The Cambridge History of the English Language is the first multi-volume work to provide a full account of the history of English. Its authoritative coverage extends from areas of central linguistic interest and concern to more specialised topics such as personal and place names. The volumes dealing with earlier periods are chronologically based, whilst those dealing with more recent periods are geographically based, thus reflecting the spread of English over the last 300 years.

Volume I deals with the history of English up to the Norman Conquest, and contains chapters on Indo-European and Germanic, phonology and morphology, syntax, semantics and vocabulary, dialectology, onomastics and literary language. Each chapter, as well as giving a chronologically-oriented presentation of the data, surveys scholarship in the area and takes full account of the impact of developing and current linguistic theory on the interpretation of the data. The chapters have been written with both specialists and non-specialists in mind; they will be essential reading for all those interested in the history of English.

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY
OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GENERAL EDITOR Richard M. Hogg

VOLUME I The Beginnings to 1066
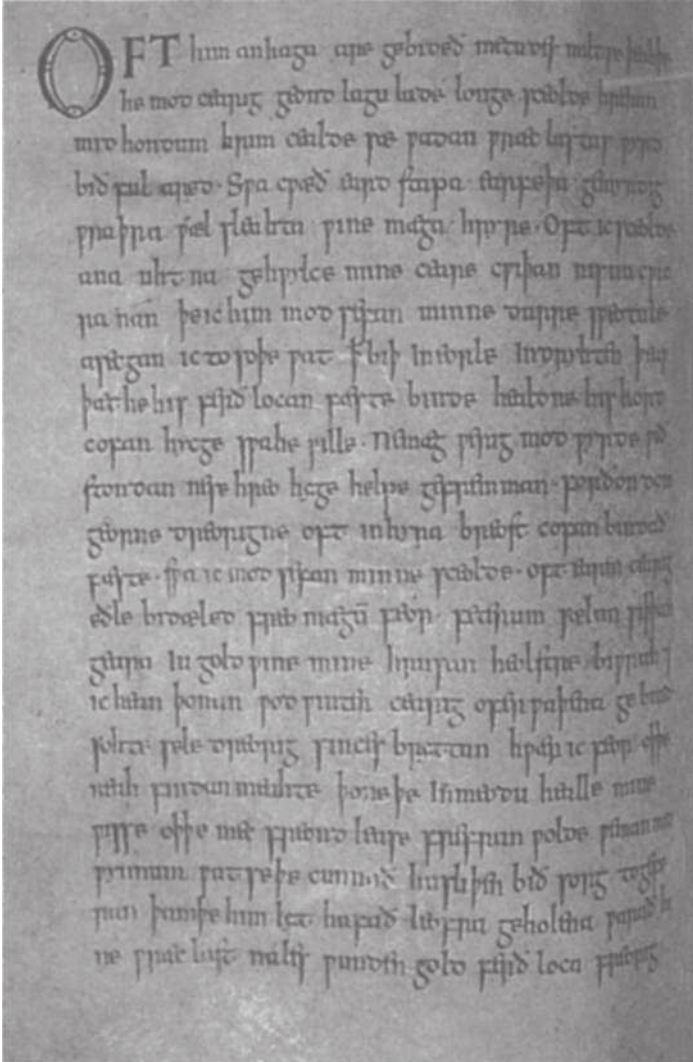
Facsimile page from the Exeter Book of Anglo-Saxon poetry
(Exeter D. & C. MS 3501, s. x): *The Wanderer*, 76v, lines 1–33.
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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

VOLUME I *The Beginnings to 1066*

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

Although it is a topic of continuing debate, there can be little doubt that English is the most widely-spoken language in the world, with significant numbers of native speakers in almost every major region – only South America falling largely outside the net. In such a situation an understanding of the nature of English can be claimed unambiguously to be of world-wide importance.

Growing consciousness of such a role for English is one of the motivations behind this History. There are other motivations too. Specialist students have many major and detailed works of scholarship to which they can refer, for example Bruce Mitchell's *Old English Syntax*, or, from an earlier age, Karl Luick's *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*. Similarly, those who come new to the subject have both one-volume histories such as Barbara Strang's *History of English* and introductory textbooks to a single period, for example Bruce Mitchell and Fred Robinson's *A Guide to Old English*. But what is lacking is the intermediate work which can provide a solid discussion of the full range of the history of English both to the anglicist who does not specialise in the particular area to hand and to the general linguist who has no specialised knowledge of the history of English. This work attempts to remedy that lack. We hope that it will be of use to others too, whether they are interested in the history of English for its own sake, or for some specific purpose such as local history or the effects of colonisation.

