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HISTORICAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Intra-Writer Variation in Historical Sociolinguistics

Markus Schiegg and Judith Huber (eds)

PETER LANG

HISTORICAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Intra-individual variation is an emerging research field in linguistics with a rapidly growing number of studies. In historical sociolinguistics, this trend has been slow, as it is still largely dominated by the macroscopic approaches of earlier sociolinguistics. Microscopic studies focusing on intra-individual variation in writing, i.e. *intra-writer variation*, however, are able to reveal how writers functionalize social or text-type variation for reasons such as audience design or persona creation. They may also provide insights into how ongoing changes were perceived by speakers and writers. In general, micro-approaches are able to uncover a wide array of possible factors influencing variation, which may not always carry sociolinguistic functions.

This volume comprises twenty-two research articles on a wide range of languages and periods, all closely connected by their focus on intra-writer variation in historical texts and by their use of empirical and corpus-based approaches. The studies demonstrate that the challenges that historical material have for research on intra-individual variation can certainly be met and that the insights gleaned from analysing variation in individual writers are considerable.

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Markus Schiegg and Judith Huber
Erlangen and Munich, February 2023

CHRISTINE WALLIS

20 Linguistic repertoires and intra-writer variation in Old English: Hemming of Worcester

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores intra-writer variation in the works of Hemming of Worcester, an eleventh-century monk whose hand has been identified in seven surviving manuscripts. A corpus compares selections from Hemming's written output alongside parallel selections from other textual witnesses. The resulting scribal profile builds on data in Wallis (2013a) to analyse his variation in four features which deviate from 'standard' or 'focused' Late-West-Saxon: <wæ> spellings, o+nasal, retraction of *-ward*, and unstable <h> (h-deletion and h-insertion). Hemming's variation is shown to be due to two main factors, *constrained selection* (influenced by exemplar forms) in 'local' texts, and his own preferred usage, based on ongoing sound changes in late-Old English.

1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on variation in the writings of Hemming of Worcester (*fl. c.*1095), whose hand has been identified in a number of late-eleventh-century manuscripts, writing both Latin and Old English (OE) (Ker 1985 [1948]; Tinti 2002).[1] An experienced Anglo-Saxon scribe, Hemming is unusual in that his name, place of writing and certain

1 That the same hand is responsible for the writings discussed in this chapter is not in dispute, though the identification of this hand with Hemming of Worcester is less clear; Ker prevaricates over whether Hemming is to be identified as his hand 1 or hand 2 (the hand under consideration here), before coming down in favour of hand 2: '[t]he arrangement of the five sections of Tib. II can only be due to Hemming if he is identical with the scribe of ff.119–25 […] That this scribe is Hemming seems to me probable.' (1985 [1948]: 56).

other biographical details are known to us. He was a monk at Worcester under Bishop Wulfstan II (1062–95), and is described by William of Malmesbury as a sub-prior, while his name appears alongside those of other Worcester monks in the Durham *Liber Vitæ*, in an entry dating to the time of Wulfstan II's successor, Bishop Samson (1096–1112). In the Worcester cartulary to which he gives his name, London, British Library MS Cotton Tiberius A.xiii, Hemming names himself as the monk and priest ('monachus et sacerdos') who compiled the collection of charters (f. 131v). Tinti reads the cartulary as a reaction against the social and political instability that followed the Norman Conquest, with a particular focus on the recuperation of lands that had been lost to the monks, and on the new Norman bishop Samson, whose behaviour is negatively contrasted with that of his two predecessors, described as the monastery's 'admirable benefactors' (2002: 60). Thus, as a rare instance of a known, named Anglo-Saxon scribe, and one responsible for the (partial) copying of several manuscripts, Hemming makes an ideal subject for a study of intra-writer variation in a period whose surviving textual evidence presents a number of practical and theoretical challenges for historical sociolinguistic analysis.

Despite our comparatively detailed picture of Hemming's later life however, we know little of his origins or of his scribal training. Ker describes Hemming's hand as 'old fashioned' (1985 [1948]: 41) when compared with the other hands contributing to the cartulary, indicating that he was perhaps older than his colleagues at the time of that manuscript's production in the 1090s. On the basis of his performance as the scribe of Cambridge, University Library Kk.3.18 (a copy of the Old English translation of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*; 'the OE *Bede*'), Wallis (2013a) identified Hemming as a translator scribe, albeit one who retained a number of relict forms in his copy.[2] This chapter provides a more detailed assessment of Hemming's

2 Benskin and Laing (1981) identify three main types of scribal behaviour: *literatim* scribes copy their exemplars faithfully, retaining the spelling of the original; *translator* scribes replace exemplar forms with functional equivalents from their own repertoires, although occasional *relict* features may be transmitted from the exemplar and appear as 'show-throughs' in the new copy; a *mixer* scribe adopts both strategies, sometimes transmitting the exemplar faithfully and sometimes translating its

OE scribal practice by assessing his variation across a number of his copied texts, namely selections from the OE *Bede*, two prayers, four charter bounds and a curse,[3] totalling around 22,000 graphic units. A selection of features are examined which show variation in Hemming's writing: (a) spellings showing <wæ> rather than <we>; (b) o+nasal spellings; (c) retraction in words ending in *-ward*; (d) unstable <h>.

