INTERPRETING vs. DISAPPEARING: ON TEXTS AS HISTORICAL OBJECTS[1]

1 POLEMICAL SETTING

Much of the factual material in this paper will be familiar to readers of *SELIM,* though the implications I draw may be novel. My intention is to re-open debate on certain issues generally taken as settled a long time ago. For this reason (as well as because this is the kind of thing I seem to write) the paper is both idiosyncratic and waspishly polemical. The rhetorical stance is one of treating complex issues with a kind of pseudo-naive innocence, seeing what would happen if one asked Daddy about the Emperor's clothing. It never hurts to look at even the most obvious things again, and remind ourselves of what we once had to learn with difficulty and now accept as unproblematic.

As long as people have been seriously editing older texts, it has been customary to 'repair' the often intractable messes presented by older MSS, to make them useful, palatable, easily appreciated by readers, etc. Such tinkering comes in both (relatively) benign and malignant types, but the latter far outnumber the former. To set the cat properly among the pigeons, I suggest first that regardless of the qualifications of the editor involved, any emendation of older texts (or even worse, the filling of lacunae left by destroyed text)

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[1] This is an expanded and more technical version of material to appear in Lass (Forthcoming: ch. 2), here aimed at a specifically Anglicist and medievalist audience.

Roger Lass, *Selim* 3 (1993): 7-25

is a destructive and ultimately indefensible procedure. And second, that 'normalization' of teaching texts as usually practiced is also harmful, and even though it appears to serve pedagogical goals, serves the wrong ones. This is so because of the peculiar kind of object an early 'text' is, and an important class of insights any such object fails to afford if it is treated in a certain way.

If the priggishness underlying these remarks were to embed itself in editorial practice, it would make older texts much harder to read, and greatly complicate the task of 'literary appreciation' for students, making the texts-as-objects an even more alien life-form than they are already. This is precisely as it should be; it's only proper that the interpretation of an Old English text, for example, should in every way be more difficult, more tentative, more full of gaps and puzzles, than that of a modern one.

This is not to suggest that we oughtn't to have editions with rich textual apparatus as well as explanatory and 'intertextual' notes; far from it. What I would argue for is an enrichment of these guides to appreciation, and a radical impoverishment of the tampering actually done with texts as they appear on the page. To take an extreme case, if a piece of text is garbage, then the garbage ought to stay in the version we read, as an inseparable part of it, and be (conjecturally) sorted out only in notes. What underlies this claim is a pair of positions either profoundly reactionary or radical, depending on your point of view.

First, a text (or any other heritage) from an older historical period is an autonomous object, and our duty toward it is (a) to accept it as a contingent surviror from the past, with all its problems, and (b) to try and experience it as closely as possible to the way it might have been experienced in its own time. I'm not silly enough to think this can be done; but one can get a lot nearer this ideal by confronting a clean text, with lots of background material--in its proper place. At least we can do our best to look at the object as it was originally presented, in precisely the language it was written in.

My rationale is not dissimilar to that behind the movement for 'authentic' performances of early music (even as late as Beethoven or Berlioz). If a listener of the day could not have heard the sounds we make on modern instruments, then it could be argued that we are not actually listening to the music in question if we hear it that way. (This view is sometimes dismissed by critics as *Klangfarbmaterialismus,* but there is a lot to be said for it.) Are we for instance really 'hearing Mozart' if we have string-playing with continuous vibrato, valved instead of natural horns and trumpets, no harpsichord continuo, pitch a half-tone too high, timpani with padded sticks instead of hard ones? In such a case we are creating an acoustic object that the composer could not have imagined nor his audience heard; the object is remanufactured 'on the basis of' the original, but more a translation than a faithful copy. It provides a very different experience from the kind it could originally have induced.

So I suggest in the first instance that it might be a good idea to rid ourselves of the romantic desire to 'remake' past art objects and other things in our own image (to deprive ourselves of the undisciplined luxury of deconstruction, and start respecting artifacts as artifacts); if all old things have to be modernized, what's the point of the past at all? At least from one perspective, the delight of the old is in its oldness, not what we 'make of it'; our job is to attempt, however ineptly, to remake our own consciousness on the model of older ones, not to remake those on a new model. Without this attempt we fail to amplify our experience, and confine ourselves to the familiar and self-generated.

