

SIR ISRAEL GOLLANCZ MEMORIAL LECTURE

UNIDEAL PRINCIPLES OF EDITING
OLD ENGLISH VERSE

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RE-EDITING Old English poetic texts is a thriving industry as our bibliographies bear witness.¹ Several of the editions of the last few years, I mention only five of them as examples but it would be easy to add to the list, are good and designed for readers unwilling to accept interpretations without argument: P. J. Lucas's *Exodus* (1977), Craig Williamson's *The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book* (1977), A. N. Doane's *Genesis A* (1978), Jane Roberts's *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book* (1979), and more recently O. D. Macrae-Gibson's *The Old English Riming Poem* (1983).²

The two usual ways of presenting the poetic text, and of helping towards an understanding of it in the process, are to provide a glossary or a translation (or both, as does Macrae-Gibson, and as is attempted in the revision by J. Klegraf, W. Kühlwein, D. Nehls, R. Zimmermann, and J. Strauss under the general editorship of

¹ For editions published before 1973 see Stanley B. Greenfield and Fred C. Robinson, *A Bibliography of Publications in Old English Literature to the End of 1972* (Toronto and Buffalo, 1980), superseding all earlier bibliographies and excelling them in completeness; but A. Cameron, 'A List of Old English Texts' in Roberta Frank and Angus Cameron (eds.), *A Plan for the Dictionary of Old English* (Toronto and Buffalo, 1973), pp. 29-43, retains its usefulness and is supplemented by Antonette diP. Healey and Richard L. Venezky, 'The List of Texts and Index of Editions', for *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English* (Toronto, 1980). For more recent editions the bibliographies issued in Peter Clemoes's *Anglo-Saxon England*, and in *Old English Newsletter*, published for the Old English Division of the Modern Language Association of America, must be consulted. Carl T. Berkhout has undertaken to issue supplements to Greenfield and Robinson, to bring their *Bibliography* up to date from time to time.

² P. J. Lucas's *Exodus* appeared in Methuen's Old English Library (London), a particularly valuable series, some of the titles of which have been taken over into the (Manchester) Old and Middle English Texts, among them *The Battle of Maldon*, edited by D. G. Scragg (1982), which takes the place of E. V. Gordon's edition (1937); Craig Williamson, *Old English Riddles* (Chapel Hill); A. N. Doane, *Genesis A* (Madison, Wisconsin); Jane Roberts, *Guthlac* (Oxford); O. D. Macrae-Gibson, *Riming Poem* (Cambridge and Woodbridge).

G. Nickel of what was F. Holthausen's *Beowulf* (1976–82)¹, and to give details of editorial procedures and textual interpretations in a textual introduction, in an apparatus criticus which identifies departures from the manuscript, and in explanatory notes. An apparatus is important when the edited text is not adorned with italics and various shapes of brackets, pedantically disfigured with them as it must seem to those editors, publishers, and printers who indulge their aesthetic proclivities in this most unlikely arena.

The typical Old English verse text survives in only one manuscript, usually of about the turn of the millennium. In a small number of cases it is demonstrable that a poem which has come down to us in one of the great codices of about AD 1000 existed before that, though not in identical textual or dialectal conformation; thus the Vercelli text of *The Dream of the Rood* is closely related to the pre-tenth-century Northumbrian runic inscription cut into the high cross at Ruthwell in Dumfriesshire; and the translation of Aldhelm's *lorica* riddle, No. 35 in the numbering of E. V. K. Dobbie's edition of *The Exeter Book* in ASPR,² is preserved in a continental manuscript at Leiden also in an earlier Northumbrian form. These are peculiar cases and hardly allow of the proper deployment of the procedures of textual scholarship, peculiar, that is, because the history of their transmission from pre-tenth-century Northumbrian to late West Saxon, though considered by many to be typical for Old English verse in general, is not attested by more than one earlier Northumbrian and one later West-Saxon witness for each. Two exceptions, *Cædmon's Hymn* and *Bede's Death Song*, alone among Old English verse, call for the techniques of textual scholarship, such as are used on the poetic texts transmitted from classical antiquity. As E. V. K. Dobbie says:

The task which confronts the investigator of *Cædmon's Hymn* and *Bede's Death Song* is, then, not primarily to determine the original form of these poems, but to trace the historical descent and distribution of the texts—'Überlieferungsgeschichte' in Traube's sense of the word. That

¹ Holthausen's edition (like the revision published at Heidelberg) appeared in eight editions from 1905 to 1948; see Greenfield–Robinson No. 1648.

² The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, edited by G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie (New York and London, 1931–54), see Greenfield–Robinson Nos. 261–6. I have used the ASPR numbering of the *Riddles* and of lines of poems throughout, and have usually followed the ASPR text, though with some minor deviations. In giving manuscript readings no attempt is made by me to reproduce details of spacing or word-division: usually the manuscript readings, as I give them, are the edited readings as regards such details as well as capitalization and punctuation, but with the word or words under discussion left unemended by me.

little progress has been made in this direction by students of most Anglo-Saxon poetry, or of the vernacular literature of other countries in the Middle Ages, is to be attributed entirely to the lack of sufficient materials, especially to the small number of the MS sources. But in Cædmon's Hymn and Bede's Death Song, which provide a striking contrast to the usual paucity of MS materials for Anglo-Saxon poetical texts, we find an unusually suitable opportunity for this method of study.¹

In a small number of other cases a poem or part of a poem is extant in more than one of the great poetic codices: *Daniel* in the Junius MS comprises part of *Azarias* in the Exeter Book, and we have closely related Old English verse texts on the theme of the Soul and the Body in both the Vercelli Book and the Exeter Book. What, in either of these two cases, the relationship of one is to the other it is not possible to say; neither can have been copied from the other. But such variously faulty verse texts can lead to legitimate conclusions about the authority, or rather lack of authority, of each of the manuscript witnesses, and Kenneth Sisam addressed himself specifically to this problem.² He impugned the authority of the poetic manuscripts and left us nothing more authoritative to lean on instead. Sisam himself, though he commented brilliantly on many difficult and misunderstood passages in the verse, did not himself edit a sizeable Old English verse text to show us how we might best apply his bold teaching and so overcome the textual agoraphobia that he may have induced. Sisam's venturesome attitude was designed to encourage solutions of cruces acknowledged as such.

The history of a conservative editorial policy which enshrines the transmitted text in preference to *emendationes palmariae* goes via Johannes Hoops's important statement of editorial principles in *Beowulfstudien* (1932).³ Hoops analysed and judged the merits of editions and textual studies. He sees Wyatt's edition of 1894 as an advance on earlier work;⁴ but Trautmann's of

¹ E. V. K. Dobbie, *The Manuscripts of Cædmon's Hymn and Bede's Death Song* (New York, 1937), pp. 2-3. A footnote refers to L. Traube, *Textgeschichte der Regula S. Benedicti* (2nd edn., Munich, 1910), pp. 5 ff.

² 'Notes on Old English Poetry: the Authority of Old English Poetical Manuscripts', *Review of English Studies*, xxii (1946), 257-68, reprinted in his *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 29-44.

³ J. Hoops, *Beowulfstudien*, *Anglistische Forschungen* 74 (Heidelberg, 1932), 1-13, the first *Abhandlung*: 'Grundsätzliches zur Textkritik des *Beowulf*'.

⁴ p. 2. A. J. Wyatt, *Beowulf* (Cambridge, 1894), 2nd edition with some corrections 1898. In his preface (p. xii) Wyatt says: 'I have indulged but sparingly in the luxury of personal emendations, because they are obviously the greatest disqualification for discharging duly the functions of an editor.'

1904 is rejected as a monument of 'very arbitrary treatment of the text'—*äußerst willkürlicher Textbehandlung*—from which, however, a few happy conjectures may be isolated.¹ He is pleased that Holthausen has abandoned in the sixth edition of *Beowulf* (1929) many of the conjectures in which he rejoiced in his first edition (1905).² He commends similar improvement in Sedgefield's edition, though Sedgefield has not gone far enough in that direction.³ Similarly, he prefers Schücking's conservatism to the freer handling of the text in Heyne-Socin's editions which Schücking brought up to date.⁴ No doubt, Hoops would have liked Else von Schaubert's revision of Heyne-Socin-Schücking:⁵ his discussion was her guide to conservative editing. Hoops praises Chambers similarly for his revision of Wyatt's

¹ p. 2. M. Trautmann, *Das Beowulflied*, Bonner Beiträge zur Anglistik 16 (1904).

² p. 2. See n. 1, p. 232.

³ p. 3. W. J. Sedgefield, *Beowulf* (Manchester, 1910), 2nd edition 1913; the 3rd edition appeared in 1935, after Hoops's *Beowulfstudien* and after his important and detailed *Kommentar zum Beowulf* (also Heidelberg, 1932). Hoops's work is not listed in Sedgefield's 'A Brief Selected Bibliography' and I can find no mention of Hoops anywhere in Sedgefield's edition of 1935, though work after 1932 is occasionally used.

⁴ p. 3. See Greenfield-Robinson No. 1637 for the details of the many editions which go back to M. Heyne, *Beowulf*, 1st edition, Paderborn, 1863; all other editions of Heyne's book are also published at Paderborn: Heyne's own, 2nd 1868, 3rd 1873, 4th 1879; revised by A. Socin, 5th 1888, 6th 1898, 7th 1903; revised by L. L. Schücking, 8th 1908, 9th 1910, 10th 1913, 11th and 12th 1918, 13th and 14th 1929, and 1931; revised by Else von Schaubert, 15th 1940, 16th 1946-9; and 17th 1958-61. In his preface to the eighth edition (p. x) Schücking says:

Alle Konjekturen im Texte, alte und neue, sind wiederum untersucht. Dabei ist manches in sein Recht eingesetzt, was ein unangebrachter Normalisierungstrieb zerstört hatte.

