

Appendix 1: The Linguistic History of *Elf*

1. The phonological and morphological history of *elf*

Old English *ælf* shows *i*-mutation and a nominative plural in *-e*, establishing it as an etymological *i*-stem. The German cognates alongside a few early Old English name-forms in *aelb* (e.g. van Els 1972, 121) and the unique Old English spelling ‘*ælbinne*’ show that the Old English *f* derives from Germanic β ;²⁶² they and the Norse cognates also confirm the Old English evidence that it was masculine. An etymon **/alβi-z/* is thus clear. The morphological history of Old English *i*-stems is largely one of analogical transference to other classes—though, for reasons which I have discussed above, *ælf* maintained the *i*-stem plural inflections for longer than most (§3:3).

The phonological history of *ælf* in each of the conventionally distinguished Old English dialects is given in the following table (which presents the nominative singular form; other forms do not differ). There has been debate about some of the developments involved (see Hogg 1997, 207–12), but the processes relevant to the development of *ælf* are clear enough; since the phonetic value of the West Saxon spelling <ie> is unclear, I repeat it in the table overleaf.

I-mutation might be expected to fail in compounds beginning in **/alβi-/*, since long-stemmed *i*-stems seem at least sometimes to have lost their *-i* in this context before *i*-mutation occurred (Hogg 1992a, §5.85.11). This would have produced compounds in Southern *ealf-* and Anglian *alf-*. But *ealf-* occurs only in names in a few post-Conquest copies of Old English charters, probably reflecting hypercorrect spellings by late scribes; likewise, *Alf-* forms in personal names are probably usually to be attributed variously to Latinate spelling and late confusion of *æ* and *a*. However, a genuine *alf*-form, showing failure of *i*-mutation, may occur in the compound *alfwalda* in *Beowulf* (usually emended to *alwalda*; §4.1 n. 98). Nor is **ielf*, the *i*-mutated form of West Saxon **/æ¹lβi/*, attested (the form <IELF> on coins being an epigraphic variant of <ÆLF>: Colman 1992, 161–62; 1996, 22–23); the absence is worth noting because *ielf* is frequently cited in grammars and dictionaries.²⁶³

²⁶² Cf. §5:3. *Contra* Colman 1992, 201 and 1997, 22 who derived the *f* in Old English *ælf* from Proto-Germanic [f].

²⁶³ E.g. Hogg 1992a, §5.84, n.4; Campbell 1959, §200.1 n. 4; Holthausen 1934, s.v *ielf*; Wright–Wright 1925, §385.

		Prehistoric			Earliest texts (seventh century)		Tenth century
		Pre-OE, with loss of -z (Hogg 1992a, §4.10)	First fronting (+ Anglian retraction or failure) (Hogg 1992a, §§5.10–15)	Breaking (Hogg 1992a, §5.20)	<i>l</i> -mutation, - <i>i</i> -deletion (Hogg 1992a, §§5.79(2a), 5.82, 6.18, 6.20)	/β/ > [v], /f/ > [f] (Hogg 1992a, §7.55)	West Saxon <ie> > <y>, /y/; second fronting in some Mercian varieties (Hogg 1992a, §§5.163–68, 5.87); final outcomes
Anglian	Northumbrian (Northern)	*aɪβiz > *aɪβi	*aɪβi	*aɪβi	æɪβ	æɪf	æɪf
	Mercian (Midland)	*aɪβiz > *aɪβi	*aɪβi	*aɪβi	æɪβ	æɪf	æɪf, ɛɪf
Southern	West Saxon (South-Western)	*aɪβiz > *aɪβi	*æɪβi	*æ ^u ɪβi	*ieɪβ	*ieɪf	ylf
	Kentish (South-Eastern)	*aɪβiz > *aɪβi	*æɪβi	*æ ^u ɪβi	*eɪβ	eɪf	eɪf

Figure 6: the phonological development of ‘ælf’

