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JULIAN BROWN

E. A. LOWE AND CODICES LATINI ANTIQUIORES¹

I

When Elias Avery Lowe died in his ninetieth year on 8 August 1969 he had been at the head of his profession of Latin palaeography for more than half a century; he was the last surviving pupil of Ludwig Traube; and he had just finished the twelfth and last part, published in 1971, of *Codices Latini Antiquiores*. The completion of that great book — nothing less than a ‘palaeographical guide to Latin manuscripts prior to the ninth century’, of which part I had appeared 37 years earlier, in 1934 — was a major event in the history of classical, patristic, and early medieval studies.

Lowe was Lecturer in Palaeography in Oxford from 1913 to 1926 and Reader from 1926 to 1948, but it was only in or soon after 1950 that I first heard the excited word, ‘Dr Lowe’s in the Students’ Room’, go round the Department of Manuscripts at the British Museum, and was introduced to the venerable but extremely lively visitor. And so there are many in England who knew Lowe better and for much longer than I did. While I was at the Institute for Advanced Study under his patronage in 1966-1967, illness kept him in Europe, so that we met only during his summer visits to London or Oxford, as often as not at the luncheon parties which he used to give for his British Museum friends at Wheeler’s in

1. This paper is a very slightly revised version of a lecture which I had the honour to give in the Hall of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, on 8 May 1973. It was the first of a set of three Lowe Lectures (the others were on Insular handwriting) endowed by Dr Lowe in a bequest to the College of which he had been an Honorary Fellow and which he regarded as his home in Oxford. Further particulars of some of the works by Lowe and others referred to in my text will be found in the Bibliographical Note at pp. 194-5.

Charlotte Street, or else on the occasions when he and Stanley Morison entertained a wider circle to lunch at the Authors' Club in Whitehall Court, next door to Morison's flat. I therefore owe much to the excellent account of the man and his book published in October 1969 by Professor J. J. John, who was Lowe's assistant from 1951 to 1964. If James John's memoir and mine have the same title, it is because no other title is possible: '*Codices Latini Antiquiores* and E. A. Lowe' puts the cart before the horse.

The primary sources for an account of Lowe's work are readily accessible: not only *The Beneventan Script* and the twelve tall parts of *CLA* itself, but the two thick volumes of *Palaeographical Papers 1907-1965*, splendidly edited by Professor Ludwig Bieler and published by the Clarendon Press in 1972. Constructive self-revelation in his writings was one of Lowe's greatest achievements as a scholar and teacher. A major source that I have not used is his working collection of books, offprints, photographs, notes and correspondence, now owned by the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.

II

Lowe was born in Lithuania but educated in New York and at Cornell University, where he graduated AB in Classics in 1902. James John records that his first experience of palaeography was in a course under George Lincoln Burr in 1901. It dealt with Merovingian diplomata. Later that year he began postgraduate work — and, as he thought, his real education — in Germany, with financial support from James Loeb solicited for him by his teachers at Cornell. From Halle, Georg Wissowa sent him to Munich, where he succumbed instantly and completely to the spell of Ludwig Traube. Traube did two great things. First, he was the most inspiring of the handful of German scholars who created the discipline of Medieval Latin Philology; and his own most original contribution to it was *Überlieferungsgeschichte* — the history of textual traditions as an aspect of intellectual history. Secondly, he put new life into the ancient discipline of Latin Palaeography, partly by demonstrating in *Nomina Sacra*, published just after his early death in 1907, the historical and practical value of the study of abbreviations; and — more importantly — by showing that without palaeography there could be no adequate *Überlieferungsgeschichte*.

Lowe described what Traube did for him in the preface to *The Beneventan Script*, 1914:

« The present work is an essay in regional palaeography. Its inception goes back to my student days at the University of Munich. My master, Ludwig Traube, had proposed to me the thesis 'Monte Cassino as a centre for the transmission of Latin classics'. After spending some time on this subject it became clear that adequate treatment of it would be possible only after acquiring such a knowledge of the peculiar script used at Monte Cassino as would enable me to make sound and independent judgements with regard to the dates of Monte Cassino MSS, that is, MSS. written in the Beneventan or South Italian minuscule. Thus I conceived the idea of making a careful study of the script employed throughout the lower half of the Italian peninsula.

Traube made no objection to my working on a subject of my own choice; but with characteristic generosity put at my disposal his entire library, his very large collection of facsimiles, and even some of his own notes. Owing to my ill health I had not the fortune to put into Traube's hand the completed study. But I had at least the satisfaction of knowing that he approved of the results reached before his death. All who knew Traube know that he was like a father to his pupils. No one can feel more keenly than I the loss my work has suffered by want of his guidance and criticism; and the best verdict I could hope for upon this book would be that it was at least conceived in Traube's spirit ».

At the end of the same preface Lowe speaks of James Loeb:

« From the time I left America to begin my studies abroad, he has never ceased to aid and encourage my work in every possible way; and that I have been able to pursue my investigations uninterruptedly is in very large measure due to his generosity. No one knows better than the author the shortcomings of this book; but such as it is, it could never have been printed had not Traube been my master and James Loeb my friend ».

