The Cambridge Old English Reader

Old English was the language spoken by the Anglo-Saxons before the Norman Conquest. This is the first major new reader of Old English prose and verse to be published for thirty years. Designed for beginning students, it breaks new ground in two ways, first in its range of texts, and second in the degree of annotation it offers.

The fifty-six individual texts include the established favourites such as *The Battle of Maldon* and King Alfred's *Preface*, but also others which have not before been readily available, such as a complete Easter homily, Ælfric's life of Saint Æthelthryth and all forty-six Durham proverbs.

Modern English glosses for every prose-passage or poem are provided on the same page as the text, along with extensive notes. At the back, a succinct reference grammar is included, along with a guide to grammatical terminology. A comprehensive glossary lists and analyses all the Old English words that occur in the book. Headnotes to each of the six sections, and to every text, establish their literary and historical contexts, and illustrate the rich cultural variety of Anglo-Saxon England.

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Preface

This book was planned nearly ten years ago to meet the need for a reader in Old English which would offer teachers and students two things: first, a range of texts far wider than the narrow canon available in the primers and readers in print; second, texts edited to modern standards of 'userfriendliness', in the way of presentation, glossing and annotation. The established canon is still properly represented in this volume but the addition of many new texts will I hope open up areas of Anglo-Saxon literary life which are usually ignored by all but the specialist, and will enable teachers at all levels to plan more adventurous courses. The innovations in presentation recognise the problems of today's readers, especially students in the many universities where modularisation has resulted in the compression of courses and the consequent demand that students do more in a shorter time (and with less supervision). They recognise also that few new readers of Old English today will have had the sort of rigorous linguistic training whose lack some of us spend so much time lamenting. The decision to supply every text with same-page glosses, in addition to explanatory notes that are fuller than in most previous works of this kind, was not taken lightly – not least because of the inevitable technical complications involved. The great Victorian scholar Henry Sweet averred grumpily (in the preface to his edition of Alfred's translation of Gregory's *Regula pastoralis*, p. ix) that a student tackling an Old English text ought simply to sit down with a grammar and a dictionary and get on with it; but that time has long gone, as though it had never been. The aim of this Reader is both to enable students to read Old English texts and positively to encourage them to do so. There is no virtue, as far as I can see, in withholding anything that might help them.

At the start of this project, I was lucky to secure my then Cambridge colleague, Andy Orchard, as a collaborator, and the initial work was done by us in tandem. Eventually, however, it became clear that his many other commitments would delay indefinitely the completion of his portion of the work, and so I decided to go it alone. Nevertheless, his involvement at the planning stage was crucial. Much that may find favour with users of this volume is owed to him, and some of the material for Texts 27 and 29 is based on his original drafts. I thank him warmly for his contribution and hope that the result will not disappoint him too much.

Many other debts have been incurred during the final two years of preparation. First, I heartily thank Sarah Stanton of Cambridge University Press for her

great patience. The Press's official readers, including Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, offered immensely pertinent comments just when they were needed. Advice in connection with specific texts was freely given by many other scholars, including Elizabeth Baldwin, Debbie Banham, Carole Hough, Roy Liuzza, Lisi Oliver, Jane Page and Mary P. Richards. Simon Keynes kindly supplied me with *The Fonthill Letter* on disk. Jayne Carroll, Stuart Lee and Susan Rosser read and commented on specific sections. My colleagues at Nottingham have been using some of the texts in their teaching for several years and their input has been invaluable; Paul Cullen and David Parsons advised on place-names, Christina Lee answered a succession of queries, and Paul Cavill read all the headnotes, to their great improvement. Students in Cambridge, Leeds and Seattle, as well as Nottingham, have tried out many of the texts, and their comments have been an enormous help. The making of the combined Glossary was undertaken during a long summer by Robbie Dewa; Martin Blake, Gemma Hobbs and Tim Knebel worked assiduously to get the line references right. The University of Nottingham and the School of English Studies generously funded some of the production costs.

Last but not least, my friend and colleague Paul Remley of the University of Washington became a mentor during the final years of preparation, reading all the material, recommending and facilitating modifications, and tackling with patience and enthusiasm a succession of questions and problems relating to all aspects of the project. Without his wisdom, scholarship and sharp-sightedness, this book would be much the poorer; without his encouragement, it is unlikely that it would yet be finished.

Despite the best efforts of all the above named, some of my errors and infelicities will no doubt remain, and I trust that readers will let me know of them.

Nottingham, St Brice's Day, 2002

Abbreviations

(used in headnotes, text-notes, and Reference Grammar)

acc.	accusative (case)
adj.	adjective, adjectival
adv.	adverb, adverbial
antec.	antecedent (as noun or adjective)
art.	article
auxil.	auxiliary (verb)
BritE	British English
c.	approximately (Lat. *circa*)
cent.	century
cf.	compare (Lat. *confer*)
conj.	conjunction, conjunctive
correl.	correlative
dat.	dative (case)
def.	definite (article)
demons.	demonstrative (pronoun)
dir.	direct (object, statement)
fol(s).	folio(s) (referring to a manuscript leaf)
fut.	future (tense)
gen.	genitive (case)
imper.	imperative
imperf.	imperfect (tense)
impers.	impersonal
indecl.	indeclinable
indef.	indefinite (article, phrase)
indic.	indicative (mood of verb)
indir.	indirect (object, statement)
inf.	infinitive
infl.	inflected
instr.	instrumental (case)
interj.	interjection
intrans.	intransitive (verb)

