Genesis A: A through G

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The publication of the letter G by the *Dictionary of Old English* (*DOE*) staff under the editorship of Antonette diPaolo Healey in 2007 was a significant milestone in itself, as is the publication of every fascicle, but also for Old English lexicography what stock-market technical analysts call a "breakout" — a moment when a line of psychological importance is crossed. Although the boundary between the letters G and H is not with current alphabetization rules the halfway point in the Old English lexicon,[1] that boundary has a peculiar history in Old English lexicography, peculiar enough that crossing it has resonance for those of us who have been working in the field for any length of time.

Many scholars today have seen — if they have seen it at all — only the 1912 one-volume version revised by Holthausen and Köhler, but it is at least an interesting historical note to remember that Grein's *Sprachschatz* first appeared in two volumes, a slimmer A through G in 1861 and a fatter H through Z plus proper nouns in 1864. More intimately familiar to those of us struggling through dictionaries of Old English in the remaining years (surely not many years now) before the completion of The Dictionary of Old English Project, that other dictionary which we must consult for the letters not yet covered by the *DOE* and which we all know familiarly as Bosworth-Toller is affected by peculiarities that hover around the same boundary

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1 This point falls about the middle of letter L, if the page-count in the Clark Hall dictionary is taken as a rough indication. Earlier dictionaries and word-lists that retained the *ge-* prefix for alphabetization moved the mid-point much closer to the G-H border.

between alphabet letters. The work of T. Northcote Toller, who took over the dictionary after the death of Joseph Bosworth in 1876, began after the letter G, and since various differences of plan were instituted at that point, most prominently regarding the representation of different spellings in multiple headwords (Bosworth's leading policy) as opposed to the reduction of headwords in order to group mere spelling variations into a single entry for a word (Toller's primary tendency, not amounting to an invariable practice), the user must keep two separate series of organizational principles in mind and remain constantly aware of whether he or she is in the range A through G or H through Z.

And of course, that is just for the first volume. The additional consequence of Toller's taking over was that Bosworth's more modest ambition, the revision of his 1838 dictionary to bring it up to date with then current scholarship, was replaced with Toller's, a vision much closer to the comprehensive representation of the lexicon aspired to by the present Dictionary of Old English Project. As a result, the entries in letters H through Z of the first volume give a much more thorough account of the words they cover than do those in A through G. Moreover, and maddeningly for the user, Toller prepared a supplementary volume, issued in 1921 and considerably more than half as thick as the first volume; about two-thirds of it consisted of additions to the part of the alphabet from A through G and about one third of additions to the rest of the alphabet. The average Anglo-Saxonist is therefore doubly aware of the division of the alphabet between G and H: on the one hand, as the location of a frustrating rift between different policies within the first volume of Bosworth-Toller and, on the other, as partly responsible for the fact that each and every word must be looked up in a minimum of two locations (the entries in the first and second volumes of Bosworth-Toller) if not many more (entries with or without *ge-* prefix; multiple entries for different spellings in A-G of volume one, and so on).[2]

Like most of my generation, I first encountered the *DOE* as an exasperating addition to a look-up regime already at the brink of Heath Robinson crack-pottery as a result of these Bosworth-Toller eccentricities. By the time I submitted my doctoral dissertation in late 1986, my look-up sequence for Old English words ran as follows:

1. keeping in mind its absolutely bizarre system of choosing (or inventing) forms for headwords, check Clark Hall for a general definition, often given in only one word, to orient further searches;
2. look up the word in the first volume of Bosworth-Toller;

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2 The *Enlarged Addenda and Corrigenda* by Alistair Campbell, published in 1972, provided an additional place to look, but largely for words not represented in the two volumes of Bosworth-Toller.