Lowe was awarded the doctorate in 1907 for an edition, published in 1908, of the three oldest Kalendars from Monte Cassino. His first typical and distinguished paper was *Studia Palaeographica*, 1910, in which he surveyed the distribution in minuscule manuscripts of two objectively verifiable features — *i-longa* and the *ti*-ligature — and established important new criteria for the dating of books in the Visigothic and Beneventan scripts. In 1914 this first phase of his career was crowned by the publication by the Clarendon Press of *The Beneventan Script*, which remains the only exhaustive account of any of the Latin scripts. The two gigantic volumes of plates, *Scriptura Beneventana*, were delayed by the First world war and appeared in 1929, in honour of the fourteenth centenary of Monte Cassino. Tenacious in this as in all else, Lowe

brought out *A new list of Beneventan manuscripts* in 1962, forty-eight years after his book. A corrected reissue of book and list together is now being prepared by Dr. Virginia Brown, Lowe's last assistant at Princeton, for publication by 'Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura' in Rome. The half-dozen papers — and they are not his best work — that Lowe devoted to classical texts as such deal with manuscripts either in the Beneventan script or from Southern Italy. Far more important and characteristic are his palaeographical papers on three mss. in Visigothic script: *Codex Toletanus* (1923) and *Codex Cavensis* (1937), both Biblical, and *An unedited fragment of Irish exegesis in Visigothic script* (1960). His early acquaintance with the pre-caroline minuscules served Lowe well in dealing with the 8th century manuscripts in *CLA*; and he drew on it with obvious pleasure in papers on the mysterious Psalter (1955) and the fragments of an Antiphonary and an Epistolary (1965) discovered on Mount Sinai.

There was a gap in Lowe's output between 1914 and 1920, partly because of the War, during which he did intelligence work in Washington and transposed the last two letters of his name, making Loew into Lowe, and partly because he was preparing to enter a new field of palaeography. When the Gold Medal of the Bibliographical Society (of London) was presented to him at the Pierpont Morgan Library on 4 May 1960, he said this:

« Things have a way of coming full circle, and chance plays an enormous role in our lives. I prefer to call it Fortune instead of Chance, being of a superstitious or religious nature. The Roman goddess Fortuna, I understand, had to do with crops, childbearing and production in general — this includes C.L.A. volumes.

The future chronicles of Paleography's annals will have to say, believe it or not, that it all started in this very Morgan Library, when on a certain morning in the spring of 1916 Professor Rand of Harvard and I visited the library for the first time and were shown a number of beautiful illuminated Books of Hours and Bibles which we duly admired, but as this was not our dish of tea, we asked for any manuscript that was really old. To our astonishment we were shown a modest little volume of 12 pages containing the "Letters of Pliny the Younger" written in uncial characters of about the year 500. We couldn't believe our eyes. For heretofore the oldest copy of the "Letters" known to scholars was of the ninth century. No living Pliny scholar was aware of the existence of the ancient witness to the text. So you can understand our excitement that morning in the library. A paper was read by Rand (on the text) and by me (on the palaeography) before the Philological Society which met at Princeton. Permission was given to publish our first

(*sic*), and the Carnegie Institution of Washington accepted the publication. I happened to be a research associate of the Institution — a relationship which began in 1911 and lasted for over forty years. My task was to date and place the new Pliny manuscript. I sought guidance, but found none, so I began to draw up criteria for dating myself. To be sure, a German scholar had published a short chapter on the distinguishing features of our oldest Latin manuscripts, but his results seemed not only inadequate but in part manifestly erroneous.

Nothing so stimulates a young investigator as errors committed by his elders. I began forthwith to collect data. It was clear to me that only by amassing all available data could sound results be obtained ».

Lowe and E. K. Rand on the Morgan Pliny appeared in 1922; and Lowe's part is still the *locus classicus* for the dating of manuscripts in uncial. It had been preceded, in print at least, by a much shorter paper on the uncial manuscript of the 'Abstrusa' and 'Abolita' glosses in the Vatican (1921); and 1922 also saw a paper *On the African origin of the Codex Palatinus of the Gospels* (e). If the Palatinus was African — and by 1969 Lowe felt sure that it was (*Suppl.*, p. ix) — the reason for which Alexander Souter had suggested that conclusion was certainly not a sound one. Three other important papers appeared in 1924. *A hand-list of half-uncial manuscripts* was added to Traube's list of capital and uncial MSS published by Lehmann in 1909. *Codices Lugdunenses Antiquissimi*, splendidly illustrated and showing as much concern for marginalia as for main texts, was Lowe's first enquiry into an early centre of book production as a whole. *The palaeography of the Bobbio Missal* was an exhaustive description of an idiosyncratic and therefore difficult manuscript. Detailed description both of the palaeographical and of what we now call the codicological aspects of manuscripts; the formation of lists of dated manuscripts, of manuscripts in the same type of handwriting, of manuscripts containing particular palaeographical or codicological features that could be clearly and distinctly defined; the recognition that to prove what *cannot* be said is almost as useful as to prove what *can* be said; reflection on the principles that must underlie the reconstruction of an ancient centre; the decision to use the existing nomenclature of early scripts, however illogical and unsatisfactory — all these essential preliminaries to an exhaustive study of the oldest Latin manuscripts were broached by Lowe in the papers of 1921 to 1924. *Some facts about our oldest Latin manuscripts* (1925) was a first, cautious step towards a synthesis; *More facts about our oldest Latin manuscripts*

(1928) was a second. Rand, thanking him for an offprint of *More facts...*, wrote back: 'Your next article will have to be « Most facts »'. And sure enough, as Lowe said in 1960, 'he was only wrong in calling it an article. It is by now 1500 articles distributed in then volumes and they include 1500 facsimiles as well'. The year in which *CLA* effectively began, 1929, was the fiftieth of its editor's life. Let us pause for a moment to consider his teaching and the kind of man he was.

