

“LITTERAE UNCIALES” BEFORE AND AFTER JEROME An essay in the semantic history of the term

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in memoriam*

The subject of the paper is the history of a palaeographical *terminus technicus* ‘uncial’.¹ Numerous discussions of its origin² generated alongside with reasonable hypotheses³ a range of whimsical solutions.⁴ As to the early history of the term, we have to keep in mind that its original meaning might have developed (as often is the case)⁵ in a context quite different from its later environment.

¹ E. M. Thompson, *A Handbook of Greek and Latin Palaeography* (London 1901, repr. Chicago 1975) 118 ff. (papyri), 149 ff. (*uncials* in Greek palaeography), 190 ff. (Latin *uncials*). Thompson’s definition of ‘uncial’ is “the alphabet of curved forms”; more recently: J.-O. Tjäder, “Der Ursprung der Unzialschrift”, *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 74 = *Festgabe Albert Bruckner zum 70. Geburtstag* (Basel 1974) 9–40.

² The linguistic history of the term ‘uncial’ is outlined in N. Barone, *Intorno alla voce Onciale attributo di scrittura* (Sarno s. a. [1916]) and P. Sigillo, “Intorno all’ effettivo valore della voce *Onciale*, attributo di scrittura (Una nova ipotesi)”, *Atti della R. Accademia Peloritana* (Messina 36 [1934]) 399–421 (an attempt to demonstrate that ‘uncials’ originally meant minuscules, namely the script called ‘half-uncial’ today). Often cited are E. T. Merrill, “The ‘Uncial’ in Jerome and Lupus”, *CIPh* 11 (1916) 452–457; W. H. P. Hatch, “The Origin and Meaning of the Term ‘Uncial’”, *CIPh* 30 (1935) 247–252.

³ During later stages of my work on this paper I took knowledge of an analysis of *litterae unciales* in Jerome’s passage, which handles the subject in a way similar to mine: P. Mayvaert, “‘Uncial Letters’: Jerome’s Meaning of the Term”, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, n. s. 34 (Oxford 1983) 185–188. Further I will signal main points of consent and dissension.

⁴ Bold explanations for ‘uncial’ as originating from *uncus*, *unguis* or even *ungula* were proposed or referred to by G. Brugnoli, “Littera uncialis”, *Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale* 3 (1961) 411 f. D. F. Bright, *The Origins of the Latin Uncial Script*, Diss. (University of Cincinnati 1967), whom I can only quote from the paper of Tjäder (n. 1) 11 n. 7, explained lat. *uncialis* from gr. ὀγκώω with the meaning ‘large, round, pompous scripts’.

⁵ English *ounce* as well as *inch* came from the Latin *uncia* via French and Italian, but it would be hopeless to ponder over weights and measures in the search for the origin of the French ‘*once*’ meaning the animal (related to a rare English ‘ounce’ or German ‘Unze’ in the sense of ‘medium-sized feline beast’), as this term came into European languages from the Latin *lynx*, restructured because of the similarity of its first

1. *UNCIALES LITTERAE* IN JEROME

The history of the word ‘*uncial*’ begins for us with a famous passage from Jerome’s *Praefat. in Iob*⁶ (textus receptus):⁷

habeant qui volunt veteres libros vel in membranis purpureis auro argentoque descriptos, vel *uncialibus*,⁸ ut vulgo aiunt, *litteris*⁹ onera magis exarata quam codices, dum¹⁰ mihi meisque permittant pauperes habere scedulas et non tam pulchros codices quam emendatos.

The passage has been cited so frequently that it has served as a cause of semantic processes in many languages. I will start with some points of textual criticism and with analysis of the syntactic structure of the passage. On the basis of *initialibus* as var. lect. of *uncialibus*, some scholars sustained the view¹¹ that *inicialibus* (or *initialibus*) is correct and was falsely read as *uncialibus* (or *untialibus*), *ini-* being similar to *un-*, as both sequences of letters have four vertical strokes. If the reading *inicialibus* were true, Jerome must have referred to extremely large letters, a kind of ‘inch-script’.

consonant with the Romance definite article: *lynx* > *l’once* (a similar restructuring may be observed in such pairs as mlat. ‘lazurium’, Russ. ‘лазурь’, and Ital. ‘l’azzurro’, Fr. ‘l’azur’ from Pers. *lazward*).

⁶ Since 383, Jerome returned several times to his work on the *Book of Job*, first, when he was editing the *vetus Latina*, later, when he was defending his own translation from Greek (*MPL* 29, col. 59–114; also with a *praefatio*, col. 61 sq.) and, at last, in 392–393, when he was translating this difficult text from the Hebrew original (*MPL* 28, col. 1079). It is the *Preface* Jerome’s to the latter which concerns us here. The date is inferred from Jerome’s letter to Pammachius 52 (*epist.* XLVIII [XLIX] Hilberg), sent 394 CE: *transtuli nuper Iob in linguam nostram*.

⁷ In *MPL* ed. of Jerome’s translation of *Job* from Hebrew (vol. 28, col. 1083 sq.) the 2nd ed. of Vallarsi(us) (1734–1742) is taken over. Two modern authoritative editions are *Biblia sacra, iuxta Latinam Vulgatam versionem*, IX (Romae 1951) 73 sq. and the *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. R. Weber O. S. B., I (Stuttgart 1975) 731 f., l. 48–51, the former with more substantial apparatus criticus. I am grateful to Michael von Albrecht who in the early 80s sent me the necessary pages.

⁸ Unlike in the 1951 edition, the variant *initialibus* to *uncialibus* is not mentioned in Weber’s *Biblia sacra*. This variant will be of some importance for our analysis.

⁹ Some editors put a comma after *litteris*; see below (p. 373).

¹⁰ There is a var. lect. *dummodo* in some manuscripts, but it seems to have no impact on the meaning.

¹¹ C. Nordenfalk, *Die spätantiken Zierbuchstaben* (Stockholm 1970) 96, remarks that the confusing similarity of the letters could have been “erst mit der Minuskelschrift möglich und immer verständlicher, je mehr wir uns der gotischen Schrift nähern”.

The choice is not difficult here. The only manuscript out of the 29 cited in the 1951 *Biblia sacra* which gives *initialibus* is Paris. lat. 15 467 = cod. Universitatis seu Sorbonicus (Ω^s), a. 1270.¹² All other manuscripts (including at least four earlier than the 9th century, and fourteen of the same period as Paris. lat. 15 467) attest ‘*uncialibus*’. Both terms were in use from the 9th century onwards, but corruption of unclear *uncialibus* into far more perspicuous *initialibus* is certainly more probable than the correction in the opposite direction. It is thus not surprising that Merrill took the var. lect. *initialibus* for a “purely palaeographical error”,¹³ which occurred during transliteration into minuscules, “though just conceivably helped on by the Medieval confusion about the meaning of *uncialis* and the fact that capital letters were still employed in that period as headings and initials”.

