More Than Words: An In-Depth Examination of Materiality in MS Junius 11 and Manuscript Digitization

Allie M. Hayes

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More Than Words: An In-Depth Examination of Materiality in MS Junius 11 and Manuscript Digitization

by

Allie Marie Hayes

Under the Direction of Nicola Sharratt, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2024
ABSTRACT

Materiality is a significant component of medieval manuscript studies, but there is little research that approaches the subject from an anthropological-archaeological perspective. This project examines the Junius Manuscript (Bodleian Library MS. Junius 11) from its initial creation to its modern-day digitization. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection, this archaeological approach constructs the manuscript’s life story. Examination of material interventions within the manuscript, such as holes, writing/notations, and creases offers insight into what material traces are left behind on manuscripts and what these can tell us about human interactions in relation to the object. In addition, this thesis considers the concept of digital materiality and the digitization of manuscripts to interrogate the nuances of digital accessibility within manuscript studies. An archaeological approach to the comprehensive life history of manuscripts contributes to the articulation of new perspectives on manuscript materiality and their social lives, considering these objects as artifacts rather than solely textual sources.

INDEX WORDS: Anglo-Saxon, Manuscripts, Materiality, Archaeology, Digitization, Junius
More Than Words: An In-Depth Examination of Materiality in MS Junius 11 and Manuscript Digitization

by

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Office of Graduate Services
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
May 2024
DEDICATION

Dedicated to Grandma, Papa, Grandpa Nelson, Grandma Joanne, and Alex. I hope it makes you proud.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to show my sincerest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Nicola Sharratt, for all of the guidance and support she has given me throughout this journey. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Christie and Dr. Ruprecht, for showing unwavering support through it all. All of the advice, countless book recommendations, and guidance on becoming a master’s level scholar will forever stay with me. I could not have picked a better committee for my research and where I want to go as an academic, and you all inspire me daily with your tenacity and passion for what you do.

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1 INTRODUCTION

As humans, we define our experiences through the materiality of the world around us. The five senses are able to take in and interpret the world because of its many physical characteristics. The feeling of a breeze, the texture of sand, the smell of one’s favorite dessert baking in the oven, the sound of a family member’s voice, or the sight of a crystal blue sky on a hot summer’s day all paint images inside one’s mind because of their materiality. Memories are created because of one’s senses, and the human experience is navigated through objects’ materiality. Archaeologists use the materiality of objects found in the archaeological record to interpret how those living in the past viewed the world around them. When written words or oral histories do not survive, it is the materiality that can provide a window into the lives of the past. However, when used with available written or oral history, a more nuanced picture of the past emerges. This particularly applies when examining objects containing both written and material evidence, such as medieval manuscripts. The evidence left behind allows modern researchers to reconstruct what the objects were made for and how individuals interacted with them.

The Junius manuscript (MS Junius 11) is considered one of the four major Anglo-Saxon poetic codices (the others being the Beowulf manuscript, the Vercelli Book, and the Exeter Book) (Saltzman 2017, 1). It stands out among its contemporaries in that it is an illustrated volume of vernacular poetry, containing numerous line drawings and illustrations, which was uncommon in manuscripts from the time (Saltzman 2017, 1). It consists of two parts, Liber I and Liber II; each including biblical poems. Liber I contains the Old Testament poems Genesis A and B, parts of Daniel, and Exodus. Liber II contains Christ and Satan, a New Testament poem. The manuscript dates to the tenth century and is believed to have been produced in a Benedictine monastery attached to Christ Church in Canterbury, based on codicological and paleographical evidence.
It now resides at the Bodleian Library at Oxford, with a digitized version available on its website (“Bodleian Library MS. Junius 11,” n.d.).

Because it is one of four surviving major vernacular codices from this period, there has been extensive research on the Junius and its contents, primarily concerning the relationship between the text and pictures (Arnold 2016; Karkov 2001; Kears 2019; Lockett 2002; Lucas 1981; Molinari 2015; Ohlgren 1972; Raw 1972; Raw 1984). However, some research into the Junius scrutinizes whether Christ and Satan in Liber II was intended as part of the original manuscript or a later addition (Karkov 2001; Locket 2002; Molinari 2015; Raw 1984). The researchers doing this work represent various academic backgrounds, such as literary studies, art history, philosophy, and religious studies. The field of medieval studies is interdisciplinary, yet there has not been much work done on the Junius or Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in general by anthropological archaeologists.

Scholars with training in anthropological archaeology would thoroughly examine human interactions with manuscripts, identifying points of interference within the manuscript pages. For example, the Junius is over 1000 years old and has passed through many hands of ownership/viewership. Therefore, many individuals have left their marks on the pages that modern viewers can now see and analyze via the Bodleian Library’s digitized version of the manuscript. While not every piece of material evidence can be dated or identified, considering such details through an archaeological lens can elucidate which pages were most interacted with and, potentially, the reasons why. Additionally, other insights into human behavior and interactions with the Junius can be identified through a methodical approach, identifying instances of later notations, binding, contamination, and more. Such a methodology through an
anthropological archaeological lens has yet to be established. Therefore, this project proposes a methodology to offer new insights and perspectives into the history and significance of manuscripts through human behavior and interaction. It also offers an interpretation of the Junius’ biography by implementing this methodology and considers the advantages and disadvantages of manuscript digitization in the modern era, particularly given the cyberattack on the British Library.

1.1 Historical Context

Chapter two provides historical context for the Junius and manuscript production in Anglo-Saxon England. The Junius manuscript, also referred to as the “Cædmon manuscript,” was created during the 10th century, in the Anglo-Saxon period. This era spanned from 407 CE to 1066 CE, delineated by the end of Roman occupation in the British Isles and the Norman conquest of England. Upon the arrival of Christianity in the British Isles, major religious centers were established throughout the region, and many, primarily monks, began producing manuscripts of Christian texts and vernacular literature (Shippey 2011). Manuscript codices, such as the Junius, are the ancestors of modern books; they required an extensive production process. Each codex was handmade by various scribes and specialized tradesmen. Thus, every page and volume is unique. Analyzing these magnificent objects and their one-of-a-kind details allows modern viewers to peer inside their life histories from creation to modern-day digitization.

1.2 Manuscript Materiality

To understand the goals of this project, defining “materiality” is crucial. Chapter three discusses the theoretical framework upon which this project is built. Surviving texts from the Anglo-Saxon period are undoubtedly fascinating because of the words they contain. Modern
viewers have a direct link to what individuals in the past thought and valued because it is written down on the pages they can see in front of them. However, manuscripts hold extensive information through their materiality, something that is often overlooked. The Material Turn, a combination of various theoretical frameworks and methodologies from several academic disciplines from the late 20th century (Johnson 2020), supplies the foundation for viewing these artifacts in a unique light. Instead of focusing on the written words, examining the materiality, or physical characteristics, of these objects adds nuanced layers to our understanding of their life stories. Establishing an anthropological archaeological methodology for analyzing such objects will offer new insights and perspectives into their histories and significance past and present by connecting them to the humans and behaviors that made them.

1.3 Research Design and Methodology

Chapter four outlines the research design for the thesis. As stated, there is no established methodology for studying medieval manuscripts like the Junius that directly draws on approaches in anthropological archaeology. Therefore, this project offers a new method that allows researchers to consider the object’s materiality in both qualitative and quantitative lenses. It also enables scholars to obtain insights into human behavior and the life history of the Junius itself. The method includes a systematic analysis that guides the viewer across each page to note any signs of stains, marks, rips, holes, writing, and other forms of materiality that showcase human interaction with the manuscript. The data are recorded in a spreadsheet that can be used for comparative analysis. Types of intervention can then be singled out to discern similarities and differences between pages/sections. Additionally, considerations of digital access are explored through my experience with the digital Junius and the cyberattack on the British Library (BL) in October 2023. Chapters five and six present the project’s findings, discussing what was initially
found in the Junius and the data groupings made after further analysis, which I then analyze through the lens of the Material Turn.

1.4 Considerations

I initially planned to examine two additional manuscripts, the *Beowulf* Manuscript (Cotton MS Vitellius A XV) and an Eleventh Century Illustrated Anglo-Saxon Miscellany (Cotton Tiberius B V/1). I intended to use data from three manuscripts to undertake a comparative analysis of manuscript materiality and digital accessibility in the modern era. However, several challenges arose during the preliminary investigations and course of data collection that caused this project to deviate from its initial path and instead investigate the pitfalls of digital accessibility in real time.

On October 29, 2023, the British Library announced on X that they were experiencing “technical issues.” On November 16, 2023, the British Library confirmed that it was a victim of a cyberattack that was ultimately a ransomware attack (“British Library,” n.d.; Ley 2024). On November 21, 2023, Rhysida, the hacker group, threatened to release the stolen data on the dark web if the ransom of 20 bitcoins (about £600,000) was not paid (Ash 2024; Ley 2024). The British Library refused to pay this ransom, and 90% of the data was released onto the dark web by November 30 (Ley 2024). As of March 2024, the British Library is still actively working to provide open access and rebuild its systems, with the recovery operation estimated to cost between £6-7 million (Ley 2024).

What does all of this have to do with medieval manuscripts? The British Library houses over 170 million physical and digital items (Ash 2024). One of the most significant services is its online digitization of manuscripts, all scanned at high resolution and available for public use. Two manuscripts included in this online category were the Beowulf Manuscript (Cotton MS
Vitellius A XV) and an Eleventh Century Illustrated Anglo-Saxon Miscellany (Cotton Tiberius B V/1). When the cyberattack was announced, it was unclear how long it would take for access to be restored and whether this project could carry on as planned. As 2024 progressed, it became clear that I had to take a different course.

Therefore, I reworked my project to focus on the materiality and life history of the Junius manuscript, including its digitization at the Bodleian Library at Oxford. I also explore the nuances and pitfalls of digital access via articles from the commencement of such digitization, as well as what the cyberattack on the British Library exposed. Additionally, I examine what insight can be gleaned from the act of digitization and how this impacts manuscript studies across all academic fields. By examining such events while they unfold and comparing them to previous thefts/ransoms of manuscripts centuries ago, further insight into manuscript materiality through digitization can be examined.
2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1 The Rise and Fall of Anglo-Saxon England

Figure 1: England circa 900 CE (Roach 2016)
The Junius manuscript was made during a period commonly referred to as the Anglo-Saxon era, which spanned from the end of Roman occupation in the British Isles (around 407 CE) to the Norman conquest of England in 1066 CE. This era was a time of significant cultural, political, religious, and economic transformation in England, with many different people coming to and leaving the islands. Because of the various migrants who came from mainland Europe to the British Isles during this time, and made impacts on the culture and landscape, the history of this region is dynamic. There have been many attempts at reconstructing the Anglo-Saxon period, but it can be challenging given the complex nature of England’s history. Some scholars even argue that it should not be called the “Anglo-Saxon” period due to the various groups that played a role in this history (Oosthuizen 2019). Such a term does not include the post-Roman population, the Jutes who settled in the area around the same time, the Scandinavians who later invaded, the native Britons, and others. Because the majority of modern literature refers to this era as “Anglo-Saxon,” I am consciously choosing to use this phrasing as I describe the story of how, when, and where these manuscripts were created.

2.1.1 Defining “Anglo-Saxon”

It is important to understand the reluctance to use the term “Anglo-Saxon” to describe the various groups that invaded and settled in England in the late fifth century. In modern history, those living in England from the late fifth century to the year 1100 are typically called Anglo-Saxons (Atherton 2019; Baker 2012; Chaney 1960; Deshman and Cohen 2010; Foot 2011; Gneuss and Lapidge 2014; Graham 2000; Hines 1997; Karkov 2001; Lavelle 2011; Lockett 2012; McGurk 2002; Molinari 2015; Ohlgren 1986; Owen-Crocker 2009; Parkes 1997; Raw 1984; Richards 2015; Rumble 2009; Saltzman 2017). However, Bede, a fifth/sixth-century English monk and scholar, tells us three groups came from the European mainland during this
period: the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes. These groups did not understand themselves as sharing one cohesive identity. They had diverse cultural backgrounds, spoke multiple languages, and came from various parts of Europe. Using the term “Anglo-Saxon” lumps individuals from numerous places together into one single culture (Oosthuizen 2019). In fact, the term “Anglo-Saxon” was not even used by those living in England. It was coined by Carolingian writers in the eighth century to distinguish the country of the Angli, where Old English was the dominant spoken language, from the European mainland, where other Germanic languages were spoken (Oosthuizen 2019). However, although this term may not accurately reflect who was living in England at the time, for the purposes of this study, it is used as it is the commonly used and accepted term to describe both the era and the people in the region during the fifth to eleventh centuries (Brown 1991; Deshman and Cohen 2010; Karkov 2001; Ohlgren 1986; Owen-Crocker 2009; Raw 1984; Richards 2015; Saltzman 2017).

2.1.2 Outlining Contemporary Sources

Several primary sources offer evidence about what was happening during the Anglo-Saxon period; I draw on them in this study. These contemporary sources are incomparable, as even more than 1000 years later, they provide a window into a world that many individuals living today cannot fathom. However, it must be remembered that the sources from this period were not written in modern English and, due to the number of centuries separating them from the present day, reflect different interpretations compared to how modern individuals see the world. These differences must be considered when translating and interpreting these texts in a modern setting. Three of the most authoritative texts from this period include De Excidio Britanniae (On the Ruin of Britain) by Gildas (c. 540) (Gildas 1899), The Ecclesiastical History of the English People by the Venerable Bede (c. 731) (Bede 1969), and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle written on
the orders of King Alfred the Great (c. 890) (Ingram 2008). The creators of these sources were incredibly detail oriented, taking a keen interest in preserving the history of the land they inhabited for future generations. Although there were no standardized ways of recording history at the time, their descriptions provide what is considered today to be the most authoritative accounts of events of the time.

