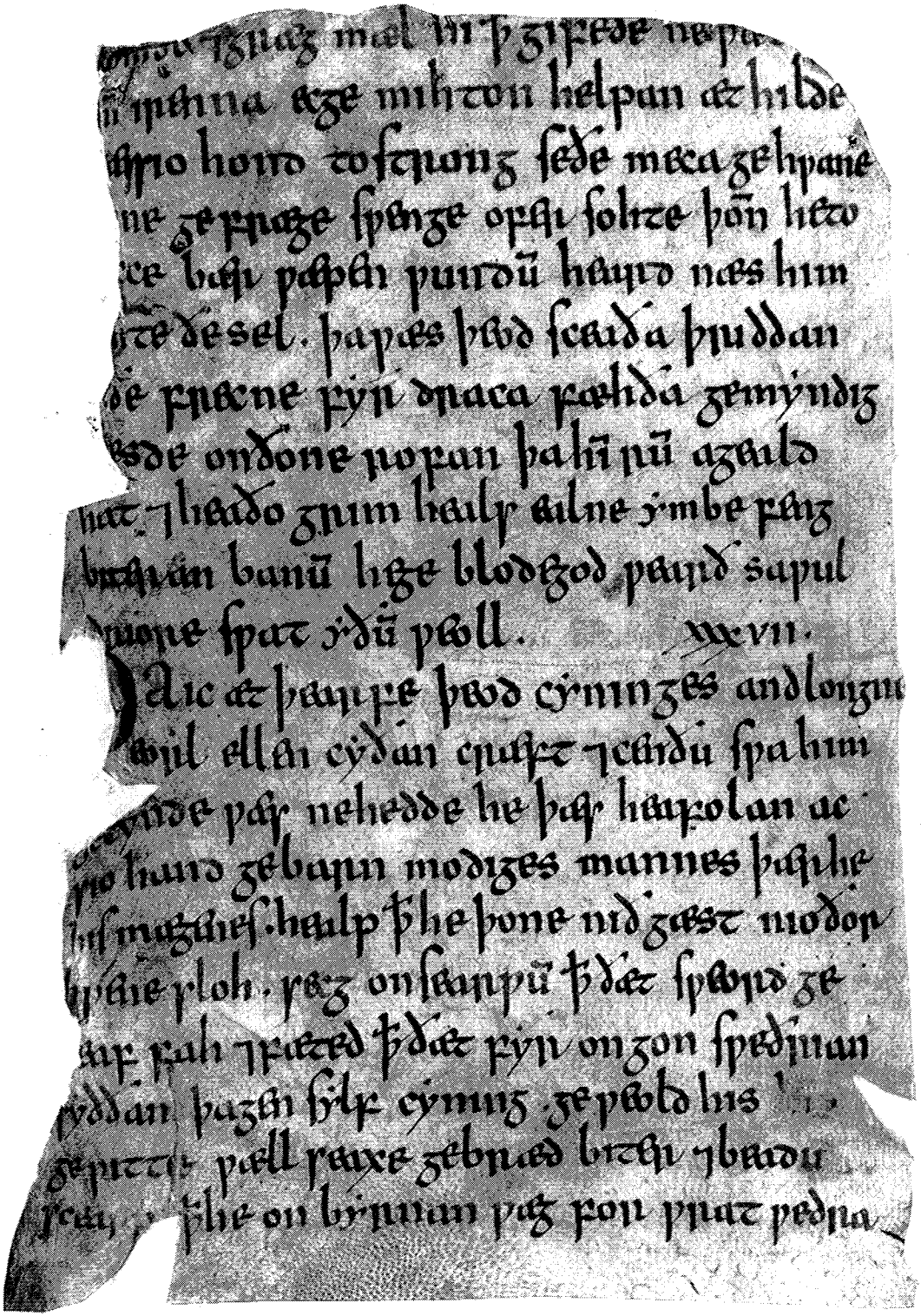