Lat.	Latin
lit.	literal, literally
ME	Middle English (*c*. 1200–1500)
ModE	Modern English (*c*. 1500–)
n	note (as in 12/34n: 'see note to Text 12, line 34')
neg.	negative
nom.	nominative (case)
NT	New Testament
num.	numeral, numerical
obj.	object
OE	Old English
om.	omits, omitted
OT	Old Testament
part.	participle; particle
perf.	perfect (tense)
pers.	person (of verb); personal (pronoun)
phr(s).	phrase(s)
pl.	plural
pluperf.	pluperfect (tense)
poss.	possessive
prep.	preposition, prepositional
pres.	present (tense, participle)
pret.	preterite (tense)
pron.	pronoun, pronominal
r	recto (front of a manuscript leaf)
rel.	relative (particle, pronoun, clause)
rflx.	reflex, reflexive
sbj.	subjunctive (mood of verb)
sg.	singular
subj.	subject
subord.	subordinate (clause)
trans.	transitive (verb); translate(d), translation
v	verso (back of a manuscript leaf)
var.	variant
vb.	verb, verbal
WS	West Saxon (OE as written in Wessex)
<	is derived from
>	gives rise to
§	see numbered section in Reference Grammar

Additional abbreviations are used in the Glossary and in the same-page glosses which accompany the texts: see pp. 396–7.

Abbreviations used in bibliographies

JOURNALS AND SERIES

ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
ASPR	Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
EEMF	Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile
EETS	Early English Text Society (original series)
ELN	*English Language Notes*
ES	*English Studies*
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
LSE	*Leeds Studies in English*
MÆ	*Medium Ævum*
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
MLQ	*Modern Language Quarterly*
MS	*Medieval Studies*
Neophil.	*Neophilologus*
NM	*Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*
n.s.	new series
PMLA	The journal of the Modern Language Association
Settimane	*Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo* (Spoleto)
SN	*Studia Neophilologica*
SP	*Studies in Philology*
s.s.	supplementary series

BOOK TITLES

Cambridge Companion	*The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. M. R. Godden and M. Lapidge (Cambridge, 1991)
OE Elegies, ed. Klinck	*The Old English Elegies: a Critical Edition and Genre Study*, ed. A. L. Klinck (Montreal, 1992; 2nd edn 2001)
OE Literature, ed. Liuzza	*Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. R. M. Liuzza (New Haven and London, 2002)

Biblical reference

The names of books of the Bible referred to in headnotes and text-notes are abbreviated as indicated by the brackets:

OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
Gen(esis)	M(a)t(thew)
Ex(odus)	M(ar)k
Deut(eronomy)	L(u)k(e)
Lev(iticus)	J(oh)n
J(u)dg(es)	Rom(ans)
2 K(in)gs	2 Cor(inthians)
2 Sam(uel)	Gal(atians)
1 and 3 Esd(ras)	Eph(esians)
J(u)d(i)th	2 Thes(salonians)
Ps(alm)s	Heb(rews)
Eccl(esiastic)us	1 and 2 J(oh)n
Isa(iah)	Rev(elation)

The Bible known to the Anglo-Saxons was the Latin Vulgate and all modern English quotations are based on the 'Douay-Rheims' translation of this work. The numbering of the psalms follows Vulgate usage, which differs slightly from the system familiar to users of Protestant Bibles in English.

Introduction

The period of English history which we now call 'Anglo-Saxon' lasted from the mid-fifth century until about the end of the eleventh, after the Norman Conquest. Most surviving Anglo-Saxon manuscripts date from the latter part of that period and the majority of them are in Latin, but England was unique in early medieval Europe in having a thriving vernacular literature also – written in the language that we now call 'Old English', to distinguish it from the 'Middle English' stage of the evolving language, which culminated in the works of Chaucer and Malory.

THE TEXTS

The fifty-six vernacular reading texts selected for this book have been organised under forty headings and in six thematic sections, in a way which it is hoped will provide a coherent view of the range and variety of the preserved OE corpus. Section introductions give a brief overview of those themes and their significance in the history and the literature of the Anglo-Saxons. However, the sections are not mutually exclusive, and many of the texts could certainly claim a place in more than one. Each text within the sections has its own headnote, which sets it in its historical and literary context and alludes to any major critical problems involved in the editing or reading of it. In a few cases, where the narrative is particularly complex, a brief summary or paraphrase is given. Some points of linguistic and orthographical interest are noted also (see below), but these are inevitably brief, and readers with an interest in such matters should always turn to the standard editions for fuller details. The items of 'Further reading', given after each headnote, begin with available printed facsimiles and recommended editions, followed (in chronological order of publication) by useful critical works. The lists are necessarily short, but the works cited will themselves suggest avenues for further study. To help readers to trace themes, persons and topics treated in the headnotes, texts and text-notes, an index is provided on pp. 526–32.

