

Morphology and Diachrony in *A Grammar of Old English* and the *Dictionary of Old English*

R. D. Fulk

Just as Richard M. Hogg relied heavily on the resources of the Dictionary of Old English Project, particularly the *Microfiche Concordance to Old English*, in compiling the first volume of his *Grammar of Old English*, on phonology, the project of completing the second volume, on morphology, has yielded many reminders what an indispensable asset the *Dictionary of Old English* and the resources it has spawned are to the community of linguists and medievalists.¹ Hogg was particularly concerned to distinguish diachronic and synchronic analysis of the language, in regard to nominal morphology actually separating the two concerns into discrete chapters; working with the resources of the *DOE* for the purpose of completing Hogg's work has, thus, prompted some contemplation of the advantages and disadvantages of the dictionary's approach to matters of diachrony and synchrony in respect to Old English morphology. The dictionary itself supplies some exceptionally useful information on morphology, particularly in its presentation of attested forms and inflected varieties. A peculiarity of the *DOE*, however, is the relative thoroughness with which considerations of language history have been excluded from the construction of the dictionary. Considering the very many difficulties that the editors would have had to address had they chosen to include much historical information — difficulties that surely would have strained the Project's budget and pace of production — it would be unreasonable to expect them to have done otherwise. The consequences of this course

¹ The second volume of *A Grammar of Old English*, by Richard M. Hogg and R. D. Fulk, appeared in January 2011.

of action, however, are far-reaching, and the following remarks will demonstrate that excluding most kinds of historical information from the *DOE* has had some unanticipated effects, creating problems, some quite serious, in connection with matters that might at first appear to be unrelated to language history. That is to say, the very idea of separating entirely synchronic and diachronic concerns in Old English lexicography is fraught with problems, and the result of excluding most sorts of diachronic concerns is detrimental to many kinds of synchronic analysis.

This is not, it should be said, an argument for the enormous changes that would be required to make the *DOE* effectively serve the purposes of historical linguists to the same extent that it currently serves the purposes of other scholars. The dictionary is eminently successful at what it aims to do, and its aims are entirely appropriate. The following observations, therefore, are not intended primarily as a critique of the *DOE*, specifically, but as an illustration of the ill effects of the underlying assumption that diachronic and synchronic concerns are entirely separable in the study of an extinct language, taking the *DOE* as a convenient source of examples (since it is so thoroughly developed an instrument), though any number of other scholarly works proceeding from the same premise might be cited. Accordingly, the following discussion begins with a consideration of the advantages offered and the problems posed by the resources of the *DOE* in the construction of such a diachronic project as Hogg's grammar, before turning more specifically to the treatment of diachronic concerns in the *DOE* itself.

When Hogg published the first volume of his *Grammar of Old English* (henceforth *GOE*) in 1992, there were available some excellent grammars covering both the phonology and the morphology of Old English, most notably Alistair Campbell's *Old English Grammar* and Karl Brunner's revision of Eduard Sievers's *Angelsächsische Grammatik*. Hogg acknowledged, with characteristic modesty, in the preface to the book, "I do not expect, or even hope, that this present book will supersede those already written."² But despite the availability of others, he thought his book justified by two developments that had occurred in the time since the publication of Campbell's and Brunner's grammars. One was the rise of poststructuralist linguistic theory. Indeed, although he worked chiefly within a structuralist phonological framework, the influence particularly of Noam Chomsky and Morris Halle's approach to phonology in *The Sound Pattern of English* is evident throughout the first volume of

2 Hogg, *A Grammar of Old English*, 1:vii.

GOE.³ Like most linguists working in the field of Old English studies, Hogg was keenly aware of the inverse relation that has arisen between, on the one hand, the philological methods that still characterize perhaps the majority of studies of earlier stages in the history of English and, on the other, the chiefly synchronic focus of most present-day linguistic scholarship. A particularly lamentable failure of philology, as he might have expressed it, is that it is disposed to unrealistic analyses because it does not pay sufficient heed to the social and historical contexts in which extinct languages were used.⁴ Approaches to the study of Old English should, to the extent feasible, resemble approaches to living languages, since it is methodologically soundest to assume that the same factors that play a role in governing variation in living languages also governed languages in use many centuries ago — an assumption generally referred to as the uniformitarian principle.⁵ Thus, Hogg was concerned to bring to bear on Old English studies the benefits not only of phonological theory but also of sociolinguistic analysis.

The other development that seemed to invite publication of a new grammar of Old English was the appearance of innovative tools for the study of the Old English language. Of the foremost importance was the Dictionary of Old English Project, valuable in 1992 chiefly for its *Microfiche Concordance to Old English*. As the dust jacket notes to the first volume of *GOE* explain, “In the field of Old English by far the greatest advance has been the Dictionary of Old English Project at Toronto. This has enabled a much wider range of data to be checked and assessed than has previously been the case, and *A Grammar of Old English* has taken full advantage of this possibility.”

It is plain that Hogg made ample and effective use of the *Microfiche Concordance* throughout the first volume of his grammar, as well as in the portions of the second volume, on morphology, that he had completed at the time of his sudden death, much regretted by friends and colleagues, in September of 2007. The appearance of the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus (DOEC)*, with the superior search capabilities of the online version, has subsequently proved invaluable, enabling the completion

3 Hogg was, thus, the model of a scholar who appreciated the point of the present essay, that philology and linguistics are inseparable. As David Denison justly remarks in his remembrance of Hogg, “Philologists pay close attention to textual evidence; linguists build theories. Hogg did both”; Denison, “Professor Richard Hogg: Historian of the English Language.”