3. keep the first volume open while looking for the word in the second volume;

4. if the word is from A through G, use the first-volume entry to help decipher the second-volume entry where the real meat resides; if from H through Z, read the main entry in the first volume and look for supplementary citations and (more rarely) senses in the second volume;

5. check for additional entries (with *ge-* prefix, with alternate possible root vowels, etc.) in both volumes of Bosworth-Toller;

6. check Campbell's 1972 *Enlarged Addenda and Corrigenda* just in case;

7. if the word starts with a D (this fascicle had just been published in 1986), get access to the relevant *DOE* microfiche and a reader, and look up the word there.

Readers used to the online *DOE* will object that although this sequence seems fantastical and torturous, at least part of the problem was of my own making, since it would have been a waste of time to look up a D word in either Clark Hall or Bosworth-Toller in those cases where *DOE* existed and effectively replaced the earlier reference works entirely. The comment is fairly put, but ignores two realities of research life. One is that dictionary searches proceed until a point of satisfaction is reached, which in many cases would have been when Clark Hall — convenient in the sense that it could be held in one hand even if its use required remembering odd rules and applying them with ingenuity — provided a definition that gave good sense in the passage I was reading, in fewer cases would have extended to part or all of the Bosworth-Toller look-up sequence above, and in a very few cases would not have ended with the dictionaries themselves but extended to the textual contexts they referenced. The other is that the microfiche *DOE* was not at all easily accessible to graduate students and most faculty members at the time, requiring a trip to the library and the use of a fiche reader.

Illogical as it may have been, variations of that graduate student look-up regime of mine persisted until I finally got *DOE* online in 2007, with increasing danger of making a serious error as the *DOE* fascicles piled up. I even admit, though blushingly, that the arrival of A through F on CD-ROM in 2003 did little to modify my set ways. The result is that the *DOE* remained a tool I used mostly when I was not satisfied with what either Clark Hall or Bosworth-Toller had to tell me. I suspect that most students and scholars were stuck in similar routines during that period, and that future

scholars may find us extremely lazy for having failed to use the resource provided by the *DOE* in its gradual microfiche publication phase to the fullest, perhaps locating situations — I am certain they must exist — where a scholar wrote about a particular passage in complete ignorance of the fact that the fiche publication of a *DOE* fascicle had already refuted his or her argument a few years earlier.

Strangely, perhaps, given the confusing and intricate research process described above, we have been less attentive to the problems posed for our research enterprise by our available lexicographical resources for Old English than the pioneers of our discipline were in the era of the first (1838) Bosworth dictionary. Bouterwek, for example, writing in the preface to the glossary portion of his edition of the poems of Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, uses almost all of his available space in an account of, and a discussion of the respective merits of, the dictionaries and other lexicographical resources he has used. Bouterwek's own glossary is clearly intended as a contribution to lexicography, not just as a tool for the use of readers: it is possibly the first instance of an editor applying a thoroughly ambitious lexicographical agenda to a really substantial text. As such, it was in its time widely used as a general lexicographical resource and, in fact, was republished as a separate volume, presumably for its general reference value, as recently as the 1960s.

It is an interesting question whether the relationship between editors and the lexicon will change with the publication of such an exhaustive linguistic resource as the *DOE*. Since the editors of that tool will, they hope, have considered the entire textual remains of Old English,[3] one may wonder what there is left for an editor of an Old English poem to do. One could imagine, perhaps, a computer programme that mapped the text being edited against the *DOE*, leaving the choice between different words, cases, and the like represented by the same spelling as the only action required by the editor.

My recent reformation from the state described above came when I myself, as an editor of *Genesis A and B* for the *Online Corpus of Old English Poetry*, recognized with the publication of the online version of the *DOE* how remiss I had been in consulting it for my edition in progress. I began a laborious process of checking the glossary in its then state against the *DOE*, covering the letters A through G. In general, I can report that the results have cured me of my laziness, which caused a number of errors I could have avoided if I had adopted a less time-consuming look-up routine in the first place by going directly to *DOE*. Now that the look-up procedure for *DOE* itself —

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3   However, the *DOE* cites the textual evidence on the basis of edited texts rather than by direct recourse to the manuscripts, which does leave some room for future lexicographical endeavour.

as long as I keep that window open on my desktop — is more efficient than even the iPhone App version of Bosworth-Toller (with all of its scanning errors), I can revise my overarching process to put the *DOE* first, where it belongs, for words beginning with A through G and soon H.

