The Monasteries of the Benedictine Reform and the 'Winchester School': Model Cases of Social Networks in Anglo-Saxon England?

Ursula Lenker

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The Monasteries of the Benedictine Reform and the 'Winchester School': Model Cases of Social Networks in Anglo-Saxon England?[*]

Ursula Lenker
Institut für Englische Philologie, LMU München

1. INTRODUCTION

It may at first glance seem too bold an endeavour to test the possibilities of applying the concept of social networks to the earliest period of English. As far as traditional handbooks are concerned, Old English 'sociolinguistics' indeed primarily means lists of the assumed phonological and morphological differences in Old English dialects, most of them rather sparsely documented.[1] Yet, Anglo-Saxonists frequently also refer to demarcating characteristics on a micro-level, in particular to the distinctive language of smaller circles such as a 'Mercian literary dialect',[2] the 'Alfred Circle' or the late tenth-century 'Winchester Circle' or 'School of Æthelwold'. These circles are characteristically linked to certain identifiable individuals (King Alfred; Bishop Æthelwold, Ælfric) and thus resemble 'social networks', if these are, quite simply, defined as 'identifiable groups within a society' or 'social relationships contracted by an individual'.[3] The concept of the 'network' is therefore perhaps not particularly new to

Correspondence: Ursula Lenker, Institut für Englische Philologie, LMU München, Schellingstr. 3/RG, 80799 München, Germany. E-mail: ursula.lenker@anglistik.uni-muenchen.de

[1]   The evidence for each of these dialects varies considerably, both diachronically and diatopically, and major parts of the country are entirely unrepresented. For a critical assessment, see Richard Hogg, 'On the Impossibility of Old English Dialectology' in *Luick Revisited*, eds. D. Kastovsky and G. Bauer (Tübingen: Narr, 1988), 183–203.

[2]   See *The Life of St Chad: An Old English Homily*, ed. Rudolf Vleeskruyer (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publ. Co., 1953), 39–62.

[3]   Lesley Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p. 187.

Anglo-Saxon studies, and Old English in fact emerges as an excellent test case for Lesley Milroy's suggestion that 'the network concept is in principle capable of universal application'.[4] The situation becomes more complicated, however, when the term 'network' is employed in its strictest sense of 'quantifiable set[s] of relations individuals have to another by reference to such acts as frequency of interaction, transactional versus exchange interactions ...'[5] and when strict structural and interactional criteria are employed for its analysis.

After a general assessment of the problems associated with the application of the network concept to Old English, this paper will concentrate on the Benedictine reform movement. It will be shown that an adoption of the network approach is not only possible but that it allows a better understanding of the language behaviour of the late tenth-century community at Winchester. The 'Winchester School' emerges as a tightknit, localised network cluster which functions as a mechanism of norm enforcement and maintenance.

2. PROBLEMS

2.1. Data

The major difficulty in the application of (whichever) sociolinguistic method on Old English is the inevitably restricted nature of our data. Our extant sources document the written medium alone and thus only the language of the small percentage of Anglo-Saxons who could read and write, mainly individuals linked to monastic scriptoria. The manuscripts (including fragments, glossaries, continuous glosses etc.) which contain a substantial amount of Old English number fewer than 200,[6] among them many translations whose language is often highly dependent on their Latin exemplar. The picture is even more distorted because we simply do not know what percentage survived the Viking raids, the Reformation and the ravages of time. In general, only the most valuable manuscripts were kept, mostly sumptuous codices recording a very formal style.

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4   Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, p. 187.
5   See Dennis Preston, 'Domain-, Role- or Network-Specific Use of Language', in *Sociolinguistics/Soziolinguistik. An International Handbook of the Science of Language and Society*, 3.1, eds. Ulrich Ammon, Norbert Dittmar and Klaus J. Mattheier (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987), 690–9, p. 697.
6   Neil Ker, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*, rev. impr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. xiv.