4 See in particular Hogg, “On the Impossibility of Old English Dialectology,” esp. 188-90.

5 The principle was first formulated by Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, 275.

of the second volume in relatively short order. With the help of the *DOEC*, it has become plain in the course of the work that not a few of the morphological oddities that stalk the grammars of Campbell, Brunner, and others are chimeras, many of them adopted from the entries in Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, where they are either cited from antiquated and inaccurate editions of Old English texts or are supplied as purely hypothetical forms. For example, Brunner cites a preterite *hēade* to the verb *hēan* (*recte, hēagan*), apparently in reliance on the preterite supplied under the headword *heán* in Bosworth and Toller's dictionary.⁶ However, as in the present instance, the forms supplied by Bosworth and Toller are frequently only their guesses as to what ought to be expected, forms intended to identify the morphological type of the headword rather than to represent actual attestations.

On the other hand, while it is true, as the dust jacket notes quoted above indicate, that the tools provided by the *DOE* facilitate checking the data, in some respects the checking is made more time-consuming by the nature of the *DOE* resources. The *DOEC* is not a record of every word of Old English, since it does not generally include manuscript variants, and when a form cited in other grammars does not turn up in a *DOEC* search, determining whether the cited form is a ghost word or a manuscript variant can require considerable effort, and it may not be possible to reach a definite conclusion. For example, often cited in evidence of the loss of stem-final *-w-* in certain forms of weak verbs is the preterite *gehlyde* 'warmed.' This is apparently in reference to Bosworth and Toller's citation of the word from the 1698 edition of Ælfric's homily for the first Sunday in September in the second series of the *Catholic Homilies* (corresponding to *ÆCHom* II, 35 in the *DOEC*) by Edward Thwaites,⁷ which was edited not from any of the four extant medieval manuscripts but from a transcript by William L'Isle, now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud E. 381.⁸ At all events, the *DOEC* is such an extensive corpus, and so easy to search, that it engenders in users an inclination to ignore any form that does not turn up in it — an inclination that must be resisted. To take one of countless examples why vigilance is required, the form *sprenst* '(you) sprinkle' is cited in the standard grammars as the only good

6 Brunner, *Altenglische Grammatik*, §408A17; cf. Hogg and Fulk, *A Grammar of Old English*, 2:§6.99.

7 Thwaites, ed., *Heptateuchus*, 165.2. The short-titles used in the citations of Old English texts may be found at the website of the Dictionary of Old English Project, at <<http://www.doe.utoronto.ca/st/index.html>>.

8 See Cook, *Biblical Quotations*, lxxiii.

example of the loss of stem-final *-g-* before the verb inflexion *-st*, but it is not to be found in a search of the *DOEC*. It is, however, an actually attested form, omitted from the *DOEC* because the edition employed therein is not based on the manuscript that happens to contain this form. A new edition of the text based on that manuscript will no doubt result in its inclusion in an updated version of the *DOEC*.⁹

Something that *GOE* has in common with the *DOE* is its preference for Late West Saxon rather than Early West Saxon forms.¹⁰ In the sections devoted to morphology in the grammars of Campbell, Brunner, and others, the standard paradigms presented are those of Early West Saxon — that is, for present purposes, Alfredian Old English — somewhat tidied up. This is in accordance with the prescriptions of Henry Sweet,¹¹ whose methods subsequently were widely adopted in dictionaries, grammars, and studies of the language. Sweet's aims were entirely practical, stemming in part from the need of students for a dictionary in which the spelling of headwords is as consistent as is feasible. Orthography is in certain respects less variable in Early than in Late West Saxon. The use of Early West Saxon, however, became standard in linguistic contexts other than dictionaries, and this is what led C. L. Wrenn, in an influential essay, to criticize the practice of privileging Early West Saxon, chiefly on the grounds that it is orthographically not as regular as has generally been assumed and that Late West Saxon better represents the language actually found in the vast majority of Old English manuscripts.¹² Hogg shared Wrenn's opinion, in part in the belief that the preference for Alfredian West Saxon has, for some, a non-linguistic, nationalistic motive rooted in the Victorian cult of King Alfred the Great.¹³ (Wrenn had, in fact, already suggested such a mistaken motive for some scholarship, but his countering, in agreement with Kenneth Sisam, that the Late West Saxon period represented a golden age is not an improvement in argument for one dialect over the other.)¹⁴

9 See Marsden, ed., *The Old English Heptateuch*, 121.

10 In recent linguistic studies, "Early" and "Late" in these names have most commonly been capitalized, in recognition that Early and Late West Saxon are not simply chronological stages of the same dialect but, in some respects, differently constituted language varieties; see Hogg, "On the Impossibility," 185-86.

11 See Sweet, ed., *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version*, v-vii; see also Sweet, *The Student's Dictionary*, x-xi.

12 See Wrenn, "'Standard' Old English." On the controversy, see Ellis, "Old English Lexicography," and Gretsche, "Winchester Vocabulary," 42-43.

13 See Hogg, "On the Ideological Boundaries," 110.

14 See Wrenn, "'Standard' Old English," 70.

There are, however, certain disadvantages to using Late rather than Early West Saxon to illustrate Old English morphology. One disadvantage is that a certain amount of historical transparency is thereby lost. The Early West Saxon diphthongs *ie* and *īe* have a unique status among sounds in the dialects of Old English. They are produced historically in several different ways, but anyone familiar with the relevant sound changes can in most instances divine without effort the etymology of an Early West Saxon word containing <ie>. For example, *bieġan* ‘bend’ can derive only from **bauzjan* or **biuzjan*, the latter unlikely because a Germanic diphthong **iu* would be unusual in a verb of the *jan*-class. By contrast, **bauzjan* is just one of several possible etyma that might come to mind on the basis of observing the equivalent Late West Saxon *bȳġan* or non-West Saxon *bēġan*. Of course, not all users of a grammar of Old English are concerned with the prehistory of the language, and so Early West Saxon forms may for some be no more or less informative than Late West Saxon ones. But in Sweet’s day, when the scientific study of language was nearly co-extensive with the field of historical linguistics, the diachronic transparency afforded by many Early West Saxon forms made the dialect almost an inevitable choice. Even today, to judge by the annual bibliographies of work in the Anglo-Saxon field, the majority of studies of Old English phonology and morphology are diachronic in their focus, and thus the employment of Late West Saxon forms in a grammar, while it may better represent the linguistic realities of what is most commonly encountered in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, detracts in a specifiable way from the historical study of the language. Of course, to Richard Hogg a detraction of that sort may have seemed a particular incentive to use Late West Saxon forms, given his conviction that the field is too mired in philological method at the expense of linguistic naturalness. To those who suspect that the impoverishment of historical understanding is not fully compensated by the rewards reaped from the application of synchronically oriented linguistic methods, the case may seem otherwise.¹⁵