The results of my work with the online *DOE* are best presented in the final edition when completed (although the draft edition is continually available on the Web as I work). Below I discuss only seven words, words which have been particularly interesting to work with and where the engagement with the *DOE* has been particularly rewarding or frustrating. I was trying to keep in mind some questions about the *DOE* as a corollary task to the actual lexicographic or glossary work: does the *DOE* offer a significant advance over Bosworth-Toller and Clark Hall, or merely an incremental improvement? Are there instances where *DOE* does not offer anything new but ought to have, or where it offers something new but ought *not* to have? And are there instances where an editor's take on a word will necessarily be different from the work of a dictionary builder who surveys the entire lexicon across all text types? The particular words which I have chosen to consider here are not necessarily the best choices to discuss these questions, the answers to which are all affirmative: they are simply words that have been challenging to address, which means that the dictionary editors have also had trouble with them. My comparisons, when I offer them, are with Bosworth-Toller and Clark Hall, but also with the first edition of Grein's *Sprachschatz*, with Bouterwek's *Glossar*, and occasionally with Doane's glossary to *Genesis A*. (I have avoided words from *Genesis B* in this article because of the additional interpretive and linguistic quandaries associated with this text.)

aæðan, *Genesis* 1280,[4] is self-defining contextually, in the run-up to Noah's flood, as "destroy" in a sentence that reads, "cwæð þæt he wolde for wera synnum eall aæðan þæt on eorðan wæs, forleosan lica gehwilc þara þe lifes gast fæðmum þeahte" (He [God] said that on account of the sins of men he would _____ all that was on earth, abandon/destroy each body which the spirit of life covered with outstretched arms). Early editors did hesitate over whether the first letter, *a*, should be a separated word, "always, forever" (though this would produce unacceptable triple alliteration), and as a result Bosworth-Toller has both *aæðan* "to lay waste; vastare" and *æðan* "To overflow, deluge, lay waste" as entries cross-referenced the first to the second, not an

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4 Unless otherwise noted, Old English quotations are taken from Krapp and Dobbie, eds., *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*.

unusual situation. Doane refers to Dietrich's 1856 article proposing that the word is "*áéðan* (*áíþan*), cognate to O[ld] H[igh] G[erman] *áróden* 'destroy,' 'lay waste.'"[5] *DOE* gives the word as an entry under *ā-ȳþan* "1. to destroy, demolish . . . 2. to attack, ravage, plunder," with five citations including three from the Cleopatra glossaries, where various forms gloss *abolere*, *exterminans*, and *demolitus*. The entry is cross-referenced not only to the verbal prefix *ā-* but also to *ȳþan* (second verb) and *on-ȳþan*. Both of the latter entries are currently inaccessible, of course, though it seems more than plausible that the verb used in *Beowulf* 421 and *Wanderer* 85 is meant by the first.