Under the influence of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, there has been, during this century, a persistent tendency to view the study of language as having two discrete parts: (i) synchronic, where a language is studied from the point of view of one moment in time; (ii) diachronic, where a language is studied from a historical perspective. It might therefore be supposed that this present work is purely diachronic.

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But this is not so. One crucial principle which guides The Cambridge History of the English Language is that synchrony and diachrony are intertwined, and that a satisfactory understanding of English (or any other language) cannot be achieved on the basis of one of these alone.

Consider, for example, the (synchronic) fact that English, when compared with other languages, has some rather infrequent or unusual characteristics. Thus, in the area of vocabulary, English has an exceptionally high number of words borrowed from other languages (French, the Scandinavian languages, American Indian languages, Italian, the languages of northern India and so on); in syntax a common construction is the use of *do* in forming questions (e.g. *Do you like cheese?*), a type of construction not often found in other languages; in morphology English has relatively few inflexions, at least compared with the majority of other European languages; in phonology the number of diphthongs as against the number of vowels in English English is notably high. In other words, synchronically, English can be seen to be in some respects rather unusual. But in order to understand such facts we need to look at the history of the language; it is often only there that an explanation can be found. And that is what this work attempts to do.

This raises another issue. A quasi-Darwinian approach to English might attempt to account for its widespread use by claiming that somehow English is more suited, better adapted, to use as an international language than others. But that is nonsense. English is no more fit than, say, Spanish or Chinese. The reasons for the spread of English are political, cultural and economic rather than linguistic. So too are the reasons for such linguistic elements within English as the high number of borrowed words. This History, therefore, is based as much upon political, cultural and economic factors as linguistic ones, and it will be noted that the major historical divisions between volumes are based upon the former type of events (the Norman Conquest, the spread of printing, the declaration of independence by the U.S.A., rather than the latter type.

As a rough generalisation, one can say that up to about the seventeenth century the development of English tended to be centripetal, whereas since then the development has tended to be centrifugal. The settlement by the Anglo-Saxons resulted in a spread of dialect variation over the country, but by the tenth century a variety of forces were combining to promote the emergence of a standard form of the language. Such an evolution was disrupted by the Norman

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Conquest, but with the development of printing together with other more centralising tendencies, the emergence of a standard form became once more, from the fifteenth century on, a major characteristic of the language. But processes of emigration and colonisation then gave rise to new regional varieties overseas, many of which have now achieved a high degree of linguistic independence, and some of which, especially American English, may even have a dominating influence on British English. The structure of this work is designed to reflect these different types of development. Whilst the first four volumes offer a reasonably straightforward chronological account, the later volumes are geographically based. This arrangement, we hope, allows scope for the proper treatment of diverse types of evolution and development. Even within the chronologically oriented volumes there are variations of structure, which are designed to reflect the changing relative importance of various linguistic features. Although all the chronological volumes have substantial chapters devoted to the central topics of semantics and vocabulary, syntax, and phonology and morphology, for other topics the space allotted in a particular volume is one which is appropriate to the importance of that topic during the relevant period, rather than some pre-defined calculation of relative importance. And within the geographically based volumes all these topics are potentially included within each geographical section, even if sometimes in a less formal way. Such a flexible and changing structure seems essential for any full treatment of the history of English.

One question that came up as this project began was the extent to which it might be possible or desirable to work within a single theoretical linguistic framework. It could well be argued that only a consensus within the linguistic community about preferred linguistic theories would enable a work such as this to be written. Certainly, it was immediately obvious when work for this History began, that it would be impossible to lay down a 'party line' on linguistic theory, and indeed, that such an approach would be undesirably restrictive. The solution reached was, I believe, more fruitful. Contributors have been chosen purely on the grounds of expertise and knowledge, and have been encouraged to write their contributions in the way they see most fitting, whilst at the same time taking full account of developments in linguistic theory. This has, of course, led to problems, notably with contrasting views of the same topic (and also because of the need to distinguish the ephemeral flight of theoretical fancy from genuine new insights into linguistic theory), but even in a work which is concerned to provide a

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unified approach (so that, for example, in most cases every contributor to a volume has read all the other contributions to that volume), such contrasts, and even contradictions, are stimulating and fruitful. Whilst this work aims to be authoritative, it is not prescriptive, and the final goal must be to stimulate interest in a subject in which much work remains to be done, both theoretically and empirically.