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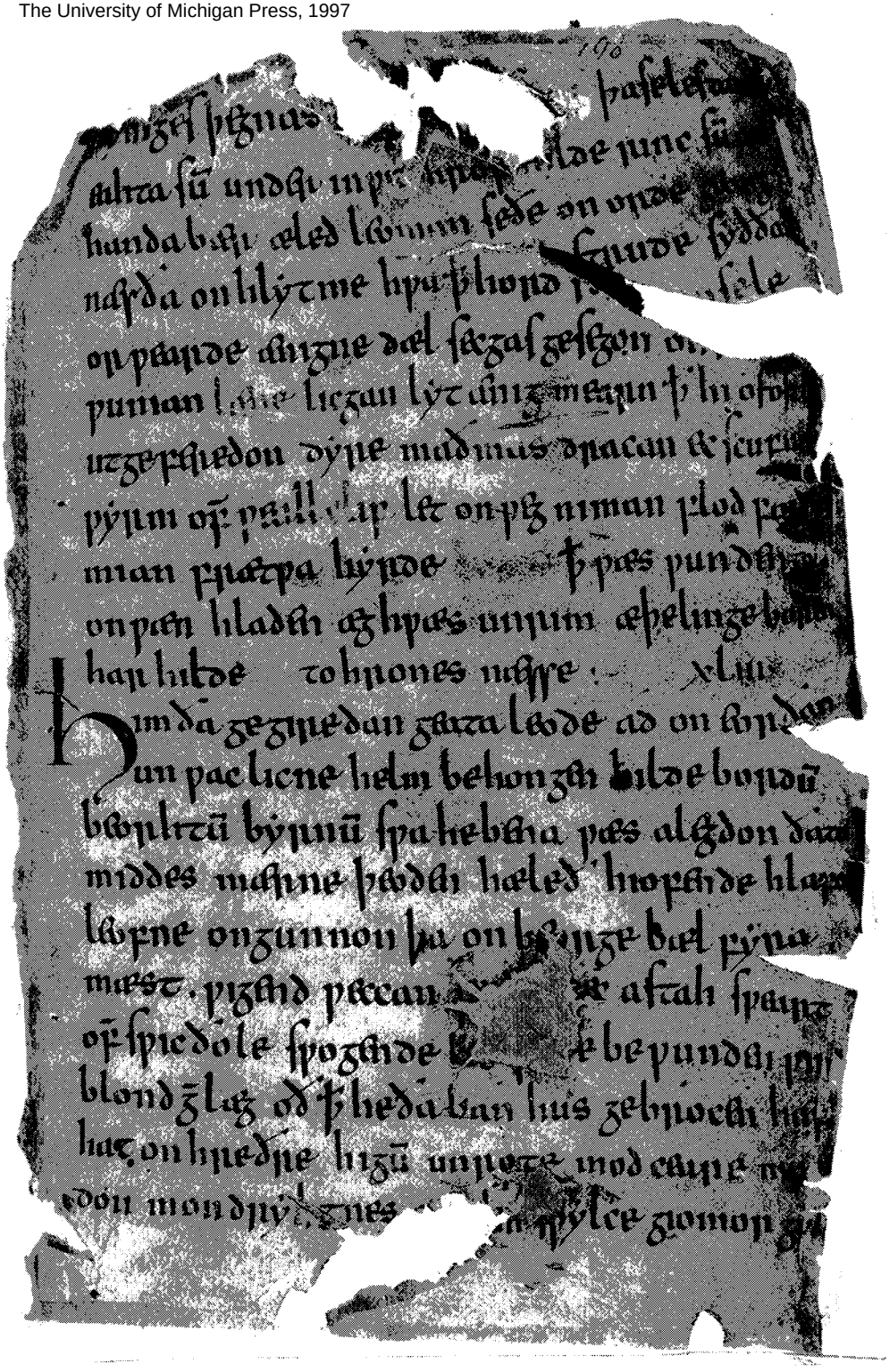