Nevertheless, the editor may wonder whether the whole story is being told by the *DOE* entry here, and whether the Bosworth-Toller suggestion of "overflow, deluge" may not be at least partly right. The *DOE* does not give etymologies, probably with good reason, but its entry for this word presupposes that it is a cognate (as Dietrich had suggested) to German *öde* "empty, desolate, barren."[6] However, in this sentence the eventual means of destruction of the world by God is not far from the poet's mind, as the image of the spirit of life covering the sinners with outstretched arms ("fæðmum") indicates: an obvious reference to Genesis 1:2 "et Spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas" (and the spirit of God moved over the waters[7]) and thus to the empty primeval waters before the creation of living beings, it also suggests the motion of swimming (cf. *Beowulf* 513). Might not *aæðan* also contain a similar watery reference — though one apparently not recognized by the scribe, given the spelling — and invoke the feminine noun *ȳð* "wave"? There is a verb *ȳðian* / *ȳðigan* / *ȳðigian* "to move like a wave, fluctuate," of which this of course could not be a form, but the verbal noun *ȳðgung* "wave-like motion, inundation" does alternate with a form *ȳðung*. Bosworth-Toller's apparent suggestion s.v. *æðan*, in the sequence of definitions "To overflow, deluge, lay waste," that we are dealing with a single verb where the idea of devastation derives from flooding is, I think, untenable, but are we instead dealing with a partial pun between two verbs *(ā)ȳð(i)an* "lay waste" and "inundate," or with a single use, misunderstood by the scribe, of an otherwise unattested verb derived from the word for "wave" and meaning "to flood, cover with waves"? Until the work of The Dictionary of Old English Project on the latter end of the alphabet is done, all an editor of the poem can do is to exercise caution, invoke the established meaning "destroy" in the glossary, and consign further speculation to a footnote: "This verb

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5 As cited in Doane, *Genesis A: A New Edition*, 258.

6 Dietrich, "Zu Caedmon," 322.

7 All English versions of the Vulgate text are taken from the Douay-Rheims translation.

has been taken by modern editors as a reference to devastation (cognate to German *öde*; see *DOE* s.v. *ā-ȳðan*) but may in fact contain a reference, either punning or etymological, to waves (*ȳð*, cognate to Latin *unda*), cf. *ȳðung*, 'inundation.'"

bresne, *Genesis* 2802, was considered by Bouterwek to be a form of the adjective *bræsen*, that is, brazen, made of bronze or brass; he gives *bræsen*, *bresne* as a headword and glosses "æneus, potens, firmus." Grein, apparently disagreeing, lists only *bresne*, gives no etymology, and glosses "potens, magnificus, validus." Clark Hall lists *bresne*, supplying "mighty, strong" as definition, separately from *bræsen*. Bosworth-Toller has an entry for *bræsen* "I. BRAZEN, made of brass" "II. strong, powerful, bold, daring," citing only *Daniel* 448 for the latter, and an entry for *bresne* "Strong, powerful, bold," citing only *Genesis* 2802 but with a cross-reference to *bræsen*. Doane follows Grein (or Bosworth-Toller), marking the word "adj-ja" and glossing "powerful."

    DOE follows Bouterwek, giving one entry, headword *bræsen*, with two definitions, "1. made of copper or bronze (cf. *bræs*)" and "2. in poetry: mighty, strong, bold; perhaps a metaphorical sense of 1; it has also been taken as a different word." The situation is very murky, and one cannot fault the *DOE* for the tack taken. It is indeed hard to know what to do here. The word *bræsen* appears in a prose context, once in a medical recipe ("cyperen fæt oþþe mæstling oþþe bræsen" [a copper vessel or an alloy one or a brazen one]), once in a translation of Psalm 17:35 (18:34) "posuisti, ut arcum æreum, brachia mea" (hast made my arms like a brazen bow), and once in Ælfric's *Glossary* (*aeneus*), all unambiguous references to the metal alloy. The poetic uses of *bresne*, whether or not a different word, are all in the poems of Junius 11, at *Genesis* 2802 and *Daniel* 173 and 448. Abraham is promised at *Genesis* 2802 that his offspring through Hagar and Ishmael will be "brad ond bresne." The nation of the Babylonians is described in *Daniel* 173 as "bresne Babilonige." Nebuchadnezzar is called "se bræsna Babilone weard" in *Daniel* 448. None of these uses has a direct counterpart in the biblical text being translated, and none has a local context that provides a sure implicit definition: the word seems a term of praise for a people or a ruler. If we accept the suggestion that it is the same word as *bræsen*, which would seem to be partly supported by the spelling in *Daniel* 448, the *DOE*'s definition "mighty, strong, bold," derived from Bosworth-Toller, will satisfy as both a reasonable sense-extension from the qualities of the metal (though "bold," particularly, would seem to be projected back from more modern uses of the word "brazen") and a reasonable fit with the contexts. To remain agnostic on the question of the relationship with *bræsen*, moreover, exposes us to possible definitional aporia, since the positive qualities of a

