APPENDIX

Summary Descriptions of the *Wonders* Manuscripts

1. **London, BL, Cotton Vitellius A. xv, fols. 94–209**

   **Introductory Bibliography**


   **Provenance**

   Vitellius A. xv is made up of two separate codices, originally bound together in ‘about 1612’ while in the possession of the antiquarian, Sir Robert Cotton (1571–1631).1 The first codex (s. xii*m*ed) comprises fols. 4r–93v, discounting the prefixed leaves before the manuscript proper.2 It is known as the ‘Southwick Codex’ from an inscription on fol. 5r showing it once belonged to the priory there.3 The second codex is commonly known as the ‘*Beowulf* manuscript’ after its most famous text. Less commonly it is called the ‘Nowell Codex’ after Laurence Nowell (c. 1510/20–c. 1571), Anglo-Saxonist and collaborator of William Lambarde (1536–1601), whose signature is inscribed on the top of the first surviving page of the codex (fol. 94r).4 Nowell gave Lambarde his collection of

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4. Further information on Nowell can be found in a series of articles from the 1980s: P.M. Black, ‘Some New Light on the Career of Laurence Nowell the Antiquary’, *Antf* 62 (1982), 116–123;
manuscripts in 1567 and it is possible that Cotton subsequently bought the manuscript from its new owner.5  

Date: s. x/xi (origin unknown)

**Dimensions**

parchment (fire-damaged) c. 245 × 185 mm; written area c. 165–180 × 105–120 mm.

**Binding and Condition**

Vitellius A. xv was badly damaged in a fire at Ashburnham House at Westminster in October 1731. However, it is not listed in the subsequent House of Commons report on the fire as one of the volumes ‘destroy’d or injured’.6 A report of 1756 for the British Museum, excerpted in Hooper’s catalogue, says of the Vitellius manuscripts:

Besides the Damage done by the Fire to the mss of this Press, it hath suffered no less by the Carelessness of those that have been the first employed in preserving them, as well as by the extraordinary Dampness of the Place. The great Humidity, together with the Extension of the Hue which the Fire extracted from those Volumes wrote on Vellum, having rotted the Edges of most of them, defaced the Marks, and afforded both Lodging and Food to numberless Shoals of Worms and other Insects.7

The immediate method of preservation was to disbind wet vellum leaves then press them ‘with a clean Flannel’ before hanging ‘upon Lines, three or four leaves together’; burned vellum leaves, on the other hand, were ‘separated with an Ivory Folder’ so that

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6 House of Commons Committee on the Cottonian Library, *A Report from the Committee Appointed to View the Cottonian Library, and such of the Publick Records of this Kingdom, as they think proper, and to Report to the House the Condition Thereof, together with What They Shall Judge Fit to be Done for the Better Reception, Preservation, and More Convenient Use of the Same* (London, 1732), Appendix B, I.