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to copy were a few extra lines at the end of *Judith*. The ending of *Beowulf* shows that he would not have used an extra leaf. Instead, he would have added extra rulings in his last quire, crowded his words together on the last pages and abbreviated freely. If one compares the last page of *Beowulf* with the last page of the *Judith* fragment, it will be evident that the scribe was going on to copy another text after *Judith*. Once this fact is recognized, it also becomes clear that the original *Judith* codex was deliberately dismembered in the 16th century. The closing lines of *Judith* were kept with the following quire or quires, but were copied in the bottom margin of fol. 206v. But if the original *Judith* codex was not dismembered until the 16th century, what happened to the lost opening of the poem, which according to current estimates, amounted to three full quires? The first page of the extant fragment is in good condition. There is no indication that it served as an outside cover after its opening was lost, which strongly suggests that it had material preceding it when it was removed from its original codex.

Because of the comparatively good condition of the surface of fol. 199, there is a good chance, at least, that the *Judith* fragment was removed from the middle of its original codex in early modern times, and that its beginning was lost to us in the same way and at the same time that its ending was lost. The obvious objection to this possibility is that there is no apparent reason why only the last quire of four would be removed. A fitting response to this objection is that there must not have been three additional quires of *Judith* to remove: the *Judith* fragment may well preserve a virtually complete text of the original poem. Presumably, more than a few lines were lost at the beginning, or they would have been copied at the beginning of fol. 199r, just as the closing lines were copied at the end of fol. 206v; but probably less than a complete folio was lost, or it could have been preserved with the extant quire. The theory that the *Judith* fragment is nearly complete is not new, of course, but it is decidedly controversial. In 1904, Albert S. Cook calmly observed, in the face of what have always seemed inarguable facts to the contrary, that "the poem seems virtually complete as it now stands," and he defended his view by pointing to the parallelism between lines 6b–7a and 344b–345a.[65] The envelope pattern clearly supports the idea

65. Ed., *Judith: An Old English Epic Fragment,* p. 21, n. 1. Cook's subtitle oddly contradicts his thesis.

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that *Judith* has lost little of its beginning.[66] The great argument began when Förster, in his monograph, deduced the loss of exactly three quires on the basis of the Vulgate source, and with the corroboration of the extant fitt numbers.

An essentially paleographical approach to the argument is illuminating. It is helpful to begin with the historical context of the 16th century, which might well have left *Judith* a fragment. The neglect of the MS has rendered such speculation irrelevant, for all commentators on the *Judith* fragment have readily assumed that it was part of the Nowell Codex, as a fragment, from the start. Since we now know, from the ending, that at least part of the original *Judith* codex was dismembered in the 16th century, we must try to understand why it was added to the Nowell Codex in the way it was. First, one may presume that the *Judith* codex came into secular hands as a result of the dissolution of the monasteries, ordered by King Henry VIII in 1537. Since the five texts of the Nowell Codex are written in two hands, which are inseparably linked in *Beowulf* at line 1939b, it is certain that all five texts derive from the same scriptorium. The *Judith* codex must have been taken with the prose codex and the *Beowulf* codex (the last two of which may have been combined already) sometime after 1537, and all three codices must have been kept together by the same collector. Laurence Nowell, the earliest known owner, has written his name and the date, 1563, at the top of the first page of the present, composite codex. It would seem to follow that *Judith* was separated from its original codex, and made part of what is now called the Nowell Codex, some time between 1537 and 1563.