In Middle English, reflexes of *ælf*, *ylf* and *elf* are all attested, in topological distributions consistent, as far as can be judged, with the Old English dialects. The West Saxon vowel is retained in the compound *vluekecche* (with the Anglo-Norman influenced spelling <v~u> for *y*; see Mossé 1968, §§11, 29; ed. Müller 1929, 89) and *may*, Kitson has suggested, be the etymon of early modern English *ouphe* and its later counterpart *oaf* (2002, 105 n. 25). Otherwise, it was unrounded to /i/, as in *ylues* in the Wade-fragment quoted above (§9:1), and in the reflexes of personal names in the place-names *Ilfracombe* (< **Ylfredes-*), *Elmscott* (< **Ylfmundes-*) and perhaps *Ilsington* (putatively < **Ylfstan-*; Watts 2004, s.vv.; cf. Colman 1997, 23–24). In the West Midlands, Anglian *æ* developed before /C/ as in other contexts: unaffected by second fronting (Hogg 1992a, §5.87), it coalesced with *a*, giving the forms *alue*, *aluen* found in both manuscripts of *Lazamon's Brut*. However, in the other reflexes of Anglian dialects, Old English *æ* from */a/Ci/ became *e* giving *elf* (Luick 1914–40, I §366; Jordan 1974, §62; cf. Hogg 1997, 207–12). This was more or less identical with the South-Eastern *elf*, so it was natural that *elf* became the standard English form, being the root used by Chaucer and almost all other later Middle English texts, regardless of their place of origin. Often when *elf* forms the first element of a compound it is followed by what is presumably an inorganic composition vowel, as in *elvene lond*, *vluekecche* (cf. Campbell 1959, §367).²⁶⁴

An exception to this regularity is that early West Saxon shows the ‘Anglian’ form *ælf* —to the extent that *ylf* is never attested in the myriad pre-Conquest attestations of Anglo-Saxon personal names, its existence there being vouched for only by the few later attestations of place-names just mentioned. What is important for this thesis is that there is no serious doubt that *ælf* was an accepted West Saxon form. That it was not merely a scribal form is shown by other later reflexes of place-names containing *Ælf*-names, and Old English hypercorrect forms with *ælf-* for *æl-* (see Appendix 3). The form *ælf* would not have presented a strange or difficult combination of sounds in historical West Saxon: loan-words and the *i*-mutation of *æ* retracted by back-mutation had independently restored /æ/C/.²⁶⁵ Moreover, early West Saxon shows Anglian-type retraction of */a/ in breaking contexts, in forms like *waldend* for later *wealdend* (cf. Stanley 1969; Lutz 1984). We might understand the variation between early and late West Saxon to reflect competing regional dialects (cf. Hogg 1992a, §5.15) or competing registers (cf. Fulk’s

²⁶⁴ Cooke has argued that *vluekecche* and some other words show a singular **elfe-*, originating in morphological levellings related to the transference of *ælf* to the weak declension (on which see §5:3.3). However, this form is poorly attested as a simplex and examples are generally late enough that the *-e* may be merely orthographic. His comparisons, *delf-delve* and *shelf-shelve*, occur only as the first element of compounds (2003, 6–7 n. 18). He interpreted compounds such as *elvene lond* to contain fossilised weak genitive plurals (2003, 2–3), but inorganic theme vowels explain these more elegantly.

²⁶⁵ E.g. *ælmæsse* (‘alms’ < Latin *eleēmosyna*), *pælle* (< Latin *pallium*), *hælfter* (‘halter’, probably from Old English **haluftri*; cf. the restoration of /ærC/ by metathesis; Hogg 1992a, §7.94).

demonstration that *waldend*-type forms were part of the poetic register of Southern Old English, 1992, §§318–39), but some sort of variation is clear (cf. Gretsche 2000, 89–106; Colman 1996, 22–25 on the South-Eastern evidence for further variation). The /aɪC/ forms, when *i*-mutated, should have produced the /æɪC/ form found in *ælf* (cf. West Saxon *hælfter*, probably from **haluftri*). In practice, these outcomes almost never occur except in *ælf* and probably—depending on the processes of metathesis in the word’s history—*wærc* (traditionally considered an ‘Anglian’ form, but well-attested in early West Saxon; see Hogg 1992a, §5.82, n. 4; Fulk 1992, §335.4; Frank 2002, 60–62). But /aɪCi/ was not a very frequent combination in prehistoric Old English: so although some words in this group were common, such as **aldir-* (‘older’), we should not be surprised to see somewhat haphazard levellings within the set. It is not unlikely, then, that variation in the development of **aɪC/* in West Saxon produced corresponding variation in the development of **aɪCi/*; but that levelling followed in which the variants produced by the *wealdend*-varieties dominated, with rare adoptions from the *waldend*-varieties. It is tempting to suggest that *ælf* specifically gained favour over *ylf* because so many early West Saxon-speaking nobles had names in *Ælf-*: given the political dominance of Mercia during much of West Saxon history, this social group was perhaps also the most likely to exhibit Mercian-style *waldend* varieties, and to insist on Mercian-style pronunciations of their names. It is also conceivable that the singular *ælf* and the plural *ylfe* were sometimes interpreted to show a morphologically significant vowel-alternation. But both points are speculation.