Another problem with the use of Late West Saxon to explain Old English morphology is the heterogeneity of the dialect. The language of Æthelwold and Ælfric is to a considerable extent uniform, and that of Wulfstan and Byrhtferth diverges from it in relatively minor ways. But otherwise Late West Saxon texts are almost entirely anonymous, and these anonymous texts differ from the remainder, as well as among

15 A particular critic of the application of newer linguistic methods to the study of Old English is Mitchell; see his *Critical Bibliography, passim*, and “*Old English Syntax: A Review*.”

themselves, in striking ways, often by the inclusion of orthographic, morphological, and lexical features that are usually thought to be characteristic of the Anglian or Kentish dialects. In former years it was for the most part assumed that such a mixture of dialect forms was due to the scribal practice of copying, into West Saxon, texts that were composed in non-West Saxon dialects.¹⁶ In some recent literature, however, there has been a tendency to assume that the linguistic heterogeneity of Late West Saxon should be attributed, in large part, to regional and social variation within the West Saxon *Sprachraum*.¹⁷ Richard Hogg was a proponent of this view — unsurprisingly, given his concern, mentioned above, to bring sociolinguistic insights to bear on the study of Old English.¹⁸ There are reasons to doubt this analysis.¹⁹ But regardless of whether or not it is incorrect, in a study of Old English morphology it would be a misrepresentation not to distinguish the different varieties of West Saxon.²⁰ In Late West Saxon texts, to offer an illustration, when the noun-forming suffix *-nys(s)* is added to a weak verb stem that is etymologically light, the stem may be either monosyllabic or disyllabic, for example LS 17.1 (MartinMor) 159 *foresetenesse* ‘purpose’ beside *gesetnysse* ‘foundation’ (many times in Ælfric; cf. *settan* ‘set’) and PsGlC (Wildhagen) 104.16 *trymenysse* ‘solidity’ beside ÆCHom I, 21 349.111 *trymnys* (cf. *trymman* ‘strengthen’).²¹ If no distinction is made among the varieties of Late West Saxon, the conclusion might be drawn that the alternation is a free variation, as in fact is maintained in the most recent study of the phenomenon.²² This would be a misreading of the facts. Although a few examples are to be found in Early West Saxon texts (which, of course, show Mercian influence in some other respects), the disyllabic stems are the rule in the Mercian gloss on the Vespasian Psalter, and in Late West Saxon they are found only in anonymous texts that present various sorts of evidence of Anglian (more specifically, Mercian) origins — texts like the Blickling

16 For an account of this controversy, with references, see Fulk, “Anglian Dialect Features in Old English Anonymous Homiletic Literature,” 81–83.

17 See, e.g., Benskin, “Descriptions of Dialect,” and Smith, *An Historical Study*, 65–67.

18 See Hogg, “On the Impossibility” and “What’s New in Old English?”

19 Counterarguments are offered in Fulk, “Anglian Features in Late West Saxon English” and “Localizing and Dating.”

20 In the second volume of *GOE* it has not been feasible to remedy this problem entirely, since this volume naturally builds upon the first, in which Late West Saxon is generally treated as if it were more or less homogeneous.

21 Stems ending in /r/ are the exception; e.g., *herenis* ‘praise’ (cf. *herian* ‘laud’) is normal in all dialects.

22 See Suzuki, “On the Origin,” 186.

Homilies and the various glosses on the Psalter.²³ The example is hardly an isolated one: anonymous texts in Late West Saxon show a wide variety of seemingly Anglian features that are generally absent from the writings of Æthelwold, Ælfric, Wulfstan, and Byrhtferth.²⁴

What may be concluded from this? If it is true that a large portion of the corpus of anonymous Late West Saxon texts is Anglian in origin, the language of such texts can only be regarded as highly artificial. That is, they show a mixture of features such as would not have been found in any single Old English dialect but is in large measure merely a residue of their textual history. Even if one is not convinced that this is the case, however, it is a possibility that must not be discarded, since none of the alternatives can be established definitely. In a study dealing with Late West Saxon, it would therefore be prejudicial to proceed as if this could not be the case by failing to distinguish the different varieties of the dialect.

It should be apparent now that if the chief motive for preferring Late to Early West Saxon in representing Old English grammatically is the belief that it is a better representation of Old English as it was actually used, as Wrenn argued, the preference is founded on some rather questionable preconceptions. Even texts by named authors offer no assurance of linguistic authenticity (whatever that may mean) of this kind. It may be true, as Wrenn charges, that Alfredian Old English, with its Mercian features and confusion of <ie> and <i>, is an artificial, literary dialect, but most likely Ælfrician Old English is equally stylized, in view of its promotion of so-called Winchester vocabulary and in view of the sorts of changes that Ælfric himself made as he revised some of his compositions.²⁵ Indeed, the profound orthographic differences between the language of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and that of Anglo-Saxon coinage suggest the extent to which the former represents convention rather than an attempt at accuracy of representation.²⁶

Linguists would like matters to be otherwise. The project of bringing the insights of contemporary linguistics to bear on Old English language study faces a daunting

23 The Mercian portions of the Old English gloss on the Rushworth Gospels use monosyllabic stems, e.g., *setnisse*, *gesettnisse*. It is impossible to determine whether this is due to a genuine dialect difference between this text and the gloss on the Vespasian Psalter or to the demonstrable influence of West Saxon norms on the glossator Farman. One suspects it may be the former.