Most of the extant manuscripts (160 out of 189) date from c. 1000 or later.[7] These manuscripts primarily record the regulated, supra-regional variety commonly called 'late West Saxon'.[8] This variety has often been dubbed 'Standard Old English' as it appears in manuscripts copied outside Wessex, irrespective of the origin of the text itself. The original language features of these texts can no longer be determined. In one of the few precise and quantitative studies of the field, Connie Eble analyses the c. 23,000 inflectional endings in the earliest extant manuscript of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* (London, BL, Royal 7. C. xii). She finds that the language preserved there is regular and conservative, and she even describes it as 'artificial', because '[t]his conservatism is not a tenacious clinging to old forms, for the noun system admits innovations for the purpose of achieving regularity – for instance, the regularisation of -*e* as the feminine singular suffix in oblique cases'.[9]

Manuscripts of this kind are virtually useless for sociolinguistic studies with respect to their phonological (or rather orthographical) and morphological features. This does not mean, however, that it is legitimate to consider this Old English 'standard' identical to its modern written equivalents. We do not have enough data to prove its full supra-regional acceptance and it is furthermore evident that 'Standard Old English' allowed a good deal more variation than our modern fixed standard languages.[10]

The criteria usually used and urgently needed for Old English dialectology and network studies, in particular phonological or morphological differences, are thus difficult to obtain from our Old English sources. So far, word-geography has been of primary importance since it was found to provide significant results which help to date or locate a text or manuscript (cf. the 'Winchester Vocabulary').[11] Equally significant results are

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7   Ker, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts*, pp. xc–xix.
8   For a survey, see Helmut Gneuss, 'The Origin of Standard Old English and Æthelwold's School at Winchester', *Anglo-Saxon England* 1 (1972), 63–83 [repr. with Addenda in *Language and History in Early England* (London: Ashgate, 1996), I, 63–83 plus Addenda], pp. 63–5.
9   Connie Eble, *Noun Inflection in Royal 7.C.XII, Ælfric's First Series of Catholic Homilies* (PhD thesis. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), 1970, p. 85.
10 For dialectal variants, see also Peter Kitson, 'The Nature of Old English Dialect Distributions, Mainly as Exhibited in Charter Boundaries', in *Medieval Dialectology*, ed. J. Fisiak (Berlin: Mouton, 1995), 43–135.
11 See Gneuss, 'The Origin of Standard Old English', p. 66 and Dieter Kastovsky, 'Semantics and Vocabulary' in *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Volume I: The Beginning to 1066*, ed. R. Hogg (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 338–51.

perhaps to be expected from an analysis of syntactic[12] or discourse features.[13]

2.2. Anonymous Authorship

While the factors considered so far hinder Old English studies in general, the anonymous transmission of the majority of Anglo-Saxon texts is a hazard to network studies in particular, since these are primarily concerned with the 'vernacular speech of the *individual*' (italics added).[14] We only rarely have reliable information on the author of a text: apart from the West-Saxon transcriptions of the short (Cædmon) and doubtful (Cynewulf, Bede) pieces of the early poetic tradition, contemporary manuscripts are only available for the works of a small number of renowned prose authors – King Alfred (and/or his circle), Wulfstan, Byrhtferth of Ramsey and Ælfric.[15]

2.3. Glosses

Notable exceptions are three late tenth-century glossators: the priest Aldred added a Northumbrian interlinear gloss to the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, and probably also the *Durham Ritual*. A scribe called Owun (*Ru²*) glossed most of the *Rushworth Gospels*, also in Northumbrian. Farmon, a scribe working 'æt harawuda' (Harewood near Leeds?), glossed the passages Mark 1–2 and John 18.1–2 (*Ru¹*) in the same manuscript.

The language of glosses is often assumed to be of only little value because the translators tried to render the Latin grammar of their exemplar as faithfully as possible. Yet, Jeremy Smith could show that the application of the network concept can be fruitful in an analysis of Farmon's language (*Ru¹*), which had long been believed to be a mixture of Mercian and West Saxon. This analysis suggests that the Mercian Farmon was incapable of copying a West-Saxon original correctly. Other research, however, assumes that Farmon was not the copyist but the translator, who

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[12] See Peter Kitson, 'Geographical Variation in Old English: Prepositions and the Location of Ælfric's and Other Literary Dialects', *English Studies* 74 (1993), 1–50.

[13] *Eornostlice*, for example, seems to be a discourse marker which is predominantly found in texts of the 'Winchester Circle' (Ursula Lenker, '*Soþlice* and *witodlice*: Discourse Markers in Old English', *Pathways of Change: Grammaticalisation Processes in Older English*, eds. D. Stein and O. Fischer (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2000), 229–49.

[14] Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, p. 177.