As well as varying phonologically, *elf* varied morphologically. The inflexions of *ælf* are poorly attested—we have nominative singular and plural examples (see notably §§4:1, 6:3; cf. 5:2), probably the dative singular (though the example could be an accusative plural; §3:6), and the genitive plural (§§1:0, 3:1); the genitive singular is attested only in place-names in what seem to be examples of a personal name *Ælf* (Appendix 2), which may not be representative (see Colman 1996, 13–17). The extensive analogical alterations to the masculine *i*-stems make it hard to reconstruct how the masculine *i*-stem paradigms declined in early Old English,²⁶⁶ but the following paradigm for *ælf* in the historical Old English period, after the collapse of unstressed front vowels, may be inferred:

²⁶⁶ Fulk 1992, 421–22; cf. Campbell 1959, §§599–601; Bammesberger 1990, 123–27; Hogg 1992b, 131–32.

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	ælf	ælfē
Accusative	ælf	ælfē
Genitive	ælfes	ælfā
Dative	ælfē	ælfum

Figure 7: *the morphology of ‘ælf’*

Like almost all English nouns, *elf* was eventually transferred to the paradigm derived from the masculine *a*-stems, with nominative and accusative plurals in *-es*, as in the form *ylues* mentioned above. However, its plural forms were in non-West Saxon dialects identical to those of the large feminine *ō*-stem declension and it may at times have been analysed as a member of this class (cf. §§2:3.2 n. 48; 5:2.3), before transference to the *a*-stem declension, which presumably took place in the North by early Middle English times (Mossé 1968, §55–57). Meanwhile, in some Southern and West-Midland varieties, *ælf* was first transferred to the weak noun class inherited from the Indo-European *n*-stems. This was a natural development, since the long-stemmed masculine *i*-stem declension to which *ælf* belonged was morphologically rather anomalous. Other members occasionally exhibit weak forms already in early West Saxon (e.g. *leodan*, *seaxan*, *waran*; Campbell 1959, §610.7; §2:3.2 n. 45), and as unstressed vowels collapsed, *ælf* was liable to be associated even in West Saxon with the feminine *ō*-stems, which were particularly prone to transference to the weak declension (e.g. d’Ardenne 1961, 213–14).

As Cooke has argued, the transference of *ælf* to the weak declension accounts for Middle English plurals in *aluen* or *eluen(e)*. It is matched in the Continental West Germanic dialects, and accounts also for the plural *elfen* in the eleventh-century Antwerp-London Glossary.²⁶⁷ This is important, because Middle English forms such as *elven* have traditionally been derived from Old English *ælfen* (< *ælf* + *en(n)* ‘female *ælf*’)—which occurs only in a few interrelated glossaries—rather than from *ælf* itself (*MED*, s.v. *elven*; *OED*, s.v.; cf. s.v. *elf*; apparently followed by the *DOE*, s.v. *ælfen*; cf. §5:3). Oddly, Cooke, showing most of these examples really to be weak forms, did accept one citation to show a Middle English derivative of *ælfen*: *Lazamon*’s line ‘To Argante þere quene, aluen swiðe sceone’ (‘to the queen Argante, a very beautiful *aluen*’, line 14278; ed. Brook–Leslie 1963–78, II 740; Cooke 2003). But this too is probably simply a weak dative singular, as in line 11272, ‘And forð he gon wenden; to Arðure þan kingen’ (< OE *cyning*, dative singular *cyninge*; ed. Brook–Leslie 1963–78, II 588).

