

The Text

The text has been constructed as a transcript of manuscript features, together with editorial additions. Its conventions are consistent with those of the *Beowulf* text on this same website. The transcript and the editorial matter are combined so as to aid analysis of certain writing conventions of the copyist in terms of the linguistic and rhetorical patterns in the prose *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle*. It is thus entirely different in both structure and purpose from a digitized facsimile. The transcript and the editorial additions in no way overlap: that is to say, both constituents of the text are encoded so that they cannot contaminate each other. Additional editorial information—grammatical parsing, for example—can be incorporated without impairing the present text.

A. Manuscript features.

(1) The alphabetic symbols are transcribed in the order in which they appear in the manuscript, following the convention of horizontal lines of writing to be read from left to right, in the order top to bottom, as they are written on leaves arranged in the sequence of codices of Western Europe.

All letters (graphemes) shared by the conventional alphabets for Old English and Modern English are transcribed in their modern configurations. This entails insular ζ being represented by **g** as well as **Ġ** being represented by **G**. Modern **s** represents any of the variant forms for the sibilant consonant in Old English. Old English **ð** **Ð**, **þ** **Þ**, **æ** **Æ** are represented by the letters shown. The pair **p** **P** (lower and upper case ‘wynn’) are replaced by **w** and **W**, respectively. The infrequent **ƿ** is transcribed as **ƿ**.

Majuscule letters are transcribed with modern capital letters. Minuscule letters are transcribed with lower case letters. No attempt is made in this transcription to register one-of-a-kinds such as 129r.1 **ūs**, in which the long *s* reaches exactly twice the measure above the ruled line as the usual measure of long *s*, one example of which is the third letter following it.

An enlarged minuscule letter is sometimes transcribed as a capital (‘block’) letter, as in e.g., **Donne** in 108v.9, or 124r.9; however, there are many occurrences of **ð**, especially in **ðā** beginning a clause, that are larger or darker than the same letter in the immediate context, which are transcribed **ð**, not **Ð**. The distinctions are not binary in the scribe’s writing, and for this reason many are left as lower case in the transcription.

(2) Other distinctive symbols in their contexts are represented as follows.

(a) A single point is transcribed as a full stop (a period); most marks of punctuation in the manuscript text are of this kind. At clause and phrase boundaries the mark is centered—more or less.

Points also occur in pairs with roman numerals, or with certain names, one preceding, one following, and commonly juxtaposed to the numeral or name; in these cases, the space between the alphabetic symbols is the one registered by the numeral, thus 107r.15–16 ² **þēod**–/**londe** ⁴ **.indie**. ³ .

Multiple marks for pointing have modern symbol approximations. Sometimes there may be ; or : (as at 131r.2) rather than · — the facsimiles not being clear enough to make the transcription reliable in this regard.

Scribal marks indicating where a correction is to be made, or where a superscript letter is to be read as a correction, and the like, are not transcribed.

(b) The mark resembling an acute accent is transcribed as an acute accent; it occurs exclusively with letters representing long vowels. The combination of the vowel letter and the mark, resembling á, for example, is transcribed as *á*. Thus, e.g., 116r.8 *ús*, 116r.13 *fȳr* (twice), 112v.17 *wíc*.

(c) Abbreviations are used in the manuscript both for words (or root morphemes) and for following sounds. The word (or morpheme) abbreviations are these:

Manuscript	<i>þ</i>	(for <i>þæt</i>)	transcribed	<i>þ</i>
	7	(for <i>ond</i>)		7

Abbreviations to signify omission of one or two letters (representing sounds or a syllable) consist of a horizontal stroke above a written letter. Manuscript *ū*, *ī*, etc. are transcribed *u=*, *i=*, etc., where the superior stroke signifies a following nasal consonant, e.g., 126r.16 *hȳdu=*, 120v.10 *eallu=*, *nȳtenu=*, 18 *mīnu=*. These are sparingly used, for the most part, but seem to cluster, as on fol. 120v. The fully spelled *þæm* is found throughout, with five exceptions, e.g., 108v.18 *þæ=*, all them occurring at the end of a line of text. There is a questionable form *yb* at 130v.3: with the abbreviation mark it would expand to *ymb*, the expected form; otherwise it has to be listed as a unique variant.