Other sources that provide a glimpse into this period include The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville (c. early 7th century) (Isidore of Seville 2006), the Historia Brittonum (History of the Britons) by Nennius (c. 828) (Nennius 2013), and Agricola by Tacitus. Isidore was a scholar, theologian, and archbishop, and his Etymologies have been described as one of the first encyclopedias (Barney et al. 2006). His account gathers all the medieval knowledge he could surmise into an intelligible work, from which his contemporaries learned, and which saved the collated knowledge for centuries to come. On the other hand, Nennius was a Welsh monk whose existence has been debated for decades by historians (Nennius 2013). Some consider his work to be an anonymous publication simply attributed to a specific individual - Nennius, while others think that the monk may not have existed at all due to the lack of information about his life (Lambdin and Lambdin 2007). Whether or not he existed, any accounts from his record should be taken with a grain of salt as his work includes the legend of King Arthur, also yet to be proven to have been a genuine person in history. However, it also includes accurate accounts of historical events of the time, so Nennius’ work can still be a helpful source. Lastly, Tacitus was a Roman senator and historian, related by marriage to Gnaeus Julius Agricola, who led the Roman army into Britain during the initial invasion in the first century CE (Tacitus). While writing from a Roman perspective, significant information can be gleaned from his accounts as well to reconstruct this period.
While many scholars, for the most part, accept these contemporary sources despite their potential biases, more recent criticisms have shed new light on the genuine authority of these sources. Susan Oosthuizen, an Emeritus Professor of Medieval Archaeology at the University of Cambridge, takes a particular interest in Bede’s writings and analyzes the impartiality of his words. Because Bede used Gildas as a primary source, Oosthuizen points to a 1983 critique made by Sims-Williams that “Bede’s chronology is simply a valiant attempt to interpret Gildas and has no independent value whatsoever” (Oosthuizen 2019, 24). She also claims that Bede’s account cannot be fully trusted as a source because “his objective…was not free from bias” (Oosthuizen 2019, 24). Oosthuizen states that Bede was attempting to discredit the legacy of the Romano-British Celtic Christianity that predated the arrival of the Gregorian mission, which was sent by Pope Gregory to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. In her opinion, Bede fails to correlate Gildas’ accounts with other evidence and fabricates Christian history in Britain in favor of the Catholicism that arrived on behalf of Pope Gregory and St. Augustine.

This review certainly highlights the authority of Bede and perhaps other contemporary sources in medieval studies, criticizing those that use these sources and take them at their word. It is crucial to consider the differences between history then and now. There was no standardized way in England at the time to conduct historical research nor to record it, and these authors were writing at a time when there were few available reliable accounts of history. Further, there was not much book production being done in the region until after the arrival of Christianity, so it was a relatively new practice. Therefore, Bede and his fellow scholars of the period were beginning the legacy of British history by writing down what they knew in their own understanding. Needless to say, due to their education, values, and the period they were writing in, there is going to be inherent bias present in their work. Modern historians must analyze these
contemporary works, understanding this bias but still using the invaluable knowledge they contain.

2.1.3 The Romans in Britain and Subsequent “Invaders”

What is commonly referred to as the “Anglo-Saxon” period began around the year 400 CE when Roman troops were withdrawn from the British Isles to address rising tensions from advancing barbarians near the empire’s capital (Baker 2012). Scholars have identified various years for this withdrawal, but it most likely occurred between 407 and 410 CE (Baker 2012, Oosthuizen 2019, Williamson 2011). Such interpretations come from changes in the archaeological record, when finds shift from Roman imperial objects to more “...generically ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and sometimes more specifically ‘Anglian’, ‘Saxon’ and – more rarely – ‘Jutish’ objects (Scull 2023, 5). The isles had been under Roman rule since the conquest of emperor Claudius in 43 CE (Baker 2012) and were known as the province Britannia. Most contemporary information modern scholars have about this period comes from Tacitus, a Roman senator and historian, whose father-in-law, Gnaeus Julius Agricola, led the Roman army into Britain (Tacitus). Following this conquest, the period was relatively peaceful under the imperial administration, with occasional episodes of violent revolt (such as that led by Boudica in 60-61 CE). There were improvements in transportation infrastructure, the introduction of a monetized market economy, the expansion of specialized production that fueled the agricultural economy, the establishment of urbanized commercial and administrative centers, and more. The population, therefore, lived in a moderately stable condition, growing to about three million people by the fifth century CE (Oosthuizen 2019). Most people lived in scattered rural settlements during this time.
When tensions started building near Rome due to invading Germanic tribes, the imperial government began withdrawing troops from Britain to help defend the imperial capital, leaving the remaining population vulnerable to other invading groups, such as the Picts from present-day Scotland and the Scots from present-day Ireland (Baker 2012; Bede 1969). During this time, the native Britons called upon a foreign group for protection. In 449 CE, three powerful Germanic tribes, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, sailed from mainland Europe on three warships (Bede 1969). Estimates place the number of warriors in these fleets as between three to five thousand individuals (Bowersock, Clive, and Graubard 1977; Oothuizen 2019). Where specifically these groups came from is ill-defined, but it is often referred to as Germania, which initially came from Tacitus’ writing (Tacitus). Sources tell us that their origin was east of the Rhine and north of the Danube (Baker 2012). Some came from as far east as the Vistula in present-day Poland, while others came from as far north as present-day Sweden and Norway. The arrival in England of these groups is described by modern scholars as an adventus saxonum (Scull 2023, 2). These tribes settled in multiple regions, which would later form the Heptarchy, or the seven Anglo-Saxon kingdoms (Baker 2012).

According to the Venerable Bede, King Vortigern of the Britons invited these tribes to fight on behalf of the Britons against their hostile foes (Bede 1969, 49). They were granted land in the eastern part of the island in exchange; however, Bede states that their real intention was to conquer the region. After being confined to Kent due to some British resistance, they found the island fertile and decided to take advantage of “the slackness of the Britons” (Bede 1969, 49, Oosthuizen 2019). The Germanic tribes then sent a larger fleet over from Germania and with the help of their larger forces subduing the native Britons, began extensively settling the area. The
population eventually increased, and they “became a terror to the natives on the island that had summoned them” (Bede 1969, 50).

Part of this origin story often includes, at least according to Bede, to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and to the *Historia Brittonum*, two Germanic brothers who led the initial invasion against the Britons (Shippey 2011). After working for King Vortigern as mercenaries, Hengest and Horsa, as they were known, supposedly turned against the king in favor of conquering the land for themselves. Scholars still dispute whether Hengest, Horsa, and King Vortigern were genuine individuals in history. However, this is where the origin myth lies, according to our most contemporary and authoritative sources. The myth of the brothers may lie in the long-standing tradition of placing siblings in origin stories, such as Romulus and Remus, Ibor and Agio of the Lombards, and Ambri and Assi of the Vandals (Turville-Petre 1953-57, 274). Whether or not this occurred, though, what can be surmised is that foreigners from the European mainland came to Britain, perhaps on behalf of the Britons asking for protection, and eventually they settled the land. As I explore below, within 50 years, by the late fifth century, almost every aspect of daily life began reflecting Germanic customs and traditions (Oosthuizen 2019). Moreover, new practices were begun, both from the old Germanic customs and from the blending of the present groups as well.

### 2.1.4 Cultural Transformations

The newcomers brought ways of life to the island that its inhabitants had not seen before. Before the invasions of the fifth century, those living on the island were primarily pagan with a small Christian population (i.e. Roman mercenaries who brought Christianity to England). This small population had little to no power, as the majority of individuals as well as the ruling families were pagan themselves. Contemporary sources tell us that the Britons worshiped their
own gods and were labeled as pagans by later Christian missionaries. When the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes arrived, they brought their gods with them. They also brought their language, architecture, weapons, jewelry, and ways of everyday life (Oosthuizen 2019). They then began intermarrying and producing offspring with the established British landholding class (Baker 2012), and by 600 CE, new social hierarchies had formed, with the “Anglo-Saxon” warrior elite at the top (Shippey 2011). These elites replaced the local aristocrats that had led late Roman Britain, and the territorial polities began to fragment (Oosthuizen 2019). This changed the political landscape across the island permanently as smaller kingdoms formed.

As the newcomers settled in the region during the sixth century, borders and kingdoms became more distinct as social hierarchies formed. Because of their close proximity to one another, there was always competition for land and resources, which resulted in conflict. Many archaeological finds from this period demonstrate a wide assortment of functional weaponry, suggesting that this was a turbulent time of clashes as the kingdoms were forming (Arnold 1997, 211). These artifacts may also indicate class status, that weaponry, strength, and warfare were perhaps valued as an indicator of higher status. By the sixth century, distinct kingdoms began taking shape. The principal ones were the two Northumbrian kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia, Mercia in the midlands, East Anglia and Wessex (Shippey 2011). There were also the subordinate kingdoms of Essex, Middlesex, Kent, and Sussex. The rulers of these kingdoms were still pagan, worshiping the gods brought from the old land. Each ruler claimed descent from Woden, the Germanic version of the Norse god Odin, except for the King of Essex, which claimed descent from the god Seaxneat (Shippey 2011).

However, changes were also on the horizon for these new inhabitants. Between 595 and 597, Pope Gregory sent the Gregorian mission, which consisted of Italian monks and priests to
Britain to “preach the word of God to the English race” (Bede 1969, 69). The now venerated Saint Augustine led this mission. The Anglo-Saxons had not had contact with Christianity, at least through purposeful attempts at conversion. This is because there is no record of the native Britons attempting conversions beforehand. Therefore, the Pope sent these missionaries 150 years after the initial arrival of the Angles to begin conversion attempts. According to Bede, Augustine pleaded with the Pope to allow the mission to return home because those living in Britain were considered fearsome and barbarous (Bede 1969). However, the Pope responded to his letter, encouraging him to continue, as God's will would protect him on this noble journey. Shippey also suggests that some returned after a prophecy from Saint Peter (Shippey 2011). Following this, the conversions occurred relatively quickly.

The mission was hosted first in the south by the King of Kent, Aethelberht, whose Frankish wife, Bertha, was already Christian. King Aethelberht and the King of Essex converted, but their successors reverted to paganism after their deaths (Atherton 2019). Then, Raedwald, the King of East Anglia, converted while still practicing some pagan rituals. This was not an uncommon practice, as suggested by the famous Sutton Hoo burial. The mixture of artifacts found, including baptismal spoons and the apparatus of a pagan warrior king, show that as conversions were taking place during this time, there was a mixing of the two religions (Shippey 2011). The mission succeeded significantly when King Edwin of Northumbria, who was married to the already Christian princess Aethelberh from Kent, converted. According to Bede, the main draw of Christianity for many of the Anglo-Saxons was its hope and certainty (Shippey 2011), which would have been crucial during this period of significant transformation and establishment of political power structures.
2.1.5 **Literacy and Book Production**

Following these conversions, major religious centers were established, and it was because of Christianity coming to the island that the Anglo-Saxons became literate in Latin (Shippey 2011). Specifically, monks were taught how to read and write for the purposes of reading religious materials. The Bible was especially important, so monks began copying manuscripts at various established monasteries. Other Christian themes were also popular, such as saints’ lives and other works in prose and verse. As the religion spread and kings began realizing its importance to their political power and population (Chaney 1960), money was allocated to establish monasteries, churches, abbeys, and shrines. The first church established was St Martin’s in modern-day Canterbury (Cantwareburh), in the Kingdom of Kent. King Aethelberht, who had converted following the Gregorian mission in the early seventh century, provided the resources needed to expand a pre-existing church he had made for his wife, the already Christian Frankish princess. Shrines to saints were also built as they accumulated followings, such as a shrine to St Cuthbert established at Lindisfarne and later at Durham to give pilgrims a place to go seeking spiritual benefits and miracles of healing (Dyas, n.d.).

By the seventh century, contemporary sources tell us that seven kingdoms had emerged, often called the Heptarchy (Arnold 1997, 208). These were Kent, Essex, Wessex, Sussex, East Anglia, Mercia, and Northumbria. Major religious centers began to grow within these kingdoms, where churches and monasteries were established. The monasteries, especially, were crucial to literacy and manuscript production in Britain because monks copied various manuscripts concerning Christian themes. At these churches, monks would copy the Bible and other Christian themes onto vellum, the material manuscript pages are made of, once they had been prepared elsewhere. Books were first written in Latin in the seventh and eighth centuries, where we see
two major authors come forth, Aldhelm and the Venerable Bede (Baker 2012). However, as the Germanic languages took hold within the kingdoms around Britain and writing became more common because of Christianity, literate elites, specifically Christian elites, developed their own writing system that would shape manuscript culture for years to come. Specifically, the Roman writing system was adapted to the vernacular language by adding runic letters to represent sounds that did not exist in Latin (Baker 2012). This differentiates the perspective on writing during this period from modern views, as in the modern era books are printed uniformly with perfect regularity. In contrast, individuals from this period would have seen the letters much more individually, therefore perceiving the materiality of letters more readily than modern readers (Christie 2012). This is a crucial moment in Anglo-Saxon history that sets the foundation for later manuscript production and the significance of this project.