[15] Of outstanding value is the manuscript London, BL, Royal 7. C. xii (*Catholic Homilies*) which was produced under Ælfric's supervision at his monastery in Dorset in 990. The works of other identifiable individuals, such as Wulfstan of Winchester, are in Anglo-Latin.

hyperadapted in the written mode, aspiring to the standardised language, late West-Saxon. Sherman Kuhn finds that

> Farman was trying to imitate the language of his temporal and ecclesiastical superiors. ... he introduced numerous Saxonisms into his glosses, among them *æ* instead of *e* for [West Germanic] *a*. He ... carried the imitation too far, and wrote *æ* frequently for *e*.[16]

In an application of the network concept, Smith ascribes this language behaviour to Farmon's weak cultural ties:

> His hypercorrection ... can be accounted for in terms of what may be called weak cultural ties; Farmon was not a West Saxon, but aspired to West Saxonism. This makes him a typical innovator ... .[17]

This analysis is a first indication that it may indeed be possible to apply the network concept to Old English and that it might be especially fruitful in the case of scribes and glossators, even if we do not know their names or much of their social contexts.

2.4. Summary

In studying Old English in such detail, as seems to be required by the approach adopted here, we have to accept that the only kind of data available for Old English is of the sort usually avoided in 'network studies', namely that from a limited set of formal and educated varieties. It is not possible to obtain access to the 'vernacular' of a speaker or to his – or her – 'least overtly careful style'.[18] Neither do we have information about the different styles available to an individual, since we know far too little about Anglo-Saxon authors and scribes and their geographical mobility.[19] Individuals with weak ties who might have served as 'innovators' are hard to investigate empirically in living languages; for Old English, they can only be constructed but never confirmed.

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[16] Sherman Kuhn, '*e* and *æ* in Farman's Mercian Glosses', *PMLA* 60 (1945), 641–2.
[17] Jeremy Smith, *An Historical Study of English. Function, Form and Change* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 26–9.
[18] Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, p. 12. For an attempt to discover colloquialisms in Old English, see Bogislav von Lindheim, 'Traces of Colloquial Speech in Old English', *Anglia* 76 (1951/2), 479–504.
[19] See, however, Malcolm Godden, 'Ælfric's Changing Vocabulary', *English Studies* 61 (1980), 206–23.

There is thus, of course, no chance of using the network concept empirically. Yet, the concept and its linguistic effects may allow a better understanding of the language of glosses or certain known individuals. For this, Smith opens up an interesting perspective when he summarises:

> It seems that what the written evidence of Anglo-Saxon England supplies us with is a set of *snapshots of individual usages ...* giving us an idea of the kinds of language found in *a few regional centres of the period* [italics added]. [20]

It does therefore indeed seem to be possible to operationalise network variables in the study of Anglo-Saxon individuals whose networks are of a relatively closeknit type. The 'Winchester School' is an example of such a network, fortunately consisting of a number of outstanding individuals, namely Bishop Æthelwold and one of his pupils, the homilist Ælfric.[21]

3. THE BENEDICTINE REFORM AND THE 'WINCHESTER SCHOOL'

3.1. Historical and cultural background

After a period of cultural decline in the ninth and early tenth centuries, the end of the tenth century emerges as a high point in Anglo-Saxon literary, scholarly, and artistic activity. As is well-known, the immediate cause of this intellectual revival was the tenth-century reform of English monasteries, known as the Benedictine reform. This reform was sparked off by the continental houses of Fleury and Cluny, but developed in a characteristic Anglo-Saxon way when Edgar became king in 959 and supported the movement. Shortly afterwards, the three principal figures of the reform were appointed bishops at Canterbury (Dunstan 959), Worcester, York (Oswald 962, 971) and Winchester (Æthelwold 963) and a large number of monasteries were founded or refounded on reformed lines in England south of the Humber (e.g. Ely, Peterborough, Thorney, Malmesbury, Sherborne). Winchester, Canterbury, Worcester and Sherborne were gradually transformed into monastic cathedrals. While monasticism and learning was virtually defunct at the beginning of the century, monastic life and

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[20] Smith, *An Historical Study of English*, p. 19.
[21] Other known individuals of the Winchester circle are the Anglo-Latin authors Lantfred, Wulfstan of Winchester and Godeman, the scribe of the 'Benedictional of St Æthelwold'. See also the names mentioned in *Wulfstan of Winchester: The Life of St Æthelwold*, eds. M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

Anglo-Saxon culture was flourishing in the hands of the reformed monks by the end of Oswald's life in 992. Reformed monasteries and cathedrals were scattered over the island south of the Humber,[22] each of them part of the 'Benedictine network' and each of them an important centre of learning and writing.