III

Even before he became engrossed with *CLA*, Lowe seems to have believed that methods were a better education than conclusions; and his account of Latin palaeography was apt to finish with the Beneventan script. Professor Rosalind Hill's memory of Lowe's teaching at Oxford is typical. The direct relevance of his class was minimal in her case — she was working on English bishops' registers of the 13th century; and yet she recalls that her outlook on historical sources was completely made over by experiences like this. Lowe writes an uncial *a* on the blackboard; steps back; contemplates it at length; turns round to his class, smiling delightedly: 'Isn't that a beautiful letter?'. No wonder that the Oxford of Lowe's pupils Richard Hunt, Neil Ker and Roger Mynors has for so long been the headquarters of Latin palaeography in Britain. In America Lowe taught only occasionally, and then by special invitation; and there the line descends through his former assistants: Ruth Dean, James John, Braxton Ross and Virginia Brown.

Of some twenty-five reviews written between 1914 and 1931 all are of palaeographical books, almost all are short, and only five deal with subjects outside Lowe's own period. His only works of vulgarization appeared in 1926: a contribution to the Society for pure English, Tract xxiii, *English Handwriting*; and a chapter on *Handwriting* in *The Legacy of the Middle Ages*, which was beautifully reprinted, with much better plates, by his old friend Maddalena de Luca in Rome (1969). The latter is elegantly written, but conventional; and Giorgio Cencetti rightly said that in it Lowe proved 'inferiore alla sua fama'. To get on with his own work was evidently his overriding concern; but we shall see that he

published his methods as openly as his results; and that, after all, is the most generous and durable form of teaching.

Being Jewish, and having emigrated from Eastern Europe to New York City when hardly out of the cradle, Lowe was well equipped to be a cosmopolitan, although for him, as for his school-friend in New York Jacob Epstein, work remained 'work' to the end. I have been told that some of the Young Turks who reached eminence in the academic life of the United States in the 1940s, from the same background as Lowe but a whole generation later, mistook him for a typical anglophile, golfing and therefore negligible, professor of the older school. They may have listened to some of his conversation, but they cannot have read his books.

James John tells us that to write *CLA* Lowe visited nearly 300 libraries in some 200 cities in twenty countries. By the time I knew him he had established a regular circuit: Oxford, London, the Continent in early summer; part of August and September in his usual heart clinic in Germany, always working as well as resting; the Continent and England again; the fall in Princeton; winter in Florida, but still working; back in Princeton for the spring. Lowe himself enjoyed every minute of it, and it enabled him to work hard in spite of his age, in spite of his poor sight (he was operated on twice for cataract), in spite of the « angina pectoris » from which he suffered from the 1940s onwards. In his postgraduate years he was seriously ill with tuberculosis, which delayed the publication of *The Beneventan Script*; but, as I have learned from a journal that he kept in Italy in 1905, kindly lent to me by his daughter Mrs. Patricia Pitzele, he counted his *soldi* and carried his two cameras as resolutely as any Fulbright Scholar. Monte Cassino, 10 April 1905: « Letter from Traube — advises to stay in Italy as long as possible and forfeit the return ticket. Am working well ». 13 April: « Amelli [the librarian of Monte Cassino] surprises me by saying to me as I was taking photos, 'How long is this going to last?' I couldn't eat that day nor think nor work. I took photos and developed and did my best to forget it ».

Although the young man had been entranced by the alpine attractions of Bavaria and the older man was deeply attached to the staid amenities of Oxford, Lowe's spiritual home was in Italy. Here is his description, after 60 years, of his first visit to Monte Cassino:

« In the formation of a palaeographer travel is a *sine qua non*, and naturally my first pilgrimage — that was 1904 — took me to Monte Cassino, founded in 529 by St. Benedict. I need not tell you that it is one of the lighthouses of Western Culture — the mother house of the Benedictines, the men chiefly responsible for the transmission of our classical heritage. To set foot on Italian soil, the land of Virgil, Cicero, and Tacitus, was long one of my ambitions, but nothing that my imagination could have conjured up equalled the heavenly beauty that met my eyes when I reached the height called Mons Casinus. My enthusiasm, however, was soon dampened by the attitude of the monk who was my guestmaster. I can say in all honesty that I have never entertained an overweening notion of the place palaeography occupies in the universal scheme of things, but my modest notion was vainglory compared with the downright disesteem of the guestmaster. Out of scores of rooms in the abbey, he cunningly selected for the tyro, maybe because of his size and youth, a cell on the inner court facing full north, a cell into which no ray of sunshine had penetrated since the edifice was reconstructed several centuries before. I assure you my room was cold. Breakfast consisted of a cup of black coffee and a slab of coarse bread. Midday dinner consisted of watery soup, *pastina al brodo*, some form of tasteless egg dish or fish, and for dessert a tiny impoverished orange. Of course there was a huge chunk of bread and a whole flask of red wine which I didn't drink — though I was told it was very good — because I was working and wanted to keep the fog out of my head. In all justice I must add that the guestmaster was not Italian. I won't immortalize him by mentioning his name. Quite different treatment was mine a few years later when Dom Mauro Inguanez, the Maltese scholar, became librarian. He was a palaeographer in his own right and he saw to it that a fellow palaeographer got a square deal and a southern room. He even added milk to my morning coffee and on occasion brought tea to my warm cell, and even grapes and figs from the monastery garden. This was eight years later ».

Lowe's devotion to Benedictinism and to the Venerable Bede, as the greatest English exponent of the Benedictine virtues, was all the more profound because Latin palaeography had been created by a Benedictine and because Lowe himself knew, and sometimes collaborated with, many of the great Benedictine scholars of his own time: Butler, Chapman, De Bruyne, Dold, Gasquet, Inguanez, Lambot, Leclercq, McCann, Mohlberg, Morin, Quentin, Schmitz, Wilmart. None of these was Italian; but in the Vatican and Ambrosian Libraries, along with distinguished foreigners, Lowe met Italian scholars of comparable distinction. The kindness he received from Franz Ehrle, as Prefect, on his first visit to the Vatican was gratefully remembered all his life. It was his good fortune to have as friends in the present the direct heirs of the ancient scribes and scholars to whose books he devoted his life.

