2.3.3 Dry-Point Annotations to the “Old English Bede”

Wallis (2013a, 2013b) presents an interesting case of dry-point annotations in a copy of the OE translation of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* preserved in Oxford, Corpus Christi College 279B, Part II [K:354] (O). This early 11th-c. copy of the “Old English Bede” was revised by a corrector – presumably of sec. xi – who added short “interventions” to the OE text, usually consisting merely of a few letters added in dry-point, of which Wallis records “at least eighty-nine in Book 3” (2013b: 161). Wallis makes a careful attempt at classifying the different types of relationship between the dry-point annotations and the original text.

The largest group of dry-point annotations is concerned with a number of grammatical emendations to the text, such as pronouns in the accusative case following the preposition OE *mid*. The corrector – working in dry-point – adds the dative ending of the demonstrative pronouns above the forms, only replacing the letters that have to be changed to arrive at the dative form. Wallis (2013b: 173) quotes the example OE *mid þa gyfe* ‘with the gift’ (f. 26v), above whose demonstrative pronoun the corrector added the letters *ære* in dry-point in order to turn the acc. form of the OE pronoun from *þa* (f. acc. sg.) into *þære* (f. dat. sg.).

In a second, smaller group of annotations, lexical substitutions are made in dry-point. Thus, for instance, the reading *hiwan* ‘retainers’ in the relative clause *þe se cyning ne cuðe ne his hiwan* ‘which neither the king nor his retainers knew’ is emended to the contextually quasi-synonymous *hired* ‘household’ by means of a dry-point superscript *red* on f. 42v. Wallis (2013b: 181) surmises that “*hiwan* was losing popularity to *hired* in the course of the eleventh century”.

In a third group Wallis assorts textual annotations, in which Anglian spellings are modified to comply with West Saxon spelling conventions. The spelling *Pehta* ‘Pict’ (with Anglian smoothing) in two instances of Book 3, for instance, triggered the addition of dry-point *<o>* above the *<eh>*, transmuting the form into *Peohta*, displaying breaking. Incidentally, a third appearance of the same word form remains unamended. In other places, readings that are impaired by cramped lettering are confirmed in dry-point (Wallis 2013b: 186), and in two instances past participle forms are prepended by prefixal *ge-* (188).

Wallis also identifies a number of dry-point emendations which she takes as evidence that variant readings may have been incorporated from other exemplars of the translation of Bede’s History in dry-point. MS O reads *7 þær wæs* ‘and there was’ and features a superscribed *<o>* above the Tironian note. This