ruler and people are not necessarily comprehended in the conventionally conjoined adjectives thrown at the word by Grein, Bosworth-Toller, or *DOE*. One alternative possibility that might present itself to the agnostic is "magnus," that is, "great, of much worldly importance," since this is in fact what Abraham is told of the seed of Ishmael at Genesis 21:13 "faciam in gentem magnam" (I will make [. . .] a great nation) and Hagar also at Genesis 21:18 "in gentem magnam faciam eum" (I will make him a great nation), and of course the phrase "Babylon magna" is an extremely well-known biblical collocation, both from Daniel 4:27 and, most memorably, from Revelation 17:5 "Babylon magna, mater fornicationum et abominationum terrae" (Babylon the great, the mother of fornications and the abominations of the earth).[8] Given all of the above, my preference would have been for the *DOE* to remain more firmly agnostic here than it has managed to be, despite the lure of the "brazen" connection, and to devote a separate entry to the Junius 11 instances, cross-referencing to *bræsen* and noting that they have been considered to be the same word.

cildisc, *Genesis* 2320b, occurs in a sentence which is somewhat difficult to construe because of the distance that separates *wesan*, used as an auxiliary in 2320b, and the past participle *geagnod* (*Genesis* 2323a, after several phrases of intercalated material), and which needs to be rearranged or understood as "Sceal monna gehwilc cildisc wæpnedcynnes þære cneorisse þæs þe on woruld cymð wesan geagnod me ymb seofon niht sigores tacne" (Each *cildisc* person of the male gender of that descent who comes into the world must be dedicated to me after seven nights with the sign of victory). Here the glossing difficulties for the editor are three: the siren call of etymological glossing, since the word does exist, though with a different, pejorative, meaning, in modern English; the problem of understanding its precise meaning in context in the Old English; and that of finding the right word or words for the gloss. "Childish" is clearly not right, though it is what Clark Hall gives. Bosworth-Toller is, if anything, worse when it expands the definition with additional pejorative words ("CHILD-ISH, puerile; puerilis"); it misreads *Genesis A* when it completes the entry with the authentic complete half-line (which does not, however, form a phrase) "cildisc wesan" glossed as "to be childish"; and it is just plain peculiar when it cross-references the *cildisc* entry to a further entry with the double headword *cildlic*, *cildisc*. These two dictionaries seem simply to have the wrong idea, no doubt misled by the common

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8   See also Revelation 14:8, 16:19, 18:2, 18:10, and 18:21.

tendency to etymological glossing. Grein was perhaps on safer ground with his Latin definition "puerilis, infans," though of course the first of these (which is the only definition given by Bouterwek) is or can be pejorative, too. Doane attempts a gloss that can be inserted into the word order of the poem as it stands "as a child, while still a child," though this oddly has him proposing adverbial phrases for the gloss of an adjective.

DOE adduces two further quotations, from the Old English Bede and from the interlinear gloss to the *Regularis Concordia*, the first translating "infantilis" ("propter infantilem [. . .] aetatem") and the other "puerilis," and defines as "of a child; of tender age." This is much better than either Clark Hall or Bosworth-Toller and more helpful to the editor: closer to the mark for the actual passage from *Genesis A*, which seems to have been the only instance seen by either of the earlier dictionaries, and better fitting the array of evidence compiled by the *DOE*. Given the specificity of the *Genesis A* passage on circumcision as to the age of the child and the fact that the Bede sentence refers to a child at or under the age of three, one might be tempted in a glossary entry for the *Genesis A* instance to emphasize the senses of OE *cild* in the exhaustive and useful analytical *DOE* entry for that word that refer primarily to infants: "newborn"? "baby?" But the sentence will in any case need an explanatory note offering a translation of the beginning of the sentence where the word *cildisc* occurs, perhaps, "Each infant male person of this descent who comes into the world must be dedicated to me."