In 1911 Lowe married Helen Tracy Porter (1876-1963), who from 1930 onwards achieved wide fame in her own right as Thomas Mann's English translator — a fame based, like Lowe's own, on scholarship. An account of the relationship between these two highly gifted and original people ought to be written. There were three daughters of the marriage, one of whom died two years before her father; and each of them has contributed to Lowe's impressive total of grandchildren.

Lowe read widely and talked with style and vivacity on subjects that had nothing to do with his speciality. His person and his dress were always elegant. His power to charm and amuse his friends, whether new or old, was impressive; and to the charm of women he never sought nor acquired any immunity. His enjoyment of trout-fishing and golf reminds us that endless patience was one of his virtues as a scholar. He loved work at least as much as he loved play. His triumphs over severe illness, in age as in youth, only seasoned a strong constitution and hardened an already formidable will. What is more, he was short in stature. To quote the affectionate comment of an Italian friend: 'Lui era piccolo, ma voleva i suoi libri grandi'.

He expected much of himself and almost as much of his collaborators. Punctilious and generous in acknowledging help, he wrote in 1934 that the name of his chief assistant deserved to stand on the first title page of *CLA*, but that he wished to remain anonymous. Father W. J. Anderson (1894-1972) was indeed remarkable as a man and as a scholar. He worked with Lowe as an undergraduate in Oxford in 1919-23 and then trained for the priesthood (he was a convert). He worked for Lowe, as he had contracted to do, from 1927 to 1934 and his travels on his behalf took him far beyond the Vatican and Italy. After twenty years of dedicated parochial service at St. Mary's, Chelsea, his health failed and he went home to Scotland, to become archivist of the Scottish Catholic Church and a regular and formidable contributor to *The Innes Review*. In later years, when another name might fittingly, have stood on the title page, Lowe declared that *CLA* had never had more than one editor; and it is true that however indispensable the collaboration and assistance he had in research and drafting, it was to the last Lowe himself who decided what was to be printed and in what form. Having in fact turned autocrat for the sake of his book, he apparently saw no point in pretending otherwise.

IV

We may learn from James John how, during that unpromising year 1929, Lowe obtained for *CLA* the necessary financial support: from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Carnegie Institution of Washington, the Library of Congress, and — most important of all — the University of Oxford and the Clarendon Press. From 1936, when Lowe became one of the six founding professors of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, New Jersey, until his death long after the usual age of retirement, the Institute looked after the research and the Press looked after publication. In 1929 Lowe had foreseen 1000 to 1100 items, to be described in five years. The twelve parts published between 1934 and 1971 deal with 1811 items, of which 141 came to light after 1934 and too late for inclusion in volumes already published. Lowe corrected his proofs for the *Supplement* — alias pt. XII — in 1969, exactly forty years on from 1929. Apart from a wartime gap between 1938 and 1947, the remarkably regular rate of production had been one volume every three years.

With *CLA* complete, it is hard to imagine how little its editor had to go on when he started: lists by Traube and himself, the index to W. M. Lindsay's *Notae Latinae*, E. H. Zimmermann's *Vorkarolingische Miniaturen*, Paul Liebaert's photographs in the Vatican, the half-dozen great collections of palaeographical plates. Since about 1910 Lindsay and Luigi Schiaparelli had each published a number of papers largely concerned with abbreviations; the 1920s and 1930s saw a few more isolated papers by Georg Baesecke, C. U. Clark, Olga Dobiaš-Rojdestvenskaya, L. W. Jones, Liebaert, Karl Loeffler, Rand and S. Tafel. Albert Bruckner's work on the Swiss scriptoria only began to appear in 1935, and Bernhard Bischoff's on the South East German scriptoria only in 1940.

Lowe himself knew better than anybody what to include in the descriptions in *CLA* and how to arrange it. If he had forerunners, they were the two Palaeographical Societies, Anton Chroust's *Monumenta Palaeographica*, and Franz Steffens's *Lateinische Paläographie*. The one lamentable feature of his arrangement is the separation of materials and ink from the description of the quires. To redo the descriptions in pt. I, on the Vatican manuscripts, was a dear and unfulfilled ambition; but in fact many of them compare very well with comparable descriptions in later volumes. The typograph-

ical contribution to the descriptions made by the Clarendon Press will be a good subject for some historian of printing: craftsmanship still existed to meet the exacting demands of Lowe's kind of palaeography.

Lowe chose admirable assistants: William Anderson (pt. I); Ruth Dean (pts I and II and again pt. VII); Marthe Dulong (pts II, V and VI); James John (pts V-XI and the *Supplement*); Braxton Ross (pt. XI and the *Supplement*); Virginia Brown (the *Supplement* and the second edition of pt. II). Their most important work was to produce first drafts of the descriptions and then to keep their ends up in the lengthy discussion of them that always followed; and Lowe deserves much credit for having chosen such an effective system of training.