A further conjecture casts doubt on the authenticity of ‘unciales’ in our passage: *uncialibus* could have derived from an imaginary *uncinalibus*, an ‘angular’ or ‘hooked script’.¹⁴ This is inconclusive both from a conservative and palaeographical point of view, since there is no sign that this script was used in the luxurious codices of the Latin Bible. Moreover, *uncinalis* does not occur in Latin literature: the closest approximation is a hapax *uncinatus* (Cic. *Luc.* 121).

The structure of Jerome’s phrase is marked with *vel ... vel*.¹⁵ How and what do they coordinate? This leads us to the question of how to punctuate after *litteris*. Some scholars¹⁶ put a comma before *onera*, which makes the words coming after *litteris* an apposition (for example, Merrill, who surrounds the clause *onera – codices* in dashes); others do not put any sign before *onera*.¹⁷

¹² Ed. Parisina of St. Jerome I (1693–1706) col. 798 by J. Martianay mentioned “duo aut tres” manuscripts that show *initialibus* instead of prevailing *untialibus* (see *MPL* 28, col. 1083). Already Hatch (n. 2) was unable to identify these “two or three” MSS. According to the critical apparatus of the edition of the *Biblia sacra* (1951), there is indeed *one* MS giving *initialibus* in our passage, that is Ω^s. Cf. below, p. 385 (Ω^l) and p. 384 (initials).

¹³ Merrill (n. 2) 455.

¹⁴ S. Allen, “Uncial or Uncinal?”, *CIR* 17 (1903) 387; F. Madan, “Uncial or Uncinal”, *CIR* 18 (1904) 165.

¹⁵ Jerome’s voluble style is marked by these and other serial conjunctions, e. g. next to two series of *vel – vel – vel* and two of *vel – vel* there are *nunc – nunc – nunc* and *aut – aut – aut* in the same brief *Preface to Job*. Cf. a long ‘vel’ series discussed by Mayvaert (n. 3) 187 n. 11.

¹⁶ *MPL* 28, 1083 sq.; W. Wattenbach, *Das Schriftwesen im Mittelalter* (Leipzig 1896) 126 f., 133; H. Foerster, *Abriß der lateinischen Paläographie* (Stuttgart 1963) 126 f. n. 40.

¹⁷ No punctuation before *onera* found in the 1951 Benedictine *Biblia sacra*.

Each version has consequences for the style and for the meaning of the passage.¹⁸ On the one hand, the pause before *onera* smoothes the flow of speech within the context: both *vel... vel...* are in this case coordinated, with a chiasmus, around *descriptos*. The sequence *onera ... codices* becomes then a separate clause, parallel to *libros ... descriptos* in the first half of the sentence. On the other hand, if we combine the first *vel* with *descriptos* and the second with *exarata*, then the *unciales litterae* link immediately with *onera exarata*. Observing Jerome's stylistic and rhythmic usage,¹⁹ one could speak about his slight predilection for double-centred *vel... vel*: each part receives its own verbal counterpart and the whole becomes harmoniously balanced.²⁰ As an implication of such double-centred structure, sumptuous purple-dyed parchment and gilded decoration of the Biblical codices are outshined by preciousness, on the one hand, and the price of the script, on the other.

Some words are to be said about '*descriptos*'. Two meanings of *describo* are known since Cicero. Forcellini mentions "*describo latiore sensu*" as "verbum proprium tum pictorum, tum libroriorum, qui penicillo aut stilo aliquid repraesentant", that is (1) '(bare) writing', as well as (2) 'covering with ornaments' (in the sense of *depingere* or *delineare*).²¹ The second meaning suits the situation with the two *vel* clauses and may support the idea that the first *vel* clause, built up around *descriptos*, suggests activities not of a scribe, but rather of an illuminator and bookbinder,

¹⁸ Attention to the punctuation in Jerome is not only due to his rich and orderly style, but also to his own conscious consideration of *cola* and *commata* when editing the Bible (cf. Cassiodor. *Inst. Div. lect.* 1, *praef.* 9).

¹⁹ See B. Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography. Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. Translated by Dáibhí ó Cróinín and D. Ganz (Cambridge 1990) 184 n. 27: "... Jerome says that books are written (*exarata*) with them [i. e. *uncialibus litteris* – A. G.]".

²⁰ Some examples of such well-proportioned *vel – vel* clauses in Jerome's correspondence: LII, 5 (bis); CVII, 4: "vel alterius supposita manu teneri *regantur* digiti, vel in tabella *sculpantur* elementa"; CXVII, 1: "vel praeterita *plangam* vitia vel vitare *nitar* praesentia"; cf. MPL 29, col. 527 (*Praef. in Quattuor Evangelia*): "... cur non ad Graecam originem revertentes ea quae vel a vitiosis interpretibus male *edita*, vel a praesumptoribus imperitis *emendata* perversius, vel a librariis dormitantibus *addita* sunt, aut *mutata*, corrigimus?" et sim. (if not indicated otherwise, cited from the Loeb ed. of F. A. Wright [*Select Letters of St. Jerome*], whose numeration coincides with that of I. Hilbergs).

²¹ The same can be found in OLD, s. v. *describo*; cf. Plaut. *Asin.* 402; Quintil. 10, 2, 6: *quidam pictores in id solum student, ut describere tabulas mensuris et lineis sciant*. An example of the third meaning of *describo*, which is not directly involved here, is in *Hermeneumata Einsidl(i)ensia*: περιγράφω πρὸς τὸν ὑπογραμμὸν with '*describo ad exemplar*' as Latin equivalent.

while the second one (around *exarata*) refers specifically to the writing.²²

This structure finds its counterpart in two parallel pairs at the end of the passage: *pauperes sc(h)edulae*,²³ but *emendati codices*: St. Jerome the Ciceronian knows to produce a climax. Similar dichotomy can be inferred from the passage in Jerome's *epist.* CVII, 12: ...*divinos codices amet, in quibus non auri et pellis Babylonicae vermiculata pictura, sed ad fidem placeat emendata et erudita distinctio*. The contraposition of external richness and internal poverty of the book, the latter patent through the carelessness of the text, is here the same as in the *Pref. to Job*.