24 For a list of many such features, see Fulk, "Anglian Dialect Features in Old English Anonymous Homiletic Literature," 86-88.

25 See Gneuss, "The Origin," and Pope, ed., *Homilies*, 1:59-62, respectively.

26 See Colman, "Anglo-Saxon Pennies."

obstacle, inasmuch as synchronic linguistic theory and methods are based on the premise of unmediated access to verifiable data. Historical records are troublesome enough, given that orthographic systems must not be regarded as wholly sufficient representations of phonological ones. If the system of writing is, in addition, a highly artificial one, as seems likely to be the case in regard to Old English, models of linguistic development based on living languages may be misleading when applied to data that owe their form as much to arbitrary conventions and manuscript culture as to phonological and morphological realities.

Despite such difficulties, a synchronic approach to Old English grammar may certainly be of value. Such phonological insights as Hogg gleaned by the application of generative phonology in the first volume of *GOE* depend to a great extent on the ability to focus on a particular stage in the development of the language. Since no dialect or historical stage of development is linguistically superior to any other, and all are equally worthy of attention, the choice of any to represent the language in a synchronic grammar might be defended, and the choice of Late West Saxon might seem particularly advisable, given that it is so well attested — advisable, that is, as long as the different varieties of Late West Saxon are not confused and as long as it is understood that it is the size of the corpus that makes it a convenient and appropriate variety to study, not the historical importance of the dialect. For to do otherwise would be to use subjective historical assessments in no less tendentious a manner than the way, Hogg charged, Alfredian English was chosen by followers of Sweet. Regarded from a purely synchronic perspective, then, the choice of one variety or another does not seem a particularly pressing, or even a very interesting, issue: if the choice really depends upon whether or not the chosen variety affords enough material for the purpose at hand, either Early or Late West Saxon would be a reasonable choice.

But grammars like those of Campbell, Brunner, and Hogg are not and cannot by their nature be solely synchronic. A grammar that attempts to represent Old English in all its variety must be historical and comparative. If, then, the remarks offered above about the nature of Early West Saxon are sound, there are linguistic reasons to prefer this variety in order to represent the language when one's aims are historical and comparative. The connection between efforts to promote a synchronic perspective and the choice of Late West Saxon to represent the language is natural enough. But it is not inevitable, and if that choice is detrimental to the historical aspects of the study of Old English grammar, it may be doubted whether the choice is a good one.

Of course, in a historical and comparative grammar the consequences of choosing one or another variety to represent the language are not profound, since information

about other varieties is not suppressed. It is merely postponed and thus rendered, in the linguistic sense, marked in relation to the facts concerning the standard dialect. Matters are different with regard to the *DOE*. Since Sweet favoured the use of Early West Saxon spellings on the purely practical ground that it made his dictionary easier to use — a ground that Wrenn, too, approved²⁷ — it is somewhat surprising to learn that all the dozens of scholars who attended the 1970 *DOE* planning conference in Toronto seem to have agreed that Late West Saxon was to be preferred for the spelling of headwords.²⁸ But for all practical purposes the issue is rendered irrelevant by advances in digital technology. The headwords and attested variants in the current versions of the *DOE* online and on compact disc are fully searchable, so that even alphabetization, though convenient, is not strictly necessary.

Nonetheless, in a dictionary so influential and so important to all Anglo-Saxonists, logic in the spelling of headwords would seem a desideratum; but the choice of Late West Saxon forms apparently has raised certain difficulties. For example, the stem *bismer-* ‘disgrace,’ in its various spellings, occurs 580 times in the *DOEC*: (1) as a simplex noun, (2) as a verb stem, (3) in derived nouns, adjectives, and adverbs (with *-ful*, *-lēas*, *-līc(e)*, *-nes*, *-ung*), and (4) in compounds.²⁹ The incidence of each of the attested spellings is recorded in Table 1, in which the four columns of figures correspond to these four categories, respectively, and, in brackets, “Æ” followed by a number indicates how many instances of the given spelling in the works of Ælfric are included in the preceding figure. In the *DOE*, the spelling adopted in all headwords is *bysmor*. It may be divined from the table why this is so: this is the commonest spelling of the stem in Ælfric. It is not the commonest spelling in “Late West Saxon” as a whole (as it is usually conceived, rather than as a collection of varieties), in which *bysmr-* is the norm; but the choice of *bysmor* rather than *bysmr* for the spelling of the headword is to be expected, since the final *-r* of the uninflected simplex is never written without a preceding vowel; it is only in inflected forms that *bysmr-* occurs. Once the spelling *bysmor* for the simplex noun has been settled upon, naturally enough the same spelling is preferred for all other headwords that begin with this morpheme. This is as it should be, since, historically, the forms summarized in columns 2-4 are derived from the simplex noun (ignoring, for the moment — but not a long

27 See Wrenn, “‘Standard’ Old English,” 82.

28 Frank, “The Dictionary of Old English Conference,” 5.

29 A search of the *DOEC* did not turn up the form *bisemære* listed among the variants in the *DOE* s.v. *bysmor*.

	Nouns	Verbs	Derivatives	Compounds
<i>bysmor-</i>	46 (Æ 18)	2 (Æ 1)	56 (Æ 41)	3
<i>bysmer-</i>	17	17 (Æ 2)	21 (Æ 1)	3
<i>bysmr-</i>	9 (Æ 2)	131 (Æ 17)	22 (Æ 2)	
<i>bysmær-</i>	2		1	
<i>bysemer-</i>		1		
<i>bismor-</i>	9 (Æ 3)	1	21 (Æ 1)	
<i>bismer-</i>	48	54	28 (Æ 1)	3
<i>bissmer-</i>		1		
<i>bismr-</i>	16 (Æ 1)	56	7	
<i>bismær-</i>		2		2
<i>bisemær-</i>	1 (Æ 1)			