The second point is linguistic, and more important to my mind than this merely aesthetic one. My main concern here is the falsification of the linguistic past produced by over-editing. The primary value of older texts is as 'samples' or 'representations' of the languages they are written in; they lose a certain vital historical import when seen through too many sets of spectacles. From the linguistic point of view, there is much to be said for leaving texts, garbage and all, the way they have come down to us, and little

if anything to say for editorial tampering. I will illustrate this point (which has a serious as well as a cranky dimension) with a familiar and particularly loathsome example, and then draw some more general conclusions.

2 WHAT's IN A WORD?

Let us look at some strategies for dealing with an intractable problem. Older text corpora may contain lexical items that appear only once (*hapax legomena*), and apparently have no descendants. Interpreting such forms may be near impossible; they are often simplex and therefore compositionally opaque (unlike say a unique compound both of whose elements are independently attested); they may have no apparent near or distant cognates either. To what extent are such items really 'historical data', and how should we treat them? Should we give them SOME interpretation, no matter how conjectural? Should we just leave them there flagged as cruxes? Or should we disappear them? (The reason I use this stage-magician's verb will become clear.)

In particularly horrid cases an item of this kind may have multiple witnesses in a textual tradition. The one to be discussed here has four: is this buried history or *folie àquatre*?

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 937 contains a linguistic object commonly taken to be a poem and usually called 'The Battle of Brunanburh'.[1] On this interpretation (see remarks in the next section), what are presented as lines 10b-13a read as follows (Corpus Christi MS 173: text from Dobbie 1942: 17):

Hettend crungun

[1] Or, to anticipate a kind of problem taken up immediately below, maybe it should be *Brunnanburh.* The Corpus Christi MS 173 has *brunanburh* with a second <n> added above the line after the <u> in a later hand, and Cotton Tiberius B. iv has *brun nanburh* (Dobbie 1942: 16).

Sceotta leoda and scipflotan
fæge feollan, feld dænnede
secga swate …

which can be translated near-literally as

(the) enemies died,
Men of the Scots and Ship-floaters [= Vikings]
doomed, fell, (the) field ?-ed
(with) men's blood …

The gloss '?-ed' indicates that while the other lexical items in the text are known from elsewhere in OE, *dænnede* is a *hapax*. So for that matter are the readings of the other witnesses, MSS Cotton Tiberius A. vi, Cotton Tiberius B. i *(dennade),* and Cotton Tiberius B. iv *(dennode)*. Most student editions read *dennode,* but Dobbie uses Corpus 173 as his copy-text and retains the reading (see below).

These three forms represent the same verb, apparently; at least nobody has (for good parsimonious reasons, I suppose) suggested two unknown forms, and the consensus is that these are variants of one item (the *-ede/-ade/-ode* variation is more or less expectable.) Three of the witnesses agree on the nuclear vowel (<e> as against <æ>), and a medial geminate <nn>.[1] The morphology is also transparent: whatever this/these verb(s) is/are, the forms are all on syntactic grounds 3rd person singulars, and on morphological grounds preterites belonging to the class II weak conjugation. This is clear because a thematic weak preterite (*-a-de, -o-de*) ending after a heavy root

[1] Corpus, aside from its idiosyncratic <æ>, seems to hesitate about the medial consonant. At least the second <n> is added above the line, in another (apparently contemporary) hand (Dobbie, 147). If this is, as seems likely, the work of a corrector, then whatever this verb is it must have been known to somebody besides the first scribe, since there was clearly a 'wrong' version, and the 'right' one had medial /-nn-/.

syllable must be class II.[1] This class of verbs standardly has the infinitive ending *-ian* (as opposed to normal class I *-an*); hence one could say that *dennode, dennade* are preterite 3 singular word-forms of a lexeme whose dictionary headword would be the infinitive *dennian* (so Hulbert 1959, Clark Hall 1960, Holthausen 1968).

Since none of these forms occur anywhere except in versions of Brunanburh 12b, how can we find a gloss? There are different sorts of attempts to deal with it. Hulbert (1959: 223) suggests *dennode* = 'became slippery', presumably following the unsupported conjecture of Bosworth-Toller; Holthausen 1968 s.v. *dennian* gives 'fließen (?)', with Skr *dhanvati* 'it flows' as a possible cognate. Clark Hall (1960) gives 'to stream (?)', Pope (1966: 158) has '*dennian,* wk.v.II. *become wet, flow*?', but says properly 'meaning doubtful' (the standard euphemism for 'unknown'). This word (or 'word') exemplifies a common problem. Is it a 'real' word, or is it a mistake, copied inaccurately from some (perhaps corrupt) original, and then perpetuated, or what?