Inevitably, the texts vary greatly in terms of the difficulties they present for the modern reader, according to complexity of syntax above all but also to matters of vocabulary and spelling. In editing the texts, I have been conscious that some of them will obviously be more suitable for tackling by new students of OE

than others, and consequently these have been rather more generously glossed and annotated; so too have the great 'canonical' texts, such as *The Battle of Maldon* and Alfred's preface to his translation of Gregory's *Cura pastoralis*, which are often a staple of courses in Anglo-Saxon studies. In my view, the most accessible first text for beginners will be no. 13 (After the Flood), closely followed by nos. 1 (In the Schoolroom) and 2 (A Personal Miscellany); and nos. 27 (Falling in Love) and 8 (England under Attack) present relatively few difficulties. Among the poems, nos. 33 (Truth is Trickiest), 35e (the 'Bookworm' riddle) and sections of 30 (*The Battle of Maldon*) may be good places to start. At the other end of the scale, nos. 18 (The Drowning of Pharaoh's Army), 31a and 31b (extracts from *Beowulf*) and 32 (*The Fight at Finnsburh*) will prove the most challenging.

SAME-PAGE GLOSSES AND NOTES

Each text is provided with same-page glosses, the glossed words being marked with a superscript circle (°) in the text. For poems, the glosses appear on the same line on the far right of the page; for prose pieces, such an arrangement was not feasible, and the glosses are in a separate register immediately beneath the texts, where the relevant line-numbers are highlighted in bold type. The glosses are a guide to interpretation only. In general, space allows for only a single modern equivalent for an Old English word and readers should not feel constrained to adopt this mechanically in a translation; other possibilities will be found in the integrated Glossary at the back of the book. In the case of compound words, including the riddle-like 'kennings', such as *wīgsmiþas*, which characterise OE poetic diction, the same-page gloss will sometimes consist of a literal translation within quotation marks ('war-smiths'); a modern interpretation may be given in parenthesis ('warriors'), but where it is not, readers can easily supply their own version – or keep the literal rendering, if this seems acceptable (and it often does). Where the glossed word has an unusual form, the more familiar form may be given after the translation, in italics and within square brackets. Some glosses are accompanied by brief grammatical information, in italics, using the abbreviating conventions of the main Glossary, but only in cases where the function of the word is crucial and/or may not be obvious. It should be noted that where words are repeated in a text, even if in a different grammatical form, they are *not* normally glossed again.

Words or phrases in the texts on which notes are given, at the bottom of the page, are enclosed between superscript angle-brackets. The relevant note is keyed by line-number, with the word or words under review (sometimes shortened by ellipsis)

given in bold type. The notes are as full as space has allowed and cover historical context, as well as matters of grammar, syntax and vocabulary. In the elucidation of problematical words or phrases, I have tried hard to avoid prescription, preferring to offer two (and occasionally more) alternative interpretations in those cases where certainty is impossible. My primary aim throughout has been to guide students towards an understanding of what the OE writers appear to *say*, not to insist on what they 'mean', nor merely to facilitate the production of a honed modern version which smoothes out all the wrinkles. Those wrinkles may be important, especially in poetry. It is curious that we applaud allusiveness, enigma, paradox and ambiguity when they are used by poets of later periods, yet when such features appear in OE poetry we see them all too often as problems in need of a solution. It cannot be stressed too much that there is no such thing as the 'perfect' translation, from OE or any other language. In this Reader, the modern renderings given in notes, glosses or Glossary should be taken as informed suggestions only and the user should not hesitate to reject the idiolect of this particular (British) editor, if it seems appropriate to do so.

Students should be especially aware of the problem of the 'etymological fallacy', whereby we assume that apparently familiar Old English words have the same meanings as their modern equivalents. That may indeed be the case, but there are many exceptions. The most notorious is Old English *mann*, which signifies a 'person', man *or* woman, not simply a male. Adjectives need particular care; *brūn*, which we recognise as modern 'brown', has a basic meaning of 'bright' or 'gleaming' and the sense of darkness or brownness is only secondary.

THE GLOSSARY

In the integrated Glossary on pp. 396–516, I have endeavoured to list every different word used in the texts, and every inflected or variant form of those words. These are sourced with text-number and, separated by a slash, line-number: thus 10/23 refers to line 23 in Text 10. I have not, however, included every single occurrence of those words and forms; to have done so would have increased the length of the Glossary greatly but offered little extra benefit to the user. Coverage of the less frequently occurring words is comprehensive, but in the case of much-used words (or the most used forms of them), a limited number of occurrences is listed; curtailment of entries is signalled by '*etc*.' at the end of a string of citations and by this the user will be warned that some texts may have been omitted altogether from the citations and that, even from the cited texts, some occurrences may have been omitted. Entries for the most frequently occurring words and their variations have been treated rather differently. In these cases, a representative sample of

occurrences only is given. Such entries are identifiable by the '*etc*.' which appears within square brackets at the end of the whole entry. The words thus treated include most of the demonstrative and personal pronouns, the 'pronoun-adjectives' (such as *manig* and *ōþer*), conjunctions, the more common adverbs, particles and prepositions, and most of the anomalous, modal and preterite-present verbs (such as *bēon-wesan*, *habban*, *weorþan*, *magan*, *sculan* and *willan*), along with a few others. The head-words are described, and their varying forms parsed, by means of the system of abbreviation explained at the start of the Glossary. For nouns, gender definition is accompanied by an indication of the pattern of declension which the noun follows, using a code keyed to the analysis of nouns in section B of the Reference Grammar. It is hoped that such information will help the serious student of language to analyse the texts successfully. In the Glossary, no attempt has been made to 'standardise' the spelling of OE words (on which see further below). Choices about which forms to prioritise (whether, say, the head-word should be *riht* or *ryht*) have been made on a pragmatic, word by word, basis – usually according to which form occurs most frequently in this collection of texts.