The historical setting provides a possible explanation for the dismemberment of the original *Judith* codex. The initial interest in Old English

66. In a convincing structural analysis, James F. Doubleday has shown that "the poem is divided into two major parts," which he goes on to say "are almost mathematically divided off." Beginning with the parallel passages pointed out by Cook, Doubleday goes on to argue that "the second passage in part one likewise parallels the next-to-last passage in part two, and so on, until two contrasting passages, Judith's triumph in the city and her speech urging her people to battle, are juxtaposed at the center of the poem." "The Principle of Contrast in *Judith*," p. 439. These aesthetic judgments are not trivial or evanescent. They thoroughly justify a revaluation of the reasons accepted by all current editors of *Judith* for viewing the extant fragment as no more than a quarter of the original poem.

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texts during the Reformation in England was primarily polemical. As Eleanor N. Adams says in "The Beginnings of Old English Scholarship in the Sixteenth Century":

> In order to lay any foundation for their new institutions, the Reformers had to establish a precedent for their beliefs. Such precedent they sought in the liturgy and sermons of the "primitive church," and in the laws of their Anglo-Saxon forbears. Their first concern was to justify, by historical documents, their attitude towards the sacrament, the secular privileges of the clergy, and the use of the Scriptures in the vernacular.[67]

The Apocryphal Book of Judith participated in the polemics. The medieval Bible, Jerome's Vulgate, follows the Alexandrian canons, and thus includes the Apocrypha in the body of the Old Testament. The English Reformers, from Coverdale's first English Bible (1535) onward, followed the Hebrew canons, and so placed the Apocrypha at the end of the Old Testament. The Reformers had an Anglo-Saxon precedent for this placement in Ælfric's "On the Old and New Testament," for Ælfric discusses the Apocrypha and the Book of Judith at the end of the treatise.[68]

The polemics involving the Book of Judith may explain how the Old English poem *Judith* came to be a fragment in the 16th century. If we assume that *Judith* was originally included in a collection of biblical texts that followed the order of the Vulgate, or at least indicated that *Judith* was canonical, its removal from this collection between 1537 and 1563 is understandable. If he wanted to save all of the texts, a Reformer would be virtually obliged to remove *Judith* from a collection that adhered to the Vulgate order. The way the *Judith* fragment ends supports this conjecture, for it indicates that whatever followed *Judith* in

67. *Old English Scholarship in England from 1566–1800,* p. 11.

68. See S. J. Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Ælfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and His Preface to Genesis,* pp. 48–49. The title of the edition published by William L'Isle in 1623 reflects its polemical nature: *A Saxon Treatise Concerning the Old and New Testament. Written about the time of King Edgar (700 yeares agoe) by Ælfricus Abbas . . . whereby appeares what was the Canon of holy Scripture here then received, and that the Church of England had it so long agoe in her Mother-Tongue.*

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the original collection was more important to the person who dismembered the codex than *Judith*. The early modern copy of the closing lines suggests, at any rate, that the ending of *Judith* was sacrificed so that the beginning of the succeeding text might be preserved intact. The only kind of text that would certainly take priority over *Judith* at this time would be a canonical biblical text. The same explanation can be applied to the lost opening of *Judith*, which, as we have seen, may have comprised less than a folio, containing perhaps a short proem along with the start of the poem proper. These lines, like the closing lines, would have been sacrificed in favor of the canonical biblical text that preceded *Judith* in the original codex.

The theory accounts for the state in which the *Judith* fragment has come down to us. As Ker says, "The *membra disiecta* have come into existence for various reasons and especially because one part of a manuscript seemed more important than another part or had a different sort of interest" (*Catalogue,* p. lxii). In this case, the texts on either side of *Judith* were of special interest, and if *Judith* was indeed expurgated, the beginning and closing lines that remained with the original codex would have to be scraped off by the expurgator to conceal the former existence of *Judith* at that point in the codex. There would be no point in removing the main body of the text, while retaining the fragmentary proof that *Judith* once came between the remaining texts. The deliberate destruction of Old English texts by early collectors is well documented in Ker's *Catalogue*. Ker points out that "a special kind of mutilation is found in some manuscripts belonging to Archbishop Parker. This consists in the deliberate removal by one means or another of the remaining portions of the imperfect texts. Thus in *21,* art. 1 was scrapped by pasting up two of the leaves and by erasing the part of the text which still remained visible after this had been done" (*Catalogue,* p. lxiii). He goes on to list many additional texts that were erased "either partially or completely" in early modern times. The erasure of the first thirty-eight lines of a fragmentary translation of the *Regularis concordia* at the beginning of the MS CCCC 201 "is probably due," Ker guesses, "to Parker's wish to contrive a tidy beginning" (ibid., p. 83). Perhaps the study of all of these erasures under ultraviolet light will reveal more complex motives behind the mutilation of Old English texts by early collectors. It is perhaps too much to hope that the begin-