²⁶⁷ See §5:3.3; Heinrich von Morungen’s famous line ‘Von den elben wirt entsehen vil manic man’ (‘Many a man indeed is enchanted by the *elben*’; ed. Moser–Tervooren 1977, I 243).

2. Germanic cognates

The principal medieval Germanic cognates of *ælf* are *álfr* in Old Norse, variants along the lines of *alp* and *alb* in medieval High and Low German dialects, and *alf* in medieval Frisian. The *elf*-word occurs in East Germanic only in personal names (see Förstemann 1900–16, s.v. *ALFI*; cf. Woolf 1939, 223, 230), but this is unsurprising in view of the limited subject matter of our Gothic corpus. In Old Norse, */aɪβiz/ became an *a*-stem,²⁶⁸ and then underwent the regular developments /β/ > [v] /f/ > /v/ (Voyles 1992, §5.1.11; cf. Noreen 1923, §§184.3, 192) and later the lengthening of /a/ before /f/ (Noreen 1923, §124.3). Meanwhile, in the German dialects, */aɪβ-/ produced *alb* and *alp* by /β/ > /b/ (> /p/) (Voyles 1992, §§9.1.15, 9.1.21), and *alf* in Frisian by /β/ > /f/ (Voyles 1992, §§7.1.8, 8.1.18). Old Frisian *a* did not undergo *i*-mutation before /lC/ (Voyles 1992, §7.1.9); the history of *i*-mutation in the other medieval German dialects has been a subject of considerable debate (see Voyles 1992, §3.5.3). We would expect Old High German *alp* to develop like its *i*-stem counterpart *gast* ('guest'), with *alp* in the nominative singular and *elpe* in the plural, though some plurals, such as *alpe* and *alpen*, demand derivation from */aɪβa-/ if we are not to assume some analogical levelling. *Álfr* remained in the *a*-stem declension, but the Continental West Germanic dialects, like southern Middle English, extended the *n*-stem declension to develop weak forms.

²⁶⁸ See Noreen 1923, §§387–88, *contra* Peters 1963, 252; another example is Old Icelandic *þurs*, 'ogre', cf. Old English *þyrs*.

Appendix 2: Place-Names Containing *Ælf*

Particularly in view of my concern to situate *ælf*e in Anglo-Saxon constructions of space, place-names might in theory be a vital source of evidence. Old English place-names containing words for supernatural beings are a little-tapped resource: hitherto, research on ‘pagan place-names’, in a microcosm of the extensive work done in Scandinavia, has focused on names likely to denote ritual sites or to contain names of individual gods.²⁶⁹ However, the Old English material is too problematic to be useful here. As Cameron (1996, 122) commented,

there are some names which reflect a popular mythology, a belief in the supernatural world of dragons, elves, goblins, demons, giants, dwarfs, and monsters. Such creations of the popular imagination lived on long after the introduction of Christianity and traces of these beliefs still exist today, but we really have no idea when the place-names referring to them were given.

Indeed, despite Cameron’s inclusion of elves in his list (cf. Gelling 1978, 150), no *ælf*-place-name can be confidently identified for Anglo-Saxon England (cf. Gelling 1962, 18 on *os*). Sometimes etymological dithematic personal names can appear to attest to *ælf*: thus Alveston in Warwickshire, appearing already in Domesday as *Alvestone* and looking like **ælfes tun* (putatively ‘the *ælf*’s enclosure’), is earlier attested as (*æt*) *Eanulfestun* (‘Eanwulf’s estate’; Watts 2004, s.v. *ALVESTON Warw*). Post-Old English forms, then, cannot as a rule offer secure evidence for *ælf*.²⁷⁰ Moreover, a monothematic Old English personal name **Ælf* has been reconstructed, in which case no *ælf*-place-name is secure.²⁷¹ This usage might be thought to break the rule of thumb in Germanic