Cf. n. 2, p. 241, and n. 2, p. 247.

⁵ In the preface to the 15th edition (the first revised by her—see the preceding note) E. von Schaubert says (p. 7):

Bezüglich der Gestaltung des Textes stand von Anfang an bei mir fest, daß nur nachgewiesenermaßen tatsächlich vorhandene Lücken angesetzt, bzw. ausgefüllt werden dürften, daß es im Hinblick auf das Vorhandensein eines einzigen Manuskripts mit seinem bunten Durcheinander alter und junger, englischer und sächsischer Formen in keinem einzigen Falle auf ein Herstellenwollen des Originaltextes ankommen könnte, daß Abänderung allgemein nur da zulässig wäre, wo ganz offenbar beim Schreiben oder Abschreiben entstandener Irrtum vorliegt. Sache der Anmerkungen mußte es sein, über darüber hinaus in Frage kommende Textänderungen Aufschluß zu geben.

edition;¹ and he singles out Klaeber's editorial work for special praise.²

Hoops might well have praised not merely Klaeber's practice in his edition of *Beowulf* but also the excellent systematic introduction to his article 'Studies in the Textual Interpretation of *Beowulf*', *Modern Philology*, iii (1905-6), esp. 235-6:

It is an open secret that, with all the efforts of generations of scholars, the textual interpretation of *Beowulf* is still suffering from much error and uncertainty. A variety of factors are responsible for this state of affairs, but the main psychological causes revealed by a study of the *Beowulf* annals are (if I may venture to apply the phrase) pride and prejudice. Scholars have been seen to rush with enthusiasm into the 'higher criticism' of the poem before a safe basis had been established by a sufficiently close textual investigation. Far-reaching, and often disastrous, conclusions have been drawn from the misinterpretation of passages or the misconception of certain general features of the narrative. Again, the poem has been approached with preconceived ideas concerning syntax, style, and metre, the point of view being decidedly subjective in many instances. Moreover, the rage for brilliant emendations has been noticed to blind the eyes of students. Of course, the condition of the text calls for correction in various places, and only a hopeless reactionary could refuse admittance to certain 'palmary emendations' proposed by men like Bugge, Sievers, Cosijn, Holthausen. Yet the accumulated number of wanton and palpably wrong conjectures has become so large that the author of *Beowulf* would rub his eyes to see what modern scholars have made of his original poem. . . . Now, the plain duty of the humble interpreter is to see to it that the transmitted text be subjected to the closest possible cross-examination to make it yield whatever meaning it may have concealed so far.

A tradition of textual scholarship has grown up in the study of Old English verse which is more conservative than that advocated by Sisam. In a valuable footnote³ Sisam gives the state of opinion

¹ p. 3. Chambers's statement of his editorial policy is indicated by his endorsement of a statement on policy from Wyatt's preface, for which see n. 4, p. 233. For Chambers's edition see n. 1, p. 237.

² p. 3. Frederick Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* (Boston, 1922); 2nd edn. 1928; 3rd edn. 1936, reissued with supplements in 1941 and 1950.

³ See n. 2, p. 233. *Studies*, p. 30, referring to Chambers's introduction to his edition, from which I quote above (n. 4, p. 233):

There is much that should be common ground in this persuasive manifesto of the school which makes the defence or conservation of the MS. readings its ruling principle, and is therefore called 'conservative'. The term does not imply a generally conservative attitude in criticism.

The history of opinion has its interest. The headship of this school in Old English poetry belongs to R. P. Wülker, who succeeded Grein as editor of

from the time of Wülcker to when he himself was writing (in 1946), and he sums up the state of *Beowulf* textual scholarship, with only one crux (*mwatide* at line 2226) and one lacuna (at line 62) marked as faulty beyond hope of cure in the edition of Klaeber: 'It indicates that comfortable conventions have become established, so that healthy doubts have been stilled.'¹ R. W. Chambers is rightly seen by Sisam as belonging to the school of conservative textual critics. As a result of his brilliance and his skill in advocacy of views strongly held by him, Chambers seems to me to be the leader of and best spokesman for the conservative editors of *Beowulf*.

The rule which I have followed is therefore this. Where there is reason to think that the spelling or the dialectal form has been tampered with, I do not try to restore the original, such a task being at once too uncertain and too far-reaching. But where there is reason to think that the scribe has departed from the wording and grammatical construction of his original, and that this can be restored with tolerable certainty, I do so.

And here again the study of metre is of the greatest help. . . . Yet caution is advisable: where there is even a sporting chance of the MS. reading being correct I retain it: in some instances I retain the MS. reading, though firmly believing that it is wrong; because none of the emendations suggested is satisfactory.

'I have indulged but sparingly,' Mr. Wyatt wrote, 'in the luxury of personal emendations, because they are obviously the greatest disqualification for discharging duly the functions of an editor.' This view was strongly disputed at the time, notably by Zupitza, who urged, quite truly, that it is the duty of an editor to bring all his powers to bear upon the construction of a correct text; that, for instance, one of the greatest merits of Lachmann as an editor lay precisely in his personal emendations. Yet here discrimination is desirable. We do not all possess the genius of Lachmann, and if we did, we have not the advantage he had in being early in the field. On the contrary, we find the study of *Beowulf*

the *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie*. In the Preface to his first volume (1883) he announced: 'In bezug auf die textherstellung habe ich mich . . . bemüht möglichst die lesungen der handschrift zu wahren.' The best textual critics of that brilliant time were grateful for the materials he provided, which were then not so accessible as they are now; but they joked at his obtuseness: Cosijn pencilled *unsinnigen* before *lesungen* in his copy of the volume. In 1894, when Wyatt declared in his Preface to *Beowulf* that anyone who himself proposed emendations suffered from 'the greatest disqualification for discharging duly the functions of an editor', he drew a protest from Zupitza, who excelled in editorial judgement. In 1914 Chambers could fairly say that the battle for conservatism was won.

¹ *Studies*, p. 44.

littered with hundreds of conjectural emendations. All these the unfortunate editor must judge, admitting some few to a place in his text, according more a cursory reference in his notes, but of necessity dismissing the majority without mention.¹

Thus to rejoice in the luxury of conjecture—to be *konjekturfreudig*, as Hoops calls it—may be equated by conservative textual critics with aspects of one or more scholarly sins, vanity certainly, and according to Klæber pride and prejudice. If retention of the manuscript reading is a sign of scholarly virtue and conjecture evidence of a sinful disposition, Anglo-Saxonists have on the whole good reason to be modestly content, ‘comfortable’ to use Sisam’s word; for the tradition has been against departure from the manuscript readings of Old English verse texts. Thorpe and Kemble² led the way in giving the text in the transmitted spellings, though they established very many running corrections for the great range of poems they edited.³ Most of these running corrections have been

¹ R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf with The Finnsburg Fragment Edited by A. J. Wyatt* (Cambridge, 1914 (in 1920 three pages of additional notes were given in a new issue)), pp. xxvi–xxvii.

² In all Benjamin Thorpe’s editions, though many conjectures were found necessary by him—and often modern editors agree with him—the underlying policy is conservative. The policy is well expressed in the preface to the first of his major editions of Old English verse, *Cædmon’s Metrical Paraphrase of Parts of the Holy Scriptures* (London, 1832), p. xii:

The text of the present edition is founded upon a careful collation of that of Francis Junius with the Bodleian MS. In a few places, where the latter is manifestly corrupt, recourse has been had to conjectural emendation; this, however, has been very rarely ventured upon, and in no case without giving the reading of the MS. at the foot of the page.

Though the present edition be freed from the inaccuracies, both editorial and typographical, in which the former one abounds, yet the text of the manuscript itself is in numerous instances so corrupt as to admit only of conjectural interpretation; and some few places have, I regret to say, baffled all my efforts even at conjecture.

J. M. Kemble’s *The Anglo-Saxon Poems of Beowulf, The Traveller’s Song, and The Battle of Finnes-burh* (London, 1833; 2nd edn. 1835–7), dealt with a very difficult text, and he was not able to rely on G. J. Thorkelin’s *De Danorum Rebus Gestis Secul. III et IV* (Copenhagen, 1815); his policy was basically conservative; but he had to emend often, and many of his emendations are still accepted. Cf. B. Kelly, ‘The formative stages of Anglo-Saxon textual scholarship: part I’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 11 (1983), 247–74, ‘part II’, *ASE*, 12 (1984), 239–75.

³ For Thorpe’s other editions see Greenfield–Robinson Nos. 240 (Vercelli poems, 1836), No. 207 (Exeter Book, 1842), and No. 1635 (*Beowulf*, 1855), as well as verse in his *Analecta* (Greenfield–Robinson No. 279; 1834, and later editions 1846 and 1868); Kemble’s other editions are Greenfield–Robinson No. 241 (Vercelli poems, 1844–56, the title-page of Part I has 1843, the wrapper

admitted into all editions, though, as we shall see, not all of them into the most conservative recent editions, among which Raymond P. Tripp's edition of the second half of *Beowulf* provides an extreme example of resistance to persuasive emendations.¹

Instead of rejoicing in conjecture, editors rejoiced in recovering manuscript readings where their predecessors had departed from the transmitted text. In the brief preface to the first volume of the *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie* (1857) Grein speaks of the editor's first duty to restore manuscript readings rejected by his predecessors except only where corruption is obvious:

In the treatment of the text I have regarded it as my first duty to save, wherever possible, manuscript readings, and especially to demonstrate as well-founded several words considered doubtful and so omitted from the dictionaries: only when corruption is obvious have I with the greatest caution permitted myself emendations or have accepted emendations proposed by others. In such cases I have sought to follow as closely as possible what the manuscript offers. Moreover it has been my endeavour to bring to light the true sense and context which seemed to me to have been interpreted incorrectly in the work of earlier scholars. To that purpose I have striven to regulate punctuation carefully.²

In the Early English Text Society's first volume of Old English poetry, viz. *Judgement Day II* and other poems from Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 201, J. Rawson Lumby followed that tradition in 1876:

In sending forth these texts the sole aim of the Editor has been to put 1844), No. 4335 (*Solomon and Saturn*, 1845–8). Differences of scholarly emphases, rather than over editorial methodology, led to the exchange of communications between Kemble and others in *Gentleman's Magazine*, ns i (1834)–iii (1835); cf. Greenfield–Robinson No. 279 for details, as well as A. G. Kennedy, 'Odium Philologicum, or, a Century of Progress in English Philology', *Stanford Studies in Language and Literature*, edited by Hardin Craig (1941), pp. 12–18.