The Anglo-Saxons spoke what is today referred to as “Old English,” a descendant of the Germanic languages that the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes brought to England when they arrived. Many famous works were written in Old English during this time, such as *Beowulf*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and *The Battle of Maldon* (Baker 2012). Such works give us spectacular insight into the culture and values of those living during this time, even if today we are unsure which specific culture they point to. Later, King Alfred’s educational program in the late 9th century invested in translation of early Christian works from Latin to Old English (Baker 2012). There are five centuries of Anglo-Saxon vernacular literature in total that have survived, with the majority of vernacular manuscripts that survive today dating from the late ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries (Baker 2012).
2.1.6 Arrival of the Vikings

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records heathen men raiding and pillaging the church at Lindisfarne, an island off the northeast coast of England, in 793 CE (Irvine 2004, 42). The Vikings had come to England seeking land and plunder; religious centers were a primary target because they held much treasure and were typically left unguarded. The Heptarchy began disintegrating as men from primarily Norway and Denmark, also known as Vikings, began arriving in larger numbers starting in 865 CE. Contemporary sources record this as the *micel here* or “Great Raiding Army” (Atherton 2019). They set up camp in East Anglia and overran the kingdom by killing King Edmund (later remembered as St Edmund) between 869 and 870 (Atherton 2019, 53). They then began invading other kingdoms, settling permanently in Northumbria circa 876. During this time, King Alfred of Wessex reorganized his military defenses to take a stand against the Vikings. The constant raids and battles left many buildings and objects damaged or destroyed, including manuscripts from the era. Alfred eventually gained victory over various Viking leaders, such as Guthrum, who was baptized with Alfred as his sponsor following a defeat at the Battle of Edington (Atherton 2019). Soon, a peace agreement was reached, and a border was established between Wessex and the Danelaw, where the Vikings lived, along the old Roman road of Watling Street (Atherton 2019).

During the peace agreement, Alfred launched political and educational campaigns. He created *burhs*, or fortified towns, so various locations in his kingdom were ready for the Vikings when they eventually returned. He also launched educational reforms, as mentioned previously, translating many Latin works into English. This not only helped religious reforms but was significant for administration and government as well. During his reign, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle began recording crucial dates in history, and by the end of Alfred’s reign, he was said
to have ruled the Angelcynn, or “English nation” (Atherton 2019). Although the “nation” wasn’t united, his vision created the path that would eventually bring the land and its inhabitants together.

### 2.1.7 The End of the Anglo-Saxons

Following the death of Alfred, his successors did their best to continue fighting off the Vikings and attempting to unite the whole of England. Alfred’s grandson, Aethelstan, is remembered as the first King of England in today’s memory. He earned the title because none of his predecessors had ever ruled over all the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms as a single realm (Foot 2011, 10). Relative peace lasted until the reign of Aethelred II, or *Aethelred Unraed* (978-1016). Mistranslations of this title/name have caused him to be remembered as “the unready,” but it is more likely it meant “poorly advised” (Lavelle 2011). The Vikings returned during his reign and defeated the Saxons at the Battle of Maldon in 991 CE. The king paid them off, but they eventually returned in 994 in a large fleet headed by Swein Forkbeard (Bolton 2019). Forkbeard was named king briefly until his death in 1014. Aethelred II allied with the king of Norway, Olaf Haraldsson, and together they recaptured London. Aethelred was then reinstated as king until he died in 1016. His son, Edmund Ironside, took the throne after this demise. However, Swein’s son, Cnut, also returned to England during this time, seemingly to avenge his father.

Edmund and Cnut engaged in various battles for months after Cnut’s return to England. However, Edmund eventually died later in 1016 CE (Bolton 2019), either from homicide or due to infections from wounds he received in previous campaigns. Either way, Cnut ascended the throne following his death and became king of England. His realm eventually consisted of England, Denmark, and Norway, and his throne was passed to his son Harold Harefoot in 1035 upon his passing (Bolton 2019). However, when Harold died in 1040, his half-brother
Harthacnut took power. Upon his death, though, there was no clear successor. Therefore, his half-brother, Edward (the Confessor), took power as he had already been welcomed back into court. This restored the Saxon bloodline to the throne, as Edward was the son of Aethelred II and Emma of Normandy, who had married Cnut following Aethelred’s death.

Edward was married to Edith of Wessex, whose father was Harold Godwinson, the Earl of Wessex. Harold held a great deal of power for the period, and upon Edward’s death in 1066 CE, he was chosen by the Witan (council of noblemen) to be the next king due to his power, relationship to the king, and the urgency of finding the next monarch (John 1979, 250). However, someone else was vying for the crown and claimed Edward had named him as his heir. William of Normandy, a distant relative of Edward, was a powerful noble from across the channel. He claimed that Edward had named him the next king of England upon his death, so he decided to act when Harold was named king (Campbell 1972). Feeling betrayed, he prepared an invasion to conquer England and retake what he saw as rightfully his.

Meanwhile, another claimant to the throne came from Norway, who had sat on the throne there since 1046. Harald Hadrada allied with Tostig, Harold Godwinson’s exiled brother, and attempted to steal the crown away from Harold (Adams 2023). This culminated at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, ultimately leaving both Harald and Tostig dead. It was a decisive victory for Harold but exhausted him and his troops while William was just arriving from Normandy, ready for a fight. When the two sides met at Hastings, fighting ensued in the morning and lasted until sunset (Marren 2002, 114). By the end of the battle, Harold was killed (maybe from an arrow to the eye), and William was the last one standing.

While there was still resistance ahead, William would overcome this and be crowned King of England in December 1066 (Douglas 1964, 205). This ended the Anglo-Saxon period in
England, ushering in permanent changes including to cultural practice. Because William was Norman, he spoke Norman French and conducted daily life and business differently than his predecessors; this would ultimately shape the lives of not only his subjects but also of the objects in England as well, such as the various manuscripts around the land. For example, Old English manuscripts were devalued following the coronation and rule of William due to the aristocratic class speaking Norman French. This new ruling class had no use for the previous vernacular manuscripts anymore, although some continued in small pockets around the region.

Understanding the history of the time period in which manuscripts such as the Junius were created is crucial to understanding their significance, how their lives have transformed in the centuries since, and why some have survived to the present while others have not.

2.2 The Making of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts

As discussed, the Anglo-Saxons, primarily the elite and aristocracy, became literate as a direct result of Christianity coming to the island via the Gregorian missions. As the religion cemented itself within the culture, rulers poured funds into producing manuscripts of Christian texts and, later, vernacular literature such as epics and narrative tales. Creating a manuscript was a long and arduous process; and how individuals interacted with them during and following this creation is crucial for comprehending their significance within Anglo-Saxon culture, how their uses transformed in the centuries since this period, and why only a small portion have survived to the present day.

Manuscript codices are the ancestors of modern books, appearing before Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in the fifteenth century (Erik Kwakkel 2018). They are, in a sense, the model for later printed books. Primarily made for powerful patrons or religious institutions, they required years of labor and were incredibly expensive, making each manuscript
unique (Ferrell 2008). Therefore, all information coming in or out of early medieval England had to be physically moved from place to place, such as the memories of travelers or in manuscripts (Owen-Crocker and Cesario 2009), differing from the modern digital transmission of information. Because much of the information came from the Continent and Ireland, much of England’s manuscript culture was imported through scholars and books from these regions. They should be considered artifacts in their own right, as Lori Ferrell states, “...every manuscript is a human artifact: exasperating, poignant testament to the many frailties to which the human is heir” (Ferrell 2008, 14). Because books were often found in churches and other religious institutions (i.e. monasteries and convents), many lower-class individuals did not have much contact with them during the period. In actuality, they would not have been able to read them if they did have contact, thus the materiality of the manuscripts themselves was significant. The decoration, weight, illustrations, and more did just as much to connect someone with the codex as the written words did for those who could read them.

The Anglo-Saxons viewed manuscripts as works in progress rather than finished products (Owen-Crocker and Cesario 2009; Karkov 2001), thus tracing their biographies through an anthropological archaeological lens is applicable by their very nature. Their various material features can help modern scholars gain a deeper understanding of these objects. For example, examining the text for marked changes (such as color or width of the nib) points to the work of two different scribes or different monasteries (Rumble 2009). Also, the type of script used can point to a particular production date, such as before or after the Benedictine Reform, which standardized medieval monasticism (Rumble 2009). Anglo-Saxon scribes also inserted various glosses and commentaries in Old English to make sense of pre-existing manuscripts, especially those coming into the island that were in other languages, such as Latin. Gloss comes from the
Latin word *lingua*, for tongue, speaking (*loquitur*) for the meaning of the word under it (Camille 1992, 20). Alternatively, it may also have roots in the Greek word *γλώσσα* (glóssa), meaning language. Some glosses that were longer in length even became well-known works in their own right and were later copied separately, known as *scholia* (Rumble 2009, 53). Art in manuscripts can also help with dating them, as there are two distinct phases of Early Medieval English art based on chronology and style, the Insular/Hiberno-Saxon and Anglo-Saxon art (Brown 1991; Karkov 2001; Owen-Crocker and Cesario 2009). The art in manuscripts often served two purposes: uniting the interests of the word and the image. This can be seen in the Anglo-Saxon development of the historiated initial, which served as both word and image through its narrative qualities (Owen-Crocker 2009; Karkov 2001). Michelle Brown says it is the “most intimate symbiosis of text and image” (Owen-Crocker 2009; Karkov 2001). Many of the key features should be remembered when considering the significance of manuscripts’ textual and material characteristics. However, it is also essential to examine how manuscripts were made to understand the basic building blocks.

Any consideration of a manuscript’s worth must include examinations of the labor, skill, and artistry that went into its production (Ferrell 2008). Some manuscripts were crafted from parchment, made of sheep or goatskin, while others were of vellum, made of calfskin, depending on the size and quality the requesting patron could afford (Brown 1991). The skins would be defleshed, soaked, stretched, and scraped (Brown 1991, 46). Once dried, a knife would be used to scrape away any bumps on the sheet until it was at the desired thickness. Next, pumice powder was used to roughen the surface, which was then dusted with a sticky powder so the inks and colors used by the scribes would stick (J. Paul Getty Museum 2015). The quality of the parchment depended on the wealth of the manuscript’s patron. Cheaper parchment has gaps,
uneven colors, and darker stains, while more expensive books, typically Bibles, have very thin, white pages with no gaps or holes (Erik Kwakkel and Harris 2015). The process of preparing the parchment was crucial to this difference. Sheets were cut to the desired size, folded into gatherings of 16-20 pages, and shipped off to scribes to begin the writing and illustrating process.

Scribes would map out straight lines to ensure the writing was uniform and leave space for illuminators to incorporate designs as well. Quills or reed pens were the most common writing utensils, as described previously. The black ink used for the manuscripts typically came from the gallnuts of oak trees or from lamp black, a dissolved carbon substance (J. Paul Getty Museum 2015). If mistakes were made during the writing process, a scribe could erase them by using a knife since the parchment was durable from the production process. Once the scribes finished their work, the manuscript was passed on to an illuminator. Precious metals, such as gold leaf, would be applied first with plaster and then polished (J. Paul Getty Museum 2015). The illuminator would then add colors using vegetable dyes and minerals. Black and white lines were the last to be added. After the illuminators finished their work, the manuscript was passed on to be bound. The gatherings were sewn with linen thread, and clasps or straps were added to keep the book secure and to ensure the parchment did not expand over time (J. Paul Getty Museum 2015). To finish, the book was covered with gold, silk, leather, or velvet and sculpted decorations were added depending on its intended use and the wealth of the person having it made. These characteristics are unique to each manuscript, and examining them through an anthropological archaeological lens can breathe new life into manuscript studies.

The purposes of manuscripts differed depending on who requested them and where they ended up in their life cycle. Whatever its purpose, though, individuals who had contact with a
manuscript would have seen it in different ways than a modern viewer would. Much as modern society is centered around technology and looks at the body as various technological parts, i.e. the mind as software or an operating chip, the Anglo-Saxons associated their hearts and minds with books (Jager 2000). Medieval codices, or manuscripts, were central to medieval culture and valued as such. According to Eric Jager, monks and scholars saw these objects as “preeminent symbols of truth, order, and totality” (Jager 2000). This eventually transformed into the manuscript codex being the supreme symbol of the self for the literate elite. Therefore, it is no wonder that the heart, the traditional seat of human emotions since ancient times, was associated with the manuscript codex. The Book of the Heart trope formed from this belief, which “...combines the central symbol of medieval textual culture, the manuscript codex, with a psychology and anthropology centered on the heart rather than the head” (Jager 2000). These beliefs appeared in various physical examples, with each part of the codex being allegorized. For example, the polished vellum in manuscripts was associated with piety and the securing clasp with secrecy. Creating the manuscripts was also associated with various parts of the inner self, such as penitence equaling the scraping of the parchment of the heart (Jager 2000). Checking the texts for errors showed accuracy of memory, and consulting books as commentaries or glosses on scripture was seen as displaying heartfelt devotion (Jager 2000). As these beliefs spread, those who could afford to obtain manuscripts for personal use did, as the book of the heart was later associated with the hidden or private self. Silent reading also became more popular in the sixth century in place of reading aloud as handwritten objects became more widespread. Isidore of Seville even stated in his writings that he preferred silent reading because it “ensured better comprehension of the text” since “the understanding of the reader is instructed more fully when the voice is silent” (Parkes 1997). These ideas continued transforming, and many are still
prevalent in modern society as well, such as the common expression, “make a mental note,” or “turning over a new leaf” (Jager 2000).

While manuscripts themselves continued to be significant in the lives of individuals on the island, vernacular literature was eclipsed with the Norman conquest. The Normans spoke Norman French and conducted themselves in their language, also utilizing Latin for administrative purposes. The lower classes continued to use Old English; however, the manuscripts produced in Old English lost their value for centuries (Frotscher 2023, 1). Therefore, many were thrown out or repurposed, such as being burned or used for toilet paper (Frotscher 2023, 1). It would take time for their significance to be realized again, eventually being collected by the Crown in the 16th century. This “renaissance” of Anglo-Saxon cultural traditions is often associated with the Reformation following the dissolution of monasteries (Frotscher 2023, 1). During this period, many manuscripts, such as the Junius, ended up in the hands of antiquarian collectors who were concerned with persevering past knowledge and tradition (Frotscher 2023, 1). For example, this is the time when the Junius manuscript ended up in the collection of Franciscus Junius, a gift from Irish Archbishop James Ussher sometime in 1652 (Bremmer 1998, 208). Others began collecting these as the centuries wore on, which is how many have ended up in the hands of universities, museums, and private collections across England. Today, many are digitized to allow a wider audience to read and research them, coming a long way from their origins in monasteries during the Anglo-Saxon period. Such digitization can be seen as a form of materiality within itself, something I discuss later in this thesis. In many ways, not much has changed in the interactions between society and these manuscripts, as we are still fascinated by them and seek to unlock their deeper meanings. Even if we no longer seek the connection they
have with our hearts, they are still artifacts of the past that hold our attention and force us to consider life before our time.