The two individuals most important for the present analysis are closely connected with this reform – Æthelwold (905/9?–984) as its 'principal proponent'[23] and Ælfric (945?–1010?) as its 'most important literary and scholarly product'.[24] While earlier research presented Dunstan as the driving force behind the reform, Æthelwold is now regarded as the principal figure, especially because of his active participation in both ecclesiastical and temporal politics.[25] Æthelwold is not only well-known for the rigorous zeal with which he instigated the standardisation of the liturgy and of monastic life in general, but also for his learning, his extensive reading and his love of teaching. Ælfric, whose life is intimately linked with the monastic reform, shows pride in referring to his strong ties with Æthelwold and Winchester by calling himself 'alumnus Æthelwoldi' or 'Wintoniensis alumnus'.[26]

3.2. Winchester Vocabulary

In a seminal paper, Gneuss convincingly suggested that a number of late tenth-century reform documents (mainly from Winchester) are linked not only historically, but also linguistically, since they correspond in their deliberate choice of certain words in preference to synonyms commonly found in other writers[27]. This characteristic vocabulary, termed 'Winchester Vocabulary', includes such words as *ælfremed* instead of *fremde* 'foreign', *gelaþung* instead of *cirice* 'church in the sense of the/a Christian community', *modig* instead of *ofermod* 'proud' or *wuldorbeag* instead of *cynehelm* 'crown in a figurative religious sense'.

Gneuss's hypothesis was tested by Walter Hofstetter, who distinguishes between 'A-words' ('Winchester words') as characteristic of the 'Win-

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[22] See David Hill, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), maps 243–9, pp. 150–4.

[23] Lapidge, 'Introduction' in Lapidge and Winterbottom, *St Æthelwold*, p. li.

[24] Jonathan Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces* (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994), pp. 3–4.

[25] See e.g. *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1988) and Lapidge, 'Introduction' in Lapidge and Winterbottom, *St Æthelwold*, li–xci.

[26] Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, pp. 107, 132.

[27] Gneuss, 'The Origin of Standard Old English'.

chester Circle', 'B-words' whose distribution is not distinctive, and 'C-words' which are avoided in Winchester usage.[28] Consequently, a group of texts emerges whose vocabulary is strongly marked by 'Winchester usage',[29] for example:

Æthelwold's translation of the *Regula S. Benedicti*
   A 41 (62.1%)   B 38   C 25
Æthelwold's treatise 'King Edgar's establishment of monasteries'
   A 5 (83.3%)   B 3   C 1
The works of Ælfric
   A 967 (98.3%)   B 397   C 17.

By contrast, other contemporary texts favour C- and B-words, and thus do not conform to 'Winchester usage', such as the

Blickling Homilies (*c.* 1000)
   A 4 (4.2%)   B 29   C 92
Vercelli Homilies (s. x^2)
   A 3 (2.1%)   B 51   C 138
Works of Wulfstan († 1023)
   A 2 (2.6%)   B 75   C 76.

Some texts from Canterbury, but also from elsewhere, show a mixed vocabulary, such as the

interlinear gloss to Defensor's *Liber scintillarum* (s. xi^{med}; Canterbury)
   A 24 (10.3%)   B 143   C 210

and the interlinear gloss to prayers etc. in London, BL, Arundel 155 (s. xi^1; Canterbury)
   A 8 (25.8%)   B 4   C 23.

This might be an indication that some of the words were also in use in other parts of the country as dialectal vocabulary, independent of Winchester usage; alternatively, they may testify to the spread of 'Winchester usage' beyond its immediate sphere of influence.

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[28] Walter Hofstetter, *Winchester und der spätaltenglische Sprachgebrauch* (Munich: Fink, 1987) and 'Winchester and the Standardization of Old English Vocabulary', *Anglo-Saxon England* 17 (1988), 139–61.

[29] Numbers and percentages are cited according to Hofstetter, *Winchester*, 152–60. The percentages refer to the proportion of A-words to B- and C-words combined.