2. SIZE-RELATED INTERPRETATIONS OF *LITTERAE UNCIALES*

There have been three main explanations of *uncia* in Jerome's '*uncialis*' as a measure of size.²⁴

(a) Guil. Budaeus (*De asse et partibus eius libri quinque* I [Coloniae 1528] 10): "(scil. litterae) pollice crassitudine exaratae". Budé's interpretation was followed by Mabillon²⁵ and some other scholars: *uncia* as well as *ounce* and *inch* is one-twelfth of the foot.²⁶ In this case, *unciales litterae* are 'inch-letters' (cf. German 'Zollschrift') with respect to the real size (width or height²⁷) of each letter. Since letters of such size are rare in actual manuscripts, there is not enough evidence for

²² In other words, the meanings of *pictor* and *describo* develop in opposite directions. See the letter of Lupus of Ferrière discussed below (p. 382 and n. 71).

²³ The place of *schedulae* in Jerome's work process is described by E. Arns, *La technique du livre d'après Saint-Jerôme* (Paris 1958) 18 f.: "les *schedae* reçoivent la transcription de notes du tachygraphe et seront soumises à la correction avant de constituer le manuscrit définitif".

²⁴ Big size theory is also supported by B. Bischoff, "Die alten Namen der lateinischen Schriftarten", in: idem, *Mittelalterliche Studien. Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Schriftkunde und Literaturgeschichte* I (Stuttgart 1966) 4 (corrected and augmented version of his article in *Philologus* 89 [1934] 461 ff.): "Schrift von grossen Proportionen, 'zollgrosse Buchstaben' gemeint sind"; cf. idem, *loc. cit.* above (n. 19); very near to him Tjäder ([n. 1] 11): "Hieronymus spricht also nur von dem Format der Schrift, von übergrossen Buchstaben...". At the same time Bischoff states convincingly that with these (hypothetical – A. G.) 'inch-letters' Jerome could not have meant initials, because he referred to the whole books written in them.

²⁵ J. Mabillon, *De re diplomatica libri sex* I (Neapoli 1789) cap. 11, § 4, p. 48 B (on the uncial writing). Cf. below n. 41.

²⁶ In Russian 'дюймовка' (from a Dutch analogue of English 'thumb' or German 'Daumen') means 'an inch-plank'.

²⁷ Cf. an expression *altitudo uncialis* (scil. herbarum) in Plin. *NH* 18, 146.

this theory.²⁸ Even if we found a letter inch-wide or inch-high, it would not be prudent to generalize its occasional size.

(b) A variation of the above is the hyperbolic interpretation of *litterae unciales* in the manner of *litterae sesquipedales* (cf. Hor. *AP* 97).²⁹ We will see later an argument against hyperbolizing force of *uncia*, especially in the direction of something big: an *uncia* is costly, but rather small.³⁰

(c) Hatch accepts too confidently the meaning of ‘uncia’ as ‘one-twelfth of whatever unit’ (the same, for example, *OLD*, s. v. *uncia*) and assumes that *uncia* in the expression *unciales litterae* denotes one letter of a twelve letter line. My objections to this are following. First, there are indeed some tendencies³¹ to generalize the arithmetic use of *uncia* in Latin, but no evidence that it means ‘one-twelfth part of absolutely everything’ (one does not call so single months nor apostles).³² Second, the author himself – an expert of Latin MSS – was unable to find *any* manuscript whose lines would count consistently 12 letters.

In some manuscripts the length of each line in a column varies between 10 and 14 letters, but it would be strange to name a script on the basis of an *average* number. Indeed, it is doubtful whether there are any examples of consistent use of *dodekagrammatism* that would presuppose MSS based on the principle of *stoichedon* in the codices of late antiquity. Besides, would not it be linguistically more natural, in the situation postulated by Hatch, to define a line per number of letters rather than a letter per line?

Finally, a stylistic objection: *unciales litterae* in a spatial sense (as well as var. lect. *initiales* mentioned above)³³ do not anticipate the metaphor of *onera*; whereas *unciales*, if it hints at the weight,³⁴ continues and develops the mention

²⁸ Bischoff ([n. 19] 184 n. 27) cites the *Psalterium Lugdunense* (*Cod. Lat. Ant.* VI, 772: *Psalterium romanum et Gallicanum mixtum* in Lyons, saec. V–VI) as a manuscript which “may give an idea” of such “inch-high” letters.

²⁹ Cf. *Cat.* 97, 5; *Mart.* 7, 14, 10 (examples from *OLD*, s. v.); (*litterae cubitales* of Mabillon come from a Plautian hyperbole for large letters (*Rud.* 1294): *cubitum hercle longis litteris signabo*).

³⁰ See below n. 37.

³¹ Latin *ex uncia heres* inherits the twelfth part of the heritage (cf. *heres ex asse*), but the latter can be evaluated in money, so we deal here within the system of weights.

³² It is significant that the polysemy of Latin *uncia* was somewhat too much for English, which split the Latin word into two, ounce and inch.

³³ The idea that *initiales litterae*, indicating huge letters, would naturally lead Jerome and his readers to the idea of their weight, sounds surrealistic.

³⁴ So already V. Gardthausen (*Griechische Palaeographie* II [Leipzig 21913] 89); so Merrill (n. 2), who comes from an ‘inch’, that is 1/12, of a foot, to an ‘ounce’, 1/12, of a pound; a recent interpreter Mayvaert (n. 3) is also distinctly conscious of this relationship.

of *auro argentoque*, and introduces the *onera* as aptly as we can expect from such a master of well elaborated and context-bound metaphor as Jerome.³⁵

We can therefore discard the proposed spatial interpretation of (*littera*) *uncialis* as inappropriate and proceed not with inches, but with ounces.

3. WEIGHING EXPENSIVE THINGS *UNCIATIM*

Hatch considers the possibility that ‘uncia’ in *unciales* (*litterae*) hints at the weight and therefore was used by Jerome hyperbolically, to indicate that each letter either (a) weighed or (b) cost an *uncia* of gold or silver. Theoretically, that would amount to tons, or to enormous price in large manuscripts, thus suiting the sarcastic *onera* of Jerome in principle, but indulging in a rather Swiftian exaggeration.³⁶ Hatch himself finds the first solution more appropriate: “letters weighing an ounce apiece – not literally of course but in appearance”.

A further argument against *uncialibus litteris* as an indication of the enormous weight and / or price derives from the fact that symbolically, that is in its generalized and, as it were, figurative sense, *uncia* was associated in Roman linguistic consciousness with small quantities. Therefore precisely as a phraseological element, *unciales* would sound rather timid in Jerome’s context, despite an exorbitant arithmetic value alluded at; *uncia* is, in other words, too big for each letter, but a modest measure for myriads of them.³⁷

Paul Mayvaert not only highlights that *uncialibus*, taken in its weight value, aptly anticipates Jerome’s *onera*, but draws remarkable conclusions from this fact. He brings up as parallel *vitis uncialis*, which hinting at

³⁵ The inventiveness of a richly elaborated series of metaphors is characteristic of Jerome’s literary art. Here some examples from his letters: *epist.* LX, 1 (*desiderii sui* [scil. – of the deceased] *iaculo vulneratos intolerabili dolore confecit*); CVII, 5 (*habeat alias margaritas quibus postea venditis emptura est pretiosissimum margaritum*); *ibid.*, 7 (*templum – iter saeculi – adytum Scripturarum*); *ibid.*, 10 (*virgo et monachus sic in quadragesima suos emittant equos, ut sibi meminerint semper esse currendum*); LII, 10 (*multi aedificant parietes et columnas ecclesiae subtrahunt: marmora nitent, auro splendent lacunaria, gemmis altare distinguitur et ministrorum Christi nulla electio est*) et sim.