dreamhæbbende, *Genesis* 81, is a hapax and not a complicated compound, in fact, rather self-explanatory. I doubt that I would have looked this word up in a dictionary if merely reading the text. Bouterwek, followed by Grein, defines as "lætabundus," a definition also reused verbatim by Bosworth-Toller, which helpfully adds "[dreám I. *joy*, hæbbende, *having, possessing*] *Possessing bliss, joyful.*" *DOE* can hardly offer any advance, of course, and understanding the particular use as substantive, defines as "one who is joyful, blissful." My own definition five years ago was also no advance: "happy, joyful, rejoicing." Doane, similarly, has "possessing joy, blissful." But Grein is certainly onto something when he goes on to define *duguða dreámhäbbenda* [*sic*] as "angelorum." I do agree with *DOE* and Doane against Grein that *dreamhæbbendra* should be understood as used substantively and in apposition to *duguða*, but both terms refer to the heavenly host, and I would now be inclined to understand the second term more specifically as a reference to those enjoying heavenly bliss, *Dream of the Rood*'s "dream on heofonum" (*DOE* s.v. *dream*, sense 1b). On the other hand,

the word, such an easy compound but not evidenced elsewhere, may be a nonce usage and thus something the reader or hearer would be expected to work through, unlike the similar *eorðbuend*, for instance, which is of very frequent occurrence and could perhaps simply be defined as "human being." A gloss that captures all of these hesitations is difficult to achieve, but I would now be inclined to define as "(one) having (heavenly) bliss, i.e., an angel."

eðelstæf, *Genesis* 1118, 2225, occurs only in *Genesis A*. In both instances, it has been botched by the scribe, once in the dative as "edulf stæfe" (1118) and once as "*seo* eðylstæf" (2225) despite the fact that "stæf" is masculine ("eðyl" itself is not an unusual spelling at all in Junius 11), which may possibly indicate that the scribe stumbled over an unfamiliar word. The sentences are, first, "Adam hæfde, þa he eft ongan him to eðelstæfe oðres strienan bearnes . . . XXX and C . . . wintra on worulde" (1117-21: Adam had, when he began again to beget another child as his *eðelstæf*, a hundred and thirty years in the world) and, second, "Nu ic eom orwena þæt unc se eðylstæf æfre weorðe gifeðe ætgædere" (2224-26: Now I despair that to us together the *eðelstæf* will ever be given). Both sentences have to do with sons and heirs. The first is an unusually close translation of Genesis 5:3 "Vixit autem Adam centum triginta annis: et genuit ad imaginem et similitudinem suam, vocavitque nomen ejus Seth" (And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begot a son to his own image and likeness, and called his name Seth), while the second is part of a considerable expansion (with the sentence before it and two following) of Genesis 16:2 "Ecce, conclusit me Dominus, ne parerem" (Behold, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing).

Bouterwek retains "to edulfstæfe" in his text at 1118 (his 1114), has "zu Hauses Stütze" in his German translation of the poem, and glosses s.v. *edulstæf* as "sustentaculum"; he accepts *eðylstæf* at 2225 as a feminine noun and glosses it unusually fully as "columen, præsidium patriæ s.[ive] familiæ." Grein emends to "êðulstäfe" without notice at 1118 in his text and combines the two entries in the *Sprachschatz* with the definition "columen fundi hereditarii, Erbnachfolger," where the Latin definition seems to explicate the compound ("columen" glossing "stæf," and "fundi hereditarii" glossing "eðel") and the German to resolve the compound to its ultimate meaning. Clark Hall simply defines as "heir, successor." Bosworth-Toller has a main entry under *eðyl-stæf*, *edulf-stæf* and a cross-referenced one at *éðel-stæf* with identical definitions: "A family staff *or* support, stay of the house; prædii sustentaculum." Doane tries the compound-interpretive "foundation of an establishment, family."