These figures show Ælfric to be the core figure of prototypical Winchester usage (nearly 100%), while Æthelwold's translation of the Benedictine Rule (62.1% A-words) might be considered a 'forerunner'. In a recent study, Gretsch adds the glosses to the Royal Psalter and to Aldhelm's *De virginitate* to this 'forerunner' stage (and on these grounds attributes them to Æthelwold).[30]

Similarly, Elmar Seebold's study of the equivalents of Latin *prudens* and *sapiens* yielded three (or four) groups of Southern texts, among them a 'Benediktiner-Gruppe', which clearly corresponds to the 'Winchester school'.[31] While Seebold relates a number of the 'Winchester words' to regional differences, considering them to be dialectal variants which were later spread by the 'Winchester School',[32] Gneuss (and in the same vein scholars such as Gretsch, Hofstetter, Lapidge) assumes that the 'Winchester Vocabulary' developed at Æthelwold's instigation in a conscious attempt to standardise vocabulary in certain semantic fields: '…it was a specific and planned vocabulary, prevalent in one school and restricted to a certain area, and not just a modern trend in general usage'.[33]

In the following analysis, it will be shown that these explanations are not mutually exclusive in view of the network concept, since both a strong territorial base, which helps to retain archaic or dialectal words, and the concepts 'standardisation of a vernacular norm' or 'norm enforcement and maintenance' are important characteristics of tightknit networks.

4. THE WINCHESTER SCHOOL: A 'SOCIAL NETWORK'?

4.1. Analysis

The 'Winchester Circle' consists of several individuals interacting with each other and is thus, in the most basic of definitions, a 'social network'. It also shows all the characteristics of a 'community' in the specific, technical sense: it is a social unit to which people (the monks) feel they belong.[34] A more detailed investigation, however, obviously has to consider

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[30] Gneuss, 'The Origin of Standard Old English', pp. 78–9 and Mechthild Gretsch, *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999).

[31] Elmar Seebold, 'Die ae. Entsprechungen von lat. *sapiens* und *prudens*: eine Untersuchung über die mundartliche Gliederung der ae. Literatur', *Anglia* 92 (1974), 291–333, pp. 324–31.

[32] Elmar Seebold, 'Winchester und Canterbury: Zum spätaltenglischen Sprachgebrauch', *Anglia* 107 (1989), 52–60, pp. 53–59, and 'Die ae. Entsprechungen', pp. 330–1.

[33] 'The Origin of Standard Old English', p. 78.

[34] Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, p. 14. 'Community' is also the *terminus technicus* for the monks living together in a monastery.

the different structural and interactional criteria usually employed in net-
work studies,[35] in particular the 'structural criteria'

- size: first order network zone (direct contact); second order (friend of a
  friend)
- density: degree to which members of a person's network, independent-
  ly of him/her, are in touch with each other

and the 'interactional' or 'content criteria'

- multiplexity: degree to which relations between persons consist of
  single or many strands
- frequency and duration of interaction
- transactional content: actual quality of the relations.

'Density' and 'multiplexity' are commonly regarded as most important for
establishing the structure of a network. In contrast to looseknit networks,
the scores for multiplexity and density are high in tightknit ones. The
'Winchester School' definitely forms such a tightknit or closed network,
scoring (presumably) 100% for the criteria 'size', 'density' and 'multi-
plexity': each of the monks knows the other by direct contact (first order
zone) and all the members of the community are in touch with all the other
members.

The basic conditions enriching 'multiplexity' are proximity of resi-
dence, occupation, gender, friendship and kinship.[36] The ties between the
monks are therefore extraordinarily multiplex, since all of them are neigh-
bours and 'workmates', of the same sex, and are bound by voluntary associ-
ation, even in 'leisure hours'; some of them are also relatives or are con-
nected by their rank or common noble descent. The interactional ties are
similarly strong for the criteria 'frequency' and 'duration of interaction' as
they are regulated by the monastic rules. Most importantly, however, the
members of the community are linked by the transitional content of their
relations, by a communality of experience and the achievement of a com-
mon goal: their service to God and their adherence to the Benedictine Rule.
The ties of the individuals forming this group are actually so strong that the
'Winchester Circle' should be considered a cluster consisting of individuals
'who are more closely linked to each other than the rest of the network'[37] (in
our case all other reformed monasteries). This cluster is comparable to
today's upper-class closeknit networks in that its members lack social mo-
bility, occupy well-established territories, and are bound to each other by
multiplex ties such as school, voluntary association and kin.