Of Professor Bernhard Bischoff, who began as an assistant and ended as a collaborator, and who in 1970 published an obituary of Lowe in which his own work on *CLA* is passed over in silence, we must note what James John has said, after his own thirteen years of service to *CLA*:

« ... even the extraordinary generosity of the Institute for Advanced Study could not have assured the completion of C.L.A. in the form it has actually assumed. This depended, further, on the indispensable collaboration of Bernhard Bischoff who, at the time C.L.A. was getting started, was still an unknown student at the University of Munich. Without Bischoff one can seriously doubt that C.L.A. would ever have been finished, and if it did get finished, it would have been of immeasurably less value than it is. From 1933 until the present, and from 1953 as professor of Mediaeval Latin philology at Munich, he has given the project the benefit of a vast and extraordinarily acute memory for palaeographical details and of enormous erudition in philology as well as palaeography, and these talents have been combined with a herculean capacity for disciplined hard work. Many other scholars have made contributions that were indispensable to C.L.A., but I think it is fair to say that if they had not made them (I include my own contributions here), Lowe would somehow have found someone else to take their place. There was no one who could have taken Bischoff's place ».

It remains to add only that the completeness of *CLA* is largely due to Bischoff's indefatigable searches not only for *CLA* books but for the 6500 and more items to be included in his own handlist of ninth-century books: the net for *CLA* was cast very wide.

In the *Supplement* (p. V) Lowe reported that work was in progress on the necessary palaeographical indexes, and on an 'epilogue' containing his 'observations and reflections on the material that passed through his hands'. The *Supplement* itself contains

three indexes, two of them by Sir Roger Mynors (on texts and on medieval provenances). James John is busy with the elaborate set of palaeographical indexes which he described in the *Year Book 1970* of the American Philosophical Society. That a viable 'epilogue' can be put together from Lowe's note is, alas, out of the question; but his cherished intention to produce one shows that the scholar who planned and to all intents and purposes finished *CLA* was an enterprising, persuasive and resolute man. What were his other gifts?

He had a magnificent eye and visual memory, which he practiced assiduously, for the details of script (but not, I think, a visual memory for secondary sources). He further sharpened his eye by learning to write well, both with a broad pen, especially in uncials, and with the thin pen of every day: his copy of Edward Johnston's *Writing and Illuminating, and Lettering* has been well used. Lowe's basic principle in palaeography — start from the strictly objective facts — debarred him from drawing in print specific stylistic comparisons between one specimen and another, unless they were entirely obvious; and it is a grievous pity that he did not live to expound in his 'epilogue' the system of less obvious comparisons on which, since facts in that period are all too few, his judgments on the date and origin of uncial and half-uncial books partly depended. The basic principle, then, was to collect, record and evaluate facts; and as Traube's pupil he had a soft spot for abbreviations, which 'constitute an essential part of a palaeographer's equipment and are perhaps the most fascinating tool in his professional kit' (pt. IV, p. IX). It was, I think, by the standard of abbreviations that Lowe measured the respectability of other facts; and he was right to believe that if only one is observant enough and intelligent enough, such facts, or the want of them, will at best give one a positive answer and at worst reveal the full extent of one's ignorance. One of his greatest achievements, which he shares with Rand, was to have enlarged the realm of fact to include 'codicological' information about materials and the make-up of the quire. The two of them have, since the foundation of *Scriptorium* in 1947, received less credit for this than they deserve. Lowe himself admitted that he had been slow to grasp the full importance of display scripts and decoration. *The « Script of Luxeuil »; a title vindicated* (1953) marked his conversion; and *CLA VI*, of the same year, includes the first special paragraph on *Colophons and Display script* (p. VII).

In the same volume he thanks an impressive ministry of all the art-historical talents for their advice: Wilhelm Koehler, Carl Nordenfalk, Otto Paecht, Erwin Panofsky, Meyer Schapiro, Kurt Weitzmann. That Lowe had the American propensity to consult the real experts, grounded in the belief that what was good for *CLA* was good for the republic of letters, is one of the strong points of his work.

Between the basic level of fact-collecting and his ultimate goals of dates and localizations, Lowe had to attack methodological problems that are posed with particular urgency by the *CLA* period, for which the evidence is so fragmentary. It is one of his greatest merits that he gave all these problems a proper airing for the first time. One set of problems, first treated in *Studia Palaeographica* (1910) and again in the study of the Morgan Pliny (1922), concerns the relationship between the dated and localized examples of a script and the others, including the problem of *subscriptions* which are misleading because recopied. The reconstruction of an ancient centre of production by combining the evidence of script, provenance and contents was first discussed in *Codices Lugdunenses Antiquissimi* (1924). The problem of nomenclature was faced in the handlist of half-uncial manuscripts (1924). Lowe's eventual decisions to accept most of the traditional names, and in particular half-uncial, but to use 'Insular majuscule' for the more usual 'Insular half-uncial' attracted much criticism; and he returned to them again and again in *CLA* between pt. I (1934) and pt. VIII (1959). He said that in dealing with some of the latest manuscripts 'the poor editor is in perplexity and knows no better way out' (pt. VIII, p. ix). In *CLA* itself the crucial passage on method comes in pt. IV (1947), pp. XII-XIV, as an introduction to Lowe's account of Italian manuscripts, those of Verona and Bobbio in particular. See also pt. VI (1953), pp. XI, XIII and XIV.

Lowe's best passage on his dates and attributions is in pt. VI (1953), pp. IX-X:

« The first line in the description of each C.L.A. item tells at a glance the editor's date for the manuscript, and the first sentence in the final big-print paragraph gives the known or presumed place of origin. These were never meant to be oracular utterances of *ipse dixit*. As has been said in an earlier preface (I, p. XII), 'The precise home of the manuscripts in our period will never be known, since with few exceptions, all internal evidence as to origin is lacking. Such opinions, therefore, as are expressed are in the nature of reasoned surmises, that is judgements based on palaeographical considerations

with no more claim to finality than goes with such judgements'. What was said these of the precise home holds for the precise date. 'In other words', to quote an earlier preface again (IV, p. XII), 'our conclusions as to date and origin rest on very scanty bits of objective evidence. But this evidence is of the utmost importance, because it constitutes the bony structure of the whole body of observations on which palaeographical judgements are based. By a swift and almost unconscious process, subjective impressions are referred to objective data that have been tested and integrated by experience, and from these they derive their authority'. The acquisition of new knowledge alone will test their validity. Meanwhile they should be taken for the fallible things they are even though based on as wide a range of experience as the present material affords ».