²⁶⁹ On Scandinavian historiography see Holmberg 1990; 1992b; 1994; Andersson 1992. The dearth of Scandinavian studies involving other aspects of belief is emphasised by Kousgård Sørensen (1992, esp. 222). For prominent recent studies of theophoric and sacral place-names in Scandinavia see Brink 1996; 1997; 1999a, b; 2001; cf. Hedeager 2001; Fabech 1994; 1999; Sundqvist 2002, 99–101. These have English counterparts particularly in Wilson 1992, 5–21; Blair 1995; Meaney 1995; Cubitt 2000b.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Watts 2004, s.v. *ELVEDEN*. To banish some ghosts: we must ignore Ailey Hill in Ripon, attested in 1228 as *Elueshov*, *Elueshowe* and etymologised by Smith as Old English *elf* + Old Norse *haugr*, ‘the elf’s mound’ (1961–63, v 168)—tempting though the site is, with its long history as a burial site and proximity to St Wilfrid’s minster (see Hall–Whyman 1996). Ekwall’s etymologisation of a late thirteenth-century *alvedene* as *ælfa* + *denu* (1922, 64; accepted by Cameron 1996, 122) is also unreliable. The name *elfaledes* (etymologised by Smith as ‘“elves’ seat”, v. *elf*, *hlēda*’, 1964–65, III 147) survives in copy of an undated Old English boundary clause, the relevant text reading ‘Of scirann more on elfaledes, of elfaleden on hreodan burnan’ (‘from the shiny bog to *elfaledes*, from *elfaleden* to the reedy stream’, S1551; ed. Finberg 1961, 80). But the language shows influence from its fifteenth-century scribe: the Old English text must have been **of sciran more on X-as, of X-um on hreodan burnan*, the masculine plural underlying *elfaledes* precluding *hlēda* (for which Smith in any case offered no secure toponymic parallels, 1956, s.v. *hlēda*). The etymology of *elfaledes* is thus back up for grabs, and it is clear that our forms may reflect fifteenth-century English—so etyma such as **elfet-lædas* (‘swan’ + ‘drains, watercourses’) and **elm-faledas* (‘elm’ + ‘(cattle) folds’) are viable.

²⁷¹ Note Smith 1964–65, III 119–20, cf. II 103–4—*contra* DOE, s.v. *ælf* §2b. For the Old English sources see Pelteret 1990, 86–87, 121–22 [nos 63, 147].

onomastics that ‘nobody was simply called by the name of a heathen god’ (Kousgård Sørensen 1990, 395; cf. Holmberg 1990, 368), and Feilitzén found that there is ‘no safe independent evidence for OE *Ælf*’ except in place-names (1960, 6 at n. 1; *contra* Redin 1919, 3, 59, 121). But *Ælf* may have been a shortened form of dithematic names, and is attested as such in manuscript (ed. Förster 1917, 153–54); the place-name evidence is, at any rate, hard to dispute: a number of names, such as Alvingham (Domesday *Aluing(e) ha*’), must originate in a population name **Ælfingas*, and *-ingas* compounds seem always to be formed on masculine personal names or place-names (thus ‘the people of *Ælf*’; Watts 2004, s.vv. *ALVINGHAM, ALFINGTON, ALPHINGTON, ALVINGHAM, ALVINGTON, West ALVINGTON*; Cameron 1996, 66–67, 71–72). Whether a monothematic name, then, or an abbreviated dithematic one, *Ælf* occurred in place-names, meaning that almost no place-name in *ælf-* can be reliably assumed to include the common noun.

There may be one exception: *ælfruce*, in Kent, occurring in a copy of a charter from the first half of the fifteenth century, considered to be genuine, from 996 (S 877; Miller 2001, 149). The relevant text runs ‘of At ersce <to> ælfruce, of ealfruige to peallestede’ (‘from oak-stubble-field [reading *ac*] to *ælfruce*, from *ealfruige* to ledge-place’; ed. Miller 2001, 146). Place-names in the South of England whose first element was a personal name usually formed it in the genitive case (e.g. Gelling 1990–, 13–14), so although there are exceptions to this, we probably have here *ælf* and *hrycg* (‘ridge’), with some post-Anglo-Saxon interference in the spelling.²⁷² But one place-name is a slender basis on which to reconstruct the place of *ælf* in Anglo-Saxon landscapes.

