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Richard Marsden
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The Cambridge Old English Reader

This reader remains the only major new reader of Old English prose and verse to have appeared during the past forty years. The second edition is extensively revised throughout, with the addition of a new 'Beginning Old English' section for newcomers to the Old English language, along with a new extract from *Beowulf*.

The fifty-seven individual texts include established favourites such as *The Battle of Maldon* and Wulfstan's *Sermon of the Wolf*, as well as others not otherwise readily available, such as an extract from *Apollonius of Tyre*.

Modern English glosses for every prose-passage and poem are provided on the same page as the text, along with extensive notes. A succinct reference grammar is appended, along with guides to pronunciation and 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 text sections, and to every individual text, establish their literary and historical contexts, and illustrate the rich cultural variety of Anglo-Saxon England. This second edition is an accessible and scholarly introduction to Old English.

RICHARD MARSDEN is Emeritus Professor of Old English at the University of Nottingham. In addition to numerous articles on Old English literature and language and the history of the Latin Bible, he has published *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1995) and an edition of *The Old English Heptateuch* for the Early English Text Society (2008).

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RICHARD MARSDEN

*School of English Studies
University of Nottingham*



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Preface to the second edition

The Cambridge Old English Reader has become a staple resource in many university departments and among private users during the ten years since its publication, and a second edition now seems overdue. The most significant innovation is a new initial section, 'Beginning Old English'. This is not intended to be a crash course in the language but is a graded introduction to reading it, designed to enable beginners to tackle the main texts without recourse to a separate Old English primer. It is self-contained, with vocabulary and keys.

The main section of texts has now been expanded by the addition of a third extract from *Beowulf*, featuring Grendel's last attack on Heorot (Text 31a); its absence from the first edition was lamented by many users. All the original texts have been retained. One of the features of the first edition that was especially welcomed was the wide range of material offered and I know that all of the texts have been used, to varying degrees, either in undergraduate classes or in MA seminars. Teachers in the latter have particularly valued textual access to specific cultural aspects of the Anglo-Saxon world. Nevertheless, all the original texts have been revised. Corrections and emendations have been made, extra glosses have been added and notes have in many cases been rewritten. In making revisions, I have frequently been influenced by the views, published or unpublished, of fellow Anglo-Saxonists, which I acknowledge gratefully. I have taken the opportunity also to make additions and revisions to both the Reference Grammar and the Glossary, and to update the lists of further reading, though these must remain very selective.

I am grateful to the many users of the Reader who have contacted me over the years (from as far afield as Japan and South Africa, as well as the UK and the USA) with comments, queries or corrections. Colleagues, too many to mention, have given me invaluable feedback. I owe particular thanks to Jennifer Neville of Royal Holloway, University of London, and Paul Cavill of the University of Nottingham for their wise and encouraging criticism.

Norfolk, 2014

Preface to the first edition

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,

Preface to the first edition xi

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

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. <i>circa</i>)
cent.	century
cf.	compare (Lat. <i>confer</i>)
conj.	conjunction, conjunctive
correl.	correlative
dat.	dative (case)
def.	definite (article)
demons.	demonstrative (pronoun)
dir.	direct (object, statement)
f., fem.	feminine
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, inflection
instr.	instrumental (case)
interj.	interjection
intrans.	intransitive (verb)
Lat.	Latin

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lit.	literal, literally
m., masc.	masculine
ME	Middle English (c. 1200–1500)
ModE	Modern English (c. 1500–)
n	note (as in ‘12/34n’: ‘see note to Text 12, line 34’)
n., neut.	neuter
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; pronounce(d), pronunciation
r	recto (front of a manuscript leaf)
rel.	relative (particle, pronoun, clause)
rflx.	reflex, reflexive
sbj.	subjunctive (mood of verb)
sg.	singular
str.	strong (verb)
subj.	subject
subord.	subordinate (clause)
trans.	transitive (verb); translate(d), translation
v	verso (back of a manuscript leaf)
var.	variant, variation
vb.	verb, verbal
wk.	weak (verb)
WS	West Saxon (OE as written in Wessex)
<	is derived from
>	gives rise to

xiv *List of abbreviations*

§ see numbered section in Reference Grammar
? conjectured form or translation

Additional abbreviations are used in the Glossary and in the same-page glosses which accompany the texts: see pp. 451–2.