2 Theory and method

One of the challenges of using OE texts for historical sociolinguistic research lies in their status as copied texts. Unlike data from later periods, the majority of extant writing from the Anglo-Saxon period represents copies of pre-existing work, of which the author's original text rarely survives. In cases like this it is less easy to detect a writer using variation as a way of appealing to their audience, or as an act of self-fashioning in the way that, for example, Hernández-Campoy and García-Vidal (2018) demonstrate in late-Middle English letters by male members of the Paston family. Nevertheless, Hemming *does* show variation in his written output, in terms of dialect (Late-West-Saxon (LWS) vs Mercian), and in his selection of various features on a scale that could be labelled conservative-innovative (archaic vs modern, or exemplar forms vs trained

features, though the degree to which each strategy is pursued may change over the course of their writing. A *Mischsprache* scribe is a mixer who maintains their mixing behaviour consistently throughout the text.

3 'In medieval books, most notably in monastic libraries, an anathema was a curse or imprecation written into the book, usually by a librarian, calling down sorrows upon the head of anyone who stole it […] Some scribes also included anathemata in their colophons against unauthorized copyists into whose hands the manuscript might fall' (Beal 2008, s.v. *anathema*). Hemming's warning follows a Latin text outlining Bishop Wulfstan's motivations in having the cartulary compiled, and threatening excommunication on anyone interfering with Worcester's lands. The curse, then, could be read as referring both to the physical lands, and to the cartulary which was meant to record and protect Worcester's claim to them.

preferences) (Wallis 2018: 82). The question posed by this chapter, then, is: how are we to understand Hemming's variation? Is it an expression of regional or ethnic identity? Worcester was one of only two dioceses to keep its Anglo-Saxon bishop after the Norman Conquest, and is distinguished by its long-standing tradition of post-Conquest production and consumption of texts in English (Treharne 2007). Or, should we rather view Hemming's variation as having its roots in the mechanics of textual copying? Historical sociolinguistic analysis of OE texts is challenging, not least because of our lack of social information about the writers involved, but also because of the kinds of textual production involved in the majority of our surviving documentation of the language; as most of the texts are copies, we are able to see only how a writer reacts to an exemplar in front of them, meaning that we rarely get a glimpse of how that writer might have written a text that they were able to compose spontaneously or autonomously for themselves.

Hemming is the copier (rather than the author) of the texts in his hand, and so theoretical frameworks based on concepts such as audience design (Bell 1984) are less relevant to the study of this material. Therefore the corpus is instead investigated using a framework developed to interrogate Middle English scribally copied manuscripts for dialect evidence, using a scribal profile approach (McIntosh 1974; Benskin & Laing 1981). In this approach, a number of linguistic features are selected, and all tokens of each feature are collected from the sample texts. In this way, a scribal profile is created, with each feature adding further detail to the picture of the scribe's writing habits. In this study Hemming's variation is investigated in two ways: in the first, the text is used as a control; a number of the texts Hemming copied survive in multiple witnesses (e.g. the OE *Bede*, one of the prayers, and one of the charters), meaning that we can compare Hemming's own scribal choices with those of other copyists. This enables us to gauge the kinds of features that might lie behind Hemming's exemplars, and to detect relict forms (i.e. forms that have 'bled through' from the exemplar). The second method is to use the scribe as a control; comparing Hemming's output across a number of texts with different exemplars enables us to judge which features are representative of Hemming's training, and which may be attributed to his *passive repertoire* (Benskin & Laing 1981: 58).

Table 20.1 lists Hemming's surviving scribal output and shows the text selection used in this study. Manuscripts which provide alternative witnesses to texts copied by Hemming are numbered 1a, 2a, etc.

As part of his work at Worcester, Hemming copied both Latin and OE manuscripts (see Table 20.1), and much of his output is related to episcopal concerns; Hatton 114 (no. 5 in Table 20.1) is a collection of homilies probably written for and used by Bishop Wulfstan, while CCCC 391 (no. 2) was formerly known as *Wulfstan's Portiforium* and CCCC 146 (no. 7) as *Samson's Pontifical* (Da Rold et al. 2010). It has already been noted that Hemming's Cartulary seems to be part of an ongoing project by the cathedral's monks to restore lost or alienated property. It is also clear from Hemming's surviving manuscripts that he sometimes worked as part of a larger team of scribes: part 2 of Hemming's Cartulary (no. 3) was written by three main hands, CCCC 391 (no. 2) contains four hands writing OE, while at least six hands were responsible for the homilies in Hatton 114 (no. 5) and its sister volume (Hatton 113). Eleven scribes worked on the homilies in Junius 121 (no. 6). Hemming's copy of the OE *Bede* (no. 1), by contrast, was predominantly a solo project, with only a few chapter headings provided by the monk Coleman, and running heads supplied by a further hand (Ker 1957: 37; Da Rold et al. 2010).