A context for interpreting the place of *ælf* in the landscape could be provided by analysing other place-names, containing names of gods or words for monsters.²⁷³

Although gods and monsters are both associated with (burial) mounds, the place-names

²⁷² Wallenberg 1931, 347; cf. Miller 2001, 156. Although it would be possible to read *ælf-*, *ealf-* as **healf* (‘half’), assuming *h-* loss and taking *æ* to be a hypercorrect spelling for *ea*, each of Smith’s examples of names in *healf-* has words for portions of land as its second element (*hid* ‘hide’, *æcer* ‘field’, *snæd* ‘detached area of land’; 1956, s.v. *half*). Wallenberg was disconcerted by the form in a version of the text updated to Middle English, *alfryng* (ed. Miller 2001, 209). But I take this form to be a mistake, frequent in the scribe’s work (Lowe 1993, 15–19). In the case of *Alfryng*, the scribe presumably misread the minims in *-ruige* as *-ringe* (which he then spelt *-ryng(e)*), possibly encouraged by the word *elf-ring* (‘elf-ring’, ‘ring of daisies’, on which see §8.3 esp. n. 236).

²⁷³ The corpus of pagan theophoric place-names was established by Gelling 1973, 120–27, which needs only slight updating: the removal of Thurstable (Bronnenkant 1983) and the addition of *frigedene* (‘Frig’s valley’), from a copy of a charter discovered after Gelling wrote (S712a; cf. Scherr 2002). Sandred showed that *Ingham*-names in East Anglia could contain the potentially theophoric name *Ing*, but did not accept that conclusion (1987). Other words for supernatural beings are not conveniently listed. My conclusions are based on data gathered various pre-1100 sources: the collections of charter-boundaries in the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*; Sean Miller’s online corpus of Anglo-Saxon charters at <<http://www.anglo-saxons.net/hwaet>>; *The Vocabulary of English Place-Names* (Parsons–Styles 1997–) where available—I am indebted to David Parsons and his team for kindly supplying me in advance of publication with data for *dwerg*, *elf*, *elfen* and *ent*—and the earlier surveys of Jente and Peters (1921; 1961).

generally associate gods with clearings, valleys and hills, by contrast with monsters, associated with pits, pools, bogs and streams. The topographical associations of the gods correlate with *ælfrycg* and with the haunts of *elves* as portrayed later by the *Southern English Legendary* and *The Wife of Bath's Tale* (though the correlation is complicated by the associations of *aluen* with water at several points in Lazamon's *Brut*), and have Eddaic comparisons.²⁷⁴ The topographical associations of monsters correlate impressively with Anglo-Saxon literary evidence (cf. Whitelock 1951, 72–76). This suggests that gods and monsters were associated with different kinds of places, their mutual exclusivity reflecting the conceptual distinction between them apparent in the Old English morphological and anthroponymic evidence (see §§3:2–4). The possible ramifications of this for understanding how early Anglo-Saxons constructed their environment, and *ælf* in it, are considerable. But the difficulties with the data are profound: proper and common nouns are not necessarily comparable, nor need the two sets originate in the same period; the significances of theophoric place-names could vary over time (cf. North 1997a, 239–40); there are gaps in our data which cannot be random, such as the absence of theophoric names north of the Humber (cf. Hough 1997; Kousgård Sørensen 1990, 397–402); and so forth.

²⁷⁴ For the *Legendary* see §7:1.3; *The Wife of Bath's Tale* lines 860–81 (ed. Benson 1987, 116–17); for the *Brut* Edwards 2002. At the end of *Skírnismál*, Freyr is to meet Gerðr in a *lundr* ('grove' stanza 41; ed. Neckel 1962, 77). In stanza 16 of *Völundarkviða*, Níðuðr's queen says of Völundr, 'Era sá nú hýrr, er ór holti ferr' ('He is unnerving now, who travels from the wood'; ed. Neckel 1962, 119). Other high medieval English literature occasionally links *elves* with woods (e.g. *The Seege or Batayle of Troye* line 503–12; ed. Barnicle 1927, 41), but in works based directly on French or Anglo-Norman literature (where the association of *fées* with woods is well-attested; see Gallais 1992, *passim*).

