6.7.2 Co-Occurrence with Celtic Dry-Point Gloses

Following Craster’s (1923) edition of the dry-point glosses in Oxford, Bodleian Library Bodley 572, ff. 1–50, [26 / K:313] of which he identified two glosses as Brittonic, there seemed to be a link between OE dry-point glossing and Brittonic dry-point glossing in that MS. Falileyev & Russell (2003: 96–97), however, do not confirm Craster’s interpretation of the presumably Brittonic dry-point material. On the one hand, they interpret Craster’s gloss lo to L. podi ‘monastery, monastery lands[?]’ as a merograph lo- of L. loci (gen. sg. of locus ‘place’). On the other hand, where Craster reads gili glossing L. secalium ‘a kind of grain, rye, black spelt’, they decipher gilb (though they cannot provide a definitive reading for the last letter) and argue in favour of OE background, perhaps gilp ‘powder, dust’ or gilm ‘a yelm, a handful of reaped corn’. In both cases, their argumentation is not particularly convincing, though, and their conclusion that “of the two possible Brittonic dry-point glosses in this MS one is almost certainly Latin, and the Brittonic character of the other is open to serious doubt” cannot be considered a final assessment (Falileyev & Russell 2003: 97). Then again, the problems may never be resolved, as there are no simple solutions to the conundrum posed by these two dry-point glosses. Perhaps the issue may be re-addressed once our understanding of Celtic dry-point glossing practices is more complete.

Even if there may be no Brittonic dry-point glosses in Bodley 572 [26 / K:313], there is a link between OE and Brittonic glossing in that MS, nonetheless, since the text De raris fabulis, which is glossed with 7 (perhaps 8 or more) OE dry-point glosses is also glossed with about 140 Brittonic ink glosses. The MS is dated to the second quarter of the 9th c. and Craster (1923) reports that the Brittonic ink glosses are written by the same scribe as the text itself, so they must date from that period, too. Craster (1923: 136) also suggests that the dry-point glosses were added after the ink glosses, but it is not clear to me on what palaeographical grounds this comment is made. Presumably, he concludes this from the above observation, assuming that the ink glosses were incorporated into the MS at the same time or soon after the MS itself was written, hence they would have to pre-date the dry-point additions.

At the moment, it is not possible to construct a link between the very early Olr practice of dry-point glossing, attested from the 7th c., and the OE practice of dry-point glossing, attested from the early 8th c. on the Continent. Glaser & Nievergelt (2004: 131) surmise that dry-point glossing may have been introduced to the Continent as a typically Insular practice:

Die bereits früher geäußerte Vermutung, dass die Gewohnheit der Glossierung mit dem Griffel grundsätzlich von den britischen Inseln mitgebracht worden sein könnte, hat weitere Bestätigung durch die irischen Griffelglossen erfahren, die P. O Néill als