The textual selection for this study aims to provide enough data to compare (a) Hemming's scribal output in a number of texts with different underlying exemplars (intra-writer variation), and (b) Hemming's scribal practice with that of other scribes copying the same text (inter-writer variation). To this end, the selections from Book 3 of the OE *Bede* (*OEB3*) used in Wallis (2013a) have been supplemented with further material in the form of samples from the text at the beginning of that manuscript (*OEB Intro*) and Book 1 (*OEB1*). The aim of including this additional material was to see whether Hemming has a 'writing in' period, where he adjusts his own copying to the language of his exemplar (Benskin & Laing 1981: 66).[4] Only two of the four extant *Bede* manuscripts are complete at the beginning of the text, and Hemming's copy is one of these, meaning that we can see

4 See also Chapter 21 by Iyeiri in this volume, who utilizes Benskin and Laing's framework to explore progressive translation in Middle English texts.

Table 20.1. Manuscripts containing Hemming's hand

	Manuscript	Contents	Text selection used in this study (graphic units)
1	Cambridge, University Library MS Kk.3.18 (Ca)	The OE *Bede*	*OEB Intro* (2,468) *OEB1* (2,751) *OEB3* (15,533)
1a	Oxford, Bodleian MS Tanner 10 (T) Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 279B (O) Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 41 (B)	3 copies of OE *Bede*	*OEB3* (c. 15,000)
2	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 391	Liturgical texts	OE prayer (475) Bilingual prayer (434)
2a	British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii; British Library, MS Royal B.2.v	2 copies of OE Prayer	(c. 480)
3	British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.xiii	'Hemming's Cartulary' Charters S786, S1598, S1554	3 charter bounds (403) Admonition on excommunication (42)
3a	British Library, MS Cotton Augustus ii.6	Charter S786	(123)
4	British Library, Harley Ch 83.A.3	Charter S1421	1 charter (111)
5	British Library, MS Hatton 114	Homilies	
6	Oxford, Bodleian MS Junius 121	Liturgical/ecclesiastical texts	
7	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 146	Pontifical	

what Hemming's copying behaviour was like as he became accustomed to the language of his exemplar. His manuscript begins with Bede's *Preface*, followed by a West-Saxon regnal list and a list of chapter headings, before Books 1–5 of *Bede*. The transmission of the OE *Bede* is complex, however, and Whitelock suspected that the creator of the chapter headings was 'not likely to have been the translator of the work' (1974: 275). Furthermore, Miller (1890: lvi) doubted the presence of the regnal list in the original translation, while Waite (2015: 31f.), argues that 'the Preface is the product of a writer working some time after the *OE Bede* was completed, possibly in West Saxon circles'. This has implications for the language of the underlying exemplar; if the preface, regnal list and chapter headings (*OEB Intro*) were not part of the original translation, then their dialect(s) may have been different, and it will be more difficult to gauge Hemming's own contribution to the text at this point. Therefore, an additional sample was taken from the beginning of Book 1 (*OEB1*), where the underlying dialect is more likely to be consistent with that in the rest of the OE *Bede*.

For some of the texts in Table 20.1, further witnesses are available. The OE prayer in CCCC 391 (no. 2) appears in two mid-eleventh-century copies (no. 2a), while charter S786 survives as a late-tenth or early-eleventh-century single-sheet (no. 3a), in addition to the later cartulary copy (no. 3). Although short, these additional witnesses allow us to compare Hemming's copying with that of other scribes, in a variety of text types, dates and dialects.

Finally, items 5, 6 and 7 (highlighted in grey in Table 20.1) do not form part of this study. CCCC 146 contains only Latin texts in Hemming's hand, while facsimile copies of Hatton 114 and Junius 121 were not available due to Covid pandemic restrictions.[5]

5 A further manuscript, the rather damaged British Library, MS Cotton Otho C.i.2, is listed by Da Rold et al. (2010) as possibly containing sections in Hemming's hand (ff. 149r–155v), however this assessment is not shared by Ker (1957). Therefore the manuscript has not been included in the present study.

3 Data

This section presents and discusses the data for each of the four features under investigation. It begins with <wæ> spellings, before considering o+ nasal, *-ward/-weard*, and unstable <h>. None of these features are part of what might be described as 'standard' Late-West-Saxon (LWS), the 'focused' variety of OE used in the late-tenth and eleventh centuries (Smith 1996: 66), and this section investigates what it means when Hemming uses such non-LWS features in his writings.

