tricks” and “temptations of the devil”, respectively. If the Derrynaflan Paten inscriptions are considered in this context, the legibility of the inscription may not have been considered necessary by the scribe; instead, the spiritual gesture alone may have served his or her purpose. Apart from two photographic details of the L. inscription, Brown (1993: 166) supplies a hand-drawn facsimile of the L. inscription as well as hand-drawn facsimiles of the letter forms and symbols found on the rim, the frames and the cups (Brown 1993: 162–163).

2.2.4 Ink, Pencil, Dry-Point

The extant amount of dry-point writing in Anglo-Saxon MSS that we know of clearly indicates that dry-point writing enjoyed a different status than ink writing in Anglo-Saxon England. No passages of any sizeable length in dry-point writing have been discovered so far in Anglo-Saxon MSS. The only sizeable amount of dry-point writing that we know from medieval MSS can be associated with the practice of glossing L. texts in L. or in a vernacular language. However, even in this context, dry-point writing clearly is not used to the same extent as ordinary ink writing: Even the MSS with the largest number of edited dry-point glosses feature no more than ca. 600 dry-point glosses, while some Anglo-Saxon MSS feature more than 5,000 OE ink glosses and many thousand L. ink glosses on top of that. Clearly, dry-point writing was the exception, writing in ink the rule.

Motivations behind dry-point writing remain something of a puzzle: Why should glossators choose to write without ink and produce writing that is so difficult to see? As pointed out above, there is no documented example of a continuous OE gloss in dry-point, nor are there examples of glossaries written in dry-point. The observation that dry-point writing in connection with OE glosses was restricted to the domain of the occasional gloss points to the possibility that glossing in dry-point may have been more of a spontaneous activity whereas a dedicated or planned activity, such as writing a continuous interlinear gloss or a glossary, would by default have been carried out in ink. Since our knowledge of dry-point writing is still highly incomplete, however, we have to be careful about drawing too general conclusions as long as we cannot even estimate what fraction of the overall picture we have uncovered so far.

It has been argued that dry-point writing may have been employed to preserve the neatness of the costly MSS, e.g. in the “Maihingen Gospels” [1/K:287*], produced in 8th-c. Echternach:

Bei der Lektüre einzelner lateinischer Passagen müssen Echternacher Mönche auf sprachliche Schwierigkeiten gestoßen sein. Um sich den Sinn dieser Stellen besser
If so, the preference of the stylus over the quill would have been motivated by the great respect that the glossators had for the aesthetic integrity of the written L. text. A similar interpretation is discernible in Meyer (1966: 224): “als Beschreibstoff diente der Griffel auch […] zum Eintrag von Notizen und Glossen, die nicht besonders hervortreten sollten”,19 or in Graham (2009: 17): “Possibly the drypoint glossator sought to avoid having the gloss interfere with or distract attention from the main text, as an ink gloss might.” In opposition to such conclusions, Rusche (1994: 196) argues that “this is refuted by the prevalence of ink glossing in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, even those considered works of art such as the Lindisfarne Gospels.” Rusche’s observation is correct, insofar as Aldred’s glossing of the “Lindisfarne Gospels”[K:165] was indeed carried out boldly in ink. However, we must be careful when we consider Anglo-Saxon motivations, as they are not readily available and understandable to us. What may be one monk’s conviction in 8th-c. Echternach does not have to be shared by Aldred in 10th-c. Durham. It must be assumed that Aldred deliberately added his continuous OE gloss in ink, as he was most definitely convinced that he proceeded with God’s and St Cuthbert’s approval, as he states in his colophon: “Æ Aldred presbyter indignus et miserrimus mið godes fultu’mæ æ sancti cuðberhtes hit of’ glöesade ón englisc.”20 Aldred’s glossing in ink, however, cannot be taken as evidence for the attitude of every Anglo-Saxon glossator from the 8th through to the 11th c., either. It may well be that in some cases considerations of concealment really played a role when writing in dry-point, but it would have to be argued for individual gloss hands in individual MSS.

18 I. e. ‘While reading individual passages in Latin, the monks of Echternach must have chanced upon linguistic difficulties. In order to memorize these passages more easily, they did what every student would do even today: they added the translation of difficult expressions inconspicuously to the book in their native tongue. Since they were afraid of desecrating – with their additions – the artfully calligraphed divine text, they took the stylus and scratched the words as dry-point glosses unnoticeably into the parchment.’