THE REFERENCE GRAMMAR

Unlike ModE (but like German and many other living languages), OE is a highly inflected language, in which the grammatical function of a word within a sentence is as often as not indicated by a variant ending (or inflection) on the word, and sometimes by a change in the stem-form of the word. One consequence of this system is that word order in an OE sentence can be more flexible than in ModE, in which the order of subject, verb and object rigidly dictates meaning (so that the victim in the statement 'the dog bit the man' is unambiguous). Furthermore, OE uses far fewer prepositions and other 'marker' words than does ModE, relying instead on the inflections. Thus 'the dog' is *se hund*, and to say '*to* the dog' we inflect both the word for 'the' and the word for 'dog', i.e. *þām hunde*; we do not need the preposition *tō* (though, confusingly, OE *can* use it also: *tō þām hunde*). It is not unusual today for students in universities to be required to learn OE simply by reading it, with little or no formal training in the grammar of the language, and this is possible; but it will be neither a simple nor a completely successful process unless some effort is made to understand the grammatical forms being used. The Reference Grammar is intended to provide a summary of the necessary information. A key to the grammatical terminology used in it (and throughout the Reader) is given on pp. 517–25. The recurrent problem of how to present the classification of noun inflections in all their variety has been tackled here by using a system based largely on gender. To classify in the traditional way, on

historical linguistic principles, would be to encroach on a subject better treated at length in books devoted to OE and Germanic philology (on which, see the section on 'Further study', below). The traditional categorisation of the declensions is nevertheless alluded to in the Reference Grammar; students will encounter it in the glossaries of many of the older, and a few of the more recent, editions of OE texts. Though the Reference Grammar has been designed to answer specific questions raised by the texts in this Reader, it is hoped that it may prove useful for students tackling other texts also.

THE EDITING OF THE TEXTS

The texts have been edited from the original manuscripts, from microfilms or from facsimiles. Published editions have been consulted constantly. In the transcription of the texts, the following minimal modifications have been made. Contractions (mainly *þ* for *þæt* and *ū* for *-um*, with a few others) have been expanded silently; so too has *7*, the 'Tironian' symbol for *and* or *ond* (the choice of vowel in the expansion depending on the conventions followed elsewhere in the particular manuscript). Proper names and the two principal names for the deity (*God* and *Drihten*) have been given initial capital letters, as have first words in sentences. Manuscript word-separation in general has been retained (so that, for instance, both *oþ þæt* and *oþþæt* may be found), but in cases where this might cause confusion (as in the apparently arbitrary separation of place-name elements in parts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*), compounding has been effected. Dates and hands of corrections to manuscripts, whether written over an erasure or inserted above the line or in the margin, are usually very hard to identify; those which appear to be by the copyist himself (probably checking his copy against the exemplar), or at least were made while the manuscript was being used during the Anglo-Saxon period, have been accepted silently. On emendation, see below.

Punctuation always presents problems for editors of OE texts, for little is used in the manuscripts and, when it does occur, it is not always helpful to the modern reader. Many editors justifiably fear that the imposition of modern conventions may interfere with the syntactical dynamics of the original, especially in poetry, but recent attempts to produce editions of poems with minimal punctuation have not seemed particularly helpful, especially for new readers. The decisions on punctuation made by this editor have been pragmatic ones, suited to the individual texts and the perceived needs of the reader. In general, more guidance in the way of commas is given in the 'beginners' texts' listed above than in the more advanced ones. In those cases in which the interpretation of a passage may vary significantly according to where we place a notional comma or full-stop, this is pointed out in the explanatory notes.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEXTS: SPELLING VARIATION

Varied and sometimes eccentric spelling is a fundamental characteristic of OE writings, and no attempt has been made in this book to present texts in 'standard' OE – that is, to convert word-forms to those of the dialect of Wessex (i.e. West Saxon) in the later OE period. This is indeed the dialect (or, more likely, range of dialects) in which most of our surviving texts are written, but it was itself subject to much variation. A complex and interrelated set of factors produced variety in the spelling of OE, primary among them being developments in pronunciation through time, with regional dialectal differences continuously making their major contribution also. The results may be seen in many of the texts. Within the space of a few lines in the extract from the OE *Apollonius of Tyre* used for Text 27, for instance, we find *cyning* for 'king' alternating with both *cyningc* (showing 'intrusive c' after *g*, a common feature of late OE) and the increasingly used 'syncopated' (i.e. contracted) form, *cyng*; and a check in the Glossary will show that the forms *cing*, *cincg* and even *kyning* occur in other texts. The scribe whose manuscript of *The Letter of Alexander* supplies our Text 28 wrote both *trēowum* and *trīowum* for 'trees' (here in the dative plural). This example nicely illustrates one of an important set of sound-changes – occurring initially in the spoken language, and eventually showing up in writing also – which took place in the WS dialect between the earlier King Alfred's time (late ninth century) and that of Abbot Ælfric (late tenth century), namely, the shift of the diphthong *io*/*īo* to *eo*/*ēo*. It is a fair bet that the early eleventh-century scribe of *The Letter of Alexander* (or possibly a predecessor), though copying from an exemplar which preserved the older spelling of the word for 'tree', with *īo*, was influenced by his own familiarity with the contemporary version using *ēo* to make modifications (perhaps unconsciously, certainly with no zeal for consistency). It is quite possible to draw up lists of word-forms by which to distinguish 'Alfredian' texts (those, at least, preserved in 'unmodernised' copies) from later ones. In the former (our Texts 5 and 6, for example), we expect to see *biþ*, *hwelc*, *mon*, *sīo* and *þǣm*; in the latter (such as Texts 4, 21a and 22), we will not be surprised to find *byþ*, *hwilc* (or *hwylc*), *man*, *sēo* and *þām*. We might want to add the syncopated form of the word for 'king', *cyng*, to our list; but the relationship alluded to above between variation through time (diachronism) and variation across geographical boundaries at a single time (synchronism) is a complex one. The form *cyng* is indeed increasingly common in the WS dialect after 1000, but not exclusively so, for it is a form found also in Mercian writings of the tenth century.

