Whether the single edited dry-point gloss from Prudentius, Dittochaeon can really be said to be an OF dry-point gloss is not certain. On the one hand, the fact that no other OF dry-point glosses are recorded from this MS speaks in favour of OE. On the other hand, OE *catel* is not attested in any other OE source and ME catel meaning ‘live stock’ is only attested much later, namely from sec. xiv (OED s. v. “cattle” II.4.a; MED s. v. “catēl” 2). From the point of view of lexicography OF linguistic background is therefore more likely just now. From the point of view of glossography it can be argued, however, that no stylus activity in French is known from that particular MS, whereas several OE dry-point glosses have been edited. Moreover, the French glossing in ink is restricted to one folio, whereas the OE glossing was demonstrably more extensive. There is no easy way out of this uncertainty, except for a reappraisal of the MS evidence: I am quite confident that further dry-point glosses will eventually be deciphered from this part of the MS. Should they turn out to be exclusively OE, we could confidently reject the notion that catel is OF and we must pre-date the first occurrence of catel to the late OE period, instead.

6.8 Co-Occurrence with Construe Marks

Ten of the 34 OE dry-point gloss MSS that we identified also feature construe marks in ink (cf. Korhammer 1980: 55–58):

- London, BL Royal 15 B. xix [22/K:268] Sec. x² or x ᵗ Cantery CC
- London, BL Royal 6 A. vi [20/K:254] Sec. x ᵇ Cantery CC
- Oxford, Bodleian Digby 146 [27/K:320] Sec. x ᵇ Cantery StA
- Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibl. mun. 189 [2/K:7] Sec. x/xi Cantery CC
- Cambridge, CCC 326 [7/K:61] Sec. x/xi Cantery CC

The online facsimile of Cambridge, Trinity College Library O. 2. 31 [10/K:95] provided on the website of Trinity College, Cambridge shows further dry-point traces on f. 47r and elsewhere, cf. p. 128.
If we consider the respective base texts, it becomes apparent, though, that they can be related to just three authors – Aldhelm (6 MSS), Prudentius (3 MSS) and Sedulius (2 MSS) – who all enjoyed great attention in the Anglo-Saxon monastic literary canon. It can be argued then that in these cases, the increased interest that these texts generated manifested itself in both dry-point glossing and the addition of construe mark. In Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibliothèque municipale 189 [2/K:7], whose f. 7r shows the notation L. signa hic constructionem ‘enter [syntactic] construction [=construe marks] here’, we can even get a glimpse of how construe marks were presumably used in teaching:

In response to this request an Anglo-Saxon glossator (possibly the same man who provided the many Old English lexical glosses which appear throughout this manuscript) has used letters of the alphabet along with a system of dots and strokes to show how the words of Prudentius’s involuted sentence should be rearranged so as to bring them into conformity with straightforward Old English word order. (Robinson 1973: 443–444)

It is intriguing to think that we can catch a glimpse of the daily teaching routine in an Anglo-Saxon grammar school. This is the only instance of syntax lettering in this particular MS, however, so one may wonder whether this is evidence of a one-off exercise rather than of a systematic teaching method.

I did not find any reports of dry-point construe marks in the Anglo-Saxonist secondary literature. Although it is conceivable that dry-point writing was not used at all in connection with construe marks, it may just as well be the case that they have simply gone unnoticed so far. Individual letters, strokes and dots entered without ink are even less conspicuous than dry-point glosses, which usually consist of several letters, and hence their chance of being detected by coincidence may be even further reduced. Individual tokens of such dry-point construe marks may even have been noticed by individual scholars, but due to the difficult visibility of dry-point writing their systematic nature will not become apparent as easily as with ink construe marks and hence may have been ignored time and again.