Even the acknowledgements in *CLA*, always introduced on the same note: 'It is now the editor's pleasant duty ...' — have their stories to tell. The long, Baedekerish guides to contents included from pt. V (1950) onwards contain something for everybody. The systematically arranged notes on codicology, abbreviations and the like in pts I-IV and VI (1934-1953) summarise the whole of our codicological knowledge of Latin manuscripts before about A. D. 700, and add much of importance on the manuscripts of the 8th century.

The studies of groups of manuscripts to be found in eight parts of *CLA* do not add up to a handbook of early Latin palaeography. After a pause of fifteen years in the thirties and early forties, however, Lowe wrote a new and masterly series of papers: one on omission signs (1946); two — one of them a book — on English uncial (1952 and 1960); one on Luxeuil minuscule (1953); one on minuscule at Wearmouth and Jarrow (1958); one on BR-uncial (1961); and a final, most important, one on palimpsests (1964), which incorporates many new datings of items in the earlier volumes of *CLA*. Read together the papers and the introductions cover many of the most important themes in the period: and that in an incomparably more educative way than any handbook. Three passages in *CLA* stand out. The one on Insular handwriting in pt. II (1935), pp. x-xvi added to Linday's studies of Irish and Welsh script a basic work on Anglo-Saxon script, and on the codicological differences between Anglo-Saxon and Irish books. The long passage on Italian manuscripts in pt. IV (1947), pp. xiv-xxvii strikes me as the best thing Lowe wrote. It should be read with the papers on BR-uncial and on palimpsests (1961 and 1964) and with the short passages on Spanish and on African manuscripts in pt. XI (1966),

pp. VII-IX and in the *Supplement* (1971), pp. VII-IX. The long passage on the French centres in pt. VI (1953), pp. XIII-XXIX is hardly less important, but lacks the fire of the Italian study. The accounts of Swiss and German centres in pts VII (1957), pp. v, IX-X and IX (1959), pp. VIII-XI are short and mainly refer us to the basic work already done by Bruckner and Bischoff. The long passage on Salzburg and St. Amand in pt. X (1963), pp. VIII-XVIII ought, I think, to have appeared as a separate paper.

Was it necessary to do *CLA* on that vast scale? After A. D. 800 the palaeographer's problem is, if anything, *embarras de richesses* — the opposite of the problem which Lowe faced in 1916. Where more books survive and where the books themselves are more complex in contents and execution, the palaeographer's work is lightened. The historians of literature, language, art, the liturgy, ecclesiastical and academic institutions have more help to offer; and in the end archival and epistolary sources even furnish detailed biographies of scribes and scholars. Lowe's 1811 books and fragments are the material for nearly a millennium of Latin palaeography throughout — and in Ireland even beyond — the territories of the Roman Empire. Where the evidence is preserved so patchily and often so imperfectly, only a full description of it will serve. For one thing, *CLA* has illustrated some 600 items for the first time. Was it worth while to lay impeccable foundations for half the history of Latin handwriting? Yes, if the intellectual history of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages is worth our consideration. Lowe meant his book to be used: 'I determined to set about the business of putting together the extant material, not, of course, in order to brood over it by myself, but to make it accessible to as many scholars as possible. For me it seemed that this great mass of material, once published, could not fail to act as a powerful stimulus to fresh effort towards the solution of many and varied palaeographical problems' (pt. I, p. vii). As we use *CLA*, we can apply to ourselves what Lowe said of his own predecessors in insular palaeography, Wanley, Traube, and Lindsay: 'When the pioneer has cleared the field and removed the stumps even small men can plough and reap some harvest' (pt. II, 2nd edn, p. ix). What Lowe expected from his successors is made plain in the last paragraph of the passage on African manuscripts in the *Supplement*, p. x: 'The accompanying plates speak for themselves. They allow the interested student to judge the validity of what has been said above ... I confess that

I have an open mind about some of [the specimens], that is, I may be mistaken in considering them African. On the other hand it would not surprise me to learn that yet other items of African origin will in time be found among the twelve volumes of *CLA*'.

The beneficiaries of *CLA* are of many kinds. Most obviously, we may expect a whole series of new studies of early Latin palaeography, based on the complete materials. Again, any palaeographer or cataloguer of manuscripts, whatever his period and his languages, can read *CLA* as a general education in his discipline and as a source of practical hints. Not enough of them do this. Archaeologists, philologists and historians will continue to use *CLA* as an exhaustive, intelligible, and dependable guide to one of their best sources — the books written and decorated in their period. To have bequeathed all these possibilities to others involved restraint on Lowe's part. He might have spent far more time than he did in exploiting his own discoveries; but his first priority was always to finish the book as he had planned it, for use by others besides himself. He made cardinal virtues of completeness, consistency and caution; and so all can profit from his work in one way or another. He always took the greatest care to frame dates and attributions that should match as exactly as possible the degree of uncertainty in his own mind and cover all the reasonable possibilities. That is why his conclusions can so often be interpreted or developed, after more detailed investigation, without being contradicted: the better one knows *CLA* the more one respects it. At a dinner party in the woods near Cambridge, Mass., a Harvard man once greeted this apparently harmless observation on Lowe's powers as a draughtsman with: 'That's right! He's a typical New Yorker'.