Abbreviations used in Further Reading lists

JOURNALS AND SERIES

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

BOOK TITLES

<i>Cambridge Companion</i>	<i>The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature</i> , ed. M. R. Godden and M. Lapidge, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2013)
<i>OE Literature</i> , ed. Liuzza	<i>Old English Literature: Critical Essays</i> , 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(es)is	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(alms)	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 the end of the eleventh, when the Normans arrived. Most surviving Anglo-Saxon manuscripts date from the latter part of this period and many of them are in Latin, but England was unique in early medieval Europe in having a thriving vernacular literature also. This was written in what we now call ‘Old English’ (OE), to distinguish it from the ‘Middle English’ stage of the evolving language, which culminated in the works of Chaucer and Malory. The fifty-seven reading texts which make up the major part of this book have been chosen to illustrate the range and variety of OE literature.

BEGINNING OLD ENGLISH

The first section of the book, ‘Beginning Old English’, is designed for those with little or no prior knowledge of OE. It is a graded introduction to the reading of the language, based on the belief that, with suitable guidance, this skill can be learned ‘on the job’. It is self-contained, with all vocabulary and translations provided, though the vocabulary from the practice sentences and practice texts is also integrated in the main Glossary. Help with pronunciation is given by means of an imitative system, despite its inevitable flaws (it cannot of course completely accommodate all the huge variety of ‘Englishes’ spoken by users of the book). Learners cannot be expected to master the international phonetic alphabet before they even begin.

After a ‘Getting started’ section featuring short extracts from *Beowulf*, five groups of practice sentences follow, along with essential grammatical notes. All the sentences are taken from original OE texts, chosen for their relative simplicity and their usefulness in illustrating specific aspects of the language. Several have been edited or emended and some spellings have been adjusted. Each sentence is provided with a word-for-word literal translation, as well as an idiomatic translation and notes. A progress test follows the section of practice sentences, and then two practice texts. Keys to all the OE material are given. Finally, a ‘Beginning poetry’ section gives an introduction to the reading and understanding of OE verse.

There are no shortcuts to language learning. The ‘secret’ is repetition, followed by more repetition. Time spent carefully mastering the content of ‘Beginning Old English’ will be amply rewarded when the student moves on to the main texts.

THE TEXTS

The fifty-seven reading texts are organised under forty headings and arranged in six themed sections, in a way which is intended to provide a coherent guide to the preserved corpus of OE literature. Section introductions give a brief overview of the themes and their significance in the history and the literature of the Anglo-Saxons. The sections are not mutually exclusive, however, and many of the texts could certainly claim a place in more than one of them.

Each text within the sections has its own headnote, which sets it in its historical and literary contexts and alludes to any major critical problems involved in the editing or reading of it. In a few cases, where a text's narrative is particularly complex, a brief summary or paraphrase is given. Some points of linguistic and orthographical interest are noted also, but these are inevitably brief, and readers should turn to the standard editions for fuller information. Details of these editions are given in the lists of Further Reading which follow each headnote, along with printed or online facsimiles and (in chronological order of publication) useful critical works. The reading lists are necessarily short, but the works cited there will themselves open 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. 579–85.

The texts vary greatly in the difficulties they present to the modern reader in respect of syntax and vocabulary. In editing the texts, I have been conscious that some of them will 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 established 'canonical' texts, such as *The Battle of Maldon* and Alfred's letter prefacing his translation of Gregory's *Cura pastoralis*, which even today (for better or for worse) are often a staple of courses in Anglo-Saxon studies. The most accessible first text for beginners – after they have carefully worked through 'Beginning Old English' – will be Text 13 (After the Flood), closely followed by Texts 1 (In the Schoolroom) and 2 (A Personal Miscellany); Texts 8 (England under Attack) and 27 (Falling in Love) present relatively few difficulties also. Among the poems, Texts 33 (Truth is Trickiest) and 35e (the 'Bookworm' riddle) and the longer Text 30 (*The Battle of Maldon*) are good places to start.