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ning of *Judith* may some day reappear under ultraviolet light, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that it was lost by erasure.[69]

All of this may seem unduly speculative, but the original length of *Judith* is a matter of speculation that has led to widely divergent conclusions. The early modern transcript of the closing lines in the bottom margin of fol. 206v, and the manner in which the *Judith* fragment was added to the Nowell Codex, are demonstrable facts, both of which support the theory that *Judith* was taken from its original codex in early modern times. There is no obvious reason, under these circumstances, why three entire quires should have disappeared when the extant fragment was transferred from one codex to another. The alternative is that *Judith* was already a fragment when it was pulled from its original codex, but unless there is real evidence of this there is little point in accepting it. Here is the evidence: Förster reckoned that the poem must have lost a substantial part of its beginning, since the extant fragment preserved only parts of chapters 12, 13, 14, and 15 from the Vulgate Book of Judith; the scope of these losses (chapters 1 through 11), Förster argued, was confirmed by the extant fitt numbers, X, XI, and XII, which showed, he said, that well over eight fitts had been lost from the beginning.[70] There would seem to be little ground left for disagreement.

69. Who owned the codex before Nowell is still a mystery. In addition to the counterfeit insular script of the closing lines of *Judith,* the underlined proper names in *Beowulf* (for example, on fols. 138–140) suggest that the Nowell Codex may have formerly belonged to Parker; the underlinings, however, are in gray black lead, rather than the red traditionally assigned to Parker. John Bale died in 1563, and Nowell could have acquired the codex from what remained of the once vast collection of this zealous Reformer and tireless collector of MSS. It seems most likely, however, that Nowell acquired it through Sir William Cecil in 1563, when Nowell entered Cecil's household as tutor to his ward, the earl of Oxford. It is known from his correspondence with Parker that Cecil "kept artificers in his household for the purpose of 'improving' manuscripts." See May McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age,* p. 50 (and the letter cited on p. 35). For details of Nowell's life, see Robin Flower, "Laurence Nowell and the Discovery of England in Tudor Times"; and the introduction to Marckwardt's edition of the *Vocabularium Saxonicum,* pp. 1–19.

70. *Die Beowulf-Handschrift,* pp. 88–89; recently David Chamberlain, while acknowledging that much of the earlier chapters of the Vulgate Book of Judith was probably not versified in the lost part of the poem, still argues that "the poet could readily have created a poem of 1200 to 1300 lines that would have moved rapidly and

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Förster appears to be dealing with facts, not speculation, and all editors of the poem have accepted his arguments as facts. Yet careful students of the poem, from Cook on, keep insisting that the poem is alive and whole.