19 I. e. ‘The stylus also served as a writing utensil to enter notes and glosses that were not supposed to stand out particularly.’

20 Quoted from Nees (2003: 341); i.e. ‘And Aldred, unworthy and most miserable priest, glossed it in English with the help of God and St Cuthbert’ (Nees’s translation).
Another strand of argument is centred on practical considerations. The mere availability of the stylus as a writing implement may have been reason enough to use it in a MS context, too, even if it was not as easily readable as ink, or as Page puts it: “In a society where ink was not readily available, it was easier to make notes with dry-point” (2001: 241). Rusche suggests that dry-point writing perhaps predominantly took place outside the scriptorium (where quill and ink would have been ready to use):

Ink was neither rare nor expensive in the Middle Ages, but it had to be mixed before use, and any surplus would soon dry out. Also necessary was an inkhorn or some other vessel to hold the ink, a quill and a knife for sharpening the nib. While these materials were readily available in the scriptorium, a monk in another part of the monastery, such as the library, classroom or cell, had to rely on the only writing instruments that were always at hand: a wax tablet and a stylus. (Rusche 1994: 196)

This is an interesting thought experiment and I cannot think of a way to falsify the ideas behind it, but there is no way to corroborate them, either. We do not know when and where dry-point glossing was practiced during the daily routine of the monastery. We also do not know what the profile of the typical dry-point glossator might have been. Rusche surmises that the predominance of lexical dry-point glosses might be in line with a student “struggling to understand the Latin text” (1994: 199). The hypothesis that practical notions may have played a role in the choice of the stylus as writing implement seems plausible to me, yet the extant corpus of dry-point glosses would have to be investigated carefully for patterns of functional tendencies in the extant dry-point glossing first. Studies that consistently classify a specific corpus of dry-point glosses according to functional criteria remain yet to be published.

A model for such functional criteria is presented by Richter (1996: liv–lv) who classifies the OE ink glosses of London, British Library Royal 6. B. vii [K:255] according to an elaborate functional scheme, allowing him to draw conclusions about the status of the MS as a library copy, rather than a classroom book. It would surely be interesting to apply such functional criteria to dry-point gloss MSS to fathom to what extent the functional “profiles” of the glossing differs firstly between the MSS, secondly between the glossing hands and thirdly between ink and dry-point glosses.

Such profiles would have to take L. glossing into consideration, too, though, as Gwara (1999: 822) convincingly argues, and he therefore finds fault with Richter’s study that seemingly ignores the presence of thousands of L. glosses besides the 502 OE glosses in the same MS. Vernacular glossing did not take place in a vacuum; rather, it was an additional layer of annotation in a particular MS that hence must always be studied in its immediate context. Especially
so, since Richter tries to show that the difficulty of L. words does not correlate with their likelihood of being glossed in OE. He provides an example of such an arguably “easy” item of L. vocabulary in the word L. frigidus glossed with OE cól,\(^{21}\) and he observes that other (unfortunately unspecified) “difficult” items remain unglossed (Richter 1994: lxii). Deciding which L. words would be considered as “difficult” and which ones as “easy” by an Anglo-Saxon readership is a precarious enterprise in itself. If we think of the situation in which the particular items of OE glossing were added, however, it is beyond doubt that the presence of L. glosses in the MS surely would have influenced the necessity for further glossing. Hence, that context has to be taken into consideration, too. If we look at the passage surrounding the L. word frigidus in London, British Library Royal 6. B. vii [K:255], f. 46r we find the surrounding passage to be glossed quite frequently in L.:


The addition of the two OE ink glosses happened in this heavily glossed surroundings and it is important to note that the two glosses are part of the same noun phrase, quoted from Vergil’s Eclogue VIII, 71: “In the meadows the cold snake is burst by incantation." Ignoring the thousands of L. glosses that surround the OE glosses and ignoring the details of the L. text in the assessment of the OE glossing, then, makes all statements about the function of an individual gloss that is added in the middle of a heavily glossed text tenuous, at best. Here, I think, it can be argued that the comparatively easy L. word frigidus was glossed because it forms a noun phrase with the far-away and much less “easy” L. word anguis, which happens to be glossed in three other MSS of the same text, too (if this can be taken as an indicator of difficulty).