All attempts at glossing (and even Holthausen's stab at a possible etymological connection) are ultimately based on conjecture from context. After a battle, what would a field DO 'with blood'? Well, given the characteristic rhetoric of Old Germanic battle poetry, it certainly might run or flow or stream or become slippery. A non-word (in the sense that only a form exists, with no extra-contextual backup for a meaning) is being interpreted simply by trying to make sense of it; this is little more than low-level cleverness, and except for Holthausen's attempt involves no real argument, and is not intellectually respectable.

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[1] In class I (the commonest), preterites are athematic after a heavy root (*deμm-de* 'he judged'), and thematic after a light (*frem-e-de* 'he performed'). There is a small class of verbs in /-r/ which belong to class I historically, but for reasons not relevant here have thematic preterites after light roots (*herian* 'praise', *nerian* 'save', preterites *her-e-de, ner-e-de*); they also, again irrelevantly, have an infinitive ending that looks like class II.

Holthausen appears to apply this kind of strategy: if there's no attestation in the language in question, look for a putative cognate, i.e. a form whose phonological shape could be reasonably related, and which has something like what you think might be the right semantics. Apparently there is nothing in attested Germanic, but there is one Sanskrit shape that sort of fits: *den-* could = IE */dhan-/ or */dhen-/, since */e, a/ merge in Sanskrit. A PIE shape */dhen-/ would give PGmc */pen-/, which would give OE /den-/. The geminate is still to be accounted for (Holthausen does not deal with this); they are rare in class II except as the result of assimilation (e.g. OE *blissian* 'rejoice', cf *blÈµÍe*'blithe', and the noun *bliss* with its alternant *bÈµps,* and OS *blÈµ?sea*).

So much for attempts at interpretation. They are of course all (more or less) hopeless, if in Holthausen's case with some sort of minimal support. But scholars (rightly in principle, if often dreadfully wrongly in practice) abhor vacuums as much as nature does, and sometimes do naughty things to fill them. Since the late 19th century many have attempted to make something out of this crux; and the bulk of them have not tried to find an etymology, but rather assumed an error, and replaced the offending object with a familiar one that is at least similar, and has a (more or less) solid meaning. That is, rather than interpreting the (multiply attested) form, or abandoning it as hopeless, they disappear it by emending the text, and tell us 'what must have been meant'. This is only one step less criminal than another common text-editor's ploy: 'restoring' lacunae resulting from destruction of text by inventing material that ought to have been there. But it is of interest, since it displays the same strategies as the other attempts, but with less justification.

Here is a sample of the suggested replacements for *dennode* and its friends (the individual arguments are not really to the point here; for full discussion and references see Dobbie, 147):

(a) *dengode, dengede* 'manured' < *dengian,* a variant of *dyngian* 'to dung' (cf. G *düngen*). The line then reads 'the field was manured with the

blood of men', which seems to me at least a most un-OE kind of conceit. The MS readings are then based on an original error of substituting an <n> for a <g>. But if so, why did the Corpus corrector bother to put in another <n>? This suggests that indeed there was 'such a word', and that it had been mis-spelled, and the only thing the corrector was unhappy about was the single <n>. If the <æ> is original, the <e>-variant is Kentish, and the language of the MSS is not; but there is evidence that at least two of them have connections with Canterbury (Dobbie, xxxvf).

(b) *deμanian* 'to steam'. The root (not to mention the verb) is itself unattested, but could be connected with Gothic *dauns* 'odor'. Verbs of this class are often denominal (Lass 1993), so this is not out in principle. But the meaning of the Gothic form is being stretched, and there are no traces of Gmc */Íaun-/ in Old English. This falls foul as well of the 'correction' of <n> to <nn>, and the <nn> in the other witnesses.