(3) Spacing between letters not standing in normal juxtaposition (with or without ligature) is transcribed with numerals 1 through 7, the ascending order of numerals corresponding to increasing measure of space between successive letters in the lineal, left-to-right sequence. This topic is developed in detail in the next section, ‘The Measure of Spacing’ (xxii-xxvii).

Measure of spacing that cannot be determined, usually because of loss of or damage to portions of the manuscript, is represented in the electronic text by the numeral 8; the same numeral is also used when editorial emendation adds or deletes word units. End of the manuscript line is represented by the numeral 9. In the printed version—the source of the PDF files—the spacing notation 8 is replaced by ‘?’, and 9 is replaced by ‘/’. Both 8 and 9 (or ‘?’ and ‘/’) thus represent indeterminate measure of spacing between successive letters, or strings of letters, in contrast to the lineally determinate spacing represented by the numerals 1 through 7. Absence of spacing between letter strings representing types of linguistic materials that elsewhere are commonly written with intervening space—essentially, words and root morphemes—is transcribed as 0 (zero).

B. Editorial additions to the transcription

(1) Identification of folio by number and face precedes the text on any page. Foliation notation is enclosed in square brackets.

(2) Sentence division is marked by '>' to signify termination of a sentence (or sentence-like) pattern. It is juxtaposed to the first graph of the next sentence. The purpose is to facilitate segmentation for syntactic analysis.

(3) Vowel length is represented by separate characters for linguistically distinct 'long' and 'short' vowels. A long vowel is marked with a macron, *ē* for example being distinguished from a short vowel represented as *e*.

(4) Emendations of the manuscript text are registered by conventions described next. Most of them are noted in footnotes to Orchard's text in *Pride and Prodigies* (though some differ from his edition).

(a) Addition of text is marked by an asterisk preceding the letter(s) that are added; end of the addition is a blank, a hyphen, or a numeral. Editorial addition of vowel length marking is included in any added text.

(b) Deletion of manuscript text is marked by a pair of parentheses () preceding the letter(s) omitted in the edited text; end of the deletion is signified by a blank, a hyphen, an asterisk, or a numeral.

(c) Replacement of a manuscript reading is transcribed as a deletion and addition sequence. In 116r.19 ()*seodðan***seoððan* emends a form in which the first *d* was not crossed to form *ð* (a recurrent kind of error).

(5) Morph boundaries are signified by a hyphen, a blank, or a combination of these symbols according to the following rules:

(a) Identification of morph boundaries.

(1) Any position in the manuscript text at which space is left between letter strings is regarded as a morph boundary. Space is defined here as any distance between successive letters, measured along the ruled line of writing, that is greater than that for normal contiguity or juxtaposition, in this noncursive script. End of a manuscript line, as mentioned earlier, is treated as spacing of a distinctive and indeterminate kind.

(2) Any position corresponding to a word boundary (as defined by morphotactic and syntactic principles) is regarded as a morph boundary.

(3) Any position corresponding to onset of a root morpheme or a prebase morpheme is regarded as a morph boundary. However, the onset of an inflectional suffix is not so regarded for purposes of transcription, and neither is the onset of a derivational suffix, with the exception of *-lice*. Reasons for these rules are pragmatic. Roots and many prebases are usually set off from preceding morphs by spacing. On the other hand, suffixed morphemes almost never are separated from preceding morphemes unless morpheme boundary and syllable boundary are coincident.

(b) Notation of morph boundaries

Because the identification of morphs, for purposes of transcription, proceeds from both graphic and linguistic criteria, the types of morphs thus isolated are distinguished in the notation.