¹ R. P. Tripp, Jr., *More About the Fight with the Dragon—Beowulf 2208b–3182, Commentary, Edition and Translation* (Lanham, Maryland, 1983).

² Vol. 1, Pt. 1 (Göttingen, 1857), p. iv:

Bei der Behandlung des Textes galt als erste Pflicht, handschriftliche Lesarten, wo es nur immer möglich war, zu retten und namentlich auch manche angezweifelte den Lexicis fremde Wörter als wolbegründet nachzuweisen: nur da, wo Verderbniss auf der Hand liegt, habe ich mir mit der grösten Vorsicht Aenderungen erlaubt oder bereits von Andern vorgeschlagene Aenderungen aufgenommen, wobei ich mich möglichst eng an das handschriftlich gebotene anzuschliessen suchte. Sodann aber war mein Streben dahin gerichtet, an den Stellen, die mir von den bisherigen Bearbeitern nicht richtig aufgefasst schienen, den wahren Sinn und Zusammenhang zu Tage zu fördern, zu welchem Zwecke ich auf eine sorgfältige Regulierung der Interpunction bedacht war.

into the reader's hands as complete a representation of the words of the MS. as a printed text can furnish. Either in the text or in the margin the reader will find every letter of the original supplied to him . . .

It will be seen that the poems are defective in many places, as shown by the faulty alliteration in some lines, and here and there by the absence of half a line or more at a time, especially in that curious medley, the *Oratio Poetica*. The Editor leaves to others the labour of conjectural emendations.¹

It is a special pleasure for me to be able to rank Sir Israel Gollancz among conservative editors of Old English verse, both in his edition of *Christ*,² and especially in his edition of the first part of the Exeter Book for the Early English Text Society, where he follows Lumby's practice.³ That Sir Israel Gollancz had the wide-ranging imagination for conjecture in textual scholarship is shown not merely by his editions of Middle English poetry but also by his remarks in the preface to the Academy's facsimile of the *Cædmon* MS, when he tells us how lines 93-124 and the end of *Exodus* might be rearranged to better effect.⁴

Such rearrangement is unfashionable now. Irving in his edition of *Exodus* (1953) rearranged the text, but he retracted it in 1972 in his article on the poem.⁵ When we consider J. R. R. Tolkien's edition of *Exodus*, published in 1981⁶ but in fact representative of

¹ *De Domes Dæge*, EETS, os 65, pp. v-vi.

² *Cynewulf's Christ* (London, 1892).

³ *The Exeter Book*, Pt. I, EETS, os 104 (1895), p. vii:

The Editor begs leave to point out that the notes at the bottom of the page are strictly limited to variations from the MS., which has been scrupulously followed. Italic letters, when not otherwise commented on, represent the customary Anglo-Saxon contractions; the small clarendon type, used occasionally after stops, indicates that in the original the size of the respective letters is intermediate between ordinary small and capital letters. No attempt has been made to normalize the spelling of the text, and in matters of interpretation the reading of the MS. has been preferred to plausible emendations. It is surprising to find how often the MS. is correct.

⁴ *The Cædmon Manuscript of Anglo-Saxon Biblical Poetry* (for the British Academy, 1927), pp. lxx and lxxv-lxxix. Gollancz's rearrangement of the parts of *Exodus* is not now usually accepted; on the other hand, his division between the end of *Christ* and the beginning of *Guthlac* is now universally accepted. He had drawn attention to the correct division in his edition of *Christ* (1892), p. xix.

⁵ E. B. Irving, *The Old English Exodus*, Yale Studies in English 122 (1953); 'New Notes on the Old English *Exodus*', *Anglia*, xc (1972), 289-324, esp. p. 320.

⁶ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Old English Exodus*, edited by Joan Turville-Petre (Oxford, 1981); he rearranges lines 93-124, following Gollancz's facsimile, introduction, p. lxx; and of lines 520-48 he says, 'it is my feeling that the passage . . . does not come from the original poet' (p. 75), which is more than most modern readers will wish to accept without very full reasoning.

the scholarship of the 1930s and 40s, we have to bear in mind that we are dealing with stimulating lectures of more than a generation ago: before we accuse him of being 'an inveterate meddler'¹ we should remember that the scholarly trend since he delivered his *Exodus* lectures has been away from the textual ingenuity at which he excelled.

Even more extreme than the conservative practice of most editors of Old English verse, who one and all arrange the poems metrically in verse lines, add modern capitalization and (except for the editors for the Early English Text Society) give modern punctuation, is the practice of those who print the verse in pseudo-diplomatic form. Zupitza's painstaking transcript facing his facsimile of *Beowulf* of 1882,² and R. P. Wülcker's edition of *Das Beowulflied* in the second edition of the *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie*,³ in which he published *Beowulf*, *Waldere*, *The Ruin*, *The Husband's Message*, and *Durham* 'nach der Handschrift' as well as providing for each of them a corrected text, and also A. Holder's edition of *Beowulf* (1881), all are good examples of great editorial care; but we, who lack their great gift of patience, can find consolation in our insufficiency by stressing that no pseudo-diplomatic, printed text can replace a photographic facsimile of the manuscript, and that no photographic facsimile can replace the manuscript itself. We may, however, be justified in censure of Wülcker's failure to reproduce in position the manuscript accents, printing them instead in appendices where they may be ignored. The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records followed this practice half a century later,⁴ and for the prose the similar practice in the *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa* led to the omission of this part of the editions in the reprints of more recent times.⁵ Lumby for the poems of Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 201 and Gollancz and W. S. Mackie for the Exeter Book⁶ have done better than that: theirs is a better way of clear printing of poetic texts

¹ P. J. Lucas's remark in his review of the edition, *Notes and Queries*, ccxxviii (1983), 243.

² J. Zupitza, *Beowulf: Autotypes of the Unique Cotton MS. Vitellius A.xv*, EETS, os 77 (1883); 2nd edition by Norman Davis, *Beowulf Reproduced in Facsimile*, etc., EETS 245 (1959).

³ Cassel, 1883. Wülcker defends his pseudo-diplomatic editions in the preface, pp. viii–ix.

⁴ The accents in the Junius MS are listed after those in the Vercelli Book, pp. liii–lxxx.

⁵ For details of the Darmstadt reprint (1965–6) see Greenfield–Robinson, under No. 260.

⁶ EETS, os 65, 104, and 194 (1934).

conservatively, allowing the reader to form some idea of the witness of the manuscript without giving him the illusion that he is handling the manuscript itself.

Scholars reiterated Grein's wording that the first duty of an editor of Old English poetry is 'handschriftliche Lesarten, wo es nur immer möglich [ist], zu retten'; it was no mere hollow echo, for they followed his practice as best they could. In the full, recent bibliography of writings on Old English, compiled by Stanley B. Greenfield and Fred C. Robinson, the first item of the section 'Old English Poetry: Textual Criticism' is F. E. C. Dietrich's article of 1859, which bears the title 'Rettungen'.¹ He speaks of his *Rettungen* in a way that may make us translate the title not so much as 'Recoveries' but as 'Rescue Operations'. Dietrich opens his article with words which may be translated thus:

For the older written works of our antiquity more than elsewhere, Criticism, awakened from sleep, has had to arm itself with conjecture against the attacks and damages inflicted upon them by transmission. That was especially justified and beneficial in the case of such monuments as have come down to us in a single manuscript. However, precisely in these circumstances nothing occurs more easily than that Criticism misses the mark; and so it becomes necessary to rescue and restore unlawful booty carried off sometimes by acuity of intellect and at other times by mere impatience.²

In 1859, when the text of Grein's edition of the poetic corpus lay

¹ Greenfield-Robinson No. 1076. In *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum*, xi (1859), 409-48.

² pp. 409-10:

Für die älteren schriftwerke unserer vorzeit hat sich die erwachte kritik gegen die angriffe und schäden die ihnen durch die überlieferung angethan sind mehr als anderwärts mit der conjectur bewaffnen müßen, was besonders in solchen denkmälern berechtigt und wohlthätig war die nur in éiner handschrift auf uns gekommen sind. da begegnet denn aber auch nichts leichter als daß sie sich verhauet und daß es nöthig wird ungerechte beute, die bald der scharfsinn bald die bloße ungeduld wegführt, zu retten und zurückzustellen.