Another factor contributing importantly to variation in OE during the later years of the Anglo-Saxon period was the decay of the inflection system. The

end-product of this process would be, by the time of Chaucer and Malory, a language in which inflections had all but disappeared, though echoes of them long persisted in spelling (and sporadically in pronunciation also). A 'levelling' process was already under way long before the Norman Conquest, whereby, for instance, the dative ending *-um* came to be written *-an* or *-on*; the distinction between the verb-endings *-an*, *-on* and *-en* (markers of the infinitive, the past plural indicative and the plural subjunctive, respectively) became more and more blurred as well, so that all these inflections 'fell together'. Similarly, the distinction between the present-tense endings *-eþ* and *-aþ* (notionally singular and plural, respectively, in many classes of verb) became lost. Such changes, beginning in the spoken language and then reflected graphemically, were accelerated by the fact that stress was on the initial main syllable of an OE word (as still in ModE), with a consequent tendency for final syllables to be pronounced indistinctly. With word order increasingly regularised as we know it today (subject–verb–object), and with prepositions more and more used to express grammatical relationships previously signalled by a special inflection on the relevant noun, endings ceased to matter very much.

In the headnote to each text, major linguistic peculiarities (mainly related to spelling) are pointed out, but no attempt is made to present an exhaustive analysis. Readers will soon come to take 'irregularities' in their stride and to see them, not as an obstacle to the understanding of Old English, but as an integral part of the language.

EMENDATION

In the light of the foregoing remarks, it will be clear that wholesale emendation of texts to produce some sort of consistency cannot be justified. In this book, it has been kept to a minimum (with the exception of Text 1, where the fact that the OE material is based on a word-for-word gloss of a Latin text has made a certain amount of rearrangement of words desirable). Whenever a reasonable case can be made for an unusual or unexpected word-form having been the deliberate choice of a copyist, and assuming that it can be shown (albeit sometimes with difficulty) to 'make sense', it is retained. In some cases, however, emendation does seem desirable or is simply unavoidable. We can rarely be confident that we are restoring an 'original' reading. If another manuscript copy of the text in question happens to have been preserved (almost unheard of for the verse texts), that may be a good guide to the form which the emendation should take; otherwise it depends on personal editorial judgement. All emendations made in the texts are listed, along with manuscript details, on pp. 345–54.

READING ALOUD

The reading aloud of texts is highly recommended as a way of mastering the rhythms and idioms of the OE language – and the process may be undertaken with a minimum of initial preparation. Despite the orthographical instability described above, the Anglo-Saxons were innocent of the major dislocations between sound and spelling which were to become established during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and would produce the baffling inconsistencies which we know today. Broadly speaking, they spelled words as they spoke them. The notes on pp. xxix–xxxiv offer a rough guide to the probable sounds of OE in Wessex at the time when most of the preserved manuscripts were copied.

OLD ENGLISH POETRY

The poems included in this book are printed in a familiar way, line after line, but it is one of the curiosities of OE verse as written out in the manuscripts that, almost without exception, it is presented continuously, without line-breaks and with a minimum of punctuation (though recent work suggests that, in some cases, the varying amounts of space left between words may give a clue as to how a given line ought to be read). Yet editors rarely have much difficulty deciding how the poems should be presented on the printed page. This is because of the distinctive metrical structure of OE verse, which is based on a system of half-lines with alternating stressed syllables. A poetic line consists of two of these half-lines (often referred to as the *a* and *b* verses), which are separated by a 'caesura' (a notional pause, which we show distinctly in printing the poems) but at the same time are linked by alliteration – the repetition of initial sounds, as defined more precisely below. The system was part of a common Germanic legacy, deriving from the prominent phonetic characteristic of the Germanic languages to place stress on the initial syllable of a word; and because the speech rhythms on which OE metre is based are basically unchanged in the modern language, it will be found easy to grasp intuitively. Usually, each of the two half-lines, *a* and *b*, more or less equal in length, contains two strongly stressed syllables ('lifts') and a variable number, from two upwards, of lightly stressed ones (constituting a 'fall'). Alliteration links at least one stress, and more often both, in the *a*-verse with the first stress in the *b*-verse, making two or three alliterating stresses in all; the second stress in *b* does *not* alliterate. The alliterating syllable of the second half-line is called the 'head stave' and sets off the most emphatic word in that half-line. The alliteration may involve single initial consonants, identical double consonants (such as *sc*, *sp* or *cn*) or any pattern of initial vowels or diphthongs. These points are illustrated in

the first three complete lines of *The Battle of Maldon* (Text 30, lines 2–4), with the stressed syllables given here in bold type:

> **Hēt** þā **hyss**a hwæne **hors** for**l ætan**
> **feor āfȳs**an and **forð gang**an,
> **hicg**an tō **hand**um and tō **hig**e **gōd**um.
>
> '(He) ordered then each warrior to let go his horse/ send it far off and march forth/ to think about their hands and good courage.'