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[35] See Jeremy Boissevain, 'Social Network', pp. 164–9, and Preston, 'Domain-, Role- or
     Network-Specific Use of Language', pp. 690–9, in *Sociolinguistics/Soziolinguistik*.
[36] See the 'network strength scale' in Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, pp. 141–2.
[37] Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, p. 183.

The language behaviour documented for the 'Winchester School' cluster tallies with our expectations: closeknit networks with a strong territorial base are known to function as mechanisms of 'norm enforcement' and 'norm maintenance'.[38] The 'Winchester Vocabulary' forms a vernacular norm which functions as a sign of solidarity between the members of the network. The figures for Ælfric (98.3% Winchester words) show him to be a good example that 'the closer an individual's network ties are with his local community, the closer his language approximates to localised vernacular norms'.[39] Ælfric, a pupil of Æthelwold and a highly-integrated member of the Winchester network, could develop his strong network ties in an already existing closeknit network and could draw upon an already standardised vocabulary. The lower percentages for Æthelwold's texts can be explained by the fact that the ties were weaker because the group of individuals had not yet formed a tightknit network.

For the diffusion of certain 'Winchester words' to places like Canterbury, we need 'bridges' between the various communities. Network studies have shown that these 'bridges' are commonly mobile individuals with weak network ties. Such individuals would function as innovators. I have already noted that it is almost impossible to reconstruct, let alone confirm, 'weak ties' for Anglo-Saxon individuals. We know, however, that some of the monks and scribes moved from one monastery to another.[40] They could have spread reform ideas and 'Winchester language' and so qualify as 'innovators' because their ties were definitely weakened as a consequence of their move to the new house and the resulting reduced strength in the network characteristics density, duration of interaction and multiplexity. The 'early adopters' are to be found in central positions in the scriptoria of the new community[41] – authors, glossators or scribes contracting strong ties with their community. Another option is to accept non-human 'innovators', namely writings or books.[42]

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[38] See the introduction by Lesley Milroy above.

[39] Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, p. 183.

[40] We know of manifold personal links between Winchester and Canterbury, among them Archbishop Æthelgar (988–90), formerly abbot of New Minster, Winchester, and Ælfheah (1005–12), previously bishop of Winchester.

[41] For the different functions of 'innovators' and 'early adopters', see Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, p. 202.

[42] In particular, the role of most important reform document, the Old English translation of the Benedictine Rule with its incipient use of 'Winchester words', must not be underestimated.

4.2. Tightknit networks and coalitions

The 'Winchester Circle', with its standardised vocabulary, thus seems to lend itself well to an application of the network approach if we consider the 'network model' not as a means for quantitative analysis (where, admittedly, its actual strength lies), but as an analytic and explanatory concept. In this view, the 'Winchester School' emerges as a closeknit, localised network cluster functioning as a mechanism of norm-enforcement.

If we accept the assumed strong position of Æthelwold in this network, however, we should more precisely speak of a coalition, i.e. 'a network in which ties are contracted for special purposes for particular, variable periods of time'.[43] While the evaluative notion of prestige has been shown not to have a central part to play in the network model as such, overt prestige is important for a 'coalition'. Specific, targeted ties and non-friendship relations transform these coalitions into strategic, power-based connections whose language behaviour resembles that of closeknit networks. This analysis is likely because of the prominent role of Æthelwold, whose language as a bishop and teacher undoubtedly carried prestige and may indeed have been imitated for that reason. The 'Winchester Vocabulary' was perhaps also institutionally fostered by King Edgar's support of the reform movement, gaining additional reputation through its geographical base, the capital Winchester.

4.3. Cultural Focusing

If we accept the value of the network approach for a better understanding of the 'Winchester Vocabulary', it may in this vein perhaps even be possible to conceptualise the language behaviour of the Winchester School without the idea of a 'great instigator'. This might allow us to put Æthelwold's role into a more realistic perspective. A monk and bishop so active in temporal and ecclesiastical politics might have had problems in having enough time to actually develop or even create the 'Winchester Vocabulary' and, in particular, to teach it to his pupils without fail.[44] It is also to be doubted whether an argument can primarily be based on the notion of 'supervision' and his pupils' 'linguistic obedience'. Instead of concentrating on a rather static and absolutist notion such as the protuberant role of a single individual, we should perhaps consider the linguistic dynamics of a group structure such as the 'Winchester circle'.