The task of editing this History has been, and still remains, a long and complex one. As General Editor I owe a great debt to many friends and colleagues who have devoted much time and thought to how best this work might be approached and completed. Firstly, I should thank my fellow-editors: John Algeo, Norman Blake, Bob Burchfield, Roger Lass and Suzanne Romaine. They have been concerned as much with the History as a whole as with their individual volumes. Secondly, there are those fellow linguists, some contributors, some not, who have so generously given of their time and made many valuable suggestions: John Anderson, Cecily Clark, Frans van Coetsem, Fran Colman, David Denison, Ed Finegan, Olga Fischer, Jacek Fisiak, Malcolm Godden, Angus McIntosh, Lesley Milroy, Donka Minkova, Matti Rissanen, Michael Samuels, Bob Stockwell, Tom Toon, Elizabeth Traugott, Peter Trudgill, Nigel Vincent, Anthony Warner, Simone Wyss. One occasion stands out especially: the organisers of the Fourth International Conference on English Historical Linguistics, held at Amsterdam in 1985, kindly allowed us to hold a seminar on the project as it was just beginning. For their generosity, which allowed us to hear a great many views and exchange opinions with colleagues one rarely meets face-to-face, I must thank Roger Eaton, Olga Fischer, Willem Koopman and Frederike van der Leek.

With a work so complex as this, an editor is faced with a wide variety of problems and difficulties. It has been, therefore, a continual comfort and solace to know that Penny Carter of Cambridge University Press has always been there to provide advice and solutions on every occasion. Without her knowledge and experience, encouragment and good humour, this work would have been both poorer and later. After the work for Volume I was virtually complete, Marion Smith took over as publishing editor, and I am grateful to her too, not merely for ensuring such a smooth change-over, but for her bravery when faced with the mountain of paper from which this series has emerged.

Richard M. Hogg

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

(a) General

Angl.	Anglian
Arm.	Armenian
Av.	Avestan
CWGmc	Common West Germanic
DB	Domesday Book
DEPN	see Ekwall (1960) in References
EPNS	English Place-Name Society
EWS	Early West Saxon
G	German
Gk	Greek
Gmc	Germanic
Go.	Gothic
Hebr.	Hebrew
Hitt.	Hittite
IE	Indo-European
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
Lat./L	Latin
Lith.	Lithuanian
LWS	Late West Saxon
ME	Middle English
ms(s).	manuscript(s)
OBrit.	Old British
OCS	Old Church Slavonic
OE	Old English

OED	Oxford English Dictionary (= Murray et al., 1888–1933)
OFr.	Old Frisian
OHG	Old High German
OIc.	Old Icelandic
OIr.	Old Irish
ON	Old Norse
OPers.	Old Persian
OSax.	Old Saxon
Osc.	Oscan
PDE	Present-Day English
PN	County Volume of English Place-Name Society survey (see References)
PrGmc	Primitive Germanic
RB	Romano-British
RP	Received Pronunciation
Scand.	Scandinavian
Skt	Sanskrit
VL	Vulgar Latin
W	Welsh
WS	West Saxon

(b) Grammatical

acc.	accusative
abl.	ablative

List of abbreviations

adj.	adjective	O	object
advb.	adverb	pa.	past
auxil	auxiliary verb	part.	participle
C	consonant	pl.	plural
compar	comparative	poss.	possessive
dat.	dative	post	postposition
dem.	demonstrative	pr.	present
dm	determinandum	prep.	preposition
dt	determinant	pret.	preterite
exhort	exhortative	pron.	pronoun
fem./f.	feminine	PT	particle
gen.	genitive	reflx.	reflexive
imp.	imperative	S	subject
ind(ic).	indicative	sg.	singular
inf.	infinitive	subj.	(i) subject (of nouns); (ii) subjunctive (of verbs)
infl.	inflected		
instr.	instrumental		
loc.	locative	uninfl.	uninflected
masc./m.	masculine	V	(i) verb (syntax); (ii) vowel (phonology)
N	noun		
neg.	negative	voc.	vocative
neut./n.	neuter	1sg, 2sg., 3sg. etc.	first person singular, etc.
NP	noun phrase		
Num	numeral		

Map of Anglo-Saxon England