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. It is important to note that the

xviii *Introduction*

glosses are a guide to interpretation only. In general, space allows for only a single modern equivalent for an Old English word to be given but 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 (‘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 very often it does). Where the glossed word has an unusual form, a 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 a word is repeated in a text, even if in a different grammatical form, it is *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 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. One of the most obvious is Old English *mann*, which usually 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. 451–570 every different word used in the texts is listed, 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. However, every single occurrence of those words and forms is not included; to do so would increase the length of the Glossary greatly but offer 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 this will warn the user 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 headword 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

Most students in universities these days, as well as those working independently, are likely to be setting out to read OE texts with little or no formal training in the grammar of the language. The good news is that this is perfectly feasible. It is true that OE, unlike ModE (but like German and many other living languages), is highly inflected, so that the grammatical function of a word within a sentence is as often as not indicated by a variant ending (or inflection) on the word. This means that word order in OE can be far more flexible than in the modern language (in which the rule

‘subject–verb–object’ must be rigidly followed) and can do without many of the prepositions and marker words that ModE relies on. Yet much OE syntax is in fact remarkably like that of ModE and some calculations have suggested that two-thirds of the sentences found in OE prose can be understood readily without any attention being paid to inflections.

Moreover, by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period many scribes were finding OE grammar a bit of a challenge. The language was already simplifying and was poised for a rapid acceleration of that process after the Norman Conquest, which would see most noun inflections discarded, along with a mass of other complexities.

Undoubtedly, many of the intricacies of OE grammar can be ignored – but not all of them, and not all of the time. Some attention to the varying forms of OE words is essential, such as in relation to the definite article, which today is conveniently levelled to invariable ‘the’ but then had a complex array of forms. As part of the learning process, paradigms of pronouns, verbs and so on can be used to reveal the great similarities, as well as some differences, between the old and modern languages. Learning grammar by heart is not necessary, but it does need to be recognised.

The Reference Grammar is intended to provide for that need. It is set out systematically, and the main paradigms of nouns, pronouns, verbs, etc, are supplemented with notes in which material from the Reader texts is used for illustration. 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 mainly 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.

A key to the grammatical terminology used in the Reference Grammar (and throughout the Reader) is given on pp. 571–8.

THE EDITING OF THE TEXTS

The texts in the Reader have been edited from the original manuscripts, from microfilms or from facsimiles. Published editions have regularly been consulted. 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 *ȝ*, the ‘Tironian’ symbol for *and* or *ond*; the choice of vowel given in the expansion depends on the choice of vowel before *n* made 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 *op þæt* and *opþæt* 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.

It is often very hard to determine when corrections to manuscripts were made. Those which appear to be by the copyist himself (probably checking his copy against the exemplar), or at least to have been 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 occasional 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 entirely in ‘standard’ OE – that is, to convert word-forms to those of the West Saxon dialect of Wessex in the later OE period. This is indeed the dialect 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 a 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 dative plural ‘trees’.

The latter example nicely illustrates one of an important set of sound-changes – beginning in the spoken language and eventually showing up in writing also – which took place in the WS dialect between 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 *bīþ*, *hwelc*, *mon*, *sīo* and *pēm*; in the latter (such as Texts 4, 21a and 22), we will not be surprised to find *byþ*, *hwilc* (or *hwylc*), *man*, *sēo* and *pām*. 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 usually on the initial main syllable of an OE word (as it still is 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, except in ‘Beginning Old English’ and in Text 1. In the latter case, that fact that the OE material is based on a word-for-word gloss of a Latin text has made some changes inevitable. 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, nevertheless, emendation does seem desirable or is simply unavoidable. We can rarely be confident that we are restoring an ‘original’ reading, however. If another manuscript copy of the text in question happens to have been preserved (not unusual for prose texts but almost unheard of in verse), 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. 393–402.

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 testing (though mostly logical) inconsistencies which we know today. Broadly speaking, they spelled words as they spoke them. In ‘Beginning Old English’, some guidance on pronunciation is given. The section on ‘The writing and pronunciation of Old English’ on pp. 403–8 offers a more comprehensive survey of the sounds of OE as probably heard in Wessex at the time when most of the preserved manuscripts were copied.

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, inexpensive 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 available online through the ‘Germanic Lexicon Project’ at lexicon.ff.cuni.cz.

‘Bosworth–Toller’ is being replaced by the online *Dictionary of Old English*, ed. A. Cameron, A. C. Amos, A. diP. Healey *et al.* (Toronto, 1986–), whose entries are linked to the online *Oxford English Dictionary*. The letters A–G are complete. It is also available on microfiche and CD. The foundation for the *Dictionary of Old English* project is the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, ed. A. diP. Healey with J. P. Wilkin and X. Xiang (2009), a searchable database of all known texts in OE. Many university libraries subscribe to both the *Dictionary* and the *Corpus*; there is also limited free access for individuals. The address of the *Dictionary* and *Corpus* is www.doe.utoronto.ca. A CD of the entire corpus is also available.