Upon closer scrutiny, Förster's facts begin to evaporate. There is no need to argue at length that the Vulgate source does not really uphold the argument, for any objective comparison of *Judith* with the Book of Judith must conclude that the poet has deliberately neglected to rework some of his source material.[71] The way the poem ends shows beyond dispute that chapter 16 of the source was intentionally deleted. The extant poem shows that a great deal of chapters 12–15 was intentionally deleted, too. There is, then, adequate reason to believe that the substance of chapters 1–11 may never have been versified. Confirmation of this inference is easy to come by in the poem: part of chapter 10, at least, was not reworked in the lost part of the poem, for the famous *fleohnet* interpolation (lines 46–54) was inspired by the canopy mentioned in 10:19; the enlarged role in the poem of Holofernes as king of the Assyrians, as well as their general, and the deletion of the reference in 14:16 to King Nabuchodonosor, indicate that the poet never reworked Nabuchodonosor's story in chapter 1 or in 2:1–3;[72] the omission of Achior's

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excitingly to the double climax we now have." "*Judith:* A Fragmentary and Political Poem," p. 145. It cannot be claimed, however, that the theory is supported by the source; Chamberlain relies almost exclusively on the mute testimony of the fitt numbers.

71. Still the best discussion of the relationship between the source and the poem is Cook's (*Judith,* pp. xii–xxiii).

72. As Cook observed (ibid., p. xvii), Nabuchodonosor "seems to be merged in Holofernes, who is accordingly both general and king." He is consistently given regal titles in the poem: *healdend ure, ðeoden, hlaford, eorla dryhten, winedryhten,* and so on. The poet doubtless realized that an Anglo-Saxon audience would find it hard to despise Holofernes the general, who is portrayed throughout the Apocryphal Book of Judith as a fanatically loyal retainer of his king. His actions stem from Nabuchodonosor's command in 2:5-6: "Go out against all the kingdoms of the west, and against them especially that despised my commandment. / Thy eye shall not spare any kingdom, and all the strong cities thou shalt bring under my yoke." *The Holy Bible, Translated from the Latin Vulgate . . . The Old Testament . . . Douay, A. D. 1609.* By making Holofernes king, the poet transformed him from a loyal retainer to an evil fiend.

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vindication and conversion (13:27–31 and 14:6) from the preserved parts of the poem proves that the poet never told Achior's story from chapters 5 and 6. Without going further, it is hard to imagine how (or why) the poet would have expanded the residue of his source ten times over, before writing the extant "conclusion" that stands so well by itself. In view of the negative textual evidence it is unsafe, and quite misleading, to use the Vulgate even to corroborate the testimony of the fitt numbers. There is simply no justification for assuming that the poet reworked the first eleven chapters of his source.

The only evidence left that *Judith* lost much of its beginning are the extant fitt numbers, and they prove nothing, one way or the other, about the original length of the poem. Surely, they should not be ignored, as Cook did when he first proposed that the poem seemed virtually complete. Yet it is also wrong to assume that they necessarily show that over eight fitts have been lost. As Rosemary Woolf has shrewdly observed, only half of the numbered Old English poems (*Beowulf, Elene,* and *Christ and Satan*) are numbered separately; the rest (*Genesis, Exodus,* and *Daniel* from the Junius MS) are numbered seriatim (p. 170). The three poems from the Junius MS are numbered consecutively from I to LV; if *Daniel,* comprising fitts L–LV, had been separated from the MS, it would be possible to argue that forty-nine fitts had been lost from the beginning of the poem. This is precisely the argument that is used to gauge the losses at the beginning of *Judith,* but the possibility of seriatim numbering totally undermines the potency of the argument. The only weakness in Woolf's counterargument is that she ignored all of the paleographical and codicological evidence that *Judith* was a fragment when it was added to the Nowell Codex. As a result, her justification for the presence of the fitt numbers in the *Judith* fragment is unnecessarily lame, and badly weakens the efficacy of an otherwise sturdy theory.