However, one thing that has changed extensively is the relationship between society and the materiality of books. Books are allegorized in different ways today, with various parts of them having distinct meanings from those they held in the time of the Anglo-Saxons. What stands out about the modern world is how we have developed a powerful counternarrative that encourages us to “see through” materiality. Following the age of mechanical reproduction (i.e. the printing press) and digital technology, we have fostered an illusion that information is disembodied. Thus, materiality in the Anglo-Saxon period was perceived differently in manuscript culture, and many scholars, scribes, and wealthy patrons thoroughly understood the process that created each book. Every detail was meticulously planned, and understanding this provides further insight as to why reconstructing the creation and production of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts is significant, pointing to what it meant to the people who interacted with it throughout the various centuries of its lifetime.

2.3 Conclusion

Setting a foundation of historical context is crucial for understanding the nuances of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. By examining why these objects were made and the cultural contexts they were created in, their materiality at the starting point of their lives is better understood. During the Anglo-Saxon era, England was a time of invasions, transformations, and cultural blending. Various things changed on the island, from religion to traditional ways of daily life, and it was from this context that manuscripts were born.
3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Archaeology as a discipline has always considered material culture to reconstruct the past. However, in the late 20th century new ways of approaching and interpreting material culture came about within the discipline. In the 1990s, the Material Turn saw archaeology take up new approaches to materiality. Additionally, other fields in the humanities also began to pay greater attention to material culture to better understand artifacts from around the world. Extensive research on materiality and the theoretical concepts surrounding it span various disciplines, such as history, archaeology, literary studies, library science, classics, religious studies, and art history. While having the perspective of these interdisciplinary fields is beneficial, there is little research that examines medieval manuscripts as archaeological artifacts. This is a significant gap in the research, one that this study intends to fill. By combining theoretical concepts from various fields and applying my perspective as an anthropological archaeologist, insights into the material evidence left behind in medieval manuscripts and the stories they tell about human interactions with them can be gleaned.

In this thesis, I examine a manuscript from the Anglo-Saxon period (approx. 410-1066 CE). I primarily use material culture theory to analyze and interpret the materiality of the Junius Manuscript (Bodleian Library MS. Junius 11) to piece together its biography (Kopytoff 1986) from the time of its creation to modern-day digitization. For the purposes of this study, I define materiality as the physical, observable characteristics of the Junius, such as holes, discoloration, scribal errors and interventions, stains, creases, and other present “damage,” either caused directly by humans, age or other means. Material culture theory turns our attention to the physical objects created by humans and how human interactions are in turn affected by those objects.
My training as an anthropological archaeologist and as an art historian leads me to see these artifacts as objects, able to focus on the physical details that others may miss, such as pen marks, wax droplets, wear from turning of the pages, or creases on the pages, and then interpret what those details mean in terms of the manuscript’s materiality. Having a dual background in archaeology and art history also positions me to understand how manuscripts exist in human social life, not just in their written form but in their physical form. Considering what they look like, how they smell, what they are made from, how heavy they are, where they are ripped, what colors were used for pages and ink, and more tells a story of their impact on people of the past and how those individuals may have engaged with or responded to them. Of course, because I am using the digital version of the Junius, I cannot smell its pages, feel its weight, or feel the smooth sides of the parchment it holds. However, I do argue that I can appreciate its nuanced layers, such as seeing its marginalia and other marks left by readers of the text (Francomano and Bamford 2022, 21-22). More broadly, I can see and analyze readers’ interactions with the physical book based on the material evidence of interventions left behind. To a greater extent, by studying this materiality through the digital Junius and the lens of material culture theory, I can apply various theoretical frameworks to more effectively understand manuscript materiality and modern-day digitization.

3.1 Defining Materiality

Materiality is an ambiguous concept. Depending on the discipline, materiality can point to broader landscapes pertaining to an object, natural physical features, animal parts and interventions, an object’s significance, its tangible details, its varying physical characteristics, or how those physical attributes relate to human agency. While these differing viewpoints may seem contradictory, the definition's flexibility is beneficial to this interdisciplinary study. As
stated, I define materiality in this study as the physical characteristics of the manuscripts, including those that relate to its original construction but also those that occurred in the subsequent millennium, such as holes, discoloration, scribal errors and interventions, and other present “damage,” either caused directly by humans, age, or other means. While previous published research has been done on the construction of the Junius (Karkov 2001; Lockett 2002; Molinari 2015; Raw 1984), there is less on the materiality of its life course. This project aims to contribute to this gap in research by examining the materiality of the Junius’s construction, which was by intentional means, and the materiality of the life course, which was often accidental or a by-product of its use as a manuscript. It is crucial to remember that even though I am using the digitized version, or “digital surrogate”, it is still a digitized version of a material object in which much of its materiality is visible (Francomano and Bamford 2022, 17).

To clarify, instances of intervention in studies like this do not necessarily mean ill-intentioned damage or that damage from natural processes have “ruined” the manuscripts. In fact, in material studies such as this, such changes to the original manuscript help tell the object’s life story, which is what is being constructed through this research. We should remember that each artifact is not static, and its materiality is not fixed. Instead, “…its fabrication, mechanical features, or physical components, as well as its use, concentrates and “tells” in a material way what these particular things have to express and therefore do in particular social relations, at the place and time they do it” (Lemmonier 2012, 122) throughout its life history. To better understand the changes that manuscripts go through throughout their lifetimes, though, an overview of the archaeological concept of taphonomy can be useful. In archaeology, taphonomic processes refer to the transformations that occur to objects after their initial creation. For medieval manuscripts, this may be the processes that cause rips, tears, stains, rust, holes, water
damage, fire damage, animal and pest activity, human intervention, and more, considering their extensive life spans and survival through various conflicts, transportation, and more.

Definitions of materiality and how humans perceive its significance are subjective. As archaeologists, we cannot assume that the past is or is not different from the present (Lyons and Casey 2016). When examining archaeological artifacts, it is crucial to remember that we have an implicit bias in our interpretations because of our backgrounds and education. It is impossible not to insert this bias into our research, but being aware of it is important, as we must do our best not to project our modern views of culture and tradition onto the people of the past (Johnson 2020). Without considering these perspectives, scholars risk replacing contemporary and past people’s histories with reflections of dominant Western interests and values (Lyons and Casey 2016). For example, in the twenty-first century, books are widely available and accessible across a variety of media, including physically, digitally, and audibly. Because of this, it is a complex task to interpret how those living during the Anglo-Saxon period may have viewed and interacted with books since encountering one was surely a rare occurrence in most people’s daily lives (unless one was a monk specifically assigned to manuscript production). The invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century would have changed such perspectives as books became more widely available, but this was still not on the same scale as today.

Conversely, there are perspectives on books that have not changed over the years. After all, since books took the form of the codex, this medium has stayed consistent even through the invention of the printing press. These new inventions are thought to be revolutionary, yet humans continue doing many of the same things we were doing previously. There has been a consistent act of remediation, or representation of one medium within another, throughout the last several centuries of Western visual representation, with each new medium promising to reform its
predecessors by offering a more immediate or authentic experience (Bolter 1999, 11-19). This promise of reform, therefore, causes us, the audience and viewers, to become aware of the new media as media in themselves. Thus, they become tangible cultural artifacts in their own rights (Bolter 1999, 19; Campagnolo 2020, 53). However, the new medium is based on the old medium, much like how Gutenberg and the first printers based their printed books on manuscript codices, promising to make them better (Bolter 1999, 60). Many techniques, the shape, and the outline of the printed books remained the same with small changes happening gradually over the following centuries to make books more uniform. Therefore, while my modern perspective may be restrictive, I can use my training in anthropology and material culture theory to interrogate human relationships with artifacts, the life histories of medieval manuscripts, and the impact of human interaction on the manuscript I examine in this study.

3.2 The Material Turn

The broader theme of “materiality” developed in the 1990s out of various theoretical ideas and interests across multiple disciplines. Because of my disciplinary training, I highlight shifting perspectives on materiality and artifacts in archaeology. In the early 20th century, archaeologists understood their goal to be to identify the distribution of material styles in space and time. For scholars like Gordon Childe, artifacts were constituents of ‘archaeological cultures’, understood to be reflections of discrete groups of people in the past (Johnson 2020). In early functional-processual archaeology of the 1940s and 1950s, attention turned to how artifacts were used and their function. This emphasis laid the groundwork for processual paradigms of the 1960s and 70s, in which culture, including material culture, was conceptualized as “man’s extrasomatic means of adaptation” (Binford 1962: 218). Beginning in the early 1980s, post-processual thought set the stage for new disciplinary perspectives on objects (Hodder 1982;
Post-processual thought came into focus in the 1980s and 1990s with archaeologists, such as Ian Hodder, influenced by symbolic anthropology, spearheading it as a critique of positivist science (Lyons and Casey 2016). Later influences emerged, such as those from Bourdieu and Gidden. This work explored how material culture is meaningfully constituted and not just a passive reflection of human adaptive behavior (Lyons and Casey 2016). Post-processual scholars also argued that their interpretations were always hermeneutic; they emphasized that meaning is contextual and that the meaning an archaeologist attaches to an artifact is likely not the same as a past individual did (Johnson 2020, 114). Meaning is culturally contingent and historically produced.

Beyond archaeology, the Material Turn represents a shift across the humanities and social sciences; fields including history, art history, cultural anthropology recognized that objects matter and explored how they might be examined. One line of thought engages with the conceptual tension between objects and “things” (Bruckner 2019). There is a difference between something being simply an object and something that holds power. For example, a family heirloom passed down from one’s grandmother will hold special significance to the person who inherited it. But to an outsider, it is simply another object. Therefore, we must consider what makes something a thing that holds power rather than just being an ordinary object? We as humans often assume that we are the ones in control, but objects often have power over us even when we try to have power over them (Turkle 2011, 39). This is especially true because of the emotions that objects invoke in us. Approaching a medieval manuscript is going to elicit a reaction from anyone, even those who do not possess a background on the objects. People will treat the manuscript with care, ensuring it is taken care of because they understand its significance, not just because of the object that it is, but because it is a “fortunate survivor”
(Bredehoft 2014, 24) from over one thousand years ago, so it opens a window into a distant past. The framework outlining this power transformation within objects comes from several disciplines, including archaeology, philosophy, art, art history, anthropology, literary studies, environmental humanities, and more. Scholars across these fields realized that instead of relying on their own intuition and assuming why particular objects matter, there were ways of exploring what makes certain objects important to individuals who interact with them. Therefore, it is crucial that we as researchers should embark on the task of figuring out how and why they are important, explaining the tangible and material forms of an artifact via the intangible and immaterial ideas associated with it, and how those change with time and context (Johnson 2020).

As the Material Turn cemented itself into theoretical practices of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, scholars began examining how objects relate to societal values, social status, and agency. For example, pottery is often an expression of societal values changing. High-status goods, especially in large quantities, may distinguish someone of higher rank or significance in society versus someone buried with minimal to no grave goods. However, we should not assume that objects are static with no agency of their own. In fact, Gell (1998) writes that objects have social relations with people. This can be seen in the relationship between a car owner and its car. Most car owners, especially when they buy the car with their own money, perceive the car as an extension of themselves, such as a body part or prosthesis (Gell 1998). The owner takes care of the car because they are investing in the car’s social agency. Therefore, the car does not just reflect the personhood of its owner, but it has its own personhood as a car (Gell 1998). This can also be seen in photographs. For example, individuals are hesitant to deface a photograph of a beloved family member, such as a mother or grandfather. Doing so does not inherently do anything bad, but the photograph as an object has its own agency and
therefore changes the relationship that person has with it (Mitchell 1996). Just as the agency that
the photograph possesses changes the way that individuals interact with it, the same can be said
about the relationship between viewers of manuscripts throughout their life histories.
Consequently, individuals will often hesitate if asked to deface such an object.

The Material Turn was a watershed moment in the humanities that paved the way for
examining objects and the significance of their materiality. Through this lens, objects take on
their own traits, and how they impact individuals becomes a topic of interest. Human responses
to static objects bring them to life, and understanding this is crucial to comprehend how medieval
manuscripts influenced those who interacted with them throughout their life stories. Past and
current research by scholars across diverse disciplines offers a close look at these dynamic
objects and the reactions they invoke.