For semantic study, *A Thesaurus of Old English in Two Volumes*, ed. J. Roberts and C. Kay with L. Grundy (London, 1995), is essential, and a fully searchable online version is freely available at oldenglishthesaurus.arts.gla.ac.uk. The OE material from the thesaurus is integrated with the later history of English in the *Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary. With additional material from A Thesaurus of Old English*, ed. C. Kay, J. Roberts, M. Samuels and I. Wotherspoon (Oxford, 2009).

Language

On grammar, essential reference works are A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959), and R. Hogg, *A Grammar of Old English*, vol. I: *Phonology* (Cambridge, 1992) and, with R. D. Fulk, vol. II: *Morphology* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA, 2011). These 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, old but still useful, 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 syntactical matters, B. Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1985), is exhaustive.

For readers interested in the history of the OE language and its subsequent development, there are numerous works available. Popular 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 essays 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. For anyone with an interest in other contemporary Germanic languages, including Old Norse, and their relationship with OE, O. W. Robinson, *Old English and its Closest Relatives: a Survey of the Earliest Germanic Languages* (London, 1992) is recommended.

Manuscripts and texts

Indispensable for information on surviving manuscripts and the OE texts which they contain are N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957; repr. with suppl. 1990) and H. Gneuss and M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: a Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Toronto, 2014). Instructive background studies will be found in *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: Basic Readings*, ed. M. P. Richards (New York and London, 2001) and *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and their Heritage*, ed. P. Pulsiano and E. M. Treharne (Aldershot, 1998).

Editions of the OE texts featured in this Reader are given in the individual reading lists, 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), is of enduring value, containing editions and valuable commentary on all the surviving OE poems.

The literature and its background

An essential collection of authoritative essays on Old English literature and its cultural background is *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. M. R. Godden and M. Lapidge, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2013). H. Magennis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge, 2011) includes a survey of the Latin context of OE literature and its ‘afterlives’ in later periods. D. Donoghue, *Old English Literature: a Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2004) explores the literature in respect of five main cultural themes. More comprehensive is R. D. Fulk and C. M. Cain, *A History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 2003). Also recommended is *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, CT, and London, 2002). A range of survey essays is offered in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. P. Pulsiano and E. Treharne (Oxford, 2001).

For the cultural and historical background, see especially *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd edn, ed. M. Lapidge *et al.* (Oxford, 2013) and D. Hill, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1981).

Translations

Much OE literature is available in translation. For the poetry, there are prose renderings of almost the whole corpus in S. A. J. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, 2nd edn (London, 1995). Other translators have attempted modern verse renderings (many of which are online), but students looking to these as ‘cribs’ to help with their study of the poems in this Reader should beware. They may be enjoyable enough to read, and in some cases they are highly accomplished, but most stray widely from the literal meaning and all too often they show a shocking misunderstanding of OE.

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, as do those in the series *Anglo-Saxon Texts*, published by Boydell and Brewer. 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, 2009).

Bibliography

The bibliography of OE studies is vast and growing. For a classified survey of works on the literature published up to 1972, see S. B. Greenfield and F. C. Robinson, *A Bibliography of Publications on Old English Literature* (Toronto, 1980). From 1972 onwards, the comprehensive listings in the annual volumes of the periodical *Anglo-Saxon England* (1972–2012) and in the *Old English Newsletter* (1967–) have been essential. For online access to the latter resource, see the next section.

Online resources

Online resources for students of OE literature have mushroomed in recent years, but not all of them endure and some will be found to be seriously outdated. One of the most helpful sites is that of the publication *Old English Newsletter*:

www.oenewsletter.org

It offers a wide range of links to further sites dealing with language (including the dictionary resources listed above and online OE exercises), history, manuscript

Cambridge University Press
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Richard Marsden
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

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facsimiles and bibliography. Users should be warned however, that no site is able to keep its information constantly up to date.

Many of the world's libraries, including the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the British Library in London, are now painstakingly digitising their manuscripts and making them freely available online. Where the manuscripts used for the texts in this Reader are already available, this is indicated in the Further Reading lists. Users will be able to locate the texts within the manuscripts by referring to the details of foliation given for each text in the 'Manuscripts and textual emendations' section on pp. 393–402.