3.1 <wæ> spellings

Hemming is one of a number of OE *Bede* scribes to transmit variant Mercian spellings with <wæ> for <we>. Many such spellings derive from the i-umlaut of /a/ (e.g. <wærma>, <wærgan> for <werma>, <wergan>; Campbell 1959: §193a), while a further group of words exhibits a change from Mercian <e> to <æ> following /w/ (e.g. <wæg> for <weg>; Campbell 1959: §328). <Wæ> spellings in the first group remained only in the West Midlands, later becoming ME /wa/; however, the 'precise significance and cause [of group two <wæ> spellings] remain uncertain' (Hogg 1992: §5.179). Examples in *OEB3* include <wærgra> [accursed], <onwæg> [away] (T) and <wærigan> [accurse] (O), in positions where other scribes write <we>. To add to these instances, Hemming has <wærminge> [warming] (noun), <onwæg>, and this distribution, together with its absence from *OEB Intro* suggests that it was a feature of the OE *Bede* archetype.[6]

In addition to *OEB3*, <wæ> spellings can also be found in some of Hemming's charter bounds, as shown in Figure 20.1.

6 The spellings <godwæbbe> [fine woven material] and <frætwædnysse> [ornament] also appear in *OEB3*. These spellings do not appear in *DOEC*, however they each appear once in the attested spellings listed by *DOE*, with Hemming as their only source.

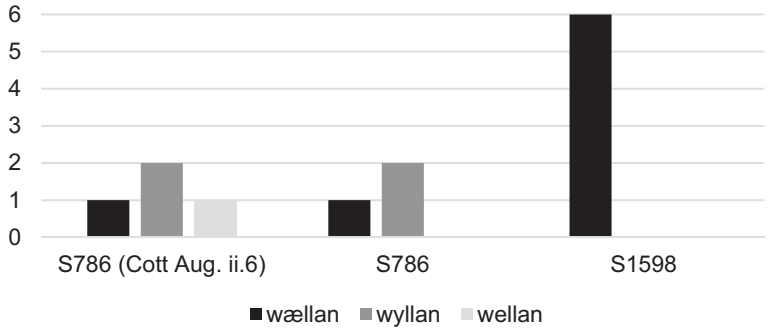

Figure 20.1. *wællan* in the Charters (total frequencies).

Alongside the LWS form <wyllan>, Hemming frequently writes <wællan> [well, spring]. This form is also found once in a second textual witness of charter S786, in British Library, MS Cotton Augustus ii.6; see (1):

(1) of sondburnan on **sceadwællan** of **sceadwellan** […] in **clægwyllan** of **clægwyllan** in æðelstanes graf
[from sandburn into the shady well, from the shady well […] to the clay well, from the clay well to Æthelstan's grove][7]

The scribe of this parallel version includes a variety of spellings, including LWS <wyllan>, alongside Mercian <wellan> and <wællan>. <Wællan> is an Anglian – and specifically a West Mercian – spelling: '<æ> consistent or sporadic is spread right across the Hwiccean region including E. Wark, […] N. Glouc. […] and all over Worc.' (Kitson 1990: 209, fn. 41). It appears, then, that in <wællan> we are dealing with a local spelling, reflecting a local document detailing the relevant land boundary. The fact that both Hemming and the Cotton Augustus scribe transmit Mercian forms indicates that the underlying exemplar possessed Mercian dialect features, including spellings like <wellan> and <wællan>.

None of Hemming's other texts contain <wæ> spellings, and the reason for this may well be that both the *Bede* and the charters are in some way 'local' texts; the *Bede* because its textual history places it firmly

7 All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

in a dialect area (Mercian) to which Worcester also belonged, and the charters because these were texts written at the behest of (and possibly by) Worcester's monks. It therefore seems likely that <wæ> spellings are a feature which is part of Hemming's *passive repertoire*: 'those forms which are not part of the active repertoire, but which are nevertheless familiar in everyday usage as the forms of other writers, and which the scribe does not balk at reproducing' (Benskin & Laing 1981: 58).

This would indicate that Hemming was familiar with Mercian dialectal features and so content to incorporate them into his own copy. Judging by his scribal output for Worcester, he was an experienced scribe, and one who was entrusted on at least one occasion with the task of copying a substantial text (the OE *Bede*) alone. His familiarity with Mercian written forms is therefore unsurprising.