3.3 Current Manuscript Research

Manuscript studies especially have benefited from the Material Turn in that scholars have
moved on from focusing solely on the written words to considering manuscripts as physical
objects. Although interest in books as archaeological objects and other notions of materiality
took hold in the nineteenth century, it was primarily the aesthetics of book covers and
bookbinding decoration that were examined (Campagnolo 2020, 54). Today, collective research
considers the sum of all of its parts, investigating how the pages, illustrations, gold leaf, holes,
stains, weight, texture, color, ink, script, binding, and more relate to the encounter and response
that individuals interacting with such objects experience. Notably, those responses will differ
depending on the time period, place, and circumstance in which an individual interacts with a
manuscript.
For example, today, individuals treat manuscripts with caution, often wearing gloves, touching them as seldom as possible, and taking great care to ensure their continued survival. However, in the past, such as in the sixteenth century, individuals such as Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, collected and interacted with medieval manuscripts much differently than a collector might today. Parker is known for his intervening red ink writings in various manuscripts (Parker 1995; Sparks 2014), something modern viewers of these objects could not bear to imagine. If someone were to write in a manuscript today, there would likely be consequences of a legal nature (unless of course, it was the owner of the manuscript, but this delves into significant questions of ownership when it comes to manuscripts). However, objects possess varying levels of power through time, and it was not unheard of for individuals to make such modifications during this time. This concept is nothing new, as noted by Alois Riegl, an art historian, in 1903, in which he names three types of monuments, one of which is “age-value monuments” (Riegl 1982). Such monuments manifest a sense of the life-cycle of artifacts and by extension of the culture they represent through their deterioration (Riegl 1982). These types of long-term changes transform the manuscripts’ materiality, making them more significant because they survive and divulging parts of their biography that may have otherwise been lost to time. Going even further back to the medieval period following the Norman Invasion, the Glastonbury Catalog documents that manuscripts, specifically those with Old English texts written in Insular script, were considered less valuable and therefore thrown out, used as door stops, toilet paper, and used in other unimaginable ways (Raw 1984, Richards 2015). This demonstrates how a manuscript’s value changes over time, and modern research provides case studies into how and why these fluctuations happen.
WJT Mitchell pondered the question, “What do pictures want?” in 1996. By this, he meant what pictures mean, how they communicate, and what power they hold. He argues that pictures are things marked by personhood, with both physical and virtual bodies. They speak to their audience literally and figuratively, changing their meaning depending on who is viewing them. Even though they are just a surface, they hold a face that faces the beholder, forcing them to consider themselves in relation to the photograph, whether as a part of it or as an outsider.

Mitchell also states that art historians treat pictures (and other objects) as if they are conscious and possess their own agency (Mitchell 1996). This goes back to the photographic example mentioned previously, as we know a picture of a beloved family member is not alive, yet we hesitate to face or destroy it because of the meaning and power it holds as an object. However, this hesitation may be lifted if one has a falling out with the person or place shown in the picture, in which the power it holds would change. The same can be said for manuscripts based on how a person values the object. Today, most individuals would hesitate to treat a manuscript without proper care. Although when all is said and done, a manuscript is simply a binding of vellum with various texts and illustrations, yet it holds a particular power due to its age, contents, weight, materials, and decoration. Just as one would hesitate to deface a photograph of one’s beloved family member, the same can be said about the relationship between viewers of manuscripts throughout their life histories.

Considering the sanctity of religious objects during the Anglo-Saxon period and how expensive and labor-intensive manuscripts were, we can infer that they were objects of value and treated as such. As is the case today, religious items were often protected by church leaders or given dedicated individuals to look after them. During the Anglo-Saxon period, pilgrimages were made to witness relics and other items in person, as they were believed to produce miracles and
answer prayers. Manuscripts also held such value, as they contained what was believed to be words from God himself, images of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and many others. Undoubtedly, if a young monk tore a page with an illustration of the Virgin Mary or Christ, this would impact him more than ripping a page with nothing on it. This is comparable to how Bibles are treated today, as many are hesitant to deface the book, even if they are not religious, because of the symbolic meaning it holds. Even still, individuals deface or destroy these objects because of their symbolic value. Old English manuscripts lost their value when the Normans came into power. Thus, they were mistreated extensively and seen as nothing more than disposable objects (Raw 1984, Richards 2015). The power gained and lost through their lives changed based on how individuals saw, valued, and interacted with them.

3.4 Contemporary Perspectives on Materiality and Manuscripts

Modern theorists and scholars provide a window into material culture studies, but ironically, we can also gain insight into how the Anglo-Saxons valued materiality through their own words. Materiality and the value objects hold are not new concepts, and we can see this in the written and physical evidence left behind by the Anglo-Saxons and others living during this time period. It should be noted that these contemporary sources were written in Old English and have been translated into modern English, so there is potential for some bias to be present in the interpretations of the words. However, they still provide a crucial insight into the making, using, and valuing of manuscripts during this period.

The Exeter Book is a tenth-century manuscript containing multiple riddles providing a window into the past. These riddles cover instances in the daily life of individuals, from farming to religion to nature. Luckily, the riddles cover objects that may seem irrelevant to modern individuals but show that these held significance in the making and writing processes of
manuscripts. To begin, examining how the Anglo-Saxons described the foundations of their writing practices is essential. The Exeter Book Riddle 41 (K-D 60) points to a crucial instrument that scribes used while creating manuscripts.

Ic wæs besonde sǣ wealle neah
æt merefarōpe minum gewunade
frumstahole fæst fea ānig wæs ·
monna cynnes þæt minne þær
on anaede eard be heolde ·
ac mec uhtna gehwam yð sio brune
lagufæðme beleolc lyt ic wende
Þ ic ær ophe sið · æfre sceolde
of er meodu muðleas sprecan
wordum wrixlan Þ is wundres dæl
on sefan searolic þā þe swylc ne conn ·
hu mec seaxeð ord 7 seo swipre hond
eorles Ingeþonc 7 ord somod
þingum geþydan þæt ic wip þe sceolde
for unc anum twan ærendspræce
abeodan bealdfice swa hit beorna ma
uncre wordcwidas widdor ne mænden
(Krapp and Dobbie 1936)

[I was along the sand, near the sea wall
At the sea waves, dwelled in my
first home firmly fixed; few alone were
men of people, that there in my
native land beheld solitude,

every dawn each dark wave surrounded me in
a watery embrace. Little I imagined
that I sooner or later eternally would
mouthless speak over mead-bench,
exchange words. That is a wonderous deal,
in spirit such complex for those who cannot understand,
how the point of the knife and the strong hand,
an earl’s inner thoughts and the blade together,
join matters, that I would proclaim boldly a message
for us two alone,
so that more men will not have told
our speech widely.]
(Author’s Translation)
Modern medievalists generally agree that the solution to this riddle is “reed” or “reed pen.” This was a common writing implement used during this time period (“Exeter Riddle 60”, 2017). The riddle points to the materiality of writing, something that individuals today do not often consider. The riddle describes the object’s biography, such as how it grew, was chosen, and then carved into a writing utensil for scribes. It also encourages us to consider how those with access to written works may have perceived such instruments and their uses. Just as tracing the biography of manuscripts is crucial to understanding their significance for modern audiences, likewise, is understanding the importance contemporaries attributed to their writing instruments. The significance of the reed pen is also shown, as it is carved by hand with a sharp knife to record “secret” messages. Its value was certainly notable, as it possessed a necessary function that communicated the scribes’ messages. Thus, we can interpret that the reed pen was a crucial component in the materiality of breathing life into manuscripts.

There are other riddles that describe objects linked to manuscripts, such as the inkhorn that holds the ink used for writing and illustrating the pages. These riddles are significant in understanding how contemporary peoples related to the materiality of the writing process, but what’s more is a riddle that links directly to manuscript materiality. Not only this, but it describes something that can be found in the Junius Manuscript, a focal point of this study. Exeter Book Riddle 47 is one of the most well-known from the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, and it explains the damage done to the pages of a book by a thieving stranger.

Modðe word fæt. Me þæt ūhte
wraetlicu wyrd, þa ic þæt wundor gefrægn,
þæt se wyrm forswealg wera gied sumes,
þeof in þystro, þrymfaetne cwede
ond þæs strangan stæpol. Stælgiest ne wæs
wihte þy gleawra, þe he þam wordum swealg.
(Krapp and Dobbie 1936)
[A moth ate words
that seemed to me a curious fate, when I heard of a wonder,
so then the worm devoured some of a man’s song,
a thief in darkness, a glorious speech
and afterwards the strong foundation.
The thievish guest was not
at all that wiser, for the words it absorbed.]
(Author’s Translation)

Medievalists commonly believe the solution to this riddle to be “book-worm” or “moth” (“Exeter Riddle 47” 2015). These creatures are known to cause holes in a text, which was no different during the Anglo-Saxon period. The holes that moths cause in the vellum of manuscripts add to the materiality that provides modern viewers some insight into its life story. However, it is evident that the Anglo-Saxons, or at least scribes, viewed this “damage” as more than just a moth eating away at the book’s pages. The riddle contains precise language related to the action of a moth eating away at vellum, such as “a thief in darkness,” “devoured a man’s song,” or “the words it absorbed.” These words provide clues as to how these individuals saw and valued books and the text they contain. For example, seeing the moth (or book-worm) as a “thief in darkness” directs us to ponder if it is stealing something tangible. It is believed that letters were viewed as palpable at this time, believed to “...have so much force that the utterances of those who are absent speak to us without a voice, [for they present words through the eyes, not through the ears]” (Barney et al. 2006, 59). This consideration of letters does not happen on the same scale today, arguably because society is more out of touch due to the mass production of books (Benjamin 1935). However, manuscripts were scarcer during the medieval period than they are in the modern era, so interacting with one would have captivated the viewer’s attention. The handmade ornaments down to the ruling of the pages by various scribes each held its own
value to the contemporary viewer, so the loss of words on a page due to a book-worm or moth was profound.

Other instances throughout the Anglo-Saxon period also point to the importance of materiality. Modern research from various disciplines demonstrates how literate individuals from this time were more in tune with the materiality of writing. E.J. Christie’s “Writing in Water” (Christie 2012) analyzes how Anglo-Saxon scribes connected with the words on the page as they wrote them and after. According to Christie, there was a medieval characterization of writing as the safeguard that “saves memory from oblivion,” and this metaphor is a counter-example of that. Many scholars from the medieval period believed that writing was “subject to the vicissitudes of fortune,” as shown by Exeter Riddle 47 and an understanding that many books could be destroyed by Viking invaders or other natural forces (Christie 2012). Therefore, it is arguable that scribes during this time knew that the written word was temporary, a “medium for thought in which the message deteriorates” (Christie 2012). Contemporaries understood that the manuscript was a fleeting medium. While medieval scribes knew that writing in pen and paper would eventually mean that the writing would be lost due to the very transience of the practice, they still understood the importance of writing down thoughts so the knowledge could be dispersed for a period of time. Such studies demonstrate how marrying theories and methods from archaeology, literary studies, and history can provide deeper insight into the perspectives of materiality from the Anglo-Saxon period. However, there are still interdisciplinary tensions present where we must bridge the gap.

3.5 Digital Materiality

The physical materiality of the Junius and other medieval manuscripts is significant to understanding the history behind these artifacts, but because of the approach this project takes to
studying them, their digital materiality must also be considered. Can a digital artifact have materiality? How does this change our interactions with these objects? By examining what digitizing does to objects, specifically medieval manuscripts, and what this means to their overall materiality, a more nuanced appreciation for the different forms of materiality in the modern world is gleaned.

The first thing to consider is how something can be material in a digitized space. After all, I have previously defined materiality as “tangible,” but we should also remember that it is the “physical, observable characteristics” of the manuscript. The online version of manuscripts can be considered a “surrogate” of the original manuscripts, which are curated objects in themselves (Francomano and Bamford 2022, 15-17). Therefore, this version possesses its own materiality in that it allows researchers to examine the observable details since the advancement of technology that can scan and upload clear images of such objects, especially in recent years. It used to be a rite of passage for graduate students within the field to handle a physical manuscript, but this has become less common with the rise of digitization.

One key factor for digitizing is funding for graduate students and other researchers. Many students often receive funding to travel to various universities, libraries, or repositories to view the manuscripts that they are studying, but such funds have gone down in recent years (Francomano and Bamford 2022, 16). This became more common as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, but as digitization efforts expanded overall, travel funds have become less necessary for students seeking to study these objects since they can access them freely from almost anywhere in the world (Francomano and Bamford 2022, 16). Digitization also helps with preservation efforts. Many institutions now limit interactions with the physical objects because digitized versions, facsimiles, and more are now widely available. For example, the Bodleian
Library specifically states in relation to the Junius, “To ensure its preservation, access to this item is restricted, and readers are asked to work from reproductions and published descriptions as far as possible” (Bodleian Library, n.d.). Therefore, more institutions are pushing to digitize because it is seen as a solution to many previous problems within medieval studies (Francomano and Bamford 2022, 17). Today, many universities and museums have begun the process of making their material culture collections digitally available. Now, the original objects can be preserved longer to protect their fragility, there is no need for credentials to gain access because they are freely accessible, and scholars do not have to travel to far off locations for access.

There are benefits and drawbacks to digitization, both of which have been used to argue for and against the practice. Some benefits include previously discussed concepts, such as preservation and accessibility. Magnification is an additional benefit included within digitized versions, as this allow you to get up close and personal with the object in ways that you may not be able to physically. Of course, this depends on the quality of the scan, but the Bodleian Library’s digital version of the Junius does offer close-up, clear images of its pages. These high-resolution images allow for amazing magnification that one would not otherwise be able to do in person due to the separation between object and researcher. Therefore, another benefit is that digitized versions offer separation between ourselves and the object. You can record and extract information without disturbing or destroying the original object (Campagnolo 2020, 71). Some may see this as a detriment to research, as one cannot feel the weight of the manuscript, smell its pages, or touch the unevenness of the vellum. However, we must also remember that individuals are prone to be extremely cautious around such objects due to their age, significance, and overall materiality. We are not going to move its pages quickly, get extremely close to the pages, or be able to handle it the way we can with a digitized version. Confronting the Junius in person may
be intimidating, but the digital version offers comfort and intimacy with the object by putting emotions at a distance (Turkle 2011, 205). The implications of this emotional distance alter how individuals interact with the manuscript. They are more likely to handle it more intensely, zooming in and out, moving the pages around, and overall interacting with it differently than they would if they were interacting with the object in-person. Again, some may argue that this intimidation or caution when approaching objects such as the Junius is a part of their materiality, and it surely can be considered as such, but so too is the materiality of the digital surrogate. As much as we may try to have power over objects, objects can also have power over us (Turkle 2011, 35). Lastly, scholars can more easily compare manuscripts or preview research done on the actual document by accessing the digitized version (Campagnolo 2020, 72). This can be cumbersome to do when examining the physical manuscript, so having digital texts available in addition to the digitized manuscript can aid the research process.