(c) *dyn(n)ede* 'resounded'. This makes very little sense, and is even less like an Old Germanic metaphor than the manure above. (Though cf. Genesis 4.10, 'uox sanguinis fratris tui clamat ad me de terra', which the author would surely have known.) The vocalism is manageable: at the time of the sources (10th-11th c.) confusion of <a> and <æ> is not unlikely, and that of <e> and <æ> possible but less so. And a writing of <e> for <y> would be just possible on the grounds of the Kentish connection ((a) above), since /y(:)/ had gone to /e(:)/ in Kentish, as had /æ(:)/.

(e) *Íaμnode* 'became wet'. From an attested class II verb, and cf. *paμn* 'moist'. This is palaeographically reasonable, since in most OE hands the letters <d> and <Í> differ only in the latter having a cross-stroke. But we still need a different vowel, and the geminate <nn>.

(f) *dunnode* 'became dark'. Also attested class II. This, like *dynnede,* would require only an initial error in the vowel; but in this case the Corpus *dænnede* is much more difficult, because there is no likelihood whatever of a 'Kenticizing' of an original /u/ <u> to <e> or <æ>.

Dobbie remarks, after a nice discussion, that 'either *dunnode* or … *Íaμnode* is defensible, but in view of other possibilities the text has not been emended'. Good for him. At least one of the other possibilities, in my opinion the only correct one, is to leave the text as it is, and refrain from any suggestion at all except one that would give the existing lemma an etymology, and take that with a good deal of salt.

But why should one not be allowed to emend texts, and take the result of the emendation as a second-order witness? Surely production of second-order ((re)constructed) witnesses is a vital part of history-making (cf. Lass 1980: ch. 2, Appendix, Lass 1986, Forthcoming, ch. 1). Isn't this is in fact precisely what we do when we reconstruct, on the basis of attested witnesses, a proto-form, e.g. IE */dhan-/ or */dhen-/ on the basis of *dennian* and Skr *dhanvati*, etc.?

One obvious motivation for not emending is that emendation (unlike reconstruction) is destructive; it obliterates part of the record, and substitutes for it an invention of another time, place and culture. Rather than filling an epistemic gap, as (properly constrained) linguistic reconstruction or interpretation of documents do, it falsifies the record, and produces corrupt second-order witnesses through a procedure that is not principle-driven, but dependent only on weak (usually flabby and aesthetic rather than methodologically controlled) argument.

But the real motivation is largely a matter of constraints, i.e. limitations on what kind of past objects we can be allowed to make; or to put it another way, the deductive consequences of our abductive guesses. In a case like this, without the power of 'hard' methods, we have very little procedural help to tell us when we are producing nonsense, and almost nothing in the way of a

critical armoury for testing our guesses. We can talk to some extent about likelihoods of particular kinds of scribal error, and suggest palaeographic grounds for (putative) misreadings. But we do not have anywhere near as secure an array of reconstructive methodologies and critical protocols for this as we do for say phonological reconstruction, e.g. comparative method, etc.[1] (There are of course no methodologies for filling lacunae in texts!)

There is another difference too, and probably a more important one. In reconstructing say a proto-IE segment, we are reconstructing a TYPE, not a TOKEN, i.e. we operate on 'system' level (in the sense of Lyons 1977: ch. 1). In trying to emend a text, we are dealing with a token, in the sense that the text is (a representation of) a particular, unique utterance. There is no reconstructive technique that can project at utterance level; we may take texts as utterances, and look for the kind of variation that is typical of certain kinds of utterances in certain kinds of situations, i.e. treat a text as a 'transcription' in some sense (cf. Lass 1992), subject it to variationist analysis, etc. But we still come out with constructs at type level.

An attempt however to reconstruct an individual's word-choice is as fatuous as producing texts in a proto-language, or reading poems aloud in a reconstructed pronunciation with 'expression', suprasegmentals and all. Not that this stops people from doing it, but they shouldn't. As Herbert Penzl very properly puts it (1991: 62), 'Our methods permit reconstruction of phonemes, morphemes, phrases, syntactical rules, vocabulary forms, but not of speakers and their language acts, such as e.g. the creation of written texts'.[2]

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[1] There are working principles for editing that often give good results, e.g. *difficilor lectio praeferenda est*; but in this case the 'more difficult' reading is in fact the unknown original, so that on these grounds too it should stand.