³⁶ In his article Hatch (n. 2) spoke of “heavy-looking” manuscripts, not denying that such explanation supposes “fanciful” style, which may seem an understatement to an admirer of Jerome’s stylistic elegance.

³⁷ Forcellini, s. v.: *de minima quantitate*. OLD gives indeed some examples of the meaning of *uncia* as ‘trifling amount’ (Mart. I, 206, 3: *raram diluti bibis unciam Falerni*); cf. ‘*unciatim*’ in the sense of ‘paulatim’ (Ter. *Phorm.* I, 1, 9 = v. 43 sqq.); demin. *unciola* and the like. This usage is inherited e. g. by an English phrase: “An ounce of practice is worth a pound of theory”.

the weight of grapes lacks literal accuracy in its turn. But how to weigh the *litterae*? More to the point is another Mayvaert's parallel (noticed, however, already by Budé) with the invective against both indecent and dull luxury, traditional for Roman moralists,³⁸ and omnipresent in Jerome.³⁹ The similarity of our main passage with the following is indeed striking (*epist.* XXII, 32): *Inficitur membrana colore purpureo, aurum liquescit in litteras, gemmis codices vestiuntur, et nudus ante fores earum*⁴⁰ *Christus emoritur*. Mayvaert comments: "Gold is melted for lettering" – metal was larded thickly to form the letters of sumptuous books – that is what the populace (the *vulgus*) had in mind when they spoke, in derogatory tones, of the rich with their books full of 'uncial letters'.

I agree with the starting point and some elements of Mayvaert's conclusion:⁴¹ on the one hand, the idea of weight in *uncialibus* (without pressing it too far) suits the context better than the spatial explanation. On the other hand, I find that the application of Mayvaert's understanding to the context (*litterae unciales* reprimanded by Jerome consisted materially, even if virtually, of gold) would produce abstruse hyperbole, inappropriate for the stylistic virtuosity of Jerome.

4. JEROME'S POLEMICS

The atmosphere, in which Jerome's translations were made, was under no circumstances a model of mutual courtesy. There was a strong resistance to his innovative version of the Latin Bible, as attested in Jerome's correspondence with St. Augustine.⁴² No wonder that Jerome is ubiqui-

³⁸ Jerome cites willingly Roman satirists (Lucilius, Horace, Persius, Juvenal) who criticized self-interest, luxury, and vanity.

³⁹ *Aurum* and *gemmae* are principal enemies of Jerome the moralist: XLV, 4 (*Numquid me vestes sericae, nitentes gemmae, picta facies, auri rapit ambitio?*); CVII, 5 (*...ne collum margaritis et auro premas, ne caput gemmis oneres*) et sim. Cf. n. 44.

⁴⁰ E. M. Thompson: "i. e. wealthy ladies". I think '*membranarum*' is intended: Christ resides in the Bible, but sumptuous binding becomes for him a rich, and, due to the poor quality of the sacred text within it, a spiritually inhospitable house.

⁴¹ Mabillion, when speaking about ancient chrysography ([n. 25] 44), cites both passages in full, but he does not apply this *Wahlverwandschaft* to the explanation of the term 'uncial' (p. 48). It becomes clear that in our main passage only *auro argenteoque descriptos* referred to chrysography to him.

⁴² H. Lietzmann, "Hieronymus", *RE* 8 (1913) 1569. Augustine writes to Jerome about the latter's two translations of *Job* (*August. epist.* 28, II, 2 Goldbacher): *Unde si quisquam veteri falsitati contentiosus faverit prolatis collatisque codicibus vel docetur facillime, vel refellitur*, cf. Hieron. *epist.* LVI, CIV, CIX–CXII.

tously polemical,⁴³ and in addition to his caustic attitude towards luxury,⁴⁴ his first and foremost weapon is pointed at people who pride themselves on possessing old *de luxe* codices of the *Vetus Latina*,⁴⁵ but oppose Jerome’s advanced philological methods and literary talent.⁴⁶ In the *Praef. in Iob*, translated from the Greek (*MPL* 29, col. 40), Jerome continues in the same vein: *tanta est enim vetustatis consuetudo ut etiam confessa plerisque vitia placeant, dum magis pulchros habere malunt codices quam emendatos.*

Other circumstance to be considered is Jerome’s remark *ut vulgo aiunt*,⁴⁷ which shows that *unciales litterae* was not his own expression, and there was no reason for him to fake this detail. Some scholars seem to take it too literally as an indication of *vulgar* provenience of the expression.⁴⁸ The careful investigations of this point⁴⁹ show, however, that one should be cautious with the stylistic evaluation of such remarks. They do not necessarily indicate a vulgarity, as the usage of Jerome’s phrases containing *vulgo*⁵⁰ or his explanations of many philological⁵¹

⁴³ Hieron. *epist.* XLIII, 3: *Habeat sibi Roma suos tumultus... nobis adhaerere Deo bonum est*, a cadence strikingly similar to that of our main passage.

⁴⁴ To the examples cited in n. 39 many other could be added, so Hieron. *Vit. Paulin. Eremit.* 17 (*Cur mortuos vestros auratis obvolvitis vestibus?*); cf. idem, *epist.* XLV, 3 (*Numquid me ... auri rapuit ambitio?*); CVII, 1 (*auratum squallet Capitolium*); 6 (*ne bibat de aureo calice Babylonis*); CXVII, 6 (*absque scandalo tuo in aliis sericas vestes auratasque miraberis*). Obviously we see here one of the leading themes of the period; cf. a passage in Isid. *Orig.* VI, 11. The motif was present in classical authors, e. g. Seneca, *Dial.* 9, 9, 4: *plerisque ignaris etiam puerilium litterarum libri non studiorum instrumenta sed cenationum ornamenta sunt.*

⁴⁵ On the bibliophile tastes of the Church Fathers, see recently M. Vinzent: “‘Philobiblie’ im frühen Christentum”, *Altertum* 45 (1999) 115–143.