As far as I know, no functional studies have been carried out on OE dry-point glosses. Where the function of dry-point glosses (as opposed to ink glosses) is concerned, questions about the visibility and, more importantly, legibility of dry-point glosses back in the Anglo-Saxon period have to be addressed, too. Rusche thinks that the difficult visual appearance was inherent in the manner of writing without ink: “Scratched glosses were probably no easier to read when they were first made than they are now” (1994: 195). Page, though, expresses some doubts about this assumption:

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I suspect that comparatively modern binding methods, where the book is put in a press to secure it firmly, could well have evened out depressions in a parchment surface. I have no evidence for it; only a general knowledge of what earlier modern binders might do in the interests of neatness rather than of scholarship. And of course very few Anglo-Saxon manuscripts retain early bindings. Further, any centuries of variations in temperature and humidity could have affected the characteristic detail of a parchment surface. (Page 2001: 221)

The bookbinders’ interests of neatness that Page refers to are well attested by codices whose margins have been cut off to form a perfectly even body of the book, sometimes even accepting loss of text or illuminations (let alone marginal glosses). It is easily possible that the compression applied during binding would have had a detrimental effect on the microscopic structures that had been produced by the dry-point writing. Jakobi-Mirwald (1993: 19a) reports that the dry-point glosses in Fulda, Hochschul- und Landesbibliothek Bonifatianus 2 [12/K:A41] have become “kaum noch verifizierbar” after the MS was restored in 1978; although she does not explicitly state what procedures were applied in the restoration process, it can be assumed that pressing may have been involved. Moreover, parchment, being an organic fabric, reacts quite markedly to humidity by swelling up and to extreme dryness by becoming warped and stiff. As far as I know, no scientific experiments considering the influence of such processes on dry-point writing have been carried out.

Even if Page’s suspicion that dry-point writing deteriorates over time should turn out to be right, it is still quite certain that dry-point writing was not perfectly visible, even in Anglo-Saxon times. The ambient lighting situation must have played an important role back in the day, just as much as it does in the 21st c. It may be safely assumed, though, that the Anglo-Saxon reader would

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22 I.e. ‘barely verifiable anymore’.
23 It goes without saying that such experiments would have to be carried out with modern stand-in MSS, produced in a similar fashion to Anglo-Saxon exemplars. Some primitive tests that I carried out with dry-point writing in modern paper books and in a pile of artisan parchment did not reveal a detrimental effect of pressing on dry-point readability, however it is easily possible that similar experiments on parchment would yield a different result.
24 To demonstrate this point at ISAS 2013 in Dublin, I added an admittedly nonsensical dry-point gloss &lt;p&gt; above the word “Isidore” in the entry for [12/K:A41] to each of the 200 copies of the Handlist of MSS known to contain OE dry-point glosses that I handed out to the members of the audience. At the end of my talk, I invited the audience to look for the dry-point gloss, knowing perfectly well that the dry-point writing would turn out to be virtually invisible in the artificially lit auditorium. The gloss was, however, (and still is on the left-over copies that I have) plainly visible to the naked eye, whenever the Handlist is inspected in natural daylight.
perhaps at least sometimes have been at liberty to choose a suitable seat to allow the daylight to shine benevolently on the MS page at the right angle. Such liberties can often no longer be taken by the modern researcher, as in most present-day repositories the workstations for the study of medieval MSS are clearly demarcated; whether the ambient light happens to be right thus becomes mainly a matter of coincidence. Whoever entered the dry-point writing in medieval times, though, must have been working on the MS in a suitable spot, as it does not seem plausible that dry-point writing would have been employed, had it not been plainly legible at the moment of writing.

Clanchy raises the interesting point that medieval ink writing may have been an activity restricted to the warmer parts of the year in connection with two accounts by the 11th-c. Anglo-Norman chronicler Ordericus Vitalis (Clanchy 1993: 116 and 119). In one instance, Ordericus interestingly relates that he wanted to make a copy of a life of St William when he was in Winchester in wintertime, but “the winter cold prevented [him] from writing”, so he made “a full accurate abbreviation on tablets” (quoted from Clanchy 1993: 119). If this was not only a peculiarity of Ordericus’s writing habits, but represents a general, positive medieval attitude towards stylus writing during inclement temperatures, it is at least imaginable that dry-point glossing may have been a practical alternative to ink glossing during the cold season, too. If so, dry-point glossing may have been practiced in wintertime especially frequently, but I cannot think of a way how to validate this interesting proposition.