Among editors who use the very term *Rettung* in prefaces to editions of Old English L. L. Schücking stands out (cf. n. 4, p. 234). He says, p. x:

Geändert wurde überall, wo die dadurch erzielte Besserung in die Augen sprang, ohne daß dem Texte Gewalt angetan wurde. Wo eine solche Befürchtung vorlag, da ist von dem metrischen Gesichtspunkt in den Anmerkungen die Rede. Damit ist der Grundzug dieser Ausgabe betont. Sie sucht ihren Ehrgeiz nicht, wie andere, in einer möglichst großen Anzahl von Konjekturen. Die Rettung einer handschriftlichen Form, die als möglich erwiesen wird, ist mir lieber, als neunundneunzig scharfsinnige Konjekturen für die Ausfüllung von Lücken und dergleichen.

complete before him, Dietrich was not referring to editorial intentions for the future. Had not every editor, from Junius, Thwaites, Rawlinson, Hearne, Thorkelin, Conybeare, Grimm, Grundtvig, Ettmüller, Bouterwek, and the rest,¹ claimed to be doing what Dietrich advocated as justified and beneficial? Editorial practice often fell short of editorial intentions, sometimes through ignorance, most obviously so in Thorkelin's *editio princeps* of *Beowulf* (1815). But *Konjekturefudigkeit* lay in the future; it came with better knowledge of Germanic metre, and the credit—and blame—for that must go to Sievers's fundamental study of 1885–7.²

The advances made in Old English philology by the Neo-Grammarians, led by Sievers for Old English, were in the last decade of the nineteenth century well used by P. J. Cosijn in a series of textual notes in the *Beiträge*, to some of which Sievers, as editor of the journal, added notes often especially on the metre.³ Thus metre became a refined help when establishing the text; or as Sievers and his followers would have thought, of re-establishing an author's text impaired in transmission. Very early, voices were raised against swallowing Sievers's doctrine on metre whole, and voices are still raised.⁴ For a long time, however, Sievers's system

¹ For details see Greenfield–Robinson Nos. 222, 5229, 5472, 1554, 1632, 278, 1417, 1636, 289, 225, respectively.

² 'Zur Rhythmik des germanischen Alliterationsverses', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, x (1885), 209–314, 451–545, xii (1887), 454–82.

³ 'Anglosaxonica', *Beiträge*, xix (1894), 441–61, xx (1895), 98–116, xxi (1896), 8–26, xxiii (1898), 109–30; and cf. his earlier notes in *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde*, i (1881), 143–50, before Sievers's contributions.

⁴ The most important criticisms, recognizing the usefulness of Sievers's system for editing but not agreeing with all aspects of it, are A. Heusler, *Deutsche Versgeschichte* in H. Paul, *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie* 8/1 (1925), §§165–74; John C. Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf* (New Haven, 1942; with important changes, 2nd edn., 1966), pp. 6–15; and more incidentally, A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf* (Oxford, 1958; rev. edn., 1967). Max Kaluza's 'Kritik der bisherigen Theorien', *Der altenglische Vers*, *Studien zum germanischen Alliterationsvers* 1, 1 (Berlin, 1894), makes some interesting points both about fundamental aspects of Sievers's system and about their detailed application to textual work; his criticism has, however, always to be read against the background of his own, to me unacceptable, theory. Cf. E. G. Stanley, 'The scholarly recovery of the significance of Anglo-Saxon records in prose and verse', *ASE*, 9 (1981), 255–6 and footnotes.

R. P. Tripp, Jr. (*More About the Fight with the Dragon*, p. 284), attacks all metrists as he defends *Beowulf* 299ob which in the manuscript reads *7 gelæsta*, making 'more than adequate sense':

A metrical 'purist' would, of course, immediately object to 299o as an

of five metrical types was received less with reasoned objections and modifications, like those of Heusler, Pope, Bliss, and the ageing Sievers himself (though his espousal of *Schallanalyse* was more a matter of faith than reason),¹ than with wholehearted commitment as by Cosijn and Holthausen,² and in England by Henry Sweet;³ and on the other side with fervent opposition by Trautmann.⁴ It is tedious now to go over the old debates between the *konjekturfreudig* Holthausen and the even more arbitrary, but

‘impossible’ line; *but meaning always outranks accent counting*. Poets write meaning rather than metrics, and for that matter, if there are *hypermetric* lines, there may just as well be *hypometric*, spoken with a deliberately slower prosody (like short lines in Donne’s poetry). We should rather, as [Bruce] Mitchell has suggested, modify our metrical theory according to the facts of the text, than the reverse.

Tripp’s is an extreme editorial policy of a metrical ‘Whatever is, is Right’. Its lack of refinement is not confined to the belief that a generalization about Old English verse based on *Beowulf* 2990b is illuminated by a generalization about Donne’s short lines.

¹ See P. Ganz, on Sievers and *Schallanalyse*, in *Beiträge*, c (Tübingen, 1978), esp. pp. 65–86.

² Sievers’s system of scansion underlies all Holthausen’s textual work, including his many emendations of very many Old English texts. In his grammars he adumbrates the system, and refers for fuller treatment to Sievers’s own work, thus in the introductory remarks on the Old Saxon poetic texts in *Altsächsisches Elementarbuch* (Heidelberg, 1899, 2nd edn., 1921).

³ In the preface to the seventh edition of his *An Anglo-Saxon Reader* (Oxford, 1894), p. xi, Sweet writes:

In the section on metre I have tried to give a clear abstract of Sievers’ views (see his *Allgermanische Metrik*, Halle, 1893, and his article in Paul’s *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*), which I feel obliged to accept, in spite of the adverse criticisms of Lawrence (*Chapters on Alliterative Verse*, London, 1893), Heath (*The Old-English Alliterative Line*, Philological Society Trans. 1891–3), and others. These critics seem to forget that Sievers’ classification of the Old English metrical forms into types is not a theory, but a statement of facts, and that the complexity and irregularity to which they object is a fact, not a theory.

The book was very influential; the grammatical introduction was still reprinted in C. T. Onions’s revised ninth edition of 1922 (last reprinted in 1943) and only the tenth edition of 1946 discarded it.

⁴ The fullest statement by Trautmann against Sievers’s metrics is probably to be found in his review of Holthausen’s edition of *Beowulf*, ‘Die neuste Beowulfausgabe und die altenglische verslehre’, *Bonner Beiträge zur Anglistik*, xvii (1905), 175–91. Intemperate remarks against Sievers occur often in Trautmann’s writings; thus in defence of his edition of the *Riddles*, ‘Zu meiner Ausgabe der altenglischen Rätsel’, *Anglia*, xlii (1918), 126, ‘Holthausen urteilt nach der Sieverschen “metrik”, die keine metrik ist’; and similarly *Anglia*, xliii (1919), 255.

differently oriented, Trautmann; but it is worth looking at some of the textual points on which they were able to agree.

A good example—and this paper allows no more than the exemplification of what is typical or striking—occurs in the second half of line 2 of the following:

Ic seah on bearwe beam hlifian,
tanum torhtne. þæt treow wæs on wynne,
wudu weaxende.¹

(*Riddle* 53, ll. 1–3)

Holthausen wished to delete *þæt* in line 2.² Trautmann agrees: ‘2 *þæt* geht gegen eine Hauptregel des ae. Versbaus; tilgen, wie auch Ho[lthausen] 1907 tut.’³ The principal rule broken by *þæt* is that anacrusis should not occur in second half-lines of type A.⁴ Pope, in his listing, has eight examples only in *Beowulf*, but all with a finite verb with syllabic ending (i.e. not like *Riddle* 53.2); thus: *swa sæ bebugeð* (93b), *gesacan ne tealde* (1773b).

A question of principle arises: should we be governed by the metrics of the strictest verse, especially of *Beowulf*, in our editing of the *Riddles*, for example? Perhaps we should exclude at once such *Riddles* as ASPR No. 28; a jingling *Riddle* in which we find rhyme usurping (at line 2 and perhaps line 10) the role of alliteration in binding together the two halves of the long line.⁵ Emendation for the sake of bringing such a jingling poem into metrical conformity with *Beowulf* is a methodological nonsense.

Sievers, in his fundamental study of Old English metre, devotes himself to the not infrequent cases (he lists some eighteen in all, five of them in *Beowulf*)⁶ when *to* is followed by an inflected infinitive where, according to his system of scansion, the metre requires the uninflected infinitive. Five of his cases involve readings in the *Riddles*,⁷ and in each case he deleted the inflexion. Though Trautmann tells us more than once that Sievers’s metrics

¹ The ASPR numbering is used by me throughout, and I silently convert other numbering to it.

² In his review of the Grein-Wülcker’s edition, *Anglia Beiblatt*, ix (1899), 358.

³ In his edition, *Die altenglischen Rätsel* (Heidelberg, 1915), 111; and in ‘Weiteres zu den altenglischen rätseln und metrisches’, *Anglia*, xliii (1919), 249.

⁴ Sievers, *Beiträge*, x (1885), 234–5; cf. Pope, *Rhythm*, p. 329 and p. xxix of 1966 edition.

⁵ F. Kluge, ‘Zur Geschichte des Reimes im Altgermanischen’, *Beiträge*, ix (1884), 422–50, adduces (pp. 436–7) the jingling *Riddles* as the earliest examples in English for the substitution of end-rhyme for alliteration in binding together the two half-lines.

⁶ *Beiträge*, x (1885), 482.

⁷ Cf. C. Williamson’s edition, pp. 225–6.