There are also drawbacks to digitization. We must remember that with the production of digital texts, there is an involvement of a textual ideology that has direct effects and consequences (Bredehoft 2014, 161). This ideology connects to how individuals interact with text depending on the form it is in (i.e. physical, digital, etc.). Ultimately, readers’ experiences with digital texts are going to vary more widely than visual experiences of printed books (Bredehoft 2014, 159). Therefore, the conclusions that derive from accessing a digital surrogate may differ from accessing the physical manuscript due to one’s interaction with the object itself. Another drawback of digitization is the lack of funding for both digitizing and preserving objects (Campagnolo 2020, 70). Institutions often have limited resources allocated for these particular objects, and they must consider if it is best to spend this money on preserving the original objects or digitizing them. For example, the Bodleian Library where the Junius is housed has “no core
budget for digitization; rely[ing] on philanthropic and grant funding” (Siefring 2022). The same can be said about museums as well. Of course, digitizing is a form of preservation, but it is crucial to remember that “...the original object in its physicality remains the one repository of all material information” (Campagnolo 2020, 70), therefore it is best to preserve it as long as feasibly possible. Therefore, digitization is typically a secondary avenue when it comes to budgeting for these institutions. Another limitation when it comes to digitizing these objects is the quality of the scan available. The goal of digitization is to make the digitized version look like the object from which it derives. However, there is always going to be anxiety about the quality of the physical file (Bredehoft 2014, 161). High resolution images do provide incredible magnification (Campagnolo 2020, 72), but not all institutions have the resources to produce high-quality digitized scans of artifacts. This is especially true considering the limitations in funding mentioned previously. Also, there is much separation between those that digitize and archive the manuscripts versus those who read and study them (Francomano and Bamford 2022, 19). Therefore, even when such scans are uploaded, they may not be done in a truly accessible or convenient manner for researchers.

This introduces the concept of accessibility versus availability, which manifests in various ways. We must remember that the historical, medieval makers of these objects were “user-experts”, but not “accessibility experts” (Francomano and Bamford 2022, 20). We must consider their rubric and intentions when making the manuscripts, considering that their productions and intentions may not translate in the form of a digital surrogate. Thus, we must ponder if manuscripts connection and security. It is normal for servers to occasionally go down, but this means that these objects are not freely available. We are at the mercy of network connections and functionality of servers themselves. I myself have experienced this several times
when working with the digitized Junius, where either my connection or the Bodleian’s server went down, and I could not access the object for study. On a more significant scale, such problems of accessibility arise due to other major events, such as the cyberattack on the British Library I discussed previously. Because of such cyberattacks and other similar events that may take place, the accessibility and availability of such manuscripts is endangered at times. This affects researchers' ability to do their work when they need to. These drawbacks taken together may seem substantial, but they must be weighed with the benefits of digitization and considered before undertaking any project that examines digital objects such as medieval manuscripts. Ultimately, digitization of manuscripts comes with its challenges, but it also comes with many benefits, and these are likely to only improve as technology advances in the coming years.

3.6 Conclusion

This project engages with a topic of interest to various disciplines. Although I emphasize an approach and perspective rooted in archaeology, theories from history, literary studies, art history, religious studies, and library science also inform this project. The interdisciplinary nature of considering manuscript materiality through these lenses will contribute significantly to manuscript studies by providing a dynamic framework with which to examine them. The Material Turn specifically places at center stage the relationship between humans and objects is. In addition to modern scholars’ perceptions, my work can also draw on contemporary (with the Junius’ fabrication) accounts of materiality, as seen in the Exeter Book Riddles. However, materiality comes in many forms, and by analyzing both its physical and digital presence, researchers can appreciate its nuances more profoundly.
4 RESEARCH DESIGN

For scholars of medieval studies, manuscripts hold layered nuances that are key to unlocking how medieval individuals saw and interacted with the world around them. These magnificent objects cover a vast number of topics, from religious to calendrical, to poetry and prose, and more. Often, modern eyes are drawn to the handwritten script or detailed illustrations created by monks or scribes over a millennium ago. While these undoubtedly offer windows to the past, many medieval scholars, including archaeologists, historians, and linguists, overlook a manuscript’s materiality. Centuries of research surrounding these objects have omitted how attention to manuscripts as material objects can facilitate reconstructing an all-encompassing biography that the written words alone cannot tell us. Some scholars have even brushed aside the materiality, believing the written word was all one needed to know to peer into the past. However, more recent studies beginning in the 1990s have shed new light on the significance of studying the object itself to further our understanding of its materiality. Scholars can glean new information from them when considering the sum of their parts, meaning their materiality, or their written words and physical construct and subsequent interventions.

This study contributes to the emerging body of research related to manuscript materiality and the construction of manuscripts’ biographies by examining and analyzing the materiality of one of the four major surviving codices of Old English literature. The materiality of the Junius Manuscript (Bodleian Library MS. Junius 11) is carefully explored and interpreted to piece together its biography from creation to modern-day digitization. This research seeks to examine how these objects change over time in the eyes of those who interact with them and as objects themselves. In terms of materiality, the unique physical characteristics of the manuscript, such as holes, discoloration, and scribal errors, are studied. Materiality has become a significant part of
medieval studies, an interdisciplinary field, since the 1990s, and this study furthers interdisciplinary perspectives on this topic by showing the reconstruction of manuscripts’ lives through their materiality.

To examine the manuscript, I primarily use the digitized version of it through University of Oxford Library’s websites. Based on what I visually examine, data are recorded in a meticulous spreadsheet for comparative purposes and to surmise the data as a whole. Specifically, page numbers, damage type, color, cause, shape, where (location), and additional notes are recorded in the spreadsheet. However, I additionally draw on materiality research conducted by other scholars who have also examined this particular manuscript and others dating from this period to see if there are any discrepancies that I cannot see in the digitized versions. Based on this research and analysis, I suggest that an appreciation of manuscript materiality will lay a foundation for future scholars to build upon. I especially aim to show how the Anglo-Saxons viewed the materiality of the manuscripts and how this perception has changed over the millennium since their creation. Manuscripts are dynamic, ever-changing objects, and through studying their transformations, scholars of medieval studies will gain deeper insights into the era they are most fascinated by.

4.1 Research Questions

There are multiple questions to explore in this study that can further materiality research regarding Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Such questions serve as guiding principles for data collection and secondary source research. Therefore, the questions this study seeks to answer include the following:
1. How can examining the materiality of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts contribute to reconstructing their biographies and aid further scholars’ understanding of these particular objects?

2. What specific instances of materiality appear in the Junius Manuscript (Bodleian Library MS. Junius 11)?

3. Is digitization a form of materiality itself? How does it affect how individuals interact with manuscripts?

Through this project, I aim to establish efficient and productive methodologies for examining manuscript materiality and defining what said methodologies can tell us how the Anglo-Saxons viewed manuscripts and how individual and collection perceptions have changed in the centuries since their original production.

4.2 Project Methodology

I collected data using qualitative and quantitative methods. Per my personal examinations of the digitized manuscript, I organized the data into various categories in an Excel spreadsheet to help with comparisons. Here I record holes, discoloration, scribal errors, stains, marks, dirt, creases, and any other material aspects of the manuscripts that could point to further investigations into their societal perceptions and subsequent biographies. This includes how individuals interacted with them during production, moments of reading, studying, acquisition, and more. The level and type of human interaction with certain pages and themes within the manuscript become more clear by analyzing certain instances of tangible materiality and intervention. Surely, there will be evidence of materiality that I do not anticipate that are not included in my original categories. When this occurs, I attempt to find evidence from other sources to see if there are concrete explanations for the unique physical features.
The qualitative data I use encompasses previous research done on the manuscript itself, including published articles, books, and book chapters. The quantitative data comes from my spreadsheet as I group together and analyze various occurrences of intervention within the Junius. I suggest that by finding varying instances of interaction with the manuscript over time, consideration of the Junius as an archaeological artifact becomes clearer. No longer are we focusing solely on the Junius’ words and illustrations, but also on instances of material interaction throughout the centuries. This may also show how perceptions of the manuscript have changed since their creation to the present day, specifically by how they are handled and what individuals do when interacting with them (such as keeping them on a lectern, allowing them to be soiled, writing in them, using gloves when handling them, etc.). While we may not be able to attribute exactly when such material changes occurred, they are no less significant to this research. However, it does limit what we can do with such data as we cannot attribute a chronology to it.
4.3 The Junius Manuscript

4.3.1 Background

The Junius Manuscript (MS Junius 11) is the only one of the four major Anglo-Saxon poetic manuscripts (the Exeter Book, the Junius Manuscript, the Vercelli Book, and the Beowulf manuscript) that is illustrated (Karkov 2001). It is believed to have been written sometime between 950 and 1000 CE, possibly at Christ Church Canterbury, and contains four biblical poems: *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*, and *Christ and Satan*. The first three are Old Testament poems,
while the latter is from the New Testament. The manuscript consists of two parts written by two different scribes, with Part I running from page one to page 212 written by the first scribe, and Part II running from pages 213-229, of which the first scribe wrote until page 215 and the second scribe from pages 216-229 (Richards 2015; Raw 1984). Carl Kears states the manuscript “discusses the consequences of rejecting God’s light, which represents the essence of created form and the intellect” (Kears 2019, 210). By rejecting God’s light and thus living in its absence, the manuscript points to that of Satan’s torture, that is, living in a hellish realm that was “leohtes leas and wæs liges full” (without light and was full of fire), as said on line 333 in Genesis B (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, 13; Kears 2019).

Examining the creation and production of MS Junius 11 provides a thorough understanding of its individuality, present materiality and the materiality of its life course. Most of the information regarding its current state comes from Barbara Raw, although other scholars have also undertaken in-depth analyses of MS Junius 11’s current status. Raw states that the present manuscript at Oxford has 116 vellum folios paginated 1-229 in script from the seventeenth century (Richards 2015; Raw 1984). The manuscript has been completely re-sewn, with the present stitching on three bands in addition to head- and tail-bands. The holes produced through earlier stitching are still visible at the center of all gatherings. The original binding is no longer present since the manuscript has been re-sewn, and modern scholars can tell that the leaves of the manuscript were originally wider than they are currently (at least 5 mm wider). The binding of the Junius Manuscript is unique in that there is no sign of the typical bindings prior to 1100 that contained triangular grooves. It has been suggested that the current binding dates from the early 13th century based on stylistic and technical evidence in the manuscript today. The binding is made of oak board that is covered in whittawed (white skin) leather, a common
material in many manuscripts from the medieval era (Richards 2015; Raw 1984). The spine has a repair made of brown calfskin that was inserted under the original leather, most likely dating from the mid-20th century. The manuscript was initially fastened by three straps that passed from the front cover to pins on its back cover, an unusual feature as books from the 12th century were typically fastened with one strap while in the 13th century were usually depicted with two (Richards 2015; Raw 1984). According to Barbara Raw, no other known examples of books fastened with three straps from this period exist. The grooves of the outer straps are still visible on the book’s outer surface despite these pins having disappeared. The pin from the central strap still remains, as does the strap at the center of the front cover. The book may have been chained at some point during its lifetime, such as to a desk or cabinet to avoid theft, as there is a scar inside the front board at the center of the upper edge (Richards 2015; Raw 1984). These physical attributes reconstruct a partial sliver of the manuscript’s biography, and understanding its uniqueness is key to appreciating the significance of its materiality.

Over the years, much speculation and debate has occurred regarding the manuscript about when it was produced, for whom, why, and how. Many scholars also dispute whether the manuscript’s four poems were originally meant to be together in one book or if Christ and Satan was a later addition by a different scribe. Catherine Karkov also writes that several scholars are still unsure of the relationship between the drawings and the text (Karkov 2001). A codicological approach can answer these questions, but first, understanding how the Junius was constructed is vital.

### 4.3.2 Subsequent Biographies

There is evidence of the Junius being used through the twelfth century, as two marginal notes in hands of the 12th century appear on pages 212 and 219 respectively, in addition to two
twelfth-century drawings on pages 31 and 96 (Raw 1984). Such claims are based on known writing samples from this period. The manuscript seems to have disappeared in the thirteenth century, as many Old English texts and books written in Insular script were considered less valuable. In fact, the Glastonbury catalogue from 1247-8 describes such manuscripts as “old and useless” (Raw 1984; Richards 2015). According to Barbara Raw (1984), there is no evidence that the manuscript was being read in the thirteenth century. Instead, she suggests that it was poorly treated during this time due to the dirty and cramped state of the last gathering, or collection of pages. After disappearing from the historical record, the manuscript was later rediscovered in the seventeenth century, eventually falling into the hands of Franciscus Junius (the younger), from whom its current name derives (Karkov 2001). Upon Junius’ death in 1677, he transferred ownership of his collection of manuscripts to the University of Oxford’s Bodleian Library, where the document now sits on shelf marker MS Junius 11.