Table 1. Alternants of the stem *bismer-* in the *DOEC*.

moment — the determination of *DOE* planners to exclude historical considerations from the construction of the dictionary), and convenience dictates that related forms should be grouped together, to the extent possible. Yet these seemingly natural choices raise a startling incongruence: of the 265 iterations of the verb stem in the *DOEC*, in just two instances is it spelt *bysmor-*; and yet *bysmorian* is the way the headword is spelt in the *DOE*. If the practice of using Late West Saxon for the spelling of headwords is motivated by the consideration that Late West Saxon better represents Old English as it really is in its most commonly encountered form — as Wrenn argued when he initiated the call for abandonment of Early West Saxon in most studies — then something has gone seriously awry, since obviously *bysmorian* is not a very representative spelling.³⁰

30 It is, of course, not possible to know for certain what motivated the many scholars at the 1970 conference to prefer Late West Saxon spellings or why this is still the general preference. One can only respond to the arguments of scholars like Wrenn and Hogg, who made their reasons explicit (as discussed above. If there are reasons to prefer Late West Saxon that have nothing to do with the notion that it better represents Old English as it is normally encountered, with one exception, I am unaware of them. Wrenn also preferred the late dialect to the early one because he considered Early West Saxon to be not as orthographically uniform as is generally supposed. But Late West Saxon, if it is understood to include texts of seemingly Anglian origin, is certainly less uniform than Alfredian Old English. The *DOE*, of course, employs for headwords both Ælfrician and non-Ælfrician Late West Saxon spellings; but even if it were somehow possible to employ only Ælfrician and Æthelwoldian spellings, the difference in the degree of uniformity encountered would not be so great as to justify on this sole basis the preference for these spellings. There must be other reasons.

But this should not be a surprising finding. The result may be expected to be illogical when the premise is illogical. The *DOE* is a scholarly tool — a “scholar’s dictionary,”³¹ not a beginner’s — and its form should follow from the purposes to which it is to be put. Those purposes are various: to establish meanings, indicate incidence, and identify the range of attested grammatical and orthographic variants, to name a few. None of its scholarly uses, however, demands that the spelling of headwords be Ælfrician. The choice of Ælfrician spellings is therefore necessarily arbitrary, and it is, thus, inevitable that the results should be arbitrary as well. This is not, it should be added, a criticism of the Dictionary of Old English Project or its editors, or an argument for abandoning the Late West Saxon standard for headwords, which, in any case, would not be feasible at this point in the dictionary’s construction. It is a criticism, rather, of the notion so prevalent among Anglo-Saxonists, linguists and non-linguists alike, that Ælfrician Old English is somehow more authentic than other varieties and that our scholarship is somehow improved by an allegiance to this spurious notion of authenticity. Nor is this to say that the use of a different spelling standard for the headwords would remove all such inconsistencies. Rather, it is to say that the aim of achieving authenticity is self-defeating, as well as extraneous to, even at times in conflict with, the effective study of the Old English language.

Another respect in which the *DOE* differs from the scholarly grammars of Old English is in its relation to language history. As remarked above, the grammars are of necessity historical and comparative. From the start, however, the Dictionary Old English Project has aimed to exclude historical information about the language from the published dictionary. The result is most obvious in the omission of etymological information except in those rare instances in which etymology is essential to establishing meaning. On this score, Christopher Ball assured attendees of the 1970 conference in Toronto “that when an etymology was the sole or major source of information about a word, it would be given; it was only the ‘frivolous’ etymology, the one linking Old English ‘fot’ with Latin ‘pedem,’ which would be omitted as unimportant and potentially misleading in determining the meaning of the Old English word.”³² One can imagine practical and valid reasons for the *DOE* not to note that Old English *fōt* is cognate with Latin *pedem*, but surely, that it is “potentially misleading in determining the meaning of the Old English word” is not one of them. But,

31 Frank and Cameron, eds., Introduction, *A Plan for the Dictionary of Old English*, vi.

32 Frank, “The Dictionary of Old English Conference,” 7.

of course, while etymology not infrequently furnishes valuable insights into meaning, is it notoriously unreliable in this regard, and if its only value were semantic, etymological dictionaries would hardly be worth the effort to construct.

Rather, etymology is an important consideration in the study of morphology and (morpho)syntax. For example, before one accepts Krapp's emendation of *sceaðan* to *sceððan* 'injure' at And 1147,³³ the form that consequently appears in the *DOEC*, it would be useful to know that *sceððan* is a strong verb with a weak present — that is, a strong verb formed with a suffixal Germanic *-j- in the present system only. Presents to verbs of this sort sometimes appear in the Germanic languages in strong form: for example, to Old English *licgan* 'lie,' *sittan* 'sit,' and *swerian* 'swear,' all with weak presents, compare Gothic *ligan*, *sitan*, *swaran*, respectively, all in strong form. In regard to *sceaðan*, then, it may be remarked that a strong present form occurs, PPs 90.9 *sceaðeð*.³⁴ Accordingly, *sceaðan* (as the manuscript reads for *sceððan* at And 1147) may be a strong infinitive, with the sort of back mutation common in poetry and in West Mercian, and emendation is therefore unnecessary.³⁵

Beowulf supplies another example. When the hero returns the sword Hrunting to its owner, we are told, he *sægde him þæs lēanes þanc* (1809: 'said thanks to him for that reward'). Because "reward" does not make good sense in this context, alternative interpretations have been placed on the passage.³⁶ The sense 'loan' seems to be what is required by the context, and this suggests that *lēanes* has been confused with a

33 *Andreas*, in Krapp, ed., *The Vercelli Book*.

