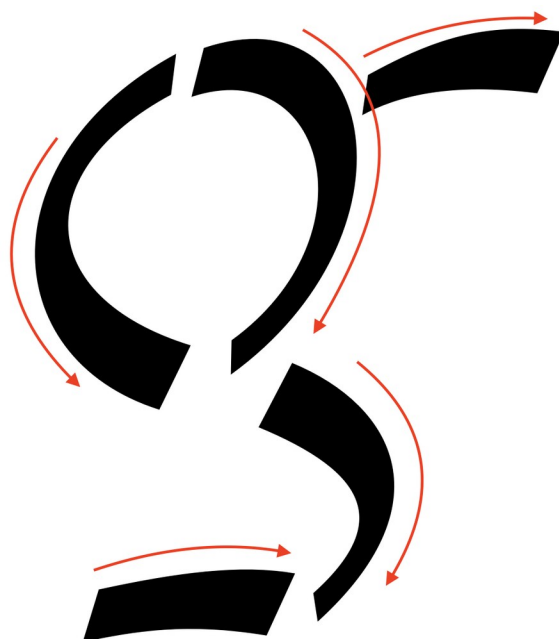
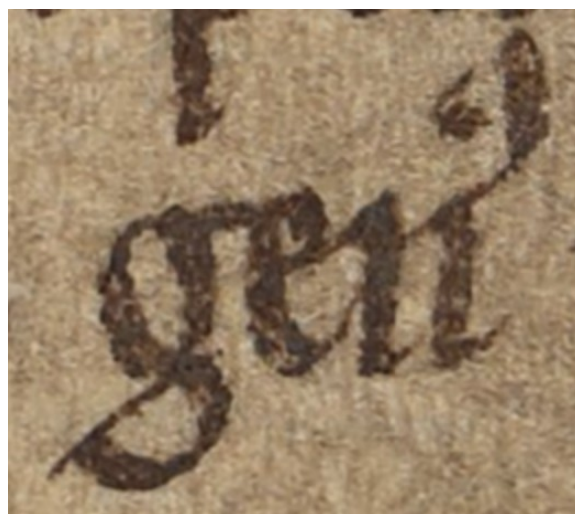


Comment on “On the glyph of LATIN LETTER CLOSED INSULAR G” by M. Everson and A. West
BY P. BAKER

My take on this is based on the ductus, or structure, the scribes of around the time of Orm used to produce a caroline g—not its resemblance to either of the common shapes of modern g. It typically consists of two rounded strokes to form a bowl on top (rather like parentheses), a down-stroke below on the right, a roughly horizontal stroke on the bottom (though it may curve up or down), and of course an ear at the upper right. Here’s an exploded view:



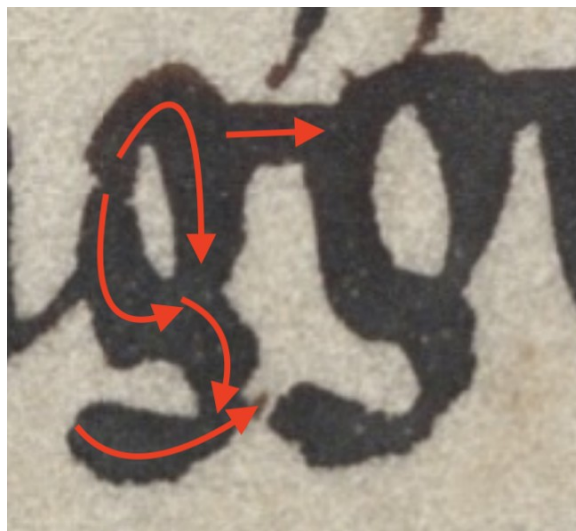
You find this basic pattern over and over in MSS, e.g. British Library Add. MS 11283 (a bestiary from the 4th quarter of the 12th century, with a nice flourish connecting the upper bowl to the bottom stroke—a common added feature):



or the less formal Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 34:

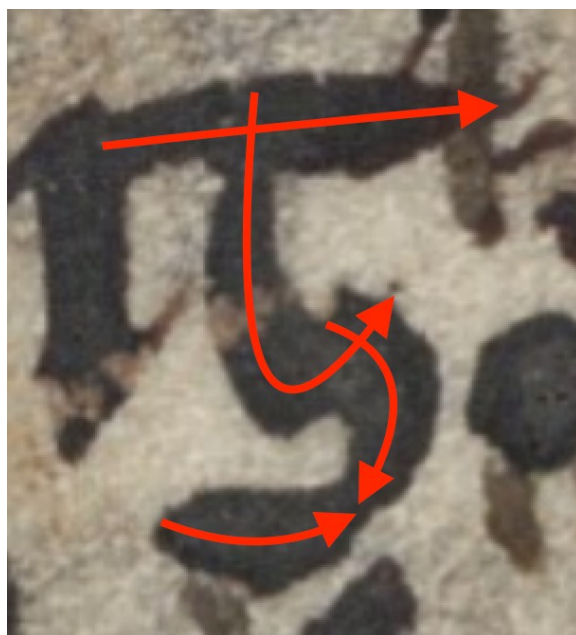


These are stylistically quite different from Orm's caroline g (which itself is rather variable, since Orm was nobody's idea of a great scribe), but structurally they are the same:



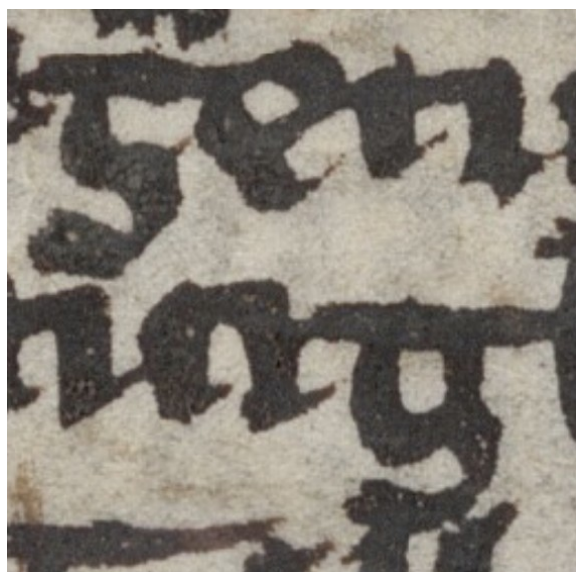
An important point to bear in mind about the caroline g is that modern editors generally represent it with whatever the default g is in a font: the two-storey g that's common in modern roman fonts or the kind that's often found in sans serif fonts and is the most common shape for U+0261. To represent it any other way would be quite odd.

Now Orm's insular g has three strokes more or less in common with his caroline g. It lacks the upper right-hand stroke and the ear, but it has a cross-bar:



The upper left stroke of this character is lengthened on either end (the upper end sometimes extends above the bar), taking up some of the space used by the (missing) right-hand stroke of the caroline g and giving it a kind of fishhook shape. Most scribes that make the insular g are after what Everson and West call an s-shape (and a more skillful scribe than Orm would make its separate strokes look like an unbroken curve), while with the caroline g they are after an o-like bowl on the top.

With Orm's g-with-bar, the new U+A7D1, the presence of that upper-right-hand stroke, making the o-shape on top, is definitive. The cross-stroke is obviously from the insular g (so the letter is a hybrid), but it is sitting on top of what is indisputably a caroline g.



As I mentioned, modern transcribers ordinarily represent the caroline g with the default g in a font. Thus the letter will be most intelligible to modern readers if it's rendered with a rather ordinary-looking g with cross bar added. That's what I was after with my rendering in Junicode. But another

way out of the current controversy might be simply to represent more accurately what we actually see in the MS, for example (an awkward first stab):

G

I'm not sure what the point is of the discussion of capitals. If we are going to talk about them, we ought to produce examples from Orm's autograph. The capital of the insular g is common, but I haven't found a certain example of the capital of the g-with-bar. Perhaps this is one, on fol. 9r:



If so, it is nothing more than an enlarged version of the lowercase form. The sound for which Orm used a caroline g doesn't occur in initial position in Old English words. It did in French, but words borrowed from French are still pretty rare in Orm's language, so you wouldn't expect to find many (or perhaps any) examples of a capital equivalent of the caroline g in this MS. Thus two at most of Orm's three g's have a paired capital.