'ist gar keine metrik, sondern silbenhaufenstatistik' ('statistics of syllabic clusters'),¹ and vociferates 'über den unfug den textkritiker noch immer mit Sievers'scher metrik treiben',² he manifests reliance on Sievers's statistics of syllabic clusters and joins in the mischief of textual critics who follow Sievers: he indicates four out of five times that inflexional *-ne* is to be ignored, and the fifth time he leaves it out without indication, printing *sæcce tō fremman* (where ASPR *Riddle* 88.26 correctly has *sæcce to fremmanne*).³

Examples of such lines in *Beowulf* are 473a, 1424b, 1941a, 2093a, and 2562a; in each case Pope agrees with Sievers in preferring the uninflected form of the infinitive.⁴ Bliss too says of these lines, 'In each instance the substitution of the uninflected for the inflected form of the infinitive gives a regular example of Type A1.'⁵ It might seem that, for *Beowulf* which is strict, even if not for the *Riddles* which are less strict metrically, such substitution is to be commended, and explained in the light of the existence in the poem elsewhere of both inflected and uninflected forms of the infinitive after *to*, thus

wið færgyrum to gefremmanne
(174)

and

to befleonne —fremme se þe wille—
(1003)

but

freode to friclan. From ærest cwom
(2556)

and the metrically difficult Sievers Type A3⁶

Mæl is me to feran; Fæder alwalda.

Bliss, who commends substitution, where metrically desirable, of uninflected for inflected infinitives, draws attention to the difficulty in the way of substitution at line 2093a:⁷

To lang ys to recenne hu ic ðam leodsceaðan

¹ 'Zum Versbau des Heliand', *Bonner Beiträge zur Anglistik*, xxiii (1907), 147; and similarly *BBzA*, xvii (1905), 177.

² *Anglia*, xliii (1919), 245.

³ Trautmann's edition, p. 51.

⁴ *Rhythm*, p. 237, as well as in the discussion of the individual lines. Hoops, *Beowulfstudien*, pp. 9–10, is against emendation of such lines.

⁵ *Metre*, § 44; cf. §§ 47 and 87.

⁶ Cf. E. G. Stanley, 'Some Observations on the A3 Lines in *Beowulf*' in *Old English Studies in Honour of John C. Pope*, edited by R. B. Burlin and E. B. Irving, Jr. (Toronto and Buffalo, 1974), p. 146.

⁷ *Metre*, § 87. Cf. Pope, *Rhythm*, p. 310.

Unemended, the half-line in an Expanded Type D* but uniquely with anacrusis in a line with alliteration on the first stress only; emended (as Sievers, Pope, and Bliss advocate), the half-line is an A line with anacrusis in a line with alliteration on the first stress only, which is also rare—two cases, according to Pope¹—and the emended half-line may therefore be preferable to the manuscript reading, but it is not ideal.

What is preferable though not ideal for the metrically strict *Beowulf* cannot be transferred lightly to all Old English verse. At *Riddle* 28.12b, if we emend manuscript *micel is to hycganne* to *Micel is to hycgan*, we do improve the metre; but in this jingling *Riddle* other lines are far from metrically perfect. *Riddle* 31 is metrically stricter perhaps, though that too is not as strict as *Beowulf* and the editions go in for several emendations of substance, not merely to improve the metre. This *Riddle* too has the second half-line *Micel is to hycgenne* (23b); can we delete the inflexional *-ne* in this *Riddle* without emending the other?

When Sievers wrote in 1885 and Pope in 1942 (and again in 1966) recommending metrically better readings than those of the manuscripts, though of course they knew that they were producing an analysis of great value for future editors, they were not writing prolegomena to actual editions of Old English poetry; when they wrote advocating a reading other than that of the manuscript they were not in fact admitting that reading to an actual new edition. The difference in principle between metrical analysis leading to preferred readings and editing the text with such readings admitted in place of the manuscript readings is best illustrated by the easy examples of the half-lines in *Beowulf* involving superlatives: *secg betsta* (947a, 1759a) and *ðegn betstan* (1871b). Sievers rightly says that whether or not an editor emends to *secga* and *ðegna* depends on the degree of his conservatism; of course, the genitive plural gives a metrically superior reading.² The long line of editions of *Beowulf* founded by Moritz Heyne and continued

¹ See *Rhythm*, p. 254. Both examples are doubtful: *in mægþa gehwære* (25a) is among lines discussed elsewhere in this paper, with scribal *gehwære* for earlier *gehwæm*; for *Gefeng þa be eaxle* (1537a) perhaps read *be feaxe*, cf. E. G. Stanley, 'Did Beowulf Commit "feaxfeng" Against Grendel's Mother?', *Notes and Queries*, ccxxi (1976), 339-40.

² *Beiträge*, x (1885), 232 and cf. 312; the first to propose emendation of all these lines was H. Schubert, *De Anglo-Saxonum Arte Metrica* (Berlin, 1870), p. 41. Kemble had emended line 1871b as early as 1835. But there are syntactical grounds for caution in emending: 'the weak adjective ought not to take a partitive genitive unless it is accompanied with the definite article', thus Pope, *Rhythm*, p. 320.

in turn by A. Socin, L. L. Schücking, and E. von Schaubert well illustrates the practical problem. Socin in his preface of 1898 says explicitly that he has declined to correct the many half-lines to fit them better into metrical types. In fact, he deals unsatisfactorily with the three half-lines mentioned, from the edition of 1888 onwards, producing: *þec, secg betsta*, (947a), which spoils the preceding half-line; *secg [se] betsta* (1759a); and *þeg[e]n betstan* (1871b), the last two with emendation *metri causa*; in the edition of 1903 he accepts Sievers's genitive plurals.¹ No edition by Socin admits Sievers's substitution of uninflected infinitives for the inflected infinitives of the manuscript. When in 1908 Schücking took over from Socin he not merely accepted Sievers's genitive plurals but also the uninflected infinitives, but he says that he has given up the resistance (in editing) to the metrical theories; he tries to have it both ways: first, emending *metri causa* when he believes that the improvement is obvious, and secondly, doing no violence to the text; and E. von Schaubert admits no metrical emendations.²

A few years later, in 1914, Chambers too admits emendations for metrical reasons which his predecessor A. J. Wyatt had held out against,³ including emendation to *secga* and *ðegna*; but he does not emend away the inflected infinitives. F. Klaeber too emends to genitive plurals, and treats the inflected infinitives inconsistently, emending at lines 473a and 1724b but not at 1941a, 2093a, and 2562a, in his first two editions.⁴ Hoops, in the section on criticism in *Beowulfstudien* (1932), made it a matter of consequence that emendation should not take place even for these clear cases.⁵ He speaks of right and wrong editorial practices; but that is surely going too far, he can mean no more than right for some purpose, or rather perhaps for some intended reader of an edition. He himself produced only a *Kommentar*, not an edition proper. Under his influence Klaeber went back to the manuscript readings instead of introducing genitive plurals and removing inflexions from

¹ For the various editions see n. 4, p. 234.

² Schücking, in his preface to the eighth edition (p. x), says: 'Die bisherige grundsätzliche Ablehnung der praktischen Verwertung der metrischen Theorien für den Beowulf ist aufgegeben', and then he goes on with the statement quoted in n. 2, p. 241.

³ Chambers's edition of 1914, p. xxiii: 'In fifty places I have . . . felt compelled, mainly on metrical grounds, to desert the MS., where Mr. Wyatt adhered to it.'

⁴ Of 1922 and 1928; the 1928 edition is in fact merely a reprint of that of 1922, with a supplement.

⁵ pp. 9-12.

infinitives; but at line 9b he persists in removing *þara* from the half-line *þara ymbsittendra*, in spite of Hoops's objections.¹

Klaeber's edition was not intended for the earliest stages of learning Old English. There seems no reason why in an edition intended for beginners all regularization of dialectal spelling and metre should be rejected. F. P. Magoun, Jr., proclaims in his title that it is *Beowulf and Judith Done in a Normalized Orthography*.² I can see nothing wrong with that, except for the uncomfortable fact that Old English studies are of a kind where the elementary student soon reaches advanced status; in the pompous language no longer quite so fashionable, the frontiers of knowledge are soon reached. A diligent student who has worked his way through *Beowulf* following Klaeber's notes fully is an advanced student by the time he has got to line 3182 of the poem.

Even conservative editors emend to introduce alliteration into lines the manuscript reading of which lacks it. At *Beowulf* 965 and 1073 the manuscript is unsatisfactory:

þæt he for handgripe	minum scolde
	(965)
beloren leofum	æt þam hildplegan
	(1073)

Ever since Kemble's edition of 1833 editors have restored alliteration by emending *hand-* to *mund-* and *hild-* to *lind-*. Even Hoops approves of these emendations in his *Kommentar* as if inevitable; even Else von Schaubert admits them.³ It is easy for a non-editor to make a pronouncement here to tell editors how far to go in regularizing alliteration. It seems to be regarded universally as an editor's duty to provide alliteration. In some cases this policy leads to alteration of a systematic spelling; thus manuscript *hunferð*

¹ *Beowulfstudien*, p. 11. See below, p. 270, and n. 1.

² Published by the Harvard Department of English (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959). Magoun ends his foreword: 'I would stress the point that as a "library" edition this version of the texts in question in no way pretends to rival or replace, except for certain class-room use and pleasure reading, the many splendid diplomatic or at least semi-diplomatic editions which have preceded it, editions on which, of course, it altogether depends and which are indispensable [*sic*] for any detailed study, textual or dialectal, of these or, indeed, any other Anglo-Saxon poems.'