V

Now for a last word on Lowe's place in the Pantheon of Latin palaeography. I shall begin with what the index to his friend Eduard Fraenkel's *Horace* calls 'hypercriticism preparatory to true understanding'.

As a deliberate and cautious worker, who got time on his side and saw to it that he had such help as he needed, Lowe gave few openings to petty criticism. The two conspicuous but not fundamental mistakes that I know of were both inspired by personal

affection. It was Stanley Morison — as Morison himself once told me — who prompted the theory about the origin of Maurdramus minuscule offered in *CLA VI* (1953), p. XII. In a prominently displayed ‘retraction’ at *CLA VIII* (1959), p. x Lowe accepted as entirely his own the blame for basing this theory on a single plate in Arndt and Tangl, not on a full examination of the MS itself. The reference does not appear in Morison’s *Politics and Script*, 1972, pl. 83. It was love for the Benedictines and for Bede himself that inspired the suggestion in *Revue Bénédictine* LXVIII (1958) that the last colophon in the Leningrad *Historia ecclesiastica* might be in Bede’s own handwriting. And in this case the description in *CLA XI* (1966), no. 1621 betrays reluctance to accept the conclusive observations soon deployed against a proposal in which the heart had ruled the head.

To turn to wider issues, Lowe never proposed a general theory of the development of Roman handwriting, such as Schiaparelli proposed in 1921 and Jean Mallon in 1952. He has been attacked for this; but he deliberately suspended judgement until *CLA* should be complete; and we may safely admire Schiaparelli and Mallon for their boldness without accusing Lowe of timidity. Time, alas, did in the end run out, before the ‘epilogue’ could be written. Again, Lowe made next to no direct contributions to *Überlieferungsgeschichte* in the manner of Traube and Bischoff. He did, however, collaborate with Bischoff for thirty-six years; and he rightly considered that *CLA* ‘not the place’ for such studies, recognizing also that they were ‘not within the competence of the editor’. See pt. VI (1953), p. XIII.

As Monsieur Gilbert Ouy likes to say, palaeography is a *science auxiliaire* when you are writing history or philology, but it is they that become the *sciences auxiliaires* when you are writing palaeography. From the first Lowe was proud to speak of himself as a palaeographer. ‘There is nothing’, he wrote in 1952 (*Palaeographical Papers II*, p. 381), ‘that delights the heart of a palaeographer more than finding historic events confirmed by some modest sign, symbol, or scribal trick easily overlooked by the uninitiated but full of meaning none the less’. Glad to be able to confirm ‘history’, he still felt no private urge to write it. What the self-confessed ‘student devoted to pure palaeography’ (*Palaeographical Papers II*, p. 592) did feel was the urge to argue cases in public, so that others might learn the principles of palaeographical research. The way he

got his results is as important to us as the results themselves. And he knew how to make his research exciting. 'The palaeographer is often in the position of a detective. The final clue is discovered to be something insignificant, a thing easily passed over, though right under one's nose' (*Palaeographical Papers* II, p. 394). He was speaking of nothing more dramatic than the display script in Morgan MS 334. As James John reminds us, he liked a difficult transcription. Above all he loved puzzles: only read his papers on the Bobbio Missal (1924), on the 'Golden Gospels' in the Morgan Library (1954), on the waifs from Mount Sinai (1955 and 1965). His sense of style was as developed as his dramatic sense. In 1924 he thanked the French translator of *Codices Lugdunenses Antiquissimi* for dealing so faithfully with 'mes longues périodes anglaises'. His tendency towards Victorian grandiosity disappeared once *CLA* had started; and the terseness and tension of the Introductions to its first six volumes make them his best work as a writer. Further, Lowe created, more or less single handed, a highly efficient and strikingly pure technical dialect of the English language.

Lowe had neither the creative genius of Mabillon nor the re-creative genius of Traube, each of whom had his eye on something beyond palaeography itself. Nor did he make a heroic mistake to match Mabillon's about the origin of the 'national' scripts or Traube's about the development of abbreviations by contraction. Delisle had been a « conservateur de manuscrits » through and through, prepared to tackle anything and deep in the history of collections. With Schiaparelli and Lindsay, who were Traube's contemporaries, not his pupils, but who began to write on palaeography after his death and under his influence, we are much nearer to Lowe. For one thing, they too shared Traube's passion for abbreviations. As Maffei had used his knowledge of Italian manuscripts to correct Mabillon, so Schiaparelli used his to correct Traube. Again, Schiaparelli's *La scrittura latina nell'età Romana* (1921) gave Lowe the important concept of 'early half-uncial', as he acknowledged in the handlist of 1924; and it anticipated many of the sharpest insights in Jean Mallon's *Paléographie Romaine* (1952), some of which were particularly directed against Lowe's traditional system of nomenclature. Lowe's admiration for Lindsay was profound. The first edition of *CLA* II was dedicated to him anonymously and the second by name. Lowe's appointment in Oxford was the result of Falconer Madan's elevation to Bodley's Librarianship — he had conducted an annual