3.2 o+nasal

In LWS words with <a> followed by a nasal, non-West-Saxon spellings often favour o+N, as in <hond> [hand], <monn> [man], <ond> [and], and this feature is found particularly in Mercian texts such as the OE *Bede* (Hogg 1992: §5.5). In *OEB3* the occurrence of o+N varies according to the scribe, as demonstrated by a selection of common examples in Figure 20.2. T's scribe retains the greatest number of o+N spellings across a variety of words (394/405 of the total words in Figure 20.2). In contrast, the later manuscripts (including Ca, written by Hemming), are much more variable and typically have far lower frequencies of o+N (O: 101/272; Ca: 60/270; B: 24/304).[8]

The fact that T has high overall counts for o+N is not surprising because it retains many other Mercian features from the OE *Bede's* archetype. Interestingly, Hemming has high use in some words but not others; across all

8 The total number of words with potential o+N varies according to manuscript, accounted for by lexical variation, and a divergent translation of chapters 16–20 in O and Ca. Furthermore, as *and/ond* is frequently abbreviated in O, Ca and B, we are unable to determine their scribes' preferred spellings for this item.

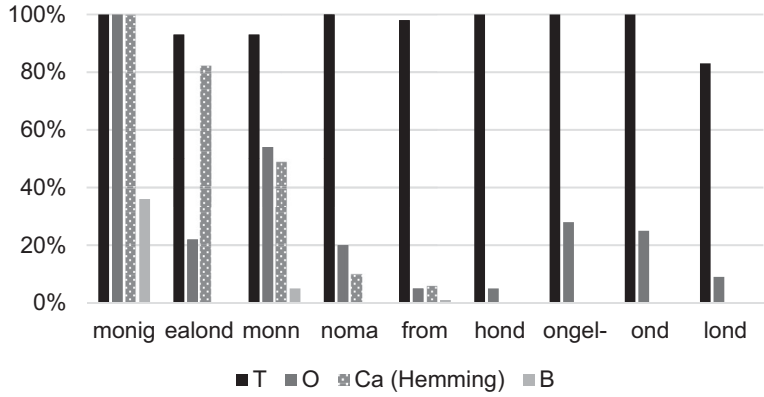

Figure 20.2. o+N in *OEB3*.

Bede scribes, <monig> [many] is most likely to be transmitted with an <o> spelling, even in B (18/50), which habitually transmits LWS equivalents of Mercian archetype features. <Ealond> [island] is also usually spelled with <o> by Hemming (14/17), and <monn> [man] is the preferred spelling in nearly half (35/75) of all instances. While some of Hemming's frequencies are close to those of O and might be explained by that manuscript's closeness to Hemming's (e.g. <monn>, <noma> [name], <from>), the two scribes clearly do not pattern alike in their preferences for which words should have o+N. The O scribe's intermittent and erratic use of o+N should not surprise us as he is a *Mischsprache* scribe (Wallis 2013b).[9]

It should also be noted that the raw frequencies for each word vary widely; frequent words in Ca are <monig> (41), <monn> (75), <from> (69) with total o+N spellings at 100 %, 49 % and 6 % respectively. Among the less frequent words, many have only a+N spellings in Hemming's copy: <hand> [hand] (18), <angel> [Angle-] (17), <and> [and] (10), <land> [land] (13), while only one of the ten instances of <noma> has o+N. Word frequency does not, therefore, seem to be the underlying factor in the difference.

9 That is, he is a mixer scribe, and this strategy is maintained throughout the text.

Given the rather intriguing results for o+N from *OEB3* (the middle of the text), an examination of Hemming's copying from the beginning of the manuscript might indicate whether he has a 'writing-in period', whereby when faced with an unfamiliar text 'the medieval scribe [...] begins by copying closely, even *literatim*, until he reads his exemplar fluently and at a glance' (Benskin & Laing 1981: 66).

The advantage of Hemming's manuscript is that his copy of the *Bede* is complete. However, as noted above, the text at the beginning of the manuscript is probably not part of the original translation. This matters because we cannot be sure what the dialect of the exemplar was; in other words, we don't know what kind of language Hemming was responding to as he was getting used to his copying task. Therefore, this part of the study uses a sample of c. 2,500 graphic units from the beginning of the manuscript, incorporating the entire *Preface* and regnal list, and the first part of the chapter headings. A second sample of c. 2,700 graphic units was taken from the beginning of *OEB1*. As we are dealing with low frequencies the data is tabulated in Table 20.2.