34 Since an anonymous reviewer objected that *sceaðeð* appears to be a weak form, it should perhaps be explained that it lacks the front mutation characteristic of weak verbs of the first class, and the inflection *-eð* does not normally appear attached to weak verbs of the second class. Rather, it lacks syncope and front mutation because strong verbs normally do lack these features in verse, due to Anglian influence on poetic language. See, for example, Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, eds., *Klaeber's Beowulf*, cxlvi-cxlvii, with references. The same reader objects that the examples offered here illustrate only morphological, not syntactic, properties to which etymology is relevant. In the example of *lēan/lūn* offered below, however, the crucial factor in the etymology is the noun's gender, a morphosyntactic property. Many thanks are due to both of the anonymous reviewers, who kindly suggested some particular improvements.

35 To be sure, the metre of *sceaðan mihton* is inferior, but it is by no means necessary to assume that *sceaðan* is the poet's form, only that at least one scribe in the course of the poem's manuscript transmission regarded it as proper. It may be that *sceaðan* is intended by the scribe to be a noun meaning 'warrior' (see Krapp, ed., *The Vercelli Book*, 118), but as long as the word may be analysed as a strong verb, emendation is not required.

36 See Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, eds., *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 217-18.

form of *lāen* ‘loan.’ The difficulty with this interpretation, however, is that *lāen* is a feminine noun, and thus it is not plain how a form of this word can have been confused with a neuter genitive, which bears the distinctive *-es* inflexion and is preceded by a distinctively non-feminine demonstrative. The problem is explained by the etymology of *lāen*: its Germanic cognates are neuter, and thus presumably the *Beowulf* poet used an archaic neuter form that was unfamiliar to the scribe, who assumed that *lāenes* in his exemplar was an error for *lēanes*. A similar substitution of *-lēan* for *-lāen* is to be found at *Exodus* 150.

There is a poetic word *hyse* ‘warrior’ that, strangely, contains a geminate in some oblique cases. Hence, there occur genitive singular *hysses*, dative singular *hysse*, and nominative plural *hyssas*. The pattern of geminates alternating with non-geminates in this way is unusual and can be understood only in historical perspective. Etymologically, *hyse* is an *i*-stem noun, which means that in West Germanic the nominative and accusative singular would both have been **husi* and thus comparable to the nominative and accusative singular of light-stemmed *ja*-stem nouns, for example **sezī* ‘man.’ The analogical proportion resulted in the extension of the *ja*-stem terminations in the other cases, and these began with **j*, causing gemination of the preceding consonant. Classification of the noun as an *i*-stem is, thus, essential to an understanding of the stem alternation in Old English.

The verb *īewan* ‘show’ (in Early West Saxon spelling) has a complicated history, in part because it originated as a verb of the third weak class but was transferred to the first and second weak classes, like most other verbs of the third class. Because of its complicated history, the forms assumed by the stem are various, and on etymological grounds the stems *īew-*, *īw-*, and *ēaw-* should all be expected to contain a long vowel or diphthong, whereas *eow-* would contain a short diphthong.³⁷ The alternation has some metrical consequences in verse.³⁸ The *DOE* accurately reports that although the verb originated in the third class, the attested forms are of the first and second, but it represents the Ælfrician stem as *ēow-*, with a long diphthong, in the compound *æt-eowian*. The error, of course, is quite minor, but it demonstrates the point

37 See Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 328 n. 2; Hogg and Fulk, *A Grammar of Old English*, 2:§6.97 n. 6.

38 The form *eoweð* at *Beowulf* 1738 causes a metrical problem, since the first syllable ought to be heavy, but the metrical anomaly is explained by the assumption that the poem is an Anglian composition, since the stem *eow-* does not occur in Anglian but has been substituted by the scribe for a heavy Anglian stem.

that a synchronic state of affairs is easy to mistake when diachronic concerns are largely excluded from consideration.

As the examples illustrate, etymology may be an important factor in gaining an understanding of synchronic phenomena in Old English, and so the omission of etymologies from the *DOE* has consequences outside the realm of purely historical linguistics. The examples are also of such a sort as to demonstrate why linking the *DOE* entries to corresponding online *OED* entries does not remedy the problem: the *OED* does not offer the sort of etymological information necessary to clarify these issues.

Etymological information of course includes more than reconstructed proto-forms; most notably it includes information about stem classes. The *DOE* does offer some information about stem classes, but often in an unusual form. The treatment of information about nominal stem classes, especially, is quite remarkable. Rather than labelling a noun as an *a*-stem, *i*-stem, or the like, the *DOE* assigns each noun to one or more of nine numbered classes or, if it belongs to none of the nine, describes it as weak. Presumably, the purpose of this practice is to eliminate historical information, since, after all, to classify a noun as a “*ja*-stem” is to refer to its prehistoric structure rather than to the realities of Old English as it is preserved. It is unfortunate, then, that there does not appear to be any explanation in the published dictionary, either online or on disc, of what the nine stem classes represent or how they differ from one another. A few minutes’ searching, looking at individual nouns, reveals what the scheme is, and the results are at once reassuring and unsettling. They are reassuring because the classes appear to correspond to the historical classes of familiar Old English grammars, proceeding in the order of classes presented in the grammars of Campbell and Brunner (but skipping weak nouns):

- class 1: *a*-stems (including *ja*-stems and *wa*-stems)
- class 2: *ō*-stems (including *jō*-stems and *wō*-stems)
- class 3: *i*-stems
- class 4: *u*-stems
- class 5: root-stems
- class 6: *r*-stems
- class 7: *nd*-stems
- class 8: *s*-stems
- class 9: *þ*-stems

What is unsettling about this discovery is that the purpose of numbering the classes appears to be simple concealment of their historical nature. A dictionary that employs Ælfrician spellings for headwords and eschews etymologies may reasonably be assumed to aim for a synchronic analysis of the material, and a system of noun classification consonant with the paradigmatic types actually found in Ælfric would be understandable in such a dictionary. That the historical classification should be retained instead is at least curious in a dictionary that otherwise resolutely excludes historical information. Under the circumstances, identifying nouns by stem class seems superfluous, an appearance strengthened by the absence of any information about what the system of classification is.