Appendix 3: Two Non-Elves

Several occurrences of *ælf-* have been excluded from this thesis. One is a scribal error, as the correction of another Anglo-Saxon scribe confirms: the form ‘se ylfa god’ (putatively ‘the god of the *ylfe*’) for ‘se sylfa god’ (‘God Himself’) in psalm 59 of the Paris Psalter (ed. Krapp 1933, 13). Some other examples of *ælf*, however, stand unaltered in their manuscripts, but have not been considered here because I take them to be hypercorrect forms of words in *ælf-*. This position is worth justifying, and offers some tangential support to my arguments above. *Ælfmihtig* occurs three times in a short text in Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 320, folio 117, containing formulas and directions for pastoral use, and dating from around 1000 (Ker 1957, 105–6 [no. 58]): ‘Gelyfst ðu on god ælfmihtine’; ‘Ic þe bidde & beode þæt þu gode ælfmihtigum gehyrsum sy’; ‘God ælfmihtig gefultumige us’ (‘Believe in God Almighty’; ‘I ask and command that you be obedient to God Almighty’; ‘May God Almighty help us’; ed. *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*, Conf 10.2 (CCCC 320) B11.10.2). *Ælmihtig* never occurs here. The provenance of this manuscript is unknown, but its language is consistently late West Saxon; there is no other instance of initial /ælf-/ in the text for comparison. *Ælfpeod-* occurs twice in Brussels, Bibliotheque Royale, MS. 1650, but curiously the examples are attributed to different hands (both from about the first quarter of the eleventh century; see Gwara 2001, i 94*–101*, 189*): it would appear that hypercorrection was contagious. Hand A, deriving material from the lost, early Common Recension glossary (on which see §5:4.2), glossed *peregre* (‘as though foreign’) with ‘ælfpeodelice’, for *ælpeodelice* (‘as though foreign’; ed. Gwara 2001, ii 70; cf. Goossens 1974, 172 [no. 381]). The largely indistinguishable hands CD, deriving once more from a lost body of glosses (see Gwara 2001, i 218*–34*), gloss *externę peregrinationis* with ‘dre ælfpeodi’, presumably for *fremdre ælfpeodignysse* (‘foreign journey abroad’; ed. Gwara 2001, ii 248; Goossens 1974, 252 [no. 1620]). The hypercorrect forms may or may not originate with the Brussels scribes themselves; each has a correct counterpart in Oxford, Bodleian MS. Digby 146 (ed. Gwara 2001, i 70, 248), which is textually related, but the principle of *lectio difficilior* could be invoked.

The hypercorrection here must relate to the fact that groups of three consonants were liable to lose their middle consonant in West Saxon (Hogg 1992a, §§7.84–86; cf. Goossens 1974, 105), which would affect *ælf-* compounds whose second element began with a consonant. How widespread this was or how profound its effects were in the common lexicon is open to doubt, but it had extensive effects on personal names, where *ælf-* for *ælf-* is well-attested in late Old English (e.g. Colman 1992, 201–3). Observing

that words, and perhaps particularly names, whose first syllable was spelt as <ælf-> could be pronounced as [ælf-], some scribes presumably inferred that some historical *ælf*-compounds were actually *ælf*- compounds. This suggests clearly that West Saxon <ælf> is not merely a scribal form of the expected West Saxon form *ylf*—West Saxons evidently might say [ælf]. But the hypercorrection may have involved an element of folk-etymology, in which case the words must reflect a semantic congruence of *ælf* with *-mihtig* and *-peodig*. In this reading, God was not ‘all-mighty’, but ‘mighty as an *ælf* is mighty’; a foreigner not ‘of another people’ (*æl*- < **alja*- ‘other, foreign, strange’), but ‘from an *ælf*-people’. Both of these readings are well-paralleled in other Old English evidence and would help to emphasise how late such associations lasted for *ælf*—but unfortunately, such evidence is too tangential to be relied on.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ *Ælfpeodig* may also have a correlative in the manuscripts of Laȝamon’s *Brut*: whereas the more conservative Caligula manuscript has King Loclin reject his wife Guendoline, in the words of his accusers, ‘for alpeodisc meiden’ (‘for a foreign maiden’, line 1151), the later Otho manuscript calls her ‘one aluis maide’ (‘an elvish maid’; ed. Brook–Leslie 1966–78, 1 58–59). But we should perhaps reckon with the meaning ‘delusory’ in the Otho text (cf. §5:5): *alpeodisc* seems to occur in Middle English only in the *Brut*, and *alpeodi* is rare and restricted to the West Midlands (*MED*, s.vv.), so the meanings of *alpeodisc* may not have been obvious to the redactor(s) behind the Otho text.