[2] This holds *a fortiori* for 'texts' written in protolanguages (whether real ones like Indo-European, or increasingly dubious ones like 'Nostratic', 'Amerind', 'Proto-World', or whatever), as well as for 'reconstruction' of texts in their supposed original dialects, when the witnesses come down to us in something else. As Penzl says of such efforts (1991: 61), 'their scholarly value is zero, even if there is no question of the learning and competence' of their perpetrators.

3 AND WHAT, FOR THAT MATTER, IS A 'TEXT' ANYHOW?

The last section was basically about 'words'. Despite the familiar theoretical problems of defining 'word' as a grammatical category, most of us have fairly useful intuitions about what they are, good enough for practical work anyhow. Etymological dictionaries, glossaries, commentaries, etc. generally seem to assume that whatever phonological level spelling might access (phonemic, morphophonemic, on occasion allophonic), the morphological input is not in question: orthographies spell words. And if texts utilize such systems, this implies in a way that texts are made of words too, since the main sources of our words are texts. This however is oversimple; there are traditions that do not always write in the 'normal' way, but take different-sized elements as inputs.

Even modern English sometimes does this: 'contractions' like *don't, weren't* are not really morphological syntagms, but pieces of syntax: not 'words' but constructions of auxiliary and negator. The lack of space and the apostrophe are signs of phonological cliticization. If we take an 'orthographic word' as a piece of an orthographic utterance surrounded by space, then these are in fact words in the textual sense, and there is not necessarily a direct mapping (with respect to boundaries) from morphology onto orthography.

Old English does this kind of thing to a much greater extent; and this may give us some evidence about suprasegmentals, or at least about writers' intuitions about suprasegmental constituents like tone-groups, etc. In many Old English texts, for instance, light elements like prepositions, conjunctions and determiners are often written as if part of the following major category item. The *Beowulf* manuscript (Zupitza 1959) has forms like the following (second OE citation with conventional editorial word-divisions, first English gloss literal, following 'word'-divisions in the original):

(i) Îa com ofmore = Îa com of more (710)
then came frommoor 'then came from the moor'

(ii) insele pam hean = in sele pam hean (713)
inhall the high 'in the high hall'

(iii) com pa torecede = com pa to recede (720)
came then tobuilding 'then he came to the building'

(iv) huseman scaĺa = hu se man-scaĺa (737)
howthewickedness injurer 'how the wicked-injurer'

(v) Íawæs onuhtan = Ía wæs on uhtan (126)
thenwas inmorning 'then there was in the morning'

The word-divisions in the second versions (those that appear in printed editions, and to some extent even in Zupitza's transcription of the MS) are presumably based on independent occurrences of the forms with spaces around them in other texts (as well as modern survivals and cognates). The reading of *man-scaĺa* and *mæl-ceare* as compounds depends on prosodic evidence; they alliterate on /m/, and according to the OE rules as we understand them the first syllables should therefore bear primary stress.[1]

The scribe then takes what looks like potential phonological cliticization and writes it; on the other hand he normally separates what ought to be first

[1] Reading the sequence <man-> in *man scaĺa* as representing the lexeme *maμn* 'wickedness' rather than *man*(*n*) 'man' is in fact a secondary inference, based apparently on metrical argument; but if *man*(*n*) indeed ends in a geminate, as it probably does, then *mann* and *mãn* are metrically equivalent, and the compound could mean 'harmer of men'. Even what lexeme is being represented is not entirely clear.

elements of compounds from seconds, even affixes from stems (see below). Perhaps even more distressing, there is virtually no punctuation, and what there is, while usually coinciding with major syntactic boundaries, often does not, but may signal line-ends or caesuras, or even, as far as we can tell, nothing much in particular. One might add of course that even though the text is in verse, and conventionally printed as such, it is written throughout as prose, with little indication of line breaks. Here for instance are lines 99ff in the standard edition ((Klaeber 1950):[1]

Swaμ Íaμ drihtguman dreμamum lifdon,
eμadiglÈμce, oÍ Íæt aμn ongan
fyrene frem(m)an feμond on helle;
wæs se grimma gst Grendel haμten,
mæμre mearcstapa, seμ pe moμras heμold,
fen ond fæsten …

[‘so the noble retainers lived in joys/blessedly, until one began/to commit crimes, a fiend from hell;/the grim spirit was named Grendel,/famous marchstepper, who held the moors,/ fen and fastness …’]