The omission of historical information is sometimes an impediment to an adequate understanding of synchronic alternations and oppositions. For example, the two commonest meanings of the verb *bewerian* are (1) ‘guard’ and (2) ‘hinder, prevent.’ (Another sense registered in the *DOE* is ‘avert,’ but this is plainly a sub-sense of (2), and, thus, it is not obvious why it is treated as a wholly different meaning, placed first, and separated from sense (2) by sense (1).) The *DOE* observes that the latter meaning is frequent in the Old English Bede but otherwise indicates no difference in dialect distribution between the two senses. In fact, the West Saxon texts in which sense (2) is found are usually assumed to derive from Anglian originals, including the Old English Bede, Wærferth’s translation of Gregory’s *Dialogi*, the Vercelli and Blickling Homilies, Psalter glosses, and poetry. Otherwise, sense (2) is found only in Anglian glosses. The reason for this is historical, as the senses derive from two etymologically discrete verbs, Germanic **warjan* of the first weak class and **warōjan* of the second.³⁹ Simply on the basis of the attested forms listed in the *DOE*, it would be difficult to determine which meaning is to be associated with which etymon, since the forms are rather intermixed — though a scholar aware of the relative conservatism of the Anglian dialects in regard to such matters might be inclined, in consideration of Mercian *biwergu* and Northumbrian *bewoeredon*, to think (correctly) that sense (2) is to be associated, historically, with the verb of the first class. The form **bi-warōjan* associated with sense (1) should produce *bewarian* (rather than *bewerian*) in Old English, and indeed, spellings with *a* in the root do occur infrequently, but for the most part the root vowel of the form associated with sense (2) has replaced the original vowel in West Saxon, a development that is doubtless to be associated with the loss of sense (2)

39 See, e.g., Orel, *A Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 449-50.

in that dialect, and perhaps also with the loss in West Saxon of the morphological distinction between disyllabicity in verbs of the first weak class like *nerian* ‘save’ and trisyllabicity in verbs of the second weak class like *lufian* ‘love.’⁴⁰ In the *DOE* the attested forms of *bewerian* are classified according to whether they are to be regarded as belonging to the first or the second weak class, followed by the remark, “Most forms with *-ig-* in the present system have been treated as examples of IWS parasiting.” The assumption appears to be that in “most forms,” that is, in the non-Anglian forms, sense (1) was transferred to the reflex of **bi-warjan*, the original sense (2) was then eliminated from the verb, and finally the glide after *r* was syllabified. It would be simpler to assume that the vowel of one verb was extended to the other. But regardless of how the shift is analysed, the *DOE* statement will remain unfathomable as long as it is not made plain what the historical background is. The appeal to Late West Saxon parasiting is in any case obscure, since, for example, this assumption is not applied to the form *bewerigeað* in Bede (though it ought to be, since sense (2) belongs etymologically to the verb of the first class), though it is correctly applied to *biwerigan*, also in Bede. The larger point to be derived from this is that omission of etymological information has rendered most of the valuable information presented in the *DOE* entry about the inflexion of the word incomprehensible — so much so that even the compiler of the entry has confused the two stems. The omission of historical information from the *DOE* is, thus, detrimental to non-historical matters, and even to the aspect of lexicography in which the *DOE* excels, the area of semantics.

The *DOE* and its related projects are a magnificent accomplishment, one that has become indispensable to the work of Anglo-Saxonists. It is, moreover, a pioneering effort in the digital humanities, mapping out ways that electronic media can serve the ends of research that print media cannot. The remarks offered above, it should be emphasized, are by no means to be construed as an indictment of the *DOE*, since any number of current publications on the Old English language might have been

40 We cannot actually be certain that the same development did not affect these two verbs in the Anglian dialects, too, since sense (1) is not attested in a related verb in any reliably Mercian or Northumbrian text. That is to say, the only evidence for Anglian use in sense (1) is in originally Anglian texts that seem to have been rendered into West Saxon. When sense (1) occurs in a text like *Beowulf*, which is to be regarded as Anglian in origin, the spelling *beweredon* may simply be a West Saxon scribe’s substitution for an Anglian form with *a* in the root. That Anglian retains both senses (if the evidence of texts like *Beowulf* is accepted) suggests, however, the likelihood that the formal distinction was maintained along with the semantic one.

cited, instead, to illustrate the problems that attend the separation of synchronic from diachronic concerns. They should not even be taken to imply that the decisions of the Project's founders as regards historical information were wrong — even if historical linguists, understandably, may continue to wish the *DOE* conveyed more historical information. Rather, these observations pertain more generally to the problem mentioned at the outset, the difficulty of reconciling philology and linguistics. If the *DOE* has excluded the kinds of diachronic considerations that lie at the heart of philology, it is not on some freakish whim of the editors: it was the will of the many Anglo-Saxonists who conferred to lay the foundations of the project that it should not look backward to the methods of the nineteenth century but forward to the benefits of modern linguistic enquiry. No one can justly call it an undesirable aim to keep Old English language study in line with modern methods of research. The fault lies, rather, in the plainly widespread dichotomization, in all branches of language study, of philology and linguistics, as if the two were entirely separate endeavours, and as if, in the study of older languages, one could simply be dispensed with, without detriment to the other.⁴¹ Ultimately, there may be no very good solution to the problem of how to reconcile the two effectively in ways that will be of use across the discipline. The present study aspires to no greater insight on that score than to point out that the divorce of synchrony and diachrony in the study of historical languages is fraught with peril, and the dangers will grow only the more acute as the education of students in philological methods continues to languish as a result of the view that philology is too mired in the past to be relevant to the training of modern linguists.