(1) The boundary of a morph that is not also a morpheme or word boundary as stipulated in (2) and (3) just above is marked by an arabic numeral (alone) within the letter-string (i.e., with neither hyphen for blank), as 115v.5 **sem¹ninga**. Or 110v.15–16 **selfe** is divided at the end of a manuscript line and transcribed as **sel⁹fe**, or 109v.6–7 **fingres** transcribed as **fin⁹gres**.

(2) The boundary of a morph that is also a root or prebase morpheme but is not a word (see (3), just above) is represented by a hyphen attached to the letter string preceding and following the spacing numeral. Some examples: 115v.7 **ge⁻³-telda**, 115v.19 **ge⁻¹-wēox**, 112v.11 **on⁻⁹-styred**, 112v.15 **ofer⁻⁴-hygdlican**, 119v.15 **middan⁻³-gearde**.

(3) The boundary of a morph that is also a word boundary, as stipulated above, is marked by a blank (only) preceding and following the spacing numeral.

Because both graphic and linguistic criteria are employed for identification of morphs in the transcription, the numeral 0 appropriately registers absence of manuscript spacing (other than normal juxtaposition of letters) at a linguistically defined morph boundary: 119v.2–3 **ā⁻⁰-beran¹ 7⁰ ā⁻⁰-lædan**. As the transcription shows, zero-spacing has unqualified pragmatic justification in that the positions in which it occurs are similar to those in which spacing occurs elsewhere—and unexceptionally—in the manuscript.

A curious reading occurs at 121v.14. The character **þ** seems to be the result of scraping away the stroke through the ascender of the character **þ̅**. With common 0-spacing following, it seems to produce **þus⁰ ic**, where **þ̅ ūsic** is the reasonable restoration. This can be compared to 123r.11 where **þ̅⁰ us** should be restored to **þus**.

Erasures are unreliably registered in this transcription, because it is made from the facsimiles. Generally, ostensible blotches in the images may result from erasure, but they have been left uninterpreted—112r.4, where **mec** may have been altered to **me**.

Legibility of facsimile is often a problem, especially in two respects. One is the accent-like mark over vowel letters, very often difficult to distinguish. Another is erasures, often difficult to make out in the facsimiles. Another stems from change in writing patterns, particularly what can be called ‘juxtaposition measures’: change of stint, alteration of pen nib, the approach to the right margin, or to the page-end. And there are others.

The spacing notation in this first version probably should be termed ‘rough and ready.’ It is certainly not careless, nor is it in any way ‘quick and dirty.’ It is a first version of an edition encoding the graphotactic features.

Summary of the notation system for this transcription.

Letters shared by Old and Modern English alphabets are transcribed with their modern values. (The letters **j q z** do not occur; **w** transliterates **p**.)

Old English letters not part of the modern English alphabet:

e þ ð Ð æ Æ.

Vowel letters with superior accent-like mark have these values (all of them are also long vowels): **á æ é í ó ú ý.**

Abbreviations for words: **þ** represents **þæt**, **7** represents **ond**.

- 0–9 a numeral registers lineal measure of spacing between strings of letters; arabic numerals do not occur in the Anglo-Saxon text.
 - 0–7 represent spacing between letter-strings;
 - 8 represents spacing that is indeterminate, whether for text being lost, erasures or corrections, or other cause. (In the printed version it is ‘?’.)
 - 9 represents end of a manuscript line. (In the printed version it is ‘/’.)
- (blank) represents word boundary and some morpheme boundaries; see B(5)(b)(3).
- (hyphen) represents morpheme boundaries not coincident with word boundaries; see B(5)(b)(2).
- * (asterisk) signifies beginning of editorial addition; see B(4)(a), (c).
- () (open and close parentheses juxtaposed) signify emendation by deletion of manuscript text; see B(4)(b), (c).
- = represents an abbreviation mark in the manuscript signifying omission of one or two letters; see A(2)(c).
- . (full stop, or period) represents the similar mark in the manuscript, usually raised in the MS. copy.
- Δ represents an illegible or lost letter.
- > represents the end of a sentence-like structure; see B(2).