⁴⁶ Cf. Jerome’s words (*MPL* 29, 61): *...quia volo antiquam divinorum voluminum viam sentibus virgultisque purgare, mihi genuinus infigitur: corrector vitiorum falsarius vocor, et errores non auferre, sed serere.*

⁴⁷ Jerome makes several such remarks: VII, 5 *iuxta tritum populi proverbium* (about an authentic proverb); CXVII, 1 *tritum vulgi sermone proverbium* (some unclear saying or parable) etc. Cf. n. 52 below.

⁴⁸ For Mayvaert ([n. 3] 188) *unciales litterae* is an expression of the ‘populace’.

⁴⁹ There is rich literature on the usage of *vulgo* in Jerome and his contemporaries, due to understandable interests of Romance philology. The most important papers on this topic are referred to and evaluated by G. J. M. Bartelink, “Les observations de Jerome sur les termes de la langue courante et parlée”, *Latomus* 38 (1979) 193–222, esp. 215 f., 220 f. n. 27 and 221 f.

⁵⁰ Bartelink (*ibid.*, 193 f.) shows that *vulgo* can be mentioned to imply vulgar, colloquial, or frequent use (as a synonym of *passim*); therefore each case should be studied individually (*ibid.*, 222).

⁵¹ Hieron. *epist.* VII, 2: *...unde pergamenarum nomen servatum est.*

or other⁵² terms abundantly demonstrate. It seems more plausible that *unciales litterae* was before Jerome an everyday expression of the bibliophile public.

At the same time, one may think that Jerome borrows from the common usage not the whole expression *litterae uncialis*, but a popular and to a certain degree figurative use of *uncialis*, when taken on its own. This is reasonable. We can say for certain that Jerome, as fine observer of the spoken language, noticed in the sphere of book production the use of *uncialis* that fits his invective. I would not exclude that *litterae* was not the only possible match for *uncialis*; it is even probable that *uncialis* in the same sense could be adapted to such words as *scriptura* or *liber*. Subjecting the evident etymology of the word *uncialis* to doubt should be estimated as a sort of *sacrificium intellectus*.⁵³

I have cited above Jerome's *epist.* CVII, where external sumptuousness and philological quality of sacred texts are skillfully opposed. Speaking of *de luxe* MSS Jerome says: *aurum liquescit in litteras*, echoing *litteras uncialis* of the *Preface to Job*. In other words, I share the view that the term *litterae uncialis* originated in commercial sphere⁵⁴ and has neither a vulgar nor exquisitely technical, but a matter-of-fact ring to it. The word *uncialis* could hint at the payment "in ounces", but a fee of an artisan who produces books has nothing specific and thus can hardly be used to describe any special kind of book production. That is why something more specific about 'ounces' must be found for the pertinent explanation of the popular expression *litterae uncialis*.

Modifying the "commercial" idea I call attention to the circumstance that precious books needed precious metals as well as ivory⁵⁵ and purple,⁵⁶ which were all traditionally weighed by ounces, *unciatim*.⁵⁷ According to e.g. Dioscorides (V, 182 [183] = I, p. 827 Sprenger), the ingredients for preparing even simple inks were weighed in ounces (οὐγγία). Chrysography,⁵⁸

⁵² Cf. *ut vulgo soletis dicere* in the *epist.* CXVII, 4 concerning an expression *saecularis mater*, where Jerome alludes to the speaking habits of young snobs. A long list of such turns in Jerome is given by Bartelink, *op. cit.*, 221.

⁵³ Although some skeptics preferred to give up both the obvious etymology and the search for another etymon for 'uncialis', e.g. Brugnoli (n. 4).

⁵⁴ Brugnoli (*ibid.*) despite his guess about 'uncials' as "termine tecnico di mercato", ruined this idea by assuming that this semantic motivation established itself as a popular etymology only (see n. 5).

⁵⁵ Juv. 11, 131: *nulla uncia est nobis eboris*.

⁵⁶ Suet. *Nero* 32, 3: *qui pauculas uncias* (scil.: Tyrii coloris) *venderet*.

⁵⁷ *OLD*, s. v. *uncia, unciatim*. Cf. use of *unciatim* in medicine (Plin. *NH* 28, 9, 37 [139 Detlefsen]).

⁵⁸ Ch. Graux, "Chrysographia", *DAGR* I, 2 (1887) 1138–1140 (with numerous references to both pagan and Christian books written in gold); Bischoff (n. 19) 16 ff.

i. e. writing with ‘golden’ ink, was used already by Jews (Aristeas § 176). In the Christian culture, there were books either written entirely in golden letters (*codices aurei*) or containing gilded elements (e. g. an opening page).⁵⁹ Such writing was often called ‘*ex (de) auro* (scribere et sim.)’.⁶⁰ Ink recipes⁶¹ for such *aureae litterae* are preserved in some documents, of which probably the most famous are papyri of Leyden.⁶² It is worth mentioning that in the versified recipes for preparing golden ink the ingredients are measured in ounces: *Tres sint vitrioli, vix una sit uncia gummi, / Gallarum quinque...* etc.⁶³

Summing up: It seems to me not a desperate guess that the name *unciales* (*libri, litterae* vel sim.) were, for some, a naturally motivated expression for golden script in sumptuous manuscripts of the Bible. This use of *uncialis* is taken by Jerome from the everyday language, with its obvious inner form skillfully adapted to the image of *onera* instead of books. It hints not at the value and price as such, but at the measurement of the materials needed for *de luxe* book production.⁶⁴

If *locus classicus* from Jerome with his *uncialibus litteris* is indeed to be explained in the way proposed above (I would call it ‘techno-commercial’), palaeography was the least of Jerome’s concerns here; it was the gratuitous luxury in the sphere of spiritual texts he was so angry with. Golden-lettered Bible manuscripts of the 3rd – early 4th centuries were written in various types of majuscules. For Bischoff the (denotative) meaning of Jerome’s ‘*litterae unciales*’ seems to have been some “large

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 27 n. 60.

⁶⁰ A passage from the 9th century Chronicle of the Abbey (with bibliophile Ansegis as abbot) is cited in D. De Bruyne, “Scriptura Romana”, *Mélanges d’Histoire offerts à Charles Moeller*. I: *Antiquité et Moyen âge* (Louvain–Paris 1914) 323: “Quattuor Evangelia in membrano purpureo *ex auro* scribere iussit (scil. Ansegis) Romana littera...”; cf. the text of St. Boniface cited by Thompson ([n. 1] 52 n. 2): “deprecor ... ut mihi *cum auro* conscribas epistolas ... Pauli apostoli” et sim.

⁶¹ Golden ink in general, see: G. Herzog-Hauser, “Tinte”, *RE Suppl.* 7 (1940) 1577 f.; Wattenbach (n. 16) 240; a brief modern overview can be found in: M. Zerdoun Bat-Yehouda, *Les encres noires au moyen âge (jusqu’à 1600)* (Paris 1983) 91–95 (‘encre chrysographique’).

