ink glosses; and Oxford, Bodleian Digby 146[27/K:320] features more than 5,500 OE ink glosses, but only 2 OE dry-point glosses have been edited from it so far. The other extreme is represented by MSS such as Cambridge, CCC 173 [4/K:40] or Cambridge, CCC 326 [7/K:61], in which OE ink glosses are outnumbered by OE dry-point glosses by more than 6:1. In some cases, the same L. lemma is glossed both in OE ink and OE dry-point and in some cases there is even a L. lemma that is glossed twice with the same OE interpretamentum, once in OE ink and in OE dry-point each (cf. Meritt 1945: 30 [gloss 74]). In that configuration we may safely assume that the dry-point gloss must pre-date the ink gloss, because it does not seem plausible that a glossator would add a dry-point gloss if the ink gloss was already in the MS. However, it does not necessarily imply that the second (ink) glossator did not see the dry-point gloss, as he may have entered the ink glosses with the aim of confirming the dry-point gloss.

The “Yale Fragment” [24/K:12] is the only OE dry-point gloss MS for which the dry-point glosses and the ink glosses are dated separately in the literature. Rusche (1994: 197) distinguishes 6 dry-point gloss hands, which he dates sec. xmed – x2. Gwara (2001a: 92) distinguishes two main hands responsible for the ink glosses and dates them sec. xi1. If these datings are correct, the dry-point glosses pre-date the ink gloss in this MS by a margin.51 I do not think that generalizations ought to be derived from this singular observation, however. Quite to the contrary, it is important that each MS witness is analysed independently.

6.7 Co-Occurrence with Other Vernaculars

6.7.1 Co-Occurrence with Old High German Dry-Point Gloses

Out of the 34 MSS of our Catalogue, five MSS (≈15%) feature both OE and OHG dry-point glosses:

51 It is puzzling that Gwara (2001a) does neither discuss nor acknowledge Rusche’s (1994) datings. Instead, he concludes even more puzzlingly: “HAND 1 [writing glosses in ink] appears throughout the volume, whereas HAND 2 [also writing glosses in ink] is concentrated only on fols. 3–8. Glosses in both hands do not occur above the same lemma, and it is consequently impossible to establish the relative chronology. Whether the scratched glosses preceded the inked glosses in HAND 1 cannot be known, but this is not likely for the same reason.” I cannot make sense of the wording of Gwara’s concluding sentence: “this [i.e. the proposition that dry-point glosses were entered before the ink glosses in HAND 1] is not likely for the same reason [i.e. the observation that glosses in both dry-point and ink do not occur above the same lemma(?)].”
The five MSS are all quite ancient, dating from the first half of the eighth c. or earlier. It is not quite certain to what extent we can group the MSS together, but some noteworthy parallels can be observed. For instance, they were all glossed in OE dry-point during the 8th c. The Kassel MS, the Köln MS and the Würzburg MS are assumed to have been in England around that time, so the OE dry-point glosses may have been entered there. For both the Augsburg and the Fulda MS, there are doubts about their origin and early provenance. The Augsburg MS may have been produced in Lindisfarne, but the literature generally is in favour of an Echternach origin. The Fulda MS was probably produced in Luxeuil or a centre closely associated with it, such as Mainz, and it is possible that the MS never left the Continent and received its OE glossing in a centre of the Anglo-Saxon mission on the Continent.

It is quite certain that all five MSS must have been associated with the Anglo-Saxon missionary activities in Germany – spearheaded by the Northumbrian Wilfrid in the 670s in Frisia and later brought to fruition in the first half of the 8th c. by his pupil Willibrord (later named Clemens), “the Apostle of the Frisians”, and by the West Saxon Wynfrith (later named Boniface), “the Apostle of the Germans”. The Fulda MS [12 / K:A41] has even been directly associated with St Boniface, ever since the cuts on the MS’s cover were interpreted as sword cuts connected with his martyrdom. Otloh of St. Emmeram, Vita Bonifatii (written in the 11th c.) relates that St Boniface tried to shield his head from vicious sword blows of a Frisian mob by holding a book of Gospels above his head.52 Quite unproverbially, however, the Frisian swords turned out to be mightier than what the pen had created and St Boniface died, together with a large number of companions on 5 June 754 in Frisia. There is no medieval evidence that Fulda, HLB Bonifatianus 2 [12 / K:A41] should be considered to be that impractical shielding device (cf. Jakobi-Mirwald 1993: 18). Moreover, it does not fit Otloh’s descriptions, as it contains a collection of dogmatic writings and creeds, but no Gospels.

52 Otloh calls it “sancti ęuangelii liber” (Levison 1905: 211).
The beginnings of OHG glossing have long been suspected in the context of the Anglo-Saxon mission, which flourished in Anglo-Saxon centres, such as Echternach (monastery established in AD 698), Würzburg, Erfurt (both bishoprics established in AD 742), Fulda (monastery founded by Boniface in AD 744) and Mainz (of which Boniface became bishop around AD 745). Bergmann (1983), after analysing the OHG gloss MSS of the 8th c., concludes:


The OHG dry-point glosses in all five OE dry-point MSS are very early, dated from between the mid-8th c. to the turn of the 8th and 9th c. Early OHG literacy predominantly consists of dry-point glossing, with the dry-point glosses in the “Augsburg Gospels” [1/K:287*] representing some of the oldest documented specimens of OHG writing in the MS context (cf. Schroeder 1979b: 397; Glaser & Nievergelt 2004: 119).

As I pointed out above, it is worth noting that nearly all early OE dry-point gloss MSS have been identified by the German palaeographer Bernhard Bischoff. It remains to be seen whether our knowledge of early OE dry-point glossing is limited to so many MSS connected with the Anglo-Saxon mission on the Continent because the missionary milieu was especially favourably inclined towards dry-point glossing or whether our view of the subject is skewed by the imbalance of research in this field. If glossing really was a cultural importation to early medieval Germany from Anglo-Saxon England, mediated through the Anglo-Saxon mission, and this earliest stratum of glossing is mainly recorded in dry-point, one may wonder why there is not more evidence of early OE glossing recorded from MSS extant in British repositories. After all, in order to make dry-point glossing a cultural export, dry-point glossing must have been practised wherever the Anglo-Saxon missionaries came from.

53 Cf. Thoma (1958: 583); BMS (3: 75, n. 3).
54 I.e. ’Both with respect to quantity and geographic distribution, the result of the present study demonstrates convincingly that there is a clear connection with the Anglo-Saxon mission, especially when it comes to the most ancient testimonies. The appearance of OHG glosses is a downright and immediate result of the appearance of Anglo-Saxon missionaries and it may be seen as part of their influence on Continental literacy.’