The evidence from the beginning of the *Bede* suggests that o+N may indeed not have been a feature of the earliest parts of Hemming's exemplar (which would be consistent with Miller's (1890), Whitelock's (1974) and Waite's (2015) observations). Although Hemming has opportunity to use o+N spellings, he does not do so, and the absence of the feature in his

Table 20.2. Frequency of o+N in samples from the OE *Bede* (total frequency (o+N) + (a+N) in brackets)

	Preface	Reg List	Ch Heads	*OEB1*	*OEB3*
from	o (4)	o (1)	o (17)	1 (24)	4 (69)
monn	o (8)	–	2 (9)	7 (13)	37 (75)
ongel-	o (3)	–	o (4)	3 (20)	o (17)
ealond	o (1)	–	4 (7)	17 (17)	14 (17)
monig	–	–	o (2)	4 (4)	41 (41)
lond	o (1)	o (2)	–	o (8)	o (13)
noma	–	–	o (1)	o (4)	1 (10)

exemplar may well be the reason for this. The *Preface* and regnal list have no instances of o+N. In the chapter headings *monig* (which had 100 % o+N spellings in *OEB1* and *OEB3*) only appears with <a>, and the only <o> spellings occur in <monn> (2/9) and <ealond> (4/7). The three instances of <ealand> occur right at the beginning of the chapter headings, and this *might* indicate a writing-in period, before Hemming reverts to a preferred <ealond>, however the evidence for <monn> does not pattern so neatly, as the two occurrences appear in the middle of the selection. Compared with the evidence from *OEB3*, where <o> forms contribute a far higher proportion of spellings (<monn> 37/75, <ealond> 14/17, <monig> 41/41), it is evident that the language of the underlying exemplar is indeed different in the earliest section, and that is what accounts for the differing frequencies.

It is clear, then, that Hemming's use of o+N is to an extent dependent on his exemplar: the more frequently o+N appeared there, the more likely Hemming was to write it in his own copy. What we cannot tell from the OE *Bede* alone, however, is whether o+N was Hemming's preferred spelling. To answer this question the evidence of the charters and prayers is required.

From the three sets of charter bounds in Hemming's hand in Cotton Tiberius A.xiii, there are three relevant lexical items, <land> (x3), <sand> (x5) and <andlang> (x3). On every occasion Hemming spells the relevant word with <a>. In the Harley charter he writes <land> (x3), <hand> and <and> (1 each), again with <a> (see Figure 20.3).

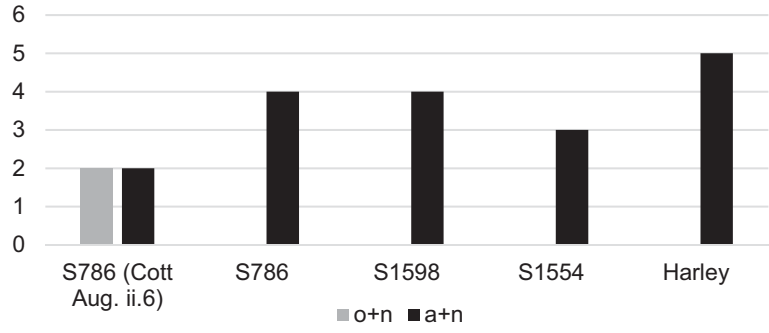

Figure 20.3. Comparison of o+N in Hemming's charters and in Cott. Aug. ii.6.

In the charters, Hemming's use of o+N is zero. The fact that o+N appears intermittently in the Cotton Augustus version of S786 (2/4 instances) suggests however that somewhere in that text's transmission there *was* o+N, though it is not possible to tell whether Hemming copied his charter directly from the Cotton Augustus version or another. Nevertheless, we are left with the fact that although Hemming *could* have written <o> in words like <sand> and <land>, he did not. It is also notable that o+N never occurs in Hemming's copies of the prayers in words like <fram> or <nama>, and occurs only once in the short admonition on excommunication, in <noma>:

(2) ic bidde
7 eac on godes **noman** halsige þ ælc mann hine sylfne
georne wið þisne curs warnige. 7 þissere stowe
hold sy. 7 getreowe. 7 se þe elles do. hæbbe him
wið gode gemæne. 7 swa swa þes curs swutelað.
[I beg and also pray in God's name that each man should eagerly take heed of this malediction and be faithful and honest in this place. And he who does otherwise, let him account to God. And so this curse declares.]

Therefore the evidence points to o+N being an example of *constrained selection* on Hemming's part. Laing (2004: 63) describes constrained selection as 'when a scribe suppresses some of his own habitual spellings in favour of the (functionally equivalent) others that he finds in front of him'. These spellings must be part of a scribe's active or passive repertoire, and will skew the relative frequency of functionally equivalent forms. O+N occurs frequently in *OEB1* and *OEB3* and is, as we have seen, very likely to be a feature of the original translation, as it is transmitted to a greater or lesser degree in other OE *Bede* manuscripts. The fact that it rarely occurs elsewhere suggests that it is indeed only transmitted by Hemming when it occurs in his exemplar, and given the charter evidence, probably not always then.