4.3.3 Current Research

Because the Junius Manuscript is a complex codex created over a millennium ago, examining it through modern eyes can be complicated. This is because cultural biases of the 21st century can skew scholarly understanding of how the document is constructed and why certain texts or images were included. However, researchers have been attempting to analyze the relationship between the text and images of the Junius for decades, of which some arguments will be examined here for consideration. There are 48 completed illustrations throughout the manuscript, with blank spaces left throughout Exodus and Daniel that may have been intended for illustrations as well (Karkov 2001). Barbara Raw argues that there must have been more spaces originally left for full-page illustrations, pointing to the provision of space for two pictures between pages 94-95 that would have allowed for a break in a long stretch of text.
(Richards 2015; Raw 1984). Franciscus Junius did not include the surviving illustrations in his 1655 edition of the manuscript, nor were they reproduced in their entirety until the 1832 study of the poems was published by Sir Henry Ellis (Karkov 2001). This suggests that viewers either did not understand the illustrations or did not think they were important to the text. Later, in-depth descriptions were made by Victor Gollancz in the early 20th century; however, “he failed to see the drawings as a narrative in their own right” (Karkov 2001). Barbara Raw later published writings exploring the sources of the drawings and the potential reasons for their “dislocation” from the main text (Karkov 2001). According to Raw, the majority of illustrations were based on an Old Saxon exemplar that the Anglo-Saxon artists must have misunderstood or had difficulty relating to the reworked text in the Junius Manuscript, specifically referencing illustrations and texts in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*. She argues that these form three “awkwardly integrated narratives,” suggesting that the drawings of the rebellion and fall of the angels actually depict the text in *Genesis A* even though they are included in *Genesis B*. A drawing on page two in *Genesis A* specifically shows God sitting on his throne with two angels by his side, one of which with a halo on his head. Raw says that the drawing clearly connects to *Genesis B* because the poem describes Satan as being next in rank to God himself, while the *A* text makes no specific references (Karkov 2001; Raw 1984). Thus, Raw argues that there is a clear ambiguity between the illustrations and the text, but Karkov disagrees, stating that the illustration could be there to simply aid readers in identifying Satan rather than being directly related to the words in the text (Karkov 2001). Other scholars have also argued that the illustrations do not match the text; these include Broderick and Ohlgren, who have each suggested their own interpretations of the drawings, such as them being more complex visual glosses or that the artists relied too heavily on independent pictorial models (Karkov 2001). However, Karkov states that scholars have been
asking the wrong questions. She attributes this to their modern interpretations that the text and illustrations are supposed to be coherent, as they often are in today’s books. She suggests that scholars are assuming that the authors and readers of the 11th century had the same taste as modern society and that scholars should instead be asking why certain drawings or episodes in the manuscript are more appealing to an 11th-century audience than they are to those in the 20th and 21st centuries (Karkov 2001). Thus, it is crucial to examine and consider the text and illustration of the Junius Manuscript as separate entities worthy of their own meanings rather than viewing them through a modern-day lens, as this disparages the significance of each piece of the manuscript. Too many have focused solely on its written words, attempting to examine the manuscript from a modern perspective, thus skewing understanding and missing other vital clues that reconstruct the Junius Manuscript’s life story.
5 FINDINGS

By examining various parts of the different sections of the Junius, I was able to collect a rich data set that when analyzed through the anthropological archaeological lens I am using, gives us insight to its life story. Using the spreadsheet mentioned in the Research Design chapter, I recorded each instance of material intervention that I perceived on the pages, such as holes, stains, writing/notations, use-wears (marks of human interaction within the manuscript itself), stains, ink smudges, creases, and more. Anything that caught my eye that I perceived as an instance of intervention following the manuscript’s production was recorded. I did this in two ways due to time constraints and the amount of data within the manuscript. First, I began by looking at the manuscript one page at a time, starting at the top center and moving counterclockwise. Once I made a full rotation, I would start at the top of the page and go vertically downward to record any material aspects in the middle of the page. Then, I would do a final sweep to ensure I did not miss anything. If necessary, I would examine pairs of pages to see if holes or stains/smudges corresponded. Secondly, I did brief scans of the pages once I became more familiar with how certain types of intervention or materiality looked. This allowed me to move more quickly through the manuscript and note significant stains, marks, creases, and more. While employing this second method, I examined the pages in pairs so I could more quickly analyze if certain marks, holes, or stains bled through to surrounding pages. Of course, this second method is more useful if one is working within a time constraint, but the first is more preferable to have a clearer picture of the materiality within the manuscript. If one has sufficient time, it is better to employ this method for later comparison of multiple groups of data. Therefore, it should be noted that examining manuscript materiality is time-consuming, but it is worth doing to better understand the life courses of these objects.
Once I collected sufficient data for comparison, I filtered the spreadsheet based on the five most common categories of materiality that I observed. These categories include: 1) holes, 2) writing/notations, 3) use-wears (marks of human interaction within the manuscript itself), 4) stains/ink smudges, and 5) creases. There are other instances of intervention within the manuscript, but they did not occur enough for analysis and comparison. Still, they are noted in my spreadsheet. Some of the instances of materiality recorded have also been documented by Barbara Raw (1984), Catherine Karkov (2001), and other scholars who have previously studied the Junius. Therefore, I am able to date some of these instances based on their analyses and provide a clearer picture of what caused them. Others, as often happens in archaeology, have no clear source, but we can speculate their causes based on human interactions with objects such as manuscripts and the traces they leave behind. In this chapter, I describe the five categories mentioned above, pointing to specific places in the text that they appear. I also illustrate each category with images of these material instances.

5.1 Category 1: Holes

There are many holes throughout the Junius for various reasons. Many likely appeared during the production process, which were then stretched larger when the vellum was being
prepared for the manuscript, such as those on page 10.

Figure 3: Example of hole on page 10 ("Bodleian Library MS Junius 11," n.d.)

Others, such as the ones on the upper cover congregated around the latch area, most likely come from use-wear. Such congregations of holes show instances on the manuscript that individuals were frequently touching it to open the latch and cover.
Most holes are tiny, such as those seen on page II, and many seem to appear near the edges or sides of the pages.
An interesting instance of holes in the Junius comes from the previous binding it underwent. According to Barbara Raw (1984, 189), the manuscript was resewn sometime before about 1300 (193) based on pen-trials found on corresponding pages from the 13th or 14th C.

Figure 6: Example of holes from previous binding (left side of text) (Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, "n.d.)

These lines of holes from the previous binding can be seen on many pages throughout the manuscript, such as 5, 6, and 7. Lastly, there is an interesting hole that appears on page 12 that appears to be a burn mark. It is also possible that this is a black mark and not a hole, something I cannot totally discern from the digitized copy alone (a drawback as mentioned in the theory chapter).
However, if it is a burn mark, it is possible it came from falling embers from the candles that the monks used for light as they worked on the manuscript. Other holes in the manuscript also appear to be burn marks, such as one as page 115, but again, it is difficult to discern from the digital copy alone.

This adds another layer of the manuscript’s biography left behind for modern viewers to see, with the author’s interpretations discussed in the following chapter.
5.2 Category 2: Writing/Notations

Needless to say, the manuscript has writing on almost every page. However, there are instances of writing that appear to have been added post-production, either years or centuries after initial creation. These occur for a variety of reasons, some to clarify or caption illustrations, some to edit the writing on the page, and some to practice a scribe’s pen. One of the most obvious instances of a later addition of writing is the pagination of the pages, which occurs on every page in the corresponding top right or left corner.

![Figure 9: Example of pagination in 16th C hand, likely that of Franciscus Junius (Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, "n.d.")](image)

Barbara Raw (1984, 188) states that the pagination is in 16th C hand and identifies the handwriting as that of Franciscus Junius himself. He must have done this after acquiring the manuscript to standardize the pages and help scholars study it. Other writing in the beginning of the manuscript again serves to standardize and identify the codex.
On page I, there is cursive lettering in faded black ink that says, “MS Junius 11.” It is written in the top center of the page and is circled, along with other writing that serves to identify it as well. This particular line identifies its shelving number, thus helping organize and catalogue the Junius within the collection.

Some pen-trials from the scribes can also be identified, such as those on an unnumbered page preceding page 9.

Barbara Raw (1984) suggests these pen-trials found on the cut pages date to the 13th or 14th centuries based on the form of the handwriting. Additionally, ruling is found on every page to help the manuscript appear uniform despite it being completely handmade.
Ruling for the writing and illustrations was done by making light pricks along the page or various lines, such as those on page 2. These appear in very light ink, almost white, and helped the scribes keep their writing steady. Other writing serves as captions for the illustrations in the Junius, of which there are many. For example, on page 7, there is writing found that says, "her he todælde dæg pið nihte" ("Here he divided the day and the night"), which is what the illustration there is depicting.
While this is not a later addition and was likely added by the scribe at the time of production, it is still an interesting look at the significance of writing within the manuscript itself. Knowing that scribes were correcting their own or other’s mistakes offers a more personal connection between them and us, humanizing these individuals and making the millennium that separates us not that big of a gap anymore. Notations also appear in other places as the scribes made corrections to their writing, such as a “ge” written above “in dyde” in light brown ink on page 9.

![Figure 14: Notation of "ge" above original text on page 9 (Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, ”n.d.)](image)

The common means that the scribe is inserting this to the original writing, basically adding “ge” to the beginning of the verb itself.

5.3 Category 3: Touch/Use-Wear

Many pages show evidence of frequent touching on the pages, whether this be from turning the pages, resting one’s hand on them while reading, or from holding the manuscript itself. Such marks are frequently found in the corners or middle of the pages, thus we can infer that many of them come from individuals turning the pages over the years. Again though, there are other instances of use-wear, such as the holes near the latch on the upper cover. On pages within the Junius, many of these marks appear to be brown or a dark gray, most likely from dirt or the oils from people’s fingers coming off on the page and then mold growing in their place over time.
Figure 15: Example of lighter discoloration from touch on page 8 (Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, "n.d.")

Such examples can be found on multiple pages, such as 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13. Some are lighter while others are darker, again showing contrasts between levels of interaction on specific pages.

Another fascinating instance of use-wear appears in many of the pages’ corners, where they seem to have been held open by something (perhaps for study or display). I hypothesize that the manuscript may have been left open on a lectern for casual reading or religious observance, and perhaps the frequent use of the manuscript in this way left these marks.
Some of these marks appear darker in particular places compared to others, such as on pages 64-65, where the story of Noah and the ark is told. Such marks point to which pages were interacted with the most, as we can see evidence of human intervention to varying degrees throughout the object itself.

5.4 Category 4: Stains/Ink Smudges

The Junius manuscript is over 1000 years old, so there will be a multitude of stains within it from age alone. However, there are identifiable stains on various pages that do not appear to be from age. These vary in size, shape, color, and density. Not all can be identified, but nonetheless they are an important part of the Junius’s story. There are multiple stains that appear a red or rust color. Sometimes these appear to match the writing on the page, but otherwise they do not seem
to match. I ponder that these could be wax droplets from candles that the scribes used for light, which are common instances in medieval manuscripts. However, it is possible that they come from ink or other origins. For example, a stain on page 3 seems to match the ink used in illustrations on the previous page.

Did the ink bleed through? Did the scribe drop ink on the next page by accident?

*Figure 17: Potential ink stain on page 3 (Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, n.d.)*
Others do appear to be ink, such as on page I, there is a diagonal line of droplets that appears to be from a scribe moving his pen quickly over the paper.

Other stains appear to be from water damage, such as one on page 10.

This appears in the first four lines of text, and there is no way to date or be 100% sure where it comes from. Nonetheless, it is significant to note its presence. Many stains also appear as
speckles across the page, often in black, brown, or red. These are often tiny dots that form in clusters. They could simply be from age, but ink smudges could also be the culprit. There are also many instances of what appear to be ink smudges, or at least stains that interfere with the writing itself.

Figure 20: Example of dotted stain cluster on page 13 (Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, n.d.)

Some words appear to be smudged themselves, such as some watery letters on page 8. Others appear to be smudges that occurred after writing, as the words themselves are not affected, only encased in the stains.

Figure 21: Watery letters on page 8 (Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, n.d.)
5.5 Category 5: Creases

Creases are bound to happen in vellum, especially in a manuscript that is over 1000 years old. However, creases can still aid in uncovering the Junius’ life story by documenting which pages are creased and where. Therefore, we can speculate as to why they appear and on what particular pages (illustrations, certain stories). One interesting crease to note appears on the lower right of page 9.

![Figure 22: Crease on right side of page 9 (Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, "n.d.")](image)

There is writing under it that appears to be a “J”, but it is unclear. The crease appears to be from turning of the page, but the writing could signify something more. Or perhaps someone was annotating the damage themselves. Other creases appear more natural, such as from the turning of pages.
These typically appear in upper or lower corners, such as those on pages 10, 11, 12, and 13. Another instance of this is on page 10 toward the center of the manuscript, a crease that most likely occurred during the rebinding of the manuscript.

A particular crease that peaked my interest is on page 11. This crease is huge compared to the others I have documented, and appears to go straight through the body of Christ in the illustration.
Figure 24: Horizontal crease through Christ's body on page 11 (Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, "n.d.)

It seems like a deliberate fold and not due to age, therefore we must wonder if someone folded this page because God is represented? Did they not want to confront an image of God face to face? Again, we may never know the true cause or reasoning behind many of the interventions discussed here, but they offer substantial insights into how and why individuals reacted with the manuscript’s pages. Analyzing this data allows us to notice patterns of intervention that demonstrate a nuanced history of the relationship between humans, the manuscript, and the millennium it has been with us.
6 DISCUSSION

The data collected in this study offer insight into the various types of material intervention within the digital surrogate of the Junius manuscript, thus establishing a new methodology for interpreting such interventions from an anthropological-archaeological lens. The data are interpreted through this theoretical framework with the awareness that owing to time constraints and the sheer amount of material data within the manuscript, I could not analyze those data in their entirety. Additionally, I interpreted the data using creative educational guesses since many of the material characteristics cannot be dated or attributed to a specific cause. However, even with such limitations, valuable insights and research into the materiality of medieval manuscripts and their digital counterparts can be discerned in order to construct their life histories. Not only this, but reconstructing the path of human interaction and emotion with the Junius itself is possible because of the material traces left behind and the analyses that come from them. This discussion will reflect on the research process, discuss the outcomes of the data collected, consider potential limitations, and offer recommendations for moving forward with future research.