³ See the editors' notes and apparatus on lines 965 and 1073, especially Dobbie's in ASPR. Since the *Kommentar* does not include an edition, Hoops has to provide notes; many editors, including E. von Schaubert, regard the emendations as so obvious that the record in the apparatus is sufficient, and no note is needed.

is corrected to alliterate at each of the four occurrences to *Unferð* (499, 530, 1165, 1488). Is that done *mit Recht*, in Hoops's language? Is it right to emend manuscript *hond slyht* to *ondslyht* at both 2929 and 2972? The alliteration requires it; but do we really know enough about alliteration in Old English to be sure that *h* cannot alliterate with vowels? Probably we do; probably such emendations are introduced *mit Recht*.¹ I am happier about emending line 2341:

lind wið lige. Sceolde þend daga

Manuscript *þend daga* makes no sense, and ever since Grundtvig's translation of 1820² editors have emended to *læn-daga*. There seems to be no hope of *Rettung*: the alliteration requires initial *l* and the *nd* of *þend* seems dittographic from *lind*. Reference to *se ðeonda dæg* 'the day increasing in length' of Ælfric's homily for the Nativity of St John the Baptist³ is of no use in defending the manuscript reading, even if one were to believe that it might help to explain the error. We are not emending to restore the alliteration merely when we change *þend* to *læn*; we are emending to give sense where the manuscript reading gives none, and that is not merely permissible, it is essential in the discharge of the editor's task.

Absence of alliteration may signal corruption; the word carrying alliteration may have been lost in transmission, or we may have to assume a larger lacuna. There is little doubt that we must emend at line 3086:

wæs þæt gifeðe to swið
þe ðone þyder ontyhte

and editors follow Grundtvig or Grein and supply a word after *ðone*; Grundtvig supplied *þeoden*,⁴ Grein and later editors supply *þeodcýning*.⁵

The problem involving absence of alliteration at *Beowulf* 389-90 is different in that the sense is not impossible or incomplete; and

¹ Tripp, pp. 276, 402-5, retains manuscript *hondslyht* translating it 'hand-slaughter'. Tripp's attempt to read *w* alliteration for *wiðlige* (from a verb *wiðlicgan* 'resist') and on *wen-* (or *wend-*) *daga* ('of thinking days' or 'of days of change'), pp. 132-4, 374-5, and to justify it by some supposed, hitherto unseen revelation in the manuscript itself, is a good example of some extreme conservative trends among a few recent editors.

² N. F. S. Grundtvig, *Bjowulfs Drape* (Copenhagen, 1829), p. 301.

³ B. Thorpe, *The Homilies of Ælfric*, I, Pt. iv (1844), 358, l. 4.

⁴ *Bjowulfs Drape*, p. 311.

⁵ In the edition of 1867; in the 1857 edition of the *Bibliothek* Grein still followed Grundtvig's *þeoden*.

the remedy is different in quantity: two half-lines are supplied. The manuscript reads:

gesaga him eac wordum þæt hie sint wilcuman
Deniga leodum. Word inne abead.¹

Not only is absence of alliteration in line 390 suspicious, but also *word* should ordinarily carry the head-stave on *w*, the alliterative letter of the preceding line. The half-line means 'he offered [them] words within'. There is every reason for leaving *Word inne abead* unemended. Of course, one could rewrite the entire line:

leodum Deniga. Leod inne abad.

'to the people of the Danes. The man [Hrothgar?] waited within.' But whether three changes in one line, inversion, *leod* for *word* and *abead* to *abad*, are really better than leaving the line alone, without alliteration, seems doubtful to me.² Either rewriting of this line or leaving the manuscript reading unemended seems preferable to me to the editorial composition, however ingenious, of two half-lines. Dobbie's three asterisks at 390b are all that is needed; and that treatment satisfies me again a few lines further on, at 403b;³ other editors follow Grein and supply a second half-line to produce two long lines alliterating on *h* where the manuscript reading has three half-lines alliterating on *h*. Such an alliterative sequence is exceptional in *Beowulf*. The deficient alliteration of the manuscript reading here signals deficiency in sense:

Snyredon ætsomne, þa secg wisode,
under Heorotes hrof
heard under helme, þæt he on heoðe⁴ gestod.
(*Beowulf* 402-4)

I suspect that *at least* three half-lines have been omitted, and in these circumstances the text is beyond editorial remedy.

The many prosodic studies of *Beowulf* make it certain that that poem is metrically exact, more exact than most other Old English poems. Yet even in *Beowulf* we find metrical anomalies. They

¹ See n. 2, p. 232.

² The repetition of *leodum* . . . *leod* seems unlikely; but cf. *wordum* . . . *word* in the manuscript reading. Emendation of *word* to *dryhtbeorn* for *Beowulf* or to *dryhtfolc* for his men would lead to a metrically impossible half-line. For other suggestions see the excellent note by Dobbie in his edition in ASPR, p. 136.

³ Dobbie, ASPR, p. 137, has a good note.

⁴ The reading *heoðe* is difficult; see Dobbie's note, and cf. E. von Schaubert in the 'Kommentar' volume of her 1961 edition (for details see n. 4, p. 234), p. 41.

should, however, not be regarded as requiring editorial improvement unless the sense is deficient too. A good example of a metrical anomaly occurs at 2717b:

Ða se æðeling giong
 þæt he bi wealle wishycgende
 gesæt on sesse; seah on enta geweorc,
 hu ða stanbogan stapulum fæste
 ece eorðreced innan healde.
 (*Beowulf* 2715b–19)

As I have said elsewhere:

The first half-line, *gesæt on sesse*, with the *s* in double-alliteration leading to the verbal alliteration on *seah* in the second half-line, seems perfectly satisfactory, both metrically and in telling us of the *sess* to which reference is made again later (2756). If only we could get vocalic alliteration into that first half-line we should be all right for the second half-line; yet no editor has proposed tinkering with *gesæt on sesse*, not even Holthausen or Sedgfield, the boldest operators when it comes to metrical improvements.

Probably the trouble is deep-seated: one could think of a lacuna of at least two half-lines, and *seah on enta geweorc* with regular vocalic alliteration. The editors assume a similar lacuna for lines 389b and 390a where the suddenness of the transition in the manuscript reading makes the supposition that something has been lost at least plausible; not so at 2717 where the sense seems complete.

Perhaps even the assumption that a pair of half-lines has been lost, substantial though it is, is insufficient to account for the complex difficulties of lines 2715b–19.¹

Within some Old English poems the metre varies greatly in strictness. *The Seafarer* is a well-known example; its end is metrically very inexact. It is therefore ended by Sweet in his *Anglo-Saxon Reader*² at line 108, lines 109–end being relegated to the

¹ 'Verbal Stress in Old English Verse', *Anglia*, xciii (1975), 312–13; cf. J. C. Pope, 'The Existential Mysteries as Treated in Certain Passages of Our Older Poets' in *Acts of Interpretation . . . In Honor of E. Talbot Donaldson*, edited by M. J. Carruthers and E. D. Kirk (Norman, Oklahoma, 1982), p. 353.

² He defends his procedure with the statement (I quote the ninth edition, 1922, revised by C. T. Onions, p. 222):

It is evident that the majority of these verses [lines 109–end] could not have formed part of the original poem. If we stop, as is done in the present text, just before the text becomes corrupt, we get a conclusion, which, in form as well as spirit, bears the closest resemblance to that of the Wanderer.

In the fifteenth edition (1967) Dorothy Whitelock follows Sweet's practice and removes lines 109–end into her notes; but she does not defend her action, except to say (p. 277) that these lines are 'very corrupt', especially lines 112–14.

notes. It might have been defensible to end the poem at line 102 if it were believed, as Thorpe did,¹ that a major loss had occurred at that point; for a new gathering begins with line 103. Editors are reluctant to follow Thorpe because the idea of the fear of God occurs at both 101b and 103a, and though the idea is a commonplace in Old English writings, that recurrence seems to bind lines 103-end to what immediately precedes it in the manuscript as we have it.² Hacking off the end after line 108 is indefensible; at least, it cannot be defended on metrical grounds coupled with the view that the text of the end is difficult and perhaps corrupt. Textual difficulty is found elsewhere in the poem and leads to emendation, especially of manuscript *tide ge* at line 69a.³

The end of *The Seafarer* is metrically inexact; but much other Old English verse could be improved in metre by a few deft editorial strokes. Examples of such moves are to be found readily in J. R. R. Tolkien's lectures on *Exodus* published with his very stylish translation.⁴ He does not go so far as to change the phonology of the poem into what may have been the poet's own dialect, a process in which, for example, A. S. Cook⁵ and Sievers⁶ indulged.

¹ B. Thorpe, *Codex Exoniensis* (London, 1842), p. 312.

² See the excellent discussion by J. C. Pope, 'Palaeography and Poetry: Some Solved and Unsolved Problems of the Exeter Book' in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Literature: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, edited by M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson (London, 1978), pp. 32-4; cf. E. G. Stanley, 'The scholarly recovery of the significance of Anglo-Saxon records . . .', *ASE*, 9 (1981), 238-9.

³ See I. L. Gordon's edition, *The Seafarer* (London, 1960), and compare my review of it, *Medium Ævum*, xxxi (1962), 58-9, where I suggest that, rather than accept emendation to a Mercian form *tidgege* (for *tiddæge*), we should perhaps emend to *ær his tide to getweon weorpeð*.

⁴ See n. 6, p. 239.

⁵ See his larger edition of *Judith* (Boston; I use the 2nd edition, revised and enlarged, 1904), pp. 75-85: 'Judith in the Dialect of the Northumbrian Gospels'.

⁶ Sievers, in his involvement with *Schallanalyse*, for which see P. Ganz (details given in n. 1, p. 243), made several reconstructions of Old English poems; thus *Cædmon's Hymn* and *Genesis A* in 'Cædmon und Genesis', in *Britannica—Max Förster zum sechzigsten Geburtstage* (Leipzig, 1929), pp. 57-84; *The Dream of the Rood*, see H. Bütow, *Das altenglische 'Traumgesicht vom Kreuz'*, *Anglistische Forschungen* 78 (1935), 176-85; and *Beowulf*, see especially T. Westphalen, *Beowulf* 3150-5 (Munich, 1967), pp. 124-32 and Tafeln III and IV, and see also F. Holthausen's eighth edition of *Beowulf* (Heidelberg, 1948—as also, it seems, 7th edition of 1938, which I have not seen), i, 103, replacing Holthausen's own reconstruction in earlier editions, as in the fourth edition (Heidelberg, 1914); Professor Ganz very kindly has enabled me to see further specimens of Sievers's reconstruction of *Beowulf* preserved in the Leipzig archives.