3.3 -ward spellings

A further idiosyncrasy of Hemming's is the retracted spelling <ward>, alongside the more usual spelling <weard>, which shows breaking of the vowel before r+C (Campbell 1959: §144). Figure 20.4 shows a comparison of each *Bede* scribe's usage in *OEB3*: Hemming is the only scribe to use retracted spellings for words ending in *-ward*. Although breaking diphthongs appear in common adjectives like <toweard> [future], <wiðerweard> [contrary, adverse] and <ondweard> [present], each of these words also occurs with retraction. Less common words can occur with both spellings (e.g. <yrfeweard>/ <yrfeward> [heir], <inneweard>/ <inneward> [inward, internal]), only with retracted spellings (e.g. <æfward> [absent]), or only with breaking (e.g. <upweard> [turned or moving upwards]).

Retracted spellings are unlikely to have been part of Hemming's exemplar. They do not appear anywhere in the other manuscripts, including T, which is by far the oldest and most conservative of the *Bede* copies. In addition, retraction before r+C is a feature of Northumbrian; as the *Bede* is an originally Mercian text we would not expect to see this feature in its earliest witnesses.

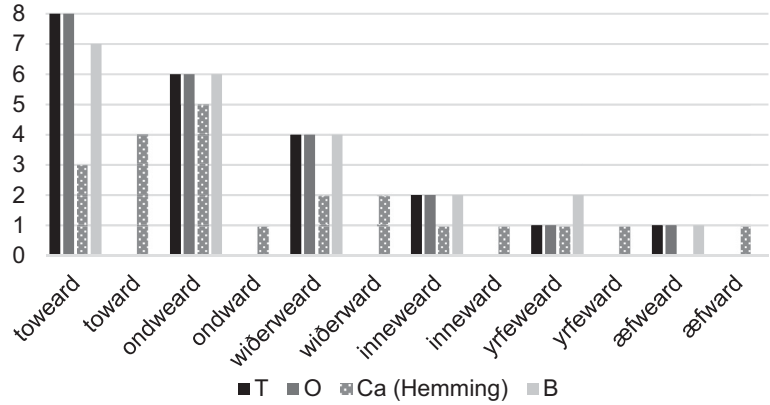

Figure 20.4. Selected <ward> spellings in *OEB3*.

Another explanation for the presence of retraction lies in the unstressed nature of the syllable. Campbell (1959: §338 and fn. 1) states that breaking may fail in unstressed syllables, and Hogg (1992: §6.7) adds that 'the second element of obscured compounds' is a usual environment for the phenomenon.[10] Notably, <ward> is also the preferred spelling of the Worcester scribe who copied London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero E. i, part 2. He consistently updates <weardes> in his exemplar (charter S1280) to <wardes>, a move which Wiles (2013: 232) interprets as reflecting a 'changing phonological situation' in the late eleventh century.

Retracted spellings appear to be part of Hemming's own preferred style; in addition to *OEB3*, <ward> occurs in the chapter headings, *OEB1*, the OE prayer and the Harley charter (3–5):

(3) þa **foreward** þe wæron geworhte
[The agreements that were made] (Harley Charter)
(4) And se ðe þas **foreward** tobreke
[And he who breaks this agreement] (Harley Charter)
(5) 7 forgif þa(m) libbendu(m) gesundfulnesse on þisum life. ge on þam **towardan**
[And give to the living health in this life and the next] (OE Prayer)

However, <ward> is rarely the only spelling of the element, and as in *OEB3*, broken forms occur alongside retracted ones (e.g. <toward>, <toweard> (OE prayer); <toweard> (Bilingual Prayer)).

3.4 Unstable <h>

In this section, two separate but related phenomena are examined: h-deletion and h-insertion, either in prevocalic environments in stressed syllables, or as part of the initial consonant clusters <hl hn hr hw>. As Lass and Laing (2010: 346) note, '[t]hese two phenomena are two aspects of the same process: loss of initial [h] and consequent "hypercorrect"

10 As support for this explanation, Hemming has only breaking spellings in stressed syllables in a similar labial environment, for example, <wearp>, <wearð>.

employment of the now "non-referential" *littera* "h" in positions where it is not expected to be associated with a *potestas*'.[11]

Hemming's writings show both h-deletion and h-insertion. Examples of the former from *OEB3* are <reas> [fell], <gerinan>[12] [to touch] and <nescan> [soft] for <hreas>, <gehrinan>, and <hnescan>. In two cases, the omission is noted and corrected:

(6) ic sceal hraðe deað **under\h/nigan**
[I will soon submit to death] (*OEB3*, f. 37r)
(7) medmycelne dæl **\h/lafes**
[a small piece of bread] (*OEB3*, f. 43v)

In each case, <h> is added in superscript. It is difficult, in such a brief intervention, to determine whether these corrections are in Hemming's hand or not; Da Rold et al. (2010) suggest that at least three correcting hands contribute to the OE *Bede* text, in addition to Hemming himself, and while the correction in (6) certainly looks like Hemming's hand, that in (7) is less certain. Clearly, either Hemming or another reader noticed the h-deletion and restored the words to their etymological spellings. Whether this was by comparison with the exemplar, or a spontaneous correction is difficult to tell. Nevertheless, it is striking that not every instance of Hemming's h-deletion was noticed and corrected.