⁶² *Papyri Graeci Musei Antiquarii Publici Lugduno-Batavi* II (Lugduni Batavorum. 1885) 199 sqq.: ‘alchemic’ recipes from a Theban papyrus of the 3rd–4th century (pap. X).

⁶³ This and other similar texts are cited by Gardthausen (n. 34).

⁶⁴ In Russian one could call this type of script ‘весовое’, ‘золотниковое’, or, with an ironical overtone, which seems to have been present in Jerome’s passage, ‘валютное (письмо)’.

ornamental script".⁶⁵ At the same time Lowe has shown that each of the oldest still extant Latin manuscripts with golden script (he enumerates six such items from 5th–6th century) contains pre-Hieronymian Biblical texts written in a book-hand called 'uncial' today.⁶⁶ So we cannot exclude,⁶⁷ that once asked about it, Jerome would associate the script of the manuscripts that he reprimanded with the 'uncial' in the modern sense of the term⁶⁸ rather than with any other bookhand.

5. LITTERAE UNCIALES AND SERVATUS LUPUS

Scarcity of evidence makes it probable that an expression *unciales litterae* was used less frequently than such terms like *litterae Romanae*.⁶⁹

The next occurrence of the expression *unciales litterae* is found in Servatus Lupus (Loup de Ferrières), himself an elegant Latin writer († after 862) and one of the main protagonists in the manuscript production. He is writing to Einhard, the favorite and biographer of Charlemagne (*epist. 5 ad Eginhardum* in *MPL* 119, 448 C = *epist. 5* Marshall):

Praeterea scriptor regius Bertcaudus dicitur antiquarum litterarum, dumtaxat earum quae maximae sunt et *unciales* a quibusdam vocari existimantur, habere mensuram descriptam. Itaque si penes vos est,⁷⁰ mittite mihi eam per hunc quaeso pictorem cum redierit, schedula tamen diligentissime sigillo munita.

The letter⁷¹ is usually dated before 840. Bischoff even conjectures that the reaction upon the letter of Lupus by Einhard is documented in

⁶⁵ Bischoff (n. 19) 60 f., 184 n. 27; cf. Gardthausen (n. 34) II, 119 ff.

⁶⁶ E. A. Lowe, *Palaeographic Papers 1907–1965* II (Oxford 1972) 400.

⁶⁷ L. Traube (*Vorlesungen und Abhandlungen* III: *Kleine Schriften*. Hrsg. von S. Brandt [München 1920; ²1965] 116–119) believed that Jerome referred to the uncial script in the sense of modern palaeography. I share this view in part: the main target of Jerome's criticism was luxury in the form of chrysography, the precise type of script was facultative. Tjäder ([n. 1] 11 and 36 f.) is close to the same idea: "Es ist natürlich *möglich*, dass die *unciales litterae* des Hieronymus wirklich das waren, was wir jetzt mit Unzialschrift meinen...".

⁶⁸ As to a plausible name for 'uncial' in the late antiquity, if there was one, this role seems to have been played in Greek by στρογγύλος χαρακτήρ (hence Syrian script 'estrangelo').

⁶⁹ De Bruyne (n. 60) tries to identify *litterae Romanae* of Medieval and later authors with what is called uncial script today.

⁷⁰ *mensura* rather than *Bertcaudus* is meant.

⁷¹ I am not able to decide who was the painter (*pictor*) sent to Einhard by Lupus of Ferrières and how clear-cut was the difference between *pictor* and *scriptor* in this case. Cf. above n. 22.

the form of the tables that exhibit the model of the script (namely the inscriptional *capitalis* or *capitalis quadrata*), sent by Einhard upon Lupus’ request.⁷²

It is only natural that Lupus knew Jerome’s *Preface to Job*, as Jerome was the classic in the literary hierarchy of the period. There are further signs attesting his acquaintance with the *Preface*: the rare expression *unciales litterae* is accompanied by a specification *a quibusdam vocari existimantur* (cf. *ut vulgo aiunt* in Jerome). It is possible that an attribute *maximae* in the letter of Lupus has to be evaluated as a consequence of the hyperbolic *onera* in Jerome, even if there is evidence that the idea of *uncials* as big letters was attested also in other texts.

Lupus evidently understands *uncials* as dignified *Buch-* and *Großschrift* in general, which could seem especially matter-of-course in the time of Carolingian nostalgia and transliteration of the old manuscripts into minuscules. On the other hand, does Lupus have in mind something associated with ink recipes? Does *mensura* in his letter mean proportions of letters, and, as it were, a model for reproduction of a grand old script? Or is it a recipe for gold and silver ink? I am not able to decide this. One could think here of *Prunkunziale* along with its later developments, or of reintroducing elegant initials in an awesome ancient style.

6. REMIGIUS OF AUXERRES AND THE BIBLE GLOSSES

More substantial for the semantic history of the expression (*litterae unciales*) is a series of comments on ancient script terminology preserved in the *Commentum in Donati Artem maiorem* (italics are mine):⁷³

Genera etiam litterarum diversa sunt. Quedam enim *unciales* dicuntur, quae et maximae sunt et in *initiis* librorum scribuntur. *Dictae autem unciales eo quod olim uncia auri a divitibus appenderetur.*

Traube investigated this text, acknowledged probable the authorship of Remigius of Auxerre (ca 841 – ca 908), and proposed Sedulius Scotus as Remigius’ source.⁷⁴ Later Bischoff published a similar text in the form of the Bible glosses, transmitted in three codices dated to the 11th–13th centuries. He supported Traube’s suggestion for the author of these glosses.

⁷² This is the most intriguing observation made by Bischoff (n. 24) 4 Anm. 10: Bischoff meant cod. Bern 250, fol. 11^v; cf. idem (n. 19) 60 n. 56.

⁷³ I cite the texts of Remigius and of the Glosses in this paragraph after Bischoff (n. 24) 1–2. More details on the textual basis of the *Commentum* see in: L. Holtz, *Donat et la tradition de l’enseignement grammatical. Étude sur l’Ars Donati et sa diffusion (IV^e – IX^e siècle) et édition critique* (Paris 1981) 440 f.

⁷⁴ Traube (n. 67).

Untiales sunt littere magne quae in initiis librorum ad ornatum fiunt ut in antiphonariis (-phoriariis MS). Dictae autem untiales quod untiam auri (corr. from aurum) dependant.