Tolkien's free handling of the transmitted text includes major transpositions of passages (following in Gollancz's footsteps), metrical improvements and regularizing of forms. Scholarly opinion has turned against major transpositions. Editorial improvement of the metre of the transmitted text is also unfashionable. One good example of an imaginative and elegant improvement by Tolkien is so easy and obvious that he did not even stoop to draw attention to it in the notes. The manuscript reads:

	leode ongeton,
dugoð Israhela,	þæt þær Drihten cwom,
weroda Drihten,	wicsteal metan.
	(<i>Exodus</i> 90-2)

P. J. Lucas, says in the note on the line in his edition:

92a] Since the MS reading is unexceptionable in sense and metre it must be allowed to stand. Yet it seems unlikely that the repetition of *Drihten* from 91 was intended in the original and there is a strong temptation to read *weroda Waldend*.

And that is precisely what Tolkien had made it. He seized on metrical improvements and gave by further change greater elegance to other scholars' emendations. Thus at lines 347-51:

þa þær folcmægen	for æfter oðrum
isernhergum	an wisode
mægenþrymmum	mæst þy he mære wearð
on forðwegas	folc æfter wolcnum
cynn æfter cynne.	
	(<i>Exodus</i> 347-51a)

The continuity of sense is difficult, and editors place lines 348-9 (or 348b-9) in parentheses; *wolcnum* is emended by some to *wolcne*, the pillar of cloud. Tolkien not merely follows those editors who emend to *folcum*, but transposes to read

folc æfter folcum	on forðwegas
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and translates: 'There each mighty division of the people followed the other—to those iron-clad armies one among them greatest in glorious power showed the path, and grew renowned thereby—one people after another upon their forward way, tribe on tribe.' In his notes¹ Tolkien regrets, not that he has meddled so much, but that he did not meddle more, and read *folc æfter folce* parallel to

¹ p. 64; emendation to *folce* had been proposed by J. W. Bright, 'Notes on the Cædmonian *Exodus*', *Modern Language Notes*, xvii (1902), 426, as the notes in ASPR, i, 211, tell us.

cynn æfter cynne. This is the further emendation for which even he lacked courage in the text, but which in the suggested variant *folc æfter oðrum* for *folc æfter folce* underlies his highly satisfying translation, distant though it is from the transmitted text.

More trifling meddling is to be found very often in Tolkien's text: thus MS *mid þære miclan hand* (275b) is emended to *mid miclan hand* (thus eliminating a grammatical difficulty); MS *bring is areafod* (290b) where the editors follow Thorpe and emend *bring* to *brim*¹ is emended further by Tolkien by reading *wæs* for *is*, though sequence of tenses is not well observed in Old English; MS *widdra ond siddra* (428b) has the two final *as* changed to *e*; and MS *fæderyncynne* (560b) has the first *y* regularized to *e* by Tolkien. Emendations of the last two kinds occur very often in Tolkien's text, who regularizes and standardizes as editors were more inclined to do at the beginning of this century than at the end.

In the first Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture on an Old English subject, *Cynewulf and His Poetry*, Kenneth Sisam proposes an improving emendation in a line of *Elene*, the manuscript reading of which gives doubtful sense and metre;² in the manuscript line 1228a reads *on maias .kl.*, where the editors expand to *kalend*, regarded by them as an Old English word. The matter is well explained in P. O. E. Gradon's edition, and she follows Sisam.³

¹ It would be possible—but wholly unconvincing—to defend *bring* for *brim* by adducing as parallel the development of the place-name Bringham (Leicestershire), which appears as Brimhirst in the spurious charter of Wulfhere of Mercia (W. de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum* (London, 1885–93), No. 22, vol. i, p. 36, 4 lines up; cf. P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (1968), No. 68). For the place-name see E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Oxford, 1960), s.n. *Bringham*.

I adduce the place-name spelling *brim-* for an element developed to *bring-* not because I regard *bring* at *Exodus* 290b as defensible by reference to *Brimhurst* for what is now *Bringham*, but because I wish to illustrate the danger of using far-fetched evidence for editorial defences. W. A. Kretschmar, Jr., 'A Reappraisal of *Exodus* 290b–291a', *Neophilologus*, lxvi (1982), 140–4, more convincingly defends the manuscript reading *bring* as the rare abstract of *bringan* found in several of the psalter glosses (cf., e.g. Bosworth–Toller, s.v. *bring*, and further, for a Middle English use, *MED*, s.v. *bring*): 'The juxtaposition of *bring* and *sand* is a major factor in interpreting the words to refer to the Israelites'; and he translates: 'That which is brought [the Israelite people] is taken away; that which is sent [the Israelite people] (is taken away) from the agitated sea.'

² In *Proceedings of the British Academy*, xviii (1932), 329 (p. 29 of offprint), n. 18; reprinted in *Studies*, p. 14 n.

³ *Cynewulf's Elene* (London, 1958), p. 70. The meaning of *kalendae* (OE *kalend*, cf. *Menologium* 7 and 31) is, however, not only the sense most common in Latin; see C. Plummer (J. Earle's), *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, i (Oxford, 1892), 316, s.v. *calend*, 'a month. (In Latin also *Calendae* poetically means a

If we read *kalend*, the form *Maias* is wrong, and has been emended to *Maius*,¹ in both sense and metre on *Maias kalendas* is unsatisfactory. Sisam proposes that on *Maius monað* should be substituted, but that involves one minor and one major alteration. I do not know how well Cynewulf understood the complexities of Roman dates; but if a scribe can get it wrong, my faith in Cynewulf is not sufficient for me to feel that it is quite impossible for him to have got it wrong originally. The metre is a little troublesome, anacrusis in an A half-line where the division of words gives two units each of them stress followed by unstress. That might do for Cynewulf: it would not do for *Beowulf*.² With so much complexity in the Old English material and so little sure knowledge on our part we should hesitate long before we emend: the text is not wholly satisfactory perhaps; but then nor is our solution for it.³ Sisam says, 'The editors read *kalēnd* as an Old English word, but *Māius mōnað* should be substituted for the Latin forms of the date.' We might think of *primilce* as the Old English equivalent of Latin *maius*—no longer familiar perhaps to all Anglo-Saxons—if that is how we should interpret the evidence at *Menologium* 78 and the marginal gloss leading editors to emend *þrymlice* to *þrymilce*.⁴ Of course, we should have to emend further to introduce *p* alliteration into the line which in the manuscript reads:

on maias .kl. sie þara manna gehwam.

An editor inclined to indulge in palmary emendations might think of

on þrimilce. Sie þara þegna gehwam.

month.)' Cf. C. T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *Kalendae*, II, and *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *kalendae*, d.

¹ Thus R. Imelmann, *Anglia Beiblatt*, xvii (1906), 226 (in his review of F. Holthausen's edition of *Elene* (Heidelberg, 1905)).

² See A. J. Bliss, *Metre*, §§ 46–7; Bliss, first published in 1958, would of course not have been available to Sisam in 1932 or to Dr Gradon for use in an edition dated 1958.

³ We should remember that, though we think of *May* as a very English word, it retained its Latin appearance in the diphthong *ai*, as well as, frequently, its endings, throughout Old English.

⁴ See Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ch. 15, edited by C. W. Jones in *Beda Opera de temporibus*, Medieval Academy of America xli (1943), 211, l. 8; cf. Plummer (see n. 3, p. 254), p. 276, n. 2; and the note in ASPR, vi, 172. Manuscript *maias .kl.* could be conveniently—though unconvincingly—explained as the incorporation of an explanatory gloss *mai .kl.* for *þrimilce* with attendant substitution of *manna* for *þegna* by a scribe wishing to restore alliteration. For that method of explaining textual errors see A. Bammesberger, *Englische*

It is a stronger reading, a metrically better reading, and a more Germanic reading than that preserved by the Vercelli scribe. If it were objected nevertheless that it is not what Cynewulf wrote, an editor full of pride and prejudice might counter that it is what Cynewulf should have written.

There is one very good reason for treating the transmitted wording of Old English verse with caution: it is not difficult for an editor by palmary emendation to produce a line better than the poet may have had. Not many of the Anglo-Saxon poets were geniuses: in Classical civilizations the bays crown the poet, and so the palm may go to his Renaissance or later editor. Excellence in a writer justifies an editor's vigorous and imaginative emendations whenever the transmitted text seems faulty, provided he is truly at home in the writer's language, as modern scholars are not in Old English—though their knowledge is sufficient for them to judge the poets of *Beowulf* and *Exodus* to be good poets, and Cynewulf a poet of indifferent skill. We do not know how the Anglo-Saxons themselves would have judged their poets. They certainly had no sense of classicality for any of their own writings in the vernacular; at the least, Anglo-Saxon scribes modernized such texts for which we have the evidence of more than one copy, and they made other changes.¹ Though on the continent and in England *Cædmon's Hymn* and *Bede's Death Song* are preserved as venerable relics,² English scribes did not refrain from changing the spellings and the wordings to bring them into line with more standard late West Saxon instead of the original Northumbrian. If the *ipsisissima verba* of the most venerated are tinkered with in transmission it does not look as if those who received and transmitted Old English verse in Anglo-Saxon times, even what we regard as the best of their verse, had much respect for the authorial *mot juste*. The modern editor who, by deft strokes of philological acumen combined with literary flair, introduces elegance of expression where the transmitted text had none may well be improving the poet's text rather than restoring it.