The manuscript reads:

SwaÍa driht guman dreamum lifdon
eadig lice oÍÍæt an ongan fyrene frem

[1] Klaeber, like many editors, marks length as well, making the text even less like the original, and falsifying the orthographic system. Length is never consistently marked in OE, though it is sporadically indicated in some traditions by vowel-graph-doubling or accents (see e.g. Krapp & Dobbie 1936: xxiv on the Exeter Book). There is however a good reason for doing this at an early stage in the teaching of Old English, since etymological identification is an essential part of what the student of the history of English ought to learn, and the visual repetition of macrons is a useful way of fixing this information.

man feond on helle was segrim ma gæst
grendel haten mære mearc stapa
se pe moras heold fen 7fæsten

Literally, more or less

Sothe noble men in-joys lived
blessed ly tothat one began crime to-
do fiend in hell was the grim m spirit
grendel called famous march stepper
who that moors held fen &fastness

There are two matters of interest here. First, it would seem reasonable to assume that the scribe was (generally) writing 'by ear' (since such conventions are not universal in OE), and that therefore he perceived certain adverbs and prepositions as clitics, and contrariwise certain (what we consider) affixes as independent 'words'. He also seems to have expected the reader to be able to track the structure of the text by the alliteration, and to construe it without the help of punctuation or sentence-division.

Second, this says something sobering (for those not familiar with the actual properties of certain historical sources) about the kind of artifact a modern 'text' is, with respect to what it purports to represent. This makes any modern edition problematic: especially considering the kind of fairly loose, rather paratactic syntax of this kind of Old English.[1] The modern editor that is has to make choices in a reading text which are frequently not the only possible ones; there is a rich (and often not very edifying) literature concerning alternative punctuations of texts from traditions of this kind. The only thing that's clear is that (on uniformitarian grounds: there are no languages

[1] For an interesting treatment of some of the syntactic problems raised by unpointed or minimally pointed OE texts, see Dunning & Bliss 1969: §§I,1, II.

that typically produce utterances made of continuous unbounded syntactic strings) we can't possibly assume that the syntactic structure of the text is mirrored in the writing in the same way that the segmental-phonological and (at times) the suprasegmental are. Texts like this then tell us things we are very interested in knowing, and fail to tell us bigger things that we'd like to know, and in many cases there's no way of finding out.

Aside from decisions that essentially amount to parsing for the reader, modern editions even make special claims about genre; the lineation as 'verse' is essentially a second-order construct (based to be sure on a long tradition that is essentially well founded, if problematic in details); but the visual experience for the modern reader (no matter how well versed in the language) is essentially different from that of the contemporary reader, since in the editions even the page layout itself defines a genre. For Old English anyhow we don't actually know what constituted a 'poem' as opposed to a piece of highly alliterative prose, for instance; lineation of poetry to show what it is comes later in the English tradition.[1] As, one might add, does giving poems titles (none of the poems in the Exeter Book or the Junius Manuscript, for instance, have original titles).[2] So 'texts', as we find them in editions that students (and all too often scholars and historians of the language) read, are already very different kinds of objects from what was presented to their contemporary readers.

They may also fail, and this is much more serious, to represent anything like the state of the language in which they are actually written. If as is often the case, texts are 'normalized' (or as Penzl puts it 'redialectalized'), this irons out variation. And this may produce a kind of object that could not in fact

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[1] The distinction between verse and prose was certainly clear to Old English speakers (though there appears to be no special word for the latter); the Exeter Book for instance is described in a list of donations to Exeter Cathedral as being 'on leoĺwisan geworht', literally 'in song-manner made' (Krapp & Dobbie 1936: ix).