A parallel to the words *quae et maximae sunt* from the *Commentum* of Remigius can be found in the gloss from the *Glossarium Amplonianum secundum*, s. IX (in: *CGL* V 399, 23 Goetz): *uncialibus longis*, which was first brought into this context by Brugnoli. The first word (*uncialibus*), which was presumably taken directly from Jerome's *praef. in Iob*, is explained by the second (*longis*).⁷⁵ We shall also note the words *in initiis librorum*: both in the *Commentum* and the gloss uncials are thought to be letters used as initials for ornamental purposes.⁷⁶ Popular etymology, evidently due to the phonetic similarity and probably prompted by the false reading *initialibus* (we have seen one example in a manuscript of Jerome's *Preface to Job*), is both natural and ingenious, albeit false.⁷⁷

Notwithstanding the fact that not everything is true in these comments and glosses, I cannot agree with Hatch who dismisses the assertion about *unciales litterae* in the commentary on the *Ars major of Donatus* as "a mere idle tale".⁷⁸ On the contrary, I find it wonderful that this brief historical outline (*dicuntur... dictae*) combines contemporary medieval usage with the (presumably) right historical understanding of Jerome's *litterae unciales*. Yet, while the explanations cited hint at the payment received by artisans, I favour, as I have argued, the explanation that it was gold (along with other precious materials) that was measured in ounces, first of all for the preparation of 'golden' ink. The payment to the artisan is an overall principle, while the extra price for golden ink et sim. is a specific case, which inspires a creative speaker to coin a new word.

At this point I am happy to add to the explanations cited the third one, which was advanced by the editors of the Latin Bible a long ago, but

⁷⁵ Brugnoli (n. 4) 411; cf. indication of the Benedictine fathers (*MPL* 28, 1083, adn. C): "Unciales quas vocat Hieronymus litteras Glossa in codice Vat. 135 exponit *longas*".

⁷⁶ Uncials for initials in the Carolingian period and earlier: Foerster (n. 16) 101; Bischoff (n. 19) 59: "From the fifth century on, capitalis, in combination with uncial, became a distinguishing script...".

⁷⁷ Almost everybody speaking of the 'miniatures' thinks of some 'mini-pictures', not of Lat. 'minium', which is known only to specialists. (Similarly, an 'apéritif' in the parlance of Russian drunkards receives sometimes an activist interpretation and becomes 'operative'.)

⁷⁸ It is worth mentioning that Budé (p. 375) knew of this scholion, but favoured his size-related interpretation, which later enjoyed such an (undeserved) success.

seems to have escaped the attention of scholars studying the history of the word *uncial*. The explanation, which I call ‘techno-commercial’ and which I fully agree with, was proposed first in the biblical gloss in the correctory Ω^j (= Correctorium S. Jacobi = Parisinus lat. 16, 720, s. XIII), where *inicialibus* of Ω^s is corrected in *uncialibus* and commented upon thus:⁷⁹

uncia est pars ponderis ad quod res preciosae ponderantur ut aurum, unde litteras unciales dicit sumptuosas vel auratas.

Of course here Jerome’s passage is interpreted by a scholar from the Dominican convent of St. Jacques in Paris, but I cannot help finding comforting this hermeneutic coincidence with a 13th century colleague.

7. OTHER MEDIEVAL AND MODERN AUTHORS

Only a brief outline can be given here of the evidence for the understanding of the word *uncial* in the late Middle Ages.⁸⁰

The old association of *litterae unciales* with *de luxe* manuscripts can be observed in Leo Marsicanus (Ostiensis) of the 2nd half of the 11th century, *Chronicon Casinense* G (MPL 173, col. 635): *obtulit* (scil. imperator)... *textum Evangelii de foris quidem ex uno latere adoportum auro purissimo ac gemmis valde pretiosis, ab intus vero uncialibus litteris atque figuris aureis mirifice decoratum...*⁸¹ Similar interpretation, i. e. that of an ambitious and expensive script, is found in Willelmus of Jumiège (Gemeticensis), surnamed Calculus (flor. ca 1070), in his *Historiae Northmannorum libri VIII* (MPL 149, col. 897): *Nec suppressendum illud est silentio, im<m>o, ut ita dicatur, uncialibus, ut aiunt, litteris exaratum saeculo venturo transmittendum...* The concern here was the will of queen Matilda, which the author evidently wanted to look perennial.

Even if these passages (not diligently studied by scholars with exception of De Bruyne) do not contain anything overwhelmingly new, they

⁷⁹ The gloss is cited after *Biblia sacra* (1951) p. 73.

⁸⁰ Thanks to Excerpta CLCLT-3-Cetedoc, Lovanii Novi, vols. I and II, copyright Sign Chadwyck-Healey Inc. 1995. I owe the following references to the staff of the MGH at Munich and to Dr Natalie Tchernetska. The search gives more for the history of the terms (*litterae unciales* and *I* or *Romanae* in the modern times, since the learned prefaces to the Fathers of the Church are searched throughout, e. g. MPL 142, col. 1097, which reproduces a phrase from the *Monitum* of a modern editor.

⁸¹ The same text is found in an auctor incertus, dated to the beginning of the 11th century (MPL 139, col. 1636).

add nonetheless substance to our meager evidence for the Middle Ages. One observes that the phrase *uncialibus litteris exarare* even became an idiom to denote something which has 'to be perpetuated and inscribed into history', while implying first of all a Latin script made of letters of bigger size, well-shaped, richly presented, and distinguished in each respect.

Antiquarian interests became predominant with scholars of the Renaissance and of the modern times. I have cited G. Budé with his 'inch-letters', which is a variation of the Medieval large size theory. Others, such as Blaise de Vigenère⁸² or J. Mabillon,⁸³ moved along the same lines. Step by step the diplomatic investigations led, however, to the emergence of palaeography as a discipline. In the *Nouveau Traité* of Toustain et Tassin we read a definition which opens new prospects in the study of 'uncial': "Par écriture onciale nous entendons la majuscule de forme ronde et distinguée de la capitale par certains éléments".⁸⁴ From this point onwards, the problem lies in the shape and ductus of the letters that meet this definition: "...having the large rounded forms (not joined to each other) characteristic of early Greek and Roman MSS; also (in looser use), of large size, capital".⁸⁵ New scholarly issues have come into consideration: how did different uncial, half-uncial, and cognate scripts develop, what were Latin and Greek names for all these varieties, etc. In this usage, the word *uncial* becomes a disputed palaeographical *terminus technicus* rather than a word of the spoken language.

SOME RESULTS OF OUR SEMASIOLOGIC INQUIRY

(A) Chrysography, as well as other kinds of ornamentation, was a technique used in the pagan world. Thus, the expression of the type *litterae unciales*, not associated with any strict palaeographical content, may have existed one or two centuries before Jerome's time, and origi-

⁸² Blaise de Vigenère, *Traicté des chiffres* (Paris 1586/1587; anast. Madrid 1996). Now this passage is regarded as the first evidence for the term 'onciale' in a French scholarly text.