DOE seems unusually dependent on previous dictionaries here, offering only the definition "sustainer of the homeland" (cf. "columen fundi hereditarii") and then using exactly these words in translating Sarah's complaint as "now I have no hope that to you and me together a sustainer of the homeland should ever be granted." Grein's "Erbnachfolger" and Clark Hall's "heir, successor" are certainly closer to capturing the apparent meaning in context, especially as regards *Genesis* 2225, and I have here taken the unusual step of signalling my discomfort with *DOE* by glossing "heir, child ('sustainer of the homeland' *DOE*)."

fæle, *Genesis* 2303, 2499, 2726, 2820, is a common enough word, very familiar indeed to readers of the Paris Psalter, and perhaps not difficult for the editor to define in context in *Genesis A*. The chief glory of the *DOE* in this case, as in many others, is its assembling of instances and its keen perception of small differences in sense. Clark Hall defines the word as "faithful, trusty, good . . . dear, beloved"; Bosworth-Toller similarly defines it as "faithful, true, dear, good," listing a variety of instances in no discernible order. *DOE* gives two principal senses and three subsenses:

1. of people/angels/God: faithful, trusty; also, more generally: kind, beloved, pleasant
  [5 citations including *Genesis* 2726 and 4 from Paris Psalter]
1.a. in specific alliterative collocations: fæle friþuscealc / friþuweard / friþuwebba / friþuwebbe 'faithful minister of peace / guardian of peace / peace-weaver'
  [4 citations from poetry including *Genesis* 2303]
1.b. se fæla fugol 'the beloved bird' (ref. to Christ)
  [1 citation from *Christ B*]
1.c. fæle sceap 'faithful or beloved sheep' (ref. to God's people)
  [2 citations from Paris Psalter]
2. of things and abstractions: good, excellent (in metrical psalters, mainly P[aris] Ps[alter]); in some instances perhaps used to facilitate alliteration without semantic precision
  [6 citations, incl. 5 from Paris Psalter and 1 from a psalm fragment]

A dictionary entry structured as this one is can only be sheer delight for the editor looking to gloss this word. From Clark Hall and Bosworth-Toller, one gets the mere impression of a mushy word whose core sense "faithful(?)" becomes in some usages merely gratulatory or approving "dear, good." It is to the great credit of the *DOE* editors that they have here made a brave and successful attempt to sort out the various

stages of mushiness, from the shading-off of definition 1 into "more generally: kind, beloved, pleasant" to the suspicion that some instances of definition 2 are "used to facilitate alliteration without semantic precision." Rather than helping the editor to supply a definite glossary entry, the careful work of the *DOE* editors makes it more difficult to be sure: two of the instances in *Genesis A* would seem to fall under principal definition 1 and two under 1.a., but of course questions arise! To what extent does the sliding of *fæle* towards "more generally: kind, beloved, pleasant" affect the passages? Is the word "faithful" in 1.b. "faithful minister of peace" simply *DOE* shorthand for the full definition under 1, including "more generally: kind, beloved, pleasant"? To what extent might the suspicion about the word (in sense 2) aiding alliteration without actually having a definite meaning extend to and pollute the instances outside the psalters, instances where we might actually prefer to have a definite meaning? It might seem that the lexicographer's finest hour is the bringing of precise definition to a word formerly only vaguely understood; but frequently language as actually used is not so cooperative as to have precise meaning, in which case a lexicographer who shows us the really unpleasant mushiness of words is doing us a considerable favour by liberating us from our bias towards the definite. Of course, my glossary entry still needs to be written.