6.1 Building Upon Past Research

As discussed previously, previous research on the Junius has primarily been from other humanities disciplines such as art history, history, philosophy, literary studies, and religious studies (Arnold 2016; Karkov 2001; Kears 2019; Lockett 2002; Lucas 1981; Molinari 2015; Ohlgren 1972; Raw 1972; Raw 1984). These studies predominantly focus on the text, the images, and the relationship between the two rather than considering the human interventions within the objects themselves. Nonetheless, these previous studies did collect valuable information. Particularly relevant is the work of Barbara Raw (1984) and Catherine Karkov
(2001), who were able to relatively date certain instances in the manuscript’s history, such as when it was resewn or by identifying the hand of Franciscus Junius. Barbara Raw (1984) also mentions that the holes near the latch on the upper cover and the pen-trials found on the cut pages that she dates to the 13th or 14th centuries based on the form of the handwriting. However, her (and others’) approaches often note the existence of such materiality rather than examining what it could mean in terms of human interaction with the Junius manuscript itself. From an archaeological perspective, such clusters of human intervention indicate a high-level of interaction with that particular part of the manuscript, thus we can draw conclusions about how it was handled, what within it was considered significant, and why.

6.2 Interpretations

Much of the data I collected have not been mentioned in these previous studies, something I attribute to the diverging approaches in manuscript studies. Overlooking certain evidence of intervention in the pages may be a result of knowing that such interventions occur in manuscripts, such as holes or water damage, or the fact that many of these interventions cannot be dated or attributed to one specific cause. Some of the material interventions seem obvious, such as water damage or wear due to age. Because of this, previous scholarship focused on other aspects of the manuscript, such as the text or holes from its resewing. However, by analyzing each individual hole, crease, and other forms of materiality and comparing them to others throughout the manuscript, it becomes obvious that many are dissimilar to one another and likely have different causes. This allows for interpretations related to the evidence that human interaction leaves behind on manuscripts to be made. Here, I offer potential causes and stories for a few of the interventions I recorded to demonstrate the significance of my methodology.
6.2.1 Holes

The holes found on pages 12 and 15 appear to be burn marks rather than simply stretched holes in the vellum from the production process. If these are in fact burn marks, then this alone opens up numerous possibilities as to what caused them and when, thus offering a unique insight into the Junius’ specific materiality and life history. I offer a potential story as to how these occurred based on my own research into manuscript studies since we do not know the true cause. Needless to say, electricity was not invented for several centuries after the Junius was created, therefore scribes from this time relied on candlelight to illuminate their work. Even those that were reading the manuscript centuries later, such as Franciscus Junius in the 1600s, relied on candles to light their way. Therefore, it is possible that a scribe during production or a later reader such as Junius himself brought their light source too close and an ember fell onto the vellum below. Did the person mumble a curse under their breath? Was this so normal that they didn’t bat an eye? Perhaps they panicked that they had damaged the manuscript, or perhaps they saw it as simply part of its material life. Whatever the case, the hole offers a plethora of possible interventions that the manuscript may have undergone. We can identify these interventions now because of the marks left behind.

6.2.2 Writing/Notations

As described previously, there are multiple instances of later writings that were added to the Junius. Many of these can be identified through handwriting styles and therefore attributed to specific time periods. The pagination is undeniably a fascinating later addition to the manuscript, one that provides insight into the mind of Franciscus Junius himself. I like to imagine his captivation with the manuscript upon receiving it from Archbishop James Ussher, ready to peruse its contents. Did he immediately begin writing on its vellum pages the moment he opened
it in his study? Did he wait until after he ready every page? I wonder what it felt like the first
time he put his pen to the page, irreversibly putting his mark on this object that would cement his
part in its history. The pagination is systematic, and it portrays the thoughts of man that believed
such an object is worth studying. Since there was no previous pagination, we can see that he
valued examining this object using a methodical approach. He wanted to refer back to certain
pages and be able to point to certain instances in the text and say, “Look! See what I found on
page X?” Today the page numbers that he wrote are still used in studies of the Junius, which
combined with the manuscript being named after the man portray the crucial role he played in its
continued history.

6.2.3 Touch/Use-wear

Another instance of intervention that is only superficially discussed in preceding research
is evidence of use-wear on various pages. I am specifically referring to the brown or dark gray
marks that most likely result from the dirt or oils on people’s fingers coming off on the pages.
These are typically only discussed in passing, as scholars know that they are from individuals
touching certain areas of the pages. However, significant insight into what pages were touched or
read more frequently is evident when taking into account the density, size, location, and quantity
of these marks. More specifically, these marks are present throughout the manuscript, but they
appear lighter on some pages (such as on page 8 shown previously) and darker on others (such as
page 13). To explore potential causes of these use-wears, we can imagine the many scribes that
handled the Junius to study its contents. Pondering deeply, one scribe may have returned to a
certain page again and again because it held his favorite story or because he grappled with the
material before him. The constant contact of his fingers with the pages eventually wore them
down, leaving his mark on the Junius for us to find centuries later. Of course, succeeding readers
of the Junius would add their touch to this scribe’s original marks, thus compounding the use-wears on the vellum pages. By seeing these or even touching them ourselves, we connect to those that came before us in viewing the manuscript.

Other marks may have resulted from different causes. For example, the story of Noah and the ark is presented on pages 64-65. Just as it is a common biblical story today, it was also well-known during the centuries following the Junius’ creation. If the manuscript was used for theological teachings in churches or monasteries, it is possible that this was a popular story told. Therefore, the book would have been held open, possibly on a lectern, to easily showcase the illustration present on the pages. Repeated use of lecterns to showcase such stories would have left evidence of wear on the corners, thus providing us with some insight as to which stories were told most through the Junius’ contents.

6.2.4 Stains/Ink Smudges

I have shown different types of stains and smudges within the Junius, but the ones that stand out to me are the watery letters, such as those on page 8. How many times have we as modern readers dropped water or condensation on a book we are reading? Seeing the watery letters in the Junius offers a sense of familiarity, a connection to those of the past that make them seem not so distant. It is not difficult to envisage a monk reading the Junius, a cup of water close by. Maybe he took a sip and a droplet struck the page by accident. Did he try to wipe it away with his sleeve to avoid damaging the written letters? Did he even notice? Was he concerned the manuscript was ruined, or did he simply move on with his reading? Remembering that humans make mistakes and experience the same kind of emotions even millennia apart is part of what makes these instances of material intervention within the Junius so fascinating.
6.2.5 Creases

Moving on to the creases, the one that strikes me the most is the long horizontal crease on page 11. Imagining what possibly caused this crease has left me contemplating the endless scenarios that could have occurred to cause it right through the middle of Christ’s body. Perhaps the page was folded during the production process without the individual realizing, and the crease remained after the manuscript was sewn together. Or maybe when the manuscript was taken apart and resewn in the 13th or 14th century, the page was folded underneath the weight of the rest of the manuscript. These are entirely plausible explanations, but I like to imagine more nuanced stories as well. For example, it is conceivable that an individual struggling with their personal beliefs and religion did not want to confront an image of Christ. They therefore could have folded the page to continue their reading without the eyes of Christ gazing at them. This is also a likely scenario in times of iconoclasm, such as during the Reformation in the 16th century, but the entire manuscript itself most likely would have been destroyed. Therefore, I imagine that someone battling internal thoughts was avoiding the gaze of God as they absorbed the Junius’ contents. Even if we will never know the true cause, these stories help humanize the manuscript and those that intervened in its life history over the past 1000 years. It is because of the traces of material evidence within the Junius that we are able to imagine these stories in the first place.

6.3 Benefits and Contributions

When beginning this project and the initial data collection, I asked myself if such data were worth studying. After all, if we will never know exactly what caused a tiny stain or why some pages have more creases than others, what is the point of attempting any kind of interpretation or analysis? As an archaeologist, though, I know that examining what little data there are can lead to big discoveries. It is crucial to remember that, in comparison with how many manuscripts
were likely produced during the Anglo-Saxon period, not many survive to the present-day, especially ones as well preserved as the Junius. The Junius itself is a “fortunate survivor” from this period, possessing a wealth of information that would have otherwise been lost to us (Bredehoft 2014, 24). Many manuscripts that have not survived either suffered catastrophic events, such as the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s by King Henry VIII or the Ashburnham House fire that damaged the Cotton collection (Bredehoft 2014, 25-26). Others were simply discarded or repurposed following the Norman conquest, such as for toilet paper (Frotscher 2023, 1). Because the Junius has survived all of this, I believe the vast amount of data it possesses therefore should be studied extensively, especially through an archaeological lens to provide a unique perspective on manuscript materiality compared to previous studies. Its unique materiality opens a window into how those in the past and present have interacted with its pages, and this is something that we cannot take for granted. Furthermore, it specifically contributes to current research by identifying and analyzing human interactions with medieval manuscripts as a whole and testifies to their significance throughout their life histories.

6.4 Limitations

This research methodology offers benefits for manuscript studies, but it is also crucial to acknowledge the limitations I encountered. First and foremost, I had to change the focus of my thesis due to a 2023 cyberattack on the British Library, one that caused me (and millions of others) to lose access to manuscripts that were part of their publicly available digital collection. Further, as mentioned, there were times that I could not access the digital copy of the Junius due to my own internet connection or the Bodleian Library’s server being down. This meant that I could not always conduct my research the way I wanted, and at times, had to postpone my data collection. Such problems emphasize the issue discussed by Francomano and Bamford (2022),
namely that while manuscripts are generally widely available, they are not always accessible (20). This can hinder research being done, but in today’s technological world, it is something that we occasionally expect to happen or experience.

Moreover, while the quality of the digital copy at the Bodleian Library was exceptional, there were still details within the manuscript that I could not make out no matter how much I magnified them. This is a direct result of studying the digital surrogate as opposed to the physical manuscript, as I cannot touch, smell, or examine the manuscript in its original form. However, this problem would also be exacerbated if the Bodleian Library did not have the resources to provide such high quality scans in the first place. I argue that utilizing digital resources is still valuable to researching manuscript materiality, but researchers must use those digital surrogates with the awareness that doing so is not the same as handling the physical object. However, it is not about comparing the two and choosing which approach is better, as both have their benefits and limitations as mentioned previously in the theory chapter. Ultimately, it is about deciding which approach is more feasible for a given scholar’s research and acknowledging the challenges that accompany it.

6.5 Thoughts on Digitization and Recommendations for Moving Forward

This project has allowed me to consider the digitization of manuscripts and other artifacts on a scale that I never had before. In this day and age, technological advancement and the further digitizing of archaeological materials is almost inevitable, as more scholars are searching for ways to preserve, study, and access these objects on a grander scale. Even when I was reading previous sources about digitization, it was clear to me that changes in quality and techniques occur rapidly each and every year. But what impact does this have on archaeological research? Is digitization worth it? How do we manage digital materiality within archaeological studies?
As an archaeology student and scholar, my education always taught me that material objects are paramount to any archaeological study. Often, material objects were defined as physical, tangible items due to the foundations of archaeology rooted in an era before technology. Now, as technological advancements are made on an almost daily basis, we as archaeologists must consider how this affects our research. Through my examination and analysis of the digital surrogate of the Junius manuscript and others like it, I can confidently state that digitization is a valuable resource within manuscript studies. These digitized versions allow researchers to contribute to manuscript studies from anywhere in the world, provided they have a working internet connection. Although there are limitations to approaching digital manuscripts such as questions of accessibility, quality of scans, and availability of funding, the benefits of this medium are numerous.

I propose that if archaeologists carry out more in-depth analyses into digital materiality and compare its uses to the physical materiality of objects within their research, a more nuanced picture of the human past and how we interact with objects can be uncovered. Digitization offers far more benefits than limitations. Even with the present limitations, the physical objects do still exist should scholars need to access them, given they receive permission from the proper owners. Therefore, it is possible for digital and physical materiality to coexist within archaeology and make their distinct contributions to reconstructing the life histories of manuscripts. Although technology will always run the risk of threats to security and accessibility, with failures sometimes occurring such as the cyberattack on the British Library, the original, physical manuscripts themselves are still being preserved as the “…sole repository of all material information” (Campagnolo 2020, 70). Ultimately, when possible, funding should first be prioritized for preserving the original manuscript and then digitizing it once it has been
confirmed reliable preservation efforts have been employed. Then, scholars can access the digital surrogate when needed and humanity still possesses these magnificent objects in their physical forms. Should the physical forms ever cease to exist, we can still access their digital surrogates even after their life histories come to an end in their physical form.
7 CONCLUSION

This project set out to examine and analyze the materiality of three Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the thesis changed to examining one manuscript and discussing the nuances layered within digital materiality in archaeological and medieval studies. By examining and collecting data on the Junius manuscript (MS Junius 11) through an anthropological-archaeological lens, my work has furthered our understanding of what traces of material intervention appear in manuscripts, how they demonstrate the ways in which individuals interact with them, and what digital surrogates offer to the study of their life histories. The Junius manuscript is an excellent choice for this foundational study because of its unique place within the collection of surviving Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, including various illustrations and numerous instances of material intervention. The digital access provided by the Bodleian Library allows researchers to observe its magnificent pages and various instances of human intervention, such as holes, writing/notations, use-wears, stains/ink smudges, and creases, opening their eyes to the depths of its biography. By understanding how to approach digital materiality in manuscripts with this new methodology and through an anthropological-archaeological framework, future scholars can further our understanding of the relationship between humans and medieval manuscripts in new ways. It is through our willingness to innovate our discipline and make use of the modern resources available to us that archaeology and its contribution to medieval studies can continue expanding modern understandings of the incredible objects that survived to this day.
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