⁸³ Mabillon (n. 25) 47 (I, cap. 11, 4, 2): the opposite of uncials are *minores litterae*.

⁸⁴ [R.-P.] Tassin et [C.] Toustain, *Nouveau Traité de diplomatique* II (Paris 1765) cap. X, 506 (the passage generally taken for the first differentiation of *capitalis* and *uncialis*).

⁸⁵ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* II (Oxford 1971) s. v. 'uncial'.

nally may not have been used exclusively in Christian circles. At the same time Jerome, presumably, had in mind Latin parchment codices of the *Vetus Latina*, copied in the 3rd – early 4th centuries CE, otherwise he would not have referred to their *vetustas* at the end of the 4th century. The terms *uncialis* (*littera*, *scriptura*, *codex* et sim.) were used in the ‘commercial’ sense within the sphere of manuscript production, meaning any luxurious bookhand, which by contingency frequently was of imposing size. The inner form of the word was evident at this time, its reference was perceived without any effort. Jerome used polemically the more or less neutral word. Its palaeographic reference seems to have been a large calligraphic script of *de luxe* Bible MSS with golden letters, which, *accidentally*, might have been the uncial in the modern sense of the term.

(B) In the late antiquity and in the Carolingian period, the usage of *litterae unciales* lost its original precision and became (a) first of all a subject of pragmatic interest in the sphere of elegant book production and (b) an object of Patristic and Biblical hermeneutics. The development of minuscules strengthened the idea that the *litterae unciales* of previous Christian centuries denoted majuscule writing in general: most Medieval scholars associated ‘uncials’ (as well as *litterae Romanae*) with letters of the largest size (*maximae*, *longae*). An additional phonetic association with *initialis*, provoked by the semantic uncertainty, helped to consolidate the notion of a large and well-proportioned script, with a residual element of a representative style. At the same time, some medieval scholars demonstrated that they were able to see the true origin of the expression in its authentic sense that can be conjectured through the passage of Jerome. The old *Sitz im Leben*, namely, book production, remained in the centre of Medieval preoccupation with ‘uncials’, even if the reference to luxury became replaced by more vague aesthetic idea of some antique (of course Latin) script.

(C) In early modern times, the size-related interpretation of ‘uncials’ as inch-high or inch-wide letters was gradually replaced by a new interpretation, which followed the logic of systematisation prevailing in the scientific age. Interest in the history and development of writing became predominant with the creation of diplomatics and palaeography. The text of Jerome’s *Preface* continued playing a consolidating role for the semantic continuity of the set phrase *litterae unciales*: Jerome’s passage was not only a testimony, it was a testament for centuries to come. However, Jerome’s concern about *unciales litterae* seemed now to be akin to that of palaeographers’. According to the modern point of view, *unciales*

litterae became the name for a variety of majuscule script with many subvariants, in Latin and (for many scholars also) in Greek, irrespective of its size and material, and each possessing a history of its own.⁸⁶

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В известном пассаже из *praef. in Iob* бл. Иеронима увязаны *aurum / argentum, unciales litterae* и *onera*. Это подтверждает представление, что (а) традиция надежна (*initialibus* – порча текста под влиянием ложных ассоциаций); (б) Иеронимом актуализована именно “весовая” семантика *uncialis*. При этом *uncialibus litteris* не гиперболизирует вес роскошных кодексов (эту функцию выполняет *onera*), а опирается на деловой термин (*ut vulgo aiunt* может подразумевать и это), намекавший, по-видимому, на приобретение – *unciatim* – драгметаллов для чернил переписчика-хрисографа. Речь шла, таким образом, о “золотниковом” и, можно сказать, “валютном” письме. Главное для Иеронима – осуждение роскошных, но в филологическом и богословском отношении убогих книг. Подхваченное Иеронимом употребление *uncialis* в приложении к *litterae, scriptura, libri*, подразумевая прежде всего кодексы с (доиеронимовскими) изданиями латинской Библии, имело в виду не частную разновидность письма, а библейский маюскул III – нач. IV в.; другое дело, что среди роскошных библейских кодексов унциальные (в современном смысле слова) по всей видимости преобладали.

В поздней античности и раннем средневековье сочетание *litterae unciales*, наверное, забылось бы, если бы *Предисловия (Прологи)* Иеронима к библейским текстам не попали в издания Библии, где их глоссировали наряду с биб-

⁸⁶ Irina (Nickolaevna) Lebedeva (in the good old days of the MS Department of the Library of the Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg) introduced me to the elements of Greek palaeography. I worked on the subject in the late 70s and presented a paper at the Institute of Linguistic Study in Leningrad in 1978, at a conference dedicated to the memory of Josef Tronskij (1897–1970). My colleagues Alexander Tschernjak and Vladimir Mazhuga showed much interest in my investigations and were ever willing to give their expert advice. In May 2001, I was invited by Prof. Patricia Easterling to give a talk on the topic at the Transmission Seminar at the Classics Faculty in Cambridge. I profited from the discussion there, and later from readers (well known to me) of the editorial board of the *Hyperboreus*. During the preparation of the written version Olga Budaragina gave me linguistic, and Natalie Tchernetska more than linguistic help.

лейскими текстами. Теперь смысл выражения *litterae unciales* становится предметом толкования; его ассоциируют с самым крупным шрифтом, взятым из старинного письма (*litterae maximae*, иногда соседствующим с *litterae Romanae*). Автор заново рассматривает свидетельства Сервата Лупа (*MPL* 119, 448 С, *epist.* 5) и возводимые к Реми(гию) из Оксерр пояснения о различных видах письма в *Commentum in Donati artem maiorem*. К этим толкованиям примыкают *Библейские глоссы*, изученные Б. Бишоффом, из коих одна содержит “техничко-коммерческое” понимание смысла выражения *uncialis* у Иеронима; в особенно точной форме это толкование содержится в маргиналии Парижской рукописи (Ω^j – правленый доминиканцами экземпляр середины XIII в.).

В Новое время в связи с развитием научного подхода и всестороннего изучения позднеантичных и средневековых рукописей в рамках дипломатики выражение *litterae unciales* начинает восприниматься как эмоционально нейтральный палеографический термин, относящийся не к материалу или величине, а к форме букв (выражение применяется и к греческому письму). Главным теперь становится описание и объяснение разновидностей унциального письма в рамках комплексного изучения античной книжности, а не более простая, по существу, история слова, первоначальная мотивировка которого оказалась оттеснена и забыта. Несмотря на перемены в содержании и коннотативной сфере, некоторая преемственность в выражении “унциал” объясняется связующей ролью пассажа из Иеронимовых *Прологов*.