In each full line there are four main stresses, and in each case the consonants of the first three stressed syllables alliterate – *h* in the first line, *f* in the second and *h* again in the third (this repetition of *h* being coincidental); in each line, the fourth stressed syllable breaks from the alliterative pattern. It will be noted that prefixes do not count in the scheme: the *ā* of *āfȳsan* is ignored, for alliteration is always on a word that bears a primary stress and prefixes (including the most common one, *ge*) do not carry such stress. The next line in the poem is as follows:

> Þā þæt **Off**an **mæg ær**est on**funde**
>
> 'When the kinsman of Offa first realised . . .'

The 'regular' pattern of two main stresses on each side of the caesura is maintained, but only one of each pair alliterates, namely the vowels in the first syllables of *Offan* and *ærest*.

It is unlikely that the Anglo-Saxon poets had rules as to how many *un*stressed elements in a line there ought to be; there are usually between two and four. A nineteenth-century German scholar, Eduard Sievers, categorised regular OE poetic half-lines in just five main 'types' (with slightly varying alternatives within one of them), according to their stress patterns. Here Sievers's types are illustrated from *The Battle of Maldon*; in the schematic analysis, / represents a 'lift' (i.e. main stress) and x a 'fall', and a secondary stress is shown by \x:

Type A	**hors** for**lǣt**an (2)	/ x / x
Type B	and **eald**e **swurd** (47)	x / x /
Type C	and **forð gang**an (3)	x / / x
Type D	**grim gūð**plega (61)	/ / \x x
	bord ord onfēng (110)	/ / x \x
Type E	**ǣtt**rene **ord** (47)	/ x x /

Sometimes, however (and apparently for special effect), poets extend their lines beyond normal metrical limits, by accommodating three main stresses in each half-line, and a number of extra unstressed syllables; the lines are then said to be 'hypermetric'. *The Dream of the Rood* is a good poem in which to see such lines in action (Text 23 and headnote). Moreover, an initial sequence of unstressed syllables may be disregarded altogether in the metrical scheme; such a sequence is termed

an 'anacrusis'. In general, rhyme as we know it today (that is, end-rhyme) is absent from OE verse, but sporadic exceptions occur in *The Battle of Maldon* itself (see 30/271n) and in other poems (see 37/headnote), and there is one poem – known today appropriately enough as *The Rhyming Poem* – which rhymes throughout.

A poet composing alliterative lines needs an abundant word-hoard of synonyms in order to be able to provide the right one in the right place, and the OE poetical vocabulary is consequently very large, containing many words which are never found in prose and which seem to have been inherited from ancient Germanic tradition perpetuated. Examples are a much-used poetic word for 'sword', *mēce* (with *sweord* the usual word in prose), and one for 'battle', *gūð* (with *gefeoht* a frequent prose alternative). The poets used many words metaphorically, and often 'metonymically' – that is, using one aspect or attribute of something for the whole: thus *ceol* 'keel' is used for 'ship' and *lind* 'linden-wood' for 'shield' (for that was one of materials used for making shields). A substantial part of the poetic vocabulary is made up of compound words or two-word phrases composed from basic nouns and known as 'kennings'. Examples are *eardstapa*, literally 'earth-stepper', one who wanders across the earth, *bānhūs*, 'bone-house', 'a body', and *hronrād*, 'whale-road', the 'ocean'. In context, the effect of kennings is often far greater than the sum of their parts, because of the expanding associations they spark off in the mind of the reader or listener.

Old English poetry has traditionally been characterised as 'formulaic', in the sense that it exhibits a high amount of verbal and thematic repetition. Examples of the sharing of phrases or half-lines between different poems are noted in the Reader: see, for example, 30/163n and 37/34n. This fact in turn has led critics to link OE poetry to the sort of oral tradition (well known in other cultures) in which unlettered poets extemporise poems by building on and varying well-known basic patterns and structures. There is certainly no doubt that the poetry of the Anglo-Saxons derived both its language and its themes from a preliterate Germanic age, but the reworking of old material and the reuse of remembered lines are time-honoured aspects of written *literary* production, too, and the context in which the poetry preserved from Anglo-Saxon England seems to have been composed and recorded is indubitably that of a literate age.

As for the distinctive style of OE poetry, two techniques may be singled out here – understatement and variation. Understatement is used to great ironical effect by many poets; when it involves expressing negation by using an apparently affirmative phrase, it may be termed 'litotes'. In *The Wife's Lament*, for instance, the wife tells us she has *lēofra lȳt*, 'few loved ones' (40/16): she appears to mean none at all. Other examples may be seen in 18/9 and 49, and 38/31 and 54–5. Variation, in its simplest form, is the multiple statement (twice or more) of the same idea within a few lines; each variation augments the original idea or image

with extra qualities or attributes. In this example from *The Battle of Maldon*, the 'varied' words are italicised:

> Lēofsunu gemælde and his *linde* āhōf
> *bord tō gebeorge* (244–5)
>
> 'Leofsunu spoke and raised up his linden-wood, board as protection'

First Leofsunu's shield is called a 'linden-wood' – it is made from the wood of a lime tree; then the idea of the shield is varied, with a phrase which describes its function, and a synonym is used for the thing itself: it is 'a board for protection'. In this second example, there are two sets of variation – of verb (shown here in italics) and of subject (in boldface) – interwoven:

> Swā hī *bylde forð* **bearn Ælfrices**,
> **wiga wintrum geong**, *wordum mælde*,
> **Ælfwine** þā *cwæð*, hē *on ellen spræc* (209–11)
>
> 'thus he *urged* them onwards, the **son of Ælfric**, **warrior young in winters**, he *declared in words*, **Ælfwine** then *pronounced*, he *spoke with courage*'.