gnyrn, *Genesis* 2422, may be one of my favourite words in the poem on the basis of phonological attractiveness and strangeness alone, even though I am not sure I know what it means. The inhabitants of Sodom are said to repay God's "god mid gnyrne, oððæt gasta helm, lifes leohtfruma leng ne wolde torn þrowigean" (good with *gnyrn* until the Protector of Souls, the Light-creator of Life would no longer endure the trouble). There are two other instances of the word, both in *Elene*, and there is also a *gnyrn-wracu* and a host of related words: *gnorn* (adj. and noun), *gnorn-cearig*, *gnorne*, *gnorn-hof*, *gnornian*, *gnorn-scyndende*, *gnorn-sorg*, *gnornung*, *gnorn-word* (these are the *DOE* entries). Bouterwek, referring to Grimm, defines this word as "querimonia, lamentatio, luctus, moestitia," with analogous definitions for *gnorn*, *gnornian*, *gnornung*, and *gnornvord*. Grein groups the *Genesis* instance with *Elene* 422, where Christ on the cross is described as "ealra gnyrnra [*sic*] leas" and defines the word in these two cases as "injuria, offensio, delictum" but as "luctus, moeror, calamitas" in *Elene* 1138, where the finding of the nails comes to St. Helen "gnyrna to geoce." *DOE* does something entirely similar, defining the *Elene* 1138 instance as "sadness, sorrow, grief," and the *Genesis* instance and the one at *Elene* 422 as "? wickedness, evil; fault, sin."

In this kind of case, it is a great advantage to be able to use the *DOE* to investigate these words which seem to stem from the same root, in which a range of significations seems to exist for that root, with "sorrow" as one pole (see *DOE* definitions s.vv. *gnorn* [adj. and noun], *gnorne*, *gnorn-sorg*, *gnorn-word*) and "lamentation, complaint" at the other (see *DOE* definitions s.vv. *gnornian*, *gnornung*, *gnorn-cearig*, *gnorne*). The *Genesis* passage might seem to tip the balance towards the second of the *DOE* definitions, and certainly the inhabitants of Sodom were sinful compared to God's good, and Christ on the Cross was without sin. But it is difficult to work out the semantic mechanism by which "sorrow, lamentation, complaint" shades into "sin." And although a significant interpretive problem is posed by the fact that Junius 11 is missing a leaf immediately prior to the lines in question, it may be relevant that it is the "clamor" (Genesis 18:20) of Sodom and Gomorrah that has come to God's ears, and that "clamor" in medieval Latin (see Niermeyer s.v.) often refers to complaint, to a legal plaint or petition, and so on. Has the author of *Genesis A* understood the Bible in this way? Could the Christ of *Elene* 422 be "without complaint" on the Cross? Might St. Helen herself in *Elene* 1138 find a consolation of her "lamentations" rather than her "sorrows" (cf. 1082a)? I am inclined to believe that *gnornian* together with its root is originally echoic, such as *murnan* (and many words in *gn-* in both Old English and Old Norse); that its core semantics are related to lamentation, complaint, and outcry or grumbling; and that this is the way the glossary definition for the *Genesis A* instance, at least, ought to be built, the inhabitants of Sodom repaying God's goodness with "complaint, outcry." But I have reached this conclusion in large part based on what the *DOE* provides.

The words selected above are too odd a group to provide real answers to the questions I had posed myself as to the usefulness and new knowledge presented in the *DOE*, but they do at least show that engagement with the work of the *DOE* editors is unremittingly valuable as an activity for the editor of an Old English text. In cases that seem unproblematic, such as *fæle* and *dreamhabbende*, the dictionary can suggest additional approaches, whether semantically narrower and more precise or (equally valuable although more difficult to deal with) less defined as to semantics. In cases that are recognized problems, such as *eðelstæf* and *gnyrn*, the editor might well venture beyond lexicographical resources in search of understanding but will always find the *DOE* entry worth considering. And there are certainly cases, such as *cildisc*, where the work of the editors simply overturns previous lexicography. Finally, it seems obvious that although the work of The Dictionary of Old English Project makes an invaluable contribution to our understanding of the Old English lexicon,

especially in considering all available texts, the editor of a particular text will still find that there is plenty of work to do and a dialogue to establish with *DOE* in search of further knowledge.

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