class in Latin palaeography from 1890 to 1912; and Lindsay, like Ehrle, Sir Frederic Kenyon and A. C. Clark, wrote a glowing testimonial to 'a really great and famous palaeographer like Dr. Loew'. Lindsay took up palaeographical research because of Traube's death and dropped it, and his journal *Palaeographia Latina*, because of the birth of *CLA* (he says so himself in his posthumous autobiography). His own palaeographical papers are mostly dour to the point of bleakness. Lowe's own achievement in palaeography is of course far greater than either Schiaparelli's or Lindsay's; and he differs from them both largely in his connoisseur's love for particular books, often as objects of beauty in themselves and always as tangible relics of the past. Where he was an archaeologist, Schiaparelli was a historian and Lindsay a philologist. Of the other Americans who were Traube's pupils, Rand and B. L. Ullman did most for palaeography, but neither practiced it full-time. Traube's mantle was divided. The palaeographical part fell on Lowe and the philological part on Paul Lehmann; but they have been reunited on the shoulders of Bernhard Bischoff, who worked with Lowe for so long and followed Lehmann in Traube's chair. Lowe's place is with the archaeologists and his life's work has much in common with that of his contemporary in Oxford, J. D. Beazley. In Lowe it is not the powers themselves that command our deepest respect but the heroic way in which he used them. Both men were lucky in that their careers fell between the pioneering of the 19th century and the factory farming of the later 20th.

Professor David Wright's excellent photographs of Lowe show him at work in his beloved « Scriptorium » at Princeton, now serious enough, now talking and smiling as he used to over the luncheon table or in the Common Room. The charm, the elegance, the urbanity are all there. For the formidable inner man, the one who really finished *CLA*, we must go — as Patricia Pitzele has said — to Epstein's head in bronze. Mrs. Pitzele also tells us that her father used to talk of a villa in Italy for his eventual retirement. And that reminds us of Bernard Berenson, a man of the same ultimate background and with similar gifts, but one who took the villa before he had finished his work. Lowe understood the Benedictine virtues and meant it when he wrote, *scripsi ut potui, non sicut volui* at the end of *CLA* XI (1966). In the year in which he was to die he ended the Introduction to the *Supplement* with these words: 'The long journey is ended. The good ship *CLA* has been

brought safely into port'. As a paleographer he must have had in the back of his mind another famous scribal motto, with its story of long, hard toil and rest at the end: « Qui scribere nescit, nullum putat esse laborem. Tres digiti scribunt, duo oculi vident, una lingua loquitur, totum corpus laborat. Et omnis labor finem habet, et praemium ejus non habet finem. Quam dulcis est naviganti optimus portus, ita scriptori novissimus versus ».

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Lowe's more important articles have all been reprinted in his *Palaeographical Papers 1907-1965*, ed. Ludwig Bieler, 2 vols, Oxford 1972. Vol. II, pp. 594-611 contains a bibliography of 115 items, arranged in chronological order, in which all the publications by Lowe referred to in this memoir can be found without difficulty. The following obituary notices of Lowe have come to my notice: [Julian Brown], *The Times*, 11 Aug. 1969, p. 8; J. S. G. Simmons, *ibid.*, 16 Aug. 1969, p. 12; James J. John, 'E. A. Lowe and *Codices Latini Antiquiores*', American Council of Learned Societies, *Newsletter* 20, no. 5 (1969), pp. 1-17; *idem*, 'A palaeographer among Benedictines: a tribute to E. A. Lowe', *American Benedictine Review* 21, no. 2 (1970), pp. 13-47; Julian Brown, 'Dr. E. Lowe: expert on Latin manuscripts', pp. 213-15 [reprinted from *The Times* — see above], Patricia Pitzele, 'My father, E. A. Lowe', pp. 216-18, Don M. Wolfe, 'Elias Avery Lowe: a portrait', pp. 219-25, all in *Journal of Historical Studies* 2, no. 3 (1969); Bernhard Bischoff, 'Elias Avery Lowe, 15.10.1879 - 8.8.1969', *Jahrbuch der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1970, pp. 199-203. A duplicated typescript of Lowe's Remarks ...' at the presentation in the Pierpont Morgan Library (p. 180) is in the Palaeography Room of the University of London Library. Lowe's reminiscences of Monte Cassino (p. 184), published in 1965, are reprinted in *Palaeographical Papers* II, pp. 577-8. The obituary of Father Anderson (p. 185), [by Monsignor David McRoberts], first published in *The Catholic Directory for Scotland* 1973, Glasgow 1973, pp. 317-23, has been reprinted, with the addition of a photograph, as a pamphlet, 'Reverend William James Anderson M. A., 1894-1972', Glasgow, n.d. Professor John's tribute to Professor Bischoff (p. 187) is quoted from his memoir of Lowe in the *ACLS Newsletter* — see above; and he has described his plans for indexes to *CLA* (p. 188) in *The American Philosophical Society, Year Book 1970*, Philadelphia 1971, pp. 625-7. I am grateful to Dr. R. W. Hunt for showing me a file of papers relating to Madan's palaeographical teaching and Lowe's appointment to the Oxford lectureship (p. 194). Lindsay's memoir of himself (p. 195) is reprinted on pp. 487-500 of M. J. Rose's obituary in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 23 (1937), pp. 487-512. Two of Professor Wright's photographs of Lowe

(p. 195) appear in Professor John's memoir in the *ACLS Newsletter*, of which one also serves as frontispiece to the first volume of *Palaeographical Papers*. The colophon of 'Jonatham clericus' (p. 88) is quoted from Wilhelm Wattenbach, *Das Schriftwesen im Mittelalter*, 3rd edn, Leipzig 1896, pp. 495-6; and it occurs at f. 137v of *Bibl. Vat., Cod. Pal. lat. 26*, a Gospel book ascribed to the Western Rhineland in the second quarter of the ninth century by Bernhard Bischoff, *Lorsch im Spiegel seiner Handschriften* (Munich 1974), pp. 20, 50, 104. On Father Anderson (p. 185), see also *The Innes Review*, 24 (1973), pp. 3-5.