The stylus was not the only alternative to quill and ink in Anglo-Saxon MSS: Pencils, for instance, were also used in the ruling of late Anglo-Saxon MSS. However, their use for that purpose became only widespread towards the very end of the Anglo-Saxon period (cf. Ker 1957: xxiv–xxv). Pencil writing is rather the exception in Anglo-Saxon MSS, too, but from four MSS with OE dry-point glosses, pencil writing is reported:

− Cambridge, CCC 223 [5/K:52] features OE glosses in ink, dry-point and pencil. Based on Meritt’s description of the pencil writing (“a coloring matter which is now a faint purple”, 1945: 28), the actual deposit could either consist
of coloured chalk – similar to the deposit created by a present-day crayon – or perhaps minium.\(^{25}\)

- Cambridge, UL Kk. 3. 21 [11/K:24] is reported to feature the words *byrnostan beoffan sunu ælfnoð ælrices sunu æt hrocanlea* written twice, once in sprawling pencil, and once in ink, on the originally blank leaf at the end of the last quire of the MS (Ker 1957: 37).

- London, BL Additional 40 000 [15/K:131] may perhaps feature some glosses in faded pencil writing, as mentioned by Ker (1957: 163), but there is no mention of pencilling in Meritt’s (1961: 42 [no. 4]) edition.

Similar to dry-point glosses, OE pencil glosses have not yet been studied in detail, but they do not seem to be nearly as common as dry-point glosses.\(^{26}\) If pencil or crayon glosses fade or smudge, they may, however, sometimes leave a dry-point like appearance behind and hence may erroneously be identified as “pale” ink glosses. Consequently, they are perhaps often not distinguished correctly from dry-point glosses in the literature.\(^{27}\) Further research, focussing specifically on the physical properties of pencil and dry-point writing, is called for.\(^{28}\)

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\(^{25}\) In the digital facsimile available from “Parker Library on the web”, both the pencil and the dry-point glosses are virtually invisible (cf. n. 4 on p. 111).

\(^{26}\) I could not find any other reports of OE pencil glosses in Ker (1957) or Vaciago (1993), but other examples of pencil writing are listed from a small number of medieval English MSS: In Oxford, Bodleian Library Bodley 340 [K:309] <E> of OE *Eft* is corrected to <O> in red pencil (Ker 1957: 363); this may have been entered in Anglo-Saxon times, but it may also have been added in the early modern era, as several early MS collectors annotated and paginated their Anglo-Saxon MSS in red pencil (cf. Ker 1957: xl and lii). However, in its accompanying volume – Oxford, Bodleian Library Bodley 342 [K:309] – a part of an OE homily, sec. xi, is written in ink on top of pencil writing (Ker 1957: 367). Cambridge, University Library Li. 2. 4 [K:27], Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 302 [K:56], London, British Library Arundel 60 [K:134], London, British Library Harley 376 [K:240], Oxford, Bodleian Library Hatton 116 [K:333] and Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud Misc. 509 [K:344] feature post-Anglo-Saxon ME and L. marginal pencil additions, sec. xiii–xiv (cf. Ker 1957: 28, 66–67, 96, 313, 403 and 422).

\(^{27}\) Vaciago (1993: 6–7 [no. 19]), for instance, does not mention the fact that some of the glosses in Cambridge CCC 223 [5/K:52] are entered in pencil; Ker’s observation that the glosses in London, BL Additional 40000 [15/K:131] might have been entered in pencil is also not included (1993: 13 [no. 51]). For a seminal overview of OHG pencil glossing, cf. Nievergelt (2009a: 233–234), who lists 17 OHG pencil gloss MSS. Incidentally, German glossographic terminology distinguishes “Schwarzstift”, “Braunstift” and “Rötel” (perhaps best translated as ‘black crayon’, ‘brown crayon’, and ‘minium’) and refers to them as the group of “Farbstifte” (i.e. ‘coloured pencils’).

\(^{28}\) Perhaps, some of the dry-point compilation notes that Schipper (1994) discusses were entered by means of something other than a mere stylus, too (see below, p. 51).