In addition to h-deletion, Hemming is responsible for a number of instances of h-insertion. One such example is in the OE prayer (8), where Hemming's copy reads <hlæne> [lean, thin] instead of <læne> [temporary, transitory, frail]:

(8) Ac loc hwænne min tima beo. 7 þin willa sy. Þ ic þis **hlæne** lif forlætan scyle.
[And whenever my time is, and it is your will, that I should leave this thin (*hlæne*)/ transitory (*læne*) life] (OE prayer)

Hemming's text has a misreading here; the penitent is clearly thinking about the time when they will leave this *transitory* life. *Læne* is also used

11 Lass and Laing (2010: 345, fn. 2) use the medieval terminology of the *littera* (the abstract 'letter'), which can be described in relation to its *figura* (symbol or shape), *nomen* (name) or *potestas* (sound value, lit. 'power').

12 The prefix *ge-* is always unstressed (Campbell 1959: §74).

to describe something that is on loan for a temporary time, and 'generally used as an epithet of things of this world when they are contrasted with those of the next' (*BT*, s.v. *læne*). As confirmation, the other two textual witnesses to the *OE Prayer* read <læne> at this point.

The *OE Prayer* also contains unetymological <h> in two readings of <onhliht> for <onliht> [to illumine, make shine] (a spelling which also occurs in *OEB3*), along with <gehrece> [rule, government], <hleoma> [limbs] and <hlihte> [alighted]. It is clear that both h-deletion and h-insertion are traits of Hemming's own writing, as they occur in more than one text, and are only occasionally corrected. Hemming is not alone in his treatment of <h>, however; the other two textual witnesses to the *OE Prayer* contain the spellings <genehxa> for Hemming's etymological spelling <gehnexa> (<gehnescian>, [to soften]), while the Cotton Tiberius A.iii scribe is a frequent h-dropper, whose spellings include <bereowsian> and <dægwamlice> for Hemming's etymological <behreowsian> and <dæghwæmlice>. For Hemming, unstable <h> appears in the consonant clusters <hl hn hr>; it is not a feature of <hw>, and it does not appear in prevocalic position.[13]

Hemming's uncertainty about the status of some words with etymological [h] reflects wider changes in English during the late-OE period. As Scragg (2012: 213) notes, there is plentiful evidence for h-loss in early Middle English:

> The written history of English suggests that the loss of the sound had occurred by the early Middle English period, although the possibility that it was lost in late Old English and survived in eleventh-century writings largely because of the success of the spread of a standard written form of the vernacular in eleventh-century England has rarely been considered.

Scragg suggests that the widespread use of LWS (what he calls the 'standard written form') masks the beginnings of h-loss, and the evidence of Hemming's writings indeed indicates that these changes were already

13 Other scribes of this period, however, *do* show h-loss in these positions (e.g. the Cotton Tiberius A.iii scribe responsible for the OE prayer and *Monasteriales Indicia*).

under way in the late-eleventh century. The combination of h-deletion and h-insertion raises some tantalizing questions: do Hemming's (over) corrections indicate an awareness of h-loss, or variable pronunciation? And, further, do they indicate an awareness of a 'correct' or desired spelling, in contrast with his own speech?

4 Conclusion

Hemming's variation reveals a number of interesting patterns. Firstly, it seems that constrained selection is responsible for features such as <wæ> spellings and o+N. O+nasal occurs in the *Bede* but not in the charters or prayers; even where an alternative witness of one charter preserves o+nasal, Hemming routinely writes Late-West-Saxon forms with a+N, and it seems that he only writes o+N where it appears in his exemplar, not spontaneously. On the other hand, <wæ> spellings occur in both the *Bede* and in the charters. This suggests that Mercian (and sometimes specifically West Midland) dialectal spellings are part of Hemming's passive repertoire, as the charters and the *Bede* (an originally Mercian text) can be classified as dialectally 'local' productions.

Secondly, *-ward* retraction and unstable <h> seem, from their distribution, to be representative of Hemming's own usage, as they are found across the corpus. These two features have their roots in ongoing sound changes in late OE, monophthongization in unstressed syllables (*-ward*) and the simplification of consonant clusters with initial <h>. It is possible that Hemming's use of <h> in unetymological positions and his self-correction of h-deletion represent an awareness on his part of a preferred or desirable spelling which is at odds with his own pronunciation of the affected words.

Hemming's variation, then, indicates a toleration of locally current written forms stemming from (historical) Mercian orthographical traditions found in the exemplars he copied from. At the same time he introduces spellings which are at odds with 'standard' or 'focused' Late-West-Saxon; these, however should be seen as the reflections of late OE developments

in pronunciation, rather than as reflections of a local, specifically 'Mercian' or 'West Midland' orthography.

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