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[43]   See Susan Fitzmaurice's contribution to the present volume.
[44]   In his *vitae*, there are indications that Æthelwold was a devoted teacher, but sources of this kind are extremely partial. See *Wulfstan of Winchester*, eds. Lapidge and Winterbottom, Chapter 31.

According to Milroy, the idea of 'cultural focusing', i.e. 'the formation of a recognisable set of norms', can be related to the network concept,[45] since 'it appears likely that highly focused sets of linguistic norms may not only be maintained, but may *also emerge in the first place ...* under the influence of the kind of group structure discussed in this book' (italics added). This idea emerges from R.B. Le Page's works on creole languages, which suggest that linguistic norms are natural products of cultural focusing. In the Winchester context, this formation of recognisable sets of norms is apparent in the standardisation of monastic life and the liturgy (cf. the *Regularis Concordia*), of manuscript art and, linguistically, the 'Winchester Vocabulary'. Daily interaction and, in particular, a common goal fostered this cultural focusing in whose course original idiosyncrasies developed into a group norm. This norm was subsequently maintained and enforced by the same tight structures and links. This idea of 'focusing' is perhaps already inherent in Gneuss's original considerations when he refers to the 'developing' or 'incipient' nature of the Winchester Vocabulary, suggesting that it only 'crystallised gradually within his [Æthelwold's] school'.[46]

Institutional support and the hierarchical organisation of the community may have facilitated the implementation of this norm, which had not, however, been deliberately contrived in all its details.[47] In the case of the linguistic norm, it seems to be more important to consider the group dynamics and the intellectual climate,[48] in particular the archaic or idiosyncratic linguistic consequences of collective studies of glosses/glossaries and older translations (Alfred Circle?), or the gradual crystallisation of a specific vocabulary in joint translation projects.

This view of the origin of the Winchester Vocabulary as a process of cultural focusing would also provide an explanation for the disputed issue of its heterogeneous character. Obviously, only some of the theological and religious words are genuine neologisms, such as the native formations *cyþere* and *gelaþung*, which are used instead of the loans *martir* and

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[45] Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, pp. 182–3. Cf. R.B. Le Page, Andrée Tabouret-Keller, *Acts of Identity. Creole-based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1985).

[46] 'Origin of Standard Old English', p. 78. Gretsch suggests an 'experimental stage' during Æthelwold's early years at Glastonbury (*Intellectual Foundations*, e.g. pp. 251–60).

[47] Cf. John H. Fisher, 'Chancery and the Emergence of Standard Written English in the Fifteenth Century', *Speculum* 52 (1977), 870–99, who refers to a similar process as 'developed by unselfconscious "drift"' (p. 883).

[48] For the intellectual climate, see Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations*, pp. 425–7.

cirice. Other words, such as *oga* 'fear' or *gearcian* 'prepare', seem to be southern regionalisms; yet others, for example *ælfremed* 'foreign', may be archaisms.[49] This mixed character of the vocabulary is hard to attribute to Æthelwold as a creator, since the bishop had a pronounced taste for flamboyant, hermeneutic language.[50] It rather agrees with the concept of close-knit networks and their recurrent social and linguistic consequences. In such closeknit networks originally archaic, dialectal or idiosyncratic features develop by way of cultural and linguistic focusing into a 'vernacular norm', in our case into one component of the 'Winchester Vocabulary'.

On the basis of the above discussion, I hope to have shown that there is thus presumably no need to regard the use of 'Winchester words' as a conscious attempt at standardisation by a single instigator or to restrict it to mere (sub)dialectal usage, let alone a trend in general usage (see above): the development of standardised, focused linguistic norms seems, in view of other network studies, to be a natural, almost inevitable consequence of a process of cultural focusing, such as the Benedictine reform. With this interpretation, the 'Winchester Vocabulary' emerges as a model case of cultural and linguistic focusing in a tightknit network.

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[49] Cf. Seebold, 'Winchester and Canterbury', p. 53.
[50] Lapidge, 'Introduction' in Lapidge and Winterbottom, *St Æthelwold*, p. lxxxviii.