Woolf had no idea that the *Judith* fragment was a late addition to the Nowell Codex. She was thus forced to conclude that the *Judith* fragment was copied *as a fragment,* and to maintain that the extant numbers derive from scribal inadvertence:

> Since the scribe of the Cotton Manuscript was presumably copying an incomplete text . . . they might mean that in an earlier manuscript *Judith*

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> had succeeded a poem that was numbered up to eight, and that this sequence had been continued in it. A scribe copying the poem, once its beginning was lost, would, of course, automatically repeat the numbers before him, without realizing that an adjustment was necessary. (p. 170)

The theory that *Judith* was numbered seriatim with other texts is not very persuasive, if it needs to rely so heavily on a groggy scribe, mechanically copying (from a fragmentary exemplar) the number X after transcribing only eighteen lines of text. The theory is more compelling once it is realized that the original *Judith* codex was dismembered in early modern times. It is easier to believe that *Judith* was numbered consecutively with other texts, rather than separately, once it is realized that the extant fitt numbers were not copied accidentally, and no doubt reliably reflect the original dimensions of the texts that once preceded the *Judith* fragment.

The argument over the original dimensions of *Judith* itself is really reduced to whether or not one believes that the poem was numbered separately or with other texts. Certainly the Vulgate source cannot be used to prove that very much has been lost at the beginning of the poem. One's view of the fitt numbers is, then, crucial. The argument can be settled by paleographical evidence that has never been brought forth before; the fitt numbers were written in the MS by someone other than the scribe. This fact can be definitely established by the distinct shape of the roman numeral *X* in the three extant fitt numbers. The scribe's *X* is well attested in the text of *Judith*, in the text of *Beowulf* (after line 1939b), and most notably in the thirty examples in the fitt numbers from *Beowulf* (XXVIII–XLIII). His *X* is consistently formed of three separate strokes: the main stroke is a heavy diagonal from upper left to lower right; usually the cross is made with two additional strokes—a heavy hook in the upper right of the main stroke, and a long, thin tail, extending well below the minim line at the lower left.[73] Sometimes the cross is made with a single stroke, but the style is unchanged, particu-

73. Cf. Malone's description of the letterforms (*Nowell Codex*, p. 20), and Westphalen's analysis (*Beowulf*, pp. 62–64, and n. 68–71). Curiously, neither considers the fitt numbers in *Judith*. A comparison with *x*'s in the text of *Judith* can be made with *feaxe*, 201v11, *feax*, 205v8, and *hupseax*, 206v4.

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nædran of horn bogan strælas ste
rde styrmdon hlude grame guð freca
garas sendon in heardra gemang hæleð wæron
re land buende laðum cynne stopon styrn
mode stercedferhðe wrehton unsofte eald
geniðlan medo werige mundum brugdon scealcas
of sceaðum scir mæled swyrd ecgum gecoste slogon
eornoste assiria oret mæcgas nið hycgende
nanne ne sparedon þæs here folces heanne
ne ricne cwicera manna þe hie ofer cuman
mihton : XII.

Swa ða mago þegnas on ða morgen tid ehton
elðeoda ealle þrage oð þ ongeaton ða ðe
grame wæron ðæs here folces heafod
weardas þ him swyrd geswing swiðlic eowdon
weras ebrisce hie wordum þ þam yldestan eal
dor þegnum cyðan eodon wrehton cumbol
wigan 7 him forhtlice fær spel bodedon
medo werigum morgen collan atolne ecg
plegan þa ic ædre gefrægn slege fæge hæleð

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larly with respect to the long, thin tail. This feature unequivocally distinguishes the scribe's *X* from the fitt numbers in *Judith*. The distinct paleographical style of the fitt numbers is most easily seen in the FS in number XII (204v11), but in the MS, number XI (202r12) presents the evidence equally well (number X is as faded in the MS as it appears to be in the FS). The manifest difference is in the cross-stroke, which does not descend below the minim line. On the contrary, it is made in a single stroke, starting *on the minim line,* and making a slanting *S*-like stroke across the main stroke.[74] Since someone other than the scribe wrote in the fitt numbers in *Judith,* it is apparent that the numbers did not exist in the scribe's exemplar.