The variation on Ælfwine's speaking is fourfold: he (verbally) urges forth, declares in words, pronounces and speaks with courage; and he himself is described in three ways: as the son of Ælfric (for the announcement of lineage is a characteristic priority among heroic men), as a warrior young in years and, lastly, by name. There has only been one subject in these three lines, and one action, but variation has given us a multiple view. Such a technique makes great demands, of course, on the poet and his word-hoard – and on the modern translator, too.

FURTHER STUDY

A great variety of published materials is available for the would-be scholar of OE language and literature. The following works will provide a solid core on which to build.

Dictionaries

An excellent dictionary for general purposes is J. R. C. Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 4th edn with suppl. by H. D. Meritt (Cambridge, 1969). The monumental J. Bosworth and T. N. Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford, 1882–98; with *Supplement*, 1908–21, and *Enlarged Addenda and Corrigenda to the Supplement*, ed. A. Campbell, 1972), is still a mine of essential information but is unwieldy. It is being replaced, on microfiche initially and now CD, by the *Dictionary of Old English*, ed. A. Cameron *et al*. (Toronto, 1986–); the CD of letters

A–F is now available (2003). The address of the *Dictionary* is www.doe.vtoronto.ca. A survey of lexical scholarship will be found in A. Cameron, A. Kingsmill and A. C. Amos, *Old English Word Studies* (Toronto, 1983). For semantic study, *A Thesaurus of Old English in Two Volumes*, ed. J. Roberts and C. Kay with L. Grundy (London, 1995) is recommended.

Language

On grammar, essential reference works are A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959), and R. Hogg, *A Grammar of Old English* (Cambridge, 1992). Both are advanced works, based on historical principles; R. Lass, *Old English: a Historical Linguistic Companion* (Cambridge, 1994) offers a gentler ride. Accessible short grammatical surveys include R. Quirk and C. L. Wrenn, *An Old English Grammar*, 2nd edn (London, 1957); H. Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Primer*, rev. N. Davis, 9th edn (Oxford, 1953); and S. Moore and T. A. Knott, *The Elements of Old English*, 9th edn (Ann Arbor, MI, 1942). On all syntactical matters, B. Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1985), is indispensable. It is supplemented by B. Mitchell, *A Critical Bibliography of Old English Syntax to the end of 1984*, including Addenda and Corrigenda to 'Old English Syntax' (Oxford, 1990), and B. Mitchell and S. Irvine, 'A Critical Bibliography of Old English Syntax: Supplement', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 93 (1992), 1–56, and 97 (1996), 1–28, 121–61 and 255–78.

For readers interested in the history of the OE language and its subsequent development, recommended introductions are A. C. Baugh and T. Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 5th edn (London, 2002); C. Barber, *The English Language: a Historical Introduction* (Cambridge, 1993); and T. Pyles and J. Algeo, *The Origins and Development of the English Language*, 4th edn (Fort Worth, TX, 1992). Specialist studies will be found in *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, Vol. I: *The Beginnings to 1066*, ed. R. M. Hogg (Cambridge, 1992), and in subsequent volumes of this series. Of great interest for anyone with an interest in other contemporary Germanic languages, including Old Norse, is O. W. Robinson, *Old English and its Closest Relatives: a Survey of the Earliest Germanic Languages* (London, 1992).

Manuscripts and texts

For information on surviving manuscripts and the OE texts which they contain, collectively indispensable are N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957; repr. with suppl. 1990); H. Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (Tempe, AZ, 2001); A. Cameron, 'A List of Old English Texts',

in *A Plan for the Dictionary of Old English*, ed. R. Frank and A. Cameron (Toronto, 1973), pp. 25–306; and A. diP. Healey and R. L. Venezky, *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English*, with *The List of Texts and Index of Editions* (Toronto, 1980). Instructive background studies will be found in M. P. Richards, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: Basic Readings* (New York and London, 2001), and in P. Pulsiano and E. M. Treharne, eds., *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and their Heritage* (Aldershot, 1998).

Published editions of the texts are listed in Cameron (1973) and Healey and Venezky (1980), above, and in S. B. Greenfield and F. C. Robinson, *A Bibliography of Publications on Old English Literature* (Toronto, 1980), which offers also a classified list of the critical literature on the texts. The latter work, however, covers only the period until 1972, at which point the annual volumes of the periodical *Anglo-Saxon England* (1972–) become essential (for all the subjects covered in this survey), along with *Old English Newsletter* (1967–).

The literature and its background

For an overview of the literary corpus, a starting point is S. B. Greenfield and D. G. Calder, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature*, with a survey of the Anglo-Latin background by M. Lapidge (New York, 1986), and, for excellent introductory essays on a variety of literary and linguistic themes, *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. M. R. Godden and M. Lapidge (Cambridge, 1991) and *Reading Old English Texts*, ed. K. O'B. O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 1997). A good collection of essays both on general literary topics and on specific texts is *Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. R. M. Liuzza (New Haven and London, 2002). A range of survey essays will be found in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. P. Pulsiano and E. Treharne (Oxford, 2001). For the cultural and historical background, *The Blackwell Encylopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge *et al*. (Oxford, 1999) and D. Hill, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1981) are invaluable reference works. The individual texts in the Reader have their own bibliographies, but one work warrants mentioning here in connection with poetry: *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records: a Collective Edition*, edited in six volumes by G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie (New York, 1931–42), contains editions and valuable commentary on all the surviving OE poems.