Indiana University

41 Although the present study has focused on the perils to linguistics of ignoring philology, the converse peril is no less real, even if it is less insistent simply because it is less frequently encountered in recent publications.

Bibliography

- An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth* [...] Edited and Enlarged by T. Northcote Toller. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1898.
- Benskin, Michael. "Descriptions of Dialect and Areal Distributions." In *Speaking in Our Tongues: Medieval Dialectology and Related Disciplines*, edited by Margaret Laing and Keith Williamson, 169-87. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994.
- Brunner, Karl. *Altenglische Grammatik nach der Angelsächsischen Grammatik von Eduard Sievers*. 3rd ed. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1965.
- Campbell, A. *Old English Grammar*. Repr. from the corrected sheets of the first edition (1959). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- Chomsky, Noam, and Morris Halle. *The Sound Pattern of English*. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.
- Colman, Fran. "Anglo-Saxon Pennies and Old English Phonology." *Folia Linguistica Historica* 5 (1984): 91-143.
- Cook, Albert S. *Biblical Quotations in Old English Prose Writers, Edited with the Vulgate and Other Latin Originals, Introduction on Old English Biblical Versions, Index of Biblical Passages, and Index of Principal Words*. London: Macmillan, 1898.
- Denison, David. "Professor Richard Hogg: Historian of the English Language." *The Independent*, 10 December 2007. Available at <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/professor-richard-hogg-historian-of-the-english-language-764097.html>>.
- Dictionary of Old English Corpus (DOEC)*: Healey, Antonette diPaolo, ed. *Dictionary of Old English Corpus in Electronic Form*. University of Michigan Press, 2004.
- Ellis, Michael. "Old English Lexicography and the Problem of Headword Spelling." *ANQ* 6 (1993): 3-11.
- Frank, Roberta. "The Dictionary of Old English Conference." In *A Plan for the Dictionary of Old English*, edited by Roberta Frank and Angus Cameron, 1-7. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, for the Centre for Medieval Studies, 1973.
- and Angus Cameron, eds. *A Plan for the Dictionary of Old English*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, for the Centre for Medieval Studies, 1973.
- Fulk, R. D. "Anglian Dialect Features in Old English Anonymous Homiletic Literature: A Survey, with Preliminary Findings." In *Studies in the History of the English Language IV: Empirical and Analytical Advances in the Study of English Language Change*, edited by Susan M. Fitzmaurice and Donka Minkova, 81-100. Topics in English Linguistics 61. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008.
- . "Anglian Features in Late West Saxon English." In *Analysing Older English*, edited by Ricardo Bermúdez-Otero, David Denison, Christopher B. McCully, and Emma Moore. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, forthcoming.

- . “Localizing and Dating Old English Anonymous Prose, and How the Inherent Problems Relate to Anglo-Saxon Legislation.” In *English Law Before Magna Carta: Felix Liebermann and ‘Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen,’* edited by Stefan Jurasinski, Lisi Oliver, and Andrew Rabin, 59-79. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- , Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, eds. *Klaeber’s Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*. Corrected repr. of the 4th ed. (2008). Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Gneuss, Helmut. “The Origin of Standard Old English and Æthelwold’s School at Winchester.” *Anglo-Saxon England* 1 (1972): 63-83.
- Gretsch, Mechthild. “Winchester Vocabulary and Standard Old English: The Vernacular in Late Anglo-Saxon England.” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 83, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 41-87.
- Hogg, Richard M. *A Grammar of Old English*. Vol. 1, *Phonology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.
- . “On the Ideological Boundaries of Old English Dialects.” In *Advances in English Historical Linguistics* (1996), edited by Jacek Fisiak and Marcin Krygier, 107-18. Trends in Linguistics, Studies and Monographs 112. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998.
- . “On the Impossibility of Old English Dialectology.” In *Luick Revisited: Papers Read at the Luick-Symposium at Schloß Liechtenstein, 15.-18.9.1985*, edited by Dieter Kastovsky and Gero Bauer, 183-203. Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1988.
- . “What’s New in Old English?” In *Studies in the History of the English Language IV: Empirical and Analytical Advances in the Study of English Language Change*, edited by Susan M. Fitzmaurice and Donka Minkova, 55-60. Topics in English Linguistics 61. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008.
- and R. D. Fulk. *A Grammar of Old English*. Vol. 2, *Morphology*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Labov, William. *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1972.
- Krapp, George Philip, ed. *The Vercelli Book*. The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 2. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1932.
- Marsden, Richard, ed. *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric’s Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*. Vol. 1, *Introduction and Text*. EETS o.s. 330. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008.
- Mitchell, Bruce. *A Critical Bibliography of Old English Syntax to the End of 1984 including Addenda and Corrigenda to ‘Old English Syntax.’* Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.
- . “Old English Syntax: A Review of the Reviews.” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 91 (1990): 273-93.
- Orel, Vladimir. *A Handbook of Germanic Etymology*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Pope, John C., ed. *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*. EETS o.s. 259, 260. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967-1968.
- Smith, Jeremy. *An Historical Study of English: Function, Form and Change*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Suzuki, Seiichi. “On the Origin and Development of the Action Noun Forming Suffix *-nis* in Old English.” *Indogermanische Forschungen* 95 (1990): 184-207.

- Sweet, Henry, ed. *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*. EETS o.s. 45, 50. London: Trübner, 1871-1872.
- . *The Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896.
- Thwaites, Edward, ed. *Heptateuchus, Liber Job, et Evangelium Nicodemi, Anglo-Saxonice*, etc. Oxford: E Theatro Sheldoniano, 1698.
- Wrenn, C. L. "'Standard' Old English." *Transactions of the Philological Society* 32 (1933): 65-88.