It might still be argued that someone later decided to number the sections of *Judith* separately, but now the evidence favors the view that *Judith* was formerly part of a group of texts that were numbered seriatim. Presumably the fitt numbers were supplied by an overseer of the collection, or perhaps by another scribe who finished copying the codex to which *Judith* originally belonged. The discovery that the numbers in *Judith* are not the scribe's, and therefore have no immediate connection with the original length of the poem, accords well with the theory that *Judith* was expurgated in the 16th century from a collection of Old Testament texts. The Junius MS is a collection of poetic paraphrases from the Old Testament that was numbered seriatim. If *Judith* once belonged to a similar collection, and was numbered consecutively with other poetic paraphrases in the Vulgate order, its noncanonical status and the zeal of the Reformation explain why it was expurgated. From internal evidence Cook, and indeed most students of the poem, have felt that *Judith* seems nearly complete. The external evidence, once it is carefully weighed, supports them.

74. A comparison with the fitt numbers in *Beowulf* shows that the scribe did not use a special form of *X* for fitt numbers. The relevant fitt numbers in *Beowulf* are on fols. 173r5, 177r17, 179r13, 181r17, 183r8, 184v9, 187v11, 189A(197)v11, 189v17, 192v7, 193v7, 195v14, and 198r11; in *Judith* they are on fols. 199r18, 202r12, and 204v11.

Plate 13. Fol. 204v of the *Judith* fragment. Compare fitt number XII in line 11 with the second scribe's fitt numbers XXXVII and XLIII on Plates 12a and 12b.

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Conclusion

The value of studying (and restudying) Cotton Vitellius A. XV. and the danger of neglecting it are well illustrated in the dispute over the original length of *Judith*. It is important to know about the construction of composite codices, which were assembled by enthusiastic antiquarians, like Nowell and Cotton, often enough after the original codices had been disassembled and otherwise transmogrified. It cannot be denied that Cotton Vitellius A. XV., as a composite codex, has been virtually ignored. The only full description of it, in German, is riddled with errors and contradictions, and yet by necessity is still regarded as definitive. The codex has not even been given, officially, an accurate foliation, though no fewer than six separate attempts were made to do so. The utter confusion over the multiple foliations is symptomatic of the general neglect of the codex, and emphasizes how difficult it presently is for scholars to communicate with one another about it: thus Förster uses one foliation under the impression that he was using another; Malone uses a different foliation in his FS of the Nowell Codex; and the two editions of Zupitza's FS of *Beowulf* use a third foliation. The same three works give three different accounts of the original gatherings, and yet the gatherings are the primary clues into the history, and prehistory, of the texts themselves. The modern construction of the Cotton and Nowell codices preserved the texts for us, but obscured the way they were originally assembled as Anglo-Saxon books.

The foregoing investigation into the original construction of the MSS in Cotton Vitellius A. XV. has as its main purpose a clearer understanding of the history and construction of the *Beowulf* MS. The curious neglect of the *Beowulf* MS is directly attributable to the ancient prejudice of Old English scholars that *Beowulf* was originally composed in the 7th or 8th century. In this way, the value of the early 11th-century MS of *Beowulf* was vitiated before it was ever studied. Without this underlying prejudice the *Beowulf* MS would have been carefully studied and restudied long ago, and long ago it would have been recognized that it held a hoard of paleographical and codicological mysteries that sharply distinguished it from the other texts in the Nowell Codex. For the most part, *Beowulf* scholars, even editors, have contented themselves with Zupitza's transcription of the MS, and with the good FSS of the MS that

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have been available since Zupitza. But there is more to the *Beowulf* MS than the text that shows up, with varying degrees of accuracy, in the very best reproductions. A collation of the leaves, to begin with, raises the exciting possibility that the *Beowulf* MS was originally copied as a separate book, and that only later did it become the fourth item in a prose anthology. At any rate, the 11th-century MS may well preserve an 11th-century poem, and the way is now open to study the body of evidence that it does.