Translations

Much OE literature is available in translation. Prose renderings of almost all the poetry are given in S. A. J. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, 2nd edn (London, 1995). Many translators have attempted renderings in verse, but students looking for

'cribs' to help with their study of the poems in this Reader should beware of these. They may be enjoyable enough to read, and in some cases they are highly accomplished, but they stray regularly from literal meaning and all too often from the original poet's intentions. As for the vast prose literature in OE, all the earlier (and some of the more recent) editions from the Early English Text Society give parallel modern translations. A useful range of important prose texts is translated in M. Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 2nd edn (London and Rutland, VT, 1993), and a good selection of both prose and verse is available in K. Crossley-Holland, *The Anglo-Saxon World: an Anthology* (Oxford, 1999).

On-line resources

On-line resources for students of OE literature multiply at a confusing rate, but one of the best gateways to them is through the Georgetown-based *Labyrinth Library: Old English Literature*; the address is: http://www.georgetown.edu/labyrinth/library/oe/oe.html. At the same university, Cathy Bell's *Old English Pages* comprise another valuable resource: http://www.georgetown.edu/cbell/oe/old_english.html.

The writing and pronunciation of Old English

WRITING

The Latin alphabet was introduced for the writing of OE by Christian monks soon after AD 600. It had twenty-three letters, lacking *v* (whose function was shared with *u*), *j* (which was not distinguished from *i*), and *w*. The letters *q*, *x* and *z* were used rarely in OE (though *x* and *z* do appear in some words taken from Greek), and *k* was little used until towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period (*c* being written instead). The letter-shapes in the manuscripts are mostly those we recognise today, though the handwriting used by Anglo-Saxons was continuously evolving over the centuries, a fact which often enables palaeographers to date manuscripts with a fair degree of precision. The shapes of *e*, *f*, *g*, *r* and *s* can cause particular difficulties for those reading the manuscripts, especially when in ligature, i.e. joined to other letters. For instance, *r*, with a descending tail, may resemble a *p*, and *s* is often written in a long form. The letter *g* was usually shaped ȝ, a symbol we call 'yogh'; most editors of OE texts today (including this one) simply print *g*.

The letters of Latin were augmented by four further characters – either invented, or borrowed from the runic alphabet, which had long been in use among the Germanic peoples, mainly for inscriptions. They are (with 'capital' forms in brackets):

þ (Þ) for 'th', a runic character with the name *þorn* ('thorn');
ð (Ð) also for 'th', formed by adding a cross-stroke to a *d* written in the Irish way, with a round back, and known by the Anglo-Saxons as *ðæt*, but today as 'eth'. Thorn and eth were used without distinction: a word such as *siþþan* might also be written *siððan* or even *siþðan* or *siðþan*.
æ (Æ) for a 'fronted' a-sound (see below); known by the Anglo-Saxons as *æsc* ('ash').
ƿ (Ƿ) for 'w', a runic character with the name *wynn* ('joy'). In most modern printing of OE, as in this book, wynn is replaced by *w*.

These new characters were not in full use among the Anglo-Saxons until the end of the seventh century. Until then, *th* or *d* may be found instead of *ð* or *þ* (the latter taking longer to become established than *ð*), *ae* or *e* for *æ*, and *uu* or *u* for *w*. For examples, see Text 20a. In manuscripts written at the close of the Anglo-Saxon

period, too, under Norman French influence, the digraph *th* is increasingly found again.

PRONUNCIATION

The relationship between sound and symbol is consistent in OE, which thus differs from the notorious modern language. *All* letters should be pronounced, including each character in pairs of doubled consonants, such as *dd* or *ll*, and each consonant in pairs such as *cn*, *gn*, *hn*, *hl*, *wl*, *hr* and *wr*. Final *-e* is always sounded (and pronounced like the *e* in ModE *met*). Most **consonants** may be pronounced as in ModE, and as in the modern language, so in OE *f*, *s* and *þ*/*ð* (i.e. 'th') may be pronounced 'voiced' (with the vocal cords vibrating) or 'unvoiced'; see below. The consonants *c* and *g* give some trouble, because they may be pronounced 'hard' (velar or guttural) or 'soft' (palatalised); guidance is given below. In the Reference Grammar and Glossary only, the distinction is marked by the use of a small dot over the 'soft' versions – *ċ* and *ġ*. The main thing to remember about **vowels** is that they are 'pure', which poses a problem for speakers of British and some other varieties of English, who tend to slur them. Vowels may be 'short' or 'long' – and the difference can make a difference to meaning (as between the verb *mæġ* and the noun *mǣġ*); for the convenience of learners, in this book all long vowels are marked with a macron, as in *ē*. It should be noted, however, that this is *not* an OE symbol and does not appear in the manuscripts; nor is it used in most printed editions of OE texts, and students quoting OE in written work should not normally reproduce it (or the 'dot' described above). The **diphthongs** (two vowels combined) can be produced simply by saying the constituent vowels in quick succession, as a continuous and shifting (but not distinctly double) sound.