[2] Interestingly, two later hands have added titles to the Junius MS poem we now know as *Genesis,* 'Genesis in lingua Saxania', and 'Genesis in Anglico' (Krapp 1931: xviii).

have been written by anybody in the tradition the text comes from. Let us return for instance to Brunanburh: this text is not written in the kind of language one learns from the grammars (indeed practically no texts are, a point I will return to in a moment). In any pedagogical grammar one might use for beginning students, it would become clear at an early stage that 'the preterite indicative plural ending' is *-on*; this is what appears in the paradigms (though other forms may be given in notes), and indeed this is what appears in the 'normalized' edition in Pope (1966). But this is not actually the case for any real witness. In Dobbie's copy-text for instance, there are 4 occurrences of *-on,* as opposed to 7 of *-un* and 10 of *-an.* That is, the 'standard' ending amounts to only 18% of the tokens in the text, and the one that is (confusingly, but importantly) a homograph (and homophone?) of the infinitive ending and the bulk of the oblique forms of weak nouns, *-an,* constitutes 45%. Nearly half the tokens of this category are not what the student has been taught should occur, and if it were not for the syntax could be taken as infinitives or noun forms.[1]

But it is an important fact about the language of this text (or nearly any other OE or other Old Germanic one) that the orthography is not codified, and that it may tell us things about the language that are of interest and importance for historical study. 'Literary appreciation' is not so primary that texts should be presented in forms totally alien to the way they were originally experienced: and, much worse, in essentially 'different languages'. (This is surely the case of those in Pope 1966, which were the first ones I read; it was only later that I discovered the much more interesting texts in the various avatars of Sweet's *Reader*, with their textual apparatus that was itself an education in the nature of variation in Old English.)

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[1] One might also note that one dative plural in this text (*lafan* 6b) also has *-an* instead of expected *-um,* and another (*wundun*, 43b) has *-un.* For a dative plural in *-on* one has to turn to another witness (*Íeodon,* MS Cotton Tiberius B. iv, 23b); all of which helps make the point.

This view has some pedagogical implications. Students must of course start somewhere, with a few handles to get hold of. The standard grammars (which are in themselves based on pseudo-codified versions of languages which were not codified in that way by their speakers) are a useful, perhaps necessary beginning: provided variability and gaps in knowledge are made clear at the outset, and students are warned that in the first texts they read they will find 'exceptions' to the rules they've learned. So normalizing grammars with (preferably rather late) West Saxon lemmata have their role to play at the outset, and indeed knowledge of this tradition is an essential part of the whole business of getting acculturated to Old English studies. But the first real texts the student encounters should be presented unnormalized, or at worst with original and edited texts (lightly normalised, with vowel-length marked, and maybe even palatalization) on facing pages. (I know of no student grammar that does this, but I could be wrong.) this way they come to experience the language with all its warts from the beginning. and in fact get some experience of what they are actually written in.[1]

There are some good arguments, I think, even for getting students of Old English and similar languages, at a quite early stage in their careers, to read texts in MS or literal unpunctuated, uncapitalized transliteration.[2] This will

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[1] Some normalizers are more horrendous than others. F.P. Magoun (1960) uses the 'early West Saxon' forms in Holthausen for his lemmata, and includes them in his texts, so that poems of Exeter Book age have <oe>, etc. This is a case of 'in affecting Holthausen he writ no language'. One learns to use Holthausen only after learning the history of the language, and for very special purposes.

[2] An exemplary presentation of texts (even for early learners) with minimal interference is Bravo *et al.* (1992), which punctuates minimally as well, and dispenses with editorial macrons in the texts themselves. (It may sound odd, but to my mind this textbook by Spanish scholars comes much closer in the way it punctuates to what OE syntax really feels like than most editions by English or German speakers.) I might add that at some point in a serious student's education there ought to be some contact with actual MSS and some palaeographic training, even little excercises in 'editing', so that they can get some feel for what editors have actually done. It's very interesting to see what students make out of a text when they have not only to turn it into modern letter-shapes, but

help disabuse them of the idea that the literary (or at least scribal) culture of the writers was as close to their own as tarted-up editions might suggest, or even that the languages of the texts were the kind of codified standards that most of them will be speakers of. Much of our 'textual' data (as the previous section has suggested) is also second-order, not first-order, built on the shakiest of foundations, and less trustworthy than the results of standard linguistic reconstruction.

In short, emending, normalizing, and other kinds of over-editing falsify and traduce under the guise of making accessible, and commit the worst kind of anachronism while pretending to 'represent' past objects. Worse, such procedures produce pseudo-data, and prejudice (or even disenable) our reading of historical monuments. If we really hate Mozart played like Mozart, and would rather hear it played like Tchaikowsky, why not listen to Tschaikowsky, and stop pretending we're hearing Mozart?

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gloss, translate, and punctuate. I can't think of a better way of getting to grips with what Old English syntax is really like.

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