For us Old English is a dead language. Modern editors therefore deploy the skills found efficacious when dealing with other dead languages, especially Latin. There are, of course, many differences between editing Classical Latin verse and editing Old

Sprachwissenschaft. Ein Neuansatz in der Textkritik der altenglischen Dichtung, Eichstätter Hochschulreden 28 (Munich, Minerva Publikation, 1981).

¹ See Sisam's important discussion (of which details are given in n. 2, p. 233).

² Cf. E. G. Stanley, 'The Oldest English Poetry Now Extant', *Poetica*, ii (Tokyo, 1974), 1–24, esp. p. 17.

English verse. On the one hand, there is the difference in security of learning leading to linguistic assurance of the editors. Though editors of Anglo-Saxon verse have included one or two scholars of the highest order, Jacob Grimm and Sievers stand out, there is not in our subject the long-established scholarly discipline found in Classical studies. Many more men and women go into Old English studies now than, say, a hundred years ago; but we have not the consensus of opinion as a consequence of which a Bentley or a Wilamowitz or a Housman for Greek and Latin—but *not* Bentley for Milton's English—is known to be master of a craft to which many were and are apprenticed. There is an even more important consideration. The scribes and early printers of manuscripts transmitting Greek or Latin verse were immeasurably less learned in the ancient languages than the poets themselves, and very considerably less learned in them than the best editors from the Renaissance onwards. But we in our subject have to remember with constant humility that though perhaps, not certainly, most scribes may not have been the equals in Old English of the best Old English poets, every one of them, sleepy and careless as he may have been at times, knew his living Old English better than the best modern editor of Old English verse. The rare moments when the editor can triumph over the scribes—perhaps even over the poets—arise from the fact that the editor goes first to his grammar, his dictionary, and now his concordance, as well as to similar aids for the related languages. The scribes, like the poets themselves, gained their regular superiority from daily familiarity with the language which provided them with assurance of what was current usage. The editor's peculiar learning may give him greater knowledge of idiom no longer current in the scribe's time; and it may give him better knowledge than the scribe had in cases where the Old English poem is a translation from a related dialect, as we know *Genesis B* to be translated from Old Saxon.¹

The recognition by an editor of his limitations should not lead to refusal to do anything other than transcribe, arrange in lines of verse and punctuate. There are occasions when something more has to be done, most obviously when there is physical damage to the manuscript leading to missing letters or words. In some cases too much is lost for any editorial aid to be possible. An extreme example of partial damage is *Riddle 82*. Only about sixty to sixty-five letters are preserved or recoverable through fairly obvious guesswork, amounting to fourteen words or fragments of words;

¹ The demonstration that *Genesis B* is a translation from Old Saxon was Sievers's, see n. 1, p. 263.

and the damage would allow about 120 letters to be written, i.e. only about a third survives with the longest sequence of words or fragments of words no more than five words long.¹ Here a modern scholar is really only able to reconstruct *ongende* as *gongende* and *ell ne flæsc* as *fell ne flæsc*.² In these circumstances the sceptical reader may find it amusing to note that the most recent editor ventures a solution for the *Riddle*, 'harrow?',³ thus contradicting an earlier similarly ill-founded solution, 'crab'.⁴

The very badly damaged fo. 182 (formerly 179) recto of the *Beowulf* MS, much photographed and discussed,⁵ with many supplied readings to fill the gaps by conjecture, includes at line 2223 what seems to be a short word beginning with *þ*, and *þegn*, *þeof*, *þeow* and *þeoden* have found support among editors and commentators, some of whom have been more certain than others that they can discern parts of *e* as the second letter. Palaeographically all these suggestions seem possible or even plausible. Perhaps a wise editor will desist altogether from completing the word; but the proportion of recoverable and certain letters to wholly illegible letters and gaps is different from the proportion in *Riddle* 82, and especially in the neighbourhood of line 2223 continuous sense can be made: 'Not at all willingly did he who had harmed him grievously break into the dragon-hoard, not by his own wish but because of severe enforcement did the þ . . . of some son of men flee from hostile blows, in need of . . . and there . . . within, a man guilty of sin.' It may be that the beating of the thief shows him to be of inferior social status, not free.⁶ If so, this thief is the only person in the poem who is of inferior status, and an editor should be reluctant to introduce into his text the explicit *þeow* 'servant'

¹ See Dobbie's careful edition, ASPR, iii, 236 and 373, and Williamson's edition (for details, see n. 2, p. 231) of his *Riddle* No. 78.

² The editors differ slightly: ASPR gives *gongende* as wholly visible.

³ Williamson, pp. 365-6.

⁴ F. Holthausen, 'Zu den altenglischen Rätseln', *Anglia Beiblatt*, xxx (1919), 53.

⁵ In colour, K. S. Kiernan, *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1981), frontispiece, and in monochrome, pl. 14a; see also his discussion, p. 238; Zupitza and Davis (for details see n. 2, p. 240); the same photographs as Davis's were used by Kemp Malone, *The Nowell Codex, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile* 12 (1963), and cf. his brief comment, p. 85; Westphalen (for details see n. 6, p. 252) has no photographs, but a valuable discussion, p. 219, n. 429. See also Tripp, pp. 44-6, 368-9, 421-2, who proposes *þeoden* 'king?'. See also T. M. Anderson, 'The Thief in *Beowulf*', *Speculum*, lix (1984), 493-508.

⁶ Cf. F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (Halle, 1903-16), ii, 621-2, s.v. *Prügel*.

when two other words would fill the gap, of which *þegn* is less acceptable, because less neutral than *þeof* as regards social rank.

At line 3151 on fo. 201 (formerly 198) verso, also much photographed and discussed,¹ the letters *unden heor* can be made out though not quite clearly, and it is thought that we might read *bunden-heorde* 'with hair bound up', it seems in the manner of married women, though I do not know of any Anglo-Saxon evidence for the hairstyle of free women before and after marriage. That gives the second half-line; there is no agreement at all on how to reconstruct 3151a. Suggestions include *bræd on bearhtme* 'chanted clamorously', *bræd ond bodode* 'chanted and proclaimed' (with *bræd* a special sense of *bregdan*, cf. *Guthlac* 906, but the sense is doubtful),² or *bodode biornum* 'proclaimed to the men';³ in the manuscript itself nothing much is to be seen.

The line before, also difficult to read because of damage is now, following J. C. Pope,⁴ read *Geatisc meowle* in the second half. It has been discussed exhaustively by T. Westphalen.⁵ He advises caution because he cannot quite see what Pope saw, and Pope did not quite see what Norman Davis saw,⁶ and Malone differs slightly too.⁷ Westphalen's caution seems to me wholly justified: 'I am sure that here the wish to see what one believes in (Pope's "once one knows what to look for") and what may indeed be a good conjecture, conjures up more than is really to be seen.'⁸ This conjecture, or perhaps possible reading, matters: the woman of the Geats may be more than an analogue to Ibn Faḍlān's angel of

¹ To the works cited in n. 5, p. 258, we may add A. H. Smith, 'The Photography of Manuscripts', *London Mediæval Studies*, i, Pt. 2 (1938), 179-207; Westphalen's Tafeln V and VII (cf. n. 6, p. 252). On **bundenheorde* see Westphalen, pp. 197-207; W. Gramm, *Die Körperpflege bei den Angelsachsen*, *Anglistische Forschungen* 86 (1938), 7-8.

² See Pope, *Rhythm*, pp. 233-4, n. 4. Tripp reads *bunden hearde* 'bound cruelly', pp. 349-50, 412-13, 453.

³ F. Klaeber, 'Randglossen zur Texterklärung des Beowulf', *Beiträge*, lxxii (1950), 125-6.

⁴ *Rhythm*, pp. 232-4; see also his important further considerations, 1966 edition, pp. xxiv-xxvii. See also his 'Beowulf 3150-1, Queen Hygd and the Word "Geomeowle"', *Modern Language Notes*, lxx (1955), 77-87.

⁵ Especially pp. 143-78.

⁶ See especially Davis, 'Note to the Second Edition' of the EETS facsimile (for details, see n. 2, p. 240), pp. viii-ix.

⁷ *Nowell Codex* (see n. 5, p. 258), pp. 104-5.

⁸ Westphalen, p. 170: 'Ich bin sicher, daß hier der Wunsch das zu sehen, woran man glaubt ("once one knows what to look for") und was durchaus eine gute Konjektur sein mag, mehr hervorzaubert, als wirklich zu sehen ist.' The quotation from Pope is taken from the article in *MLN*, lxx, 80 (see n. 4, this page).

death in the Rūs funeral;¹ she may be Beowulf's widow, and that widow could be none other than Hygd, Hygelac's widow. When the implications are so important it is best to play safe. The text is the *donné* for interpretative speculation. Unless we can really and truly read *Geatisc meowle* let us leave that for the notes and be content with :*ia(t):::meow(le)* for the edited text.²

Similarly of high importance for our understanding of the whole poem is the emendation sometimes accepted at *Beowulf* 3074: *næs he goldhwæte* emended to *næfne goldhwæte*.³ The emendation is palaeographically excellent, but the effect is too important, unlike the rather similar, but harmless, emendation of *næfre* to *næfne* at line 250, for example,⁴ though that is probably unnecessary;⁵ we should resist the temptation to emend at 3074 *because* that emendation matters. As the wording stands it could perhaps be understood as condemning our hero Beowulf to everlasting damnation. We may well wish to save him from that fate;⁶ and if it is in our power to do so editorially by adding a single cross-stroke to insular *s* and so producing *f*, i.e. reading *næf-* for *næs*, and reducing the ascender of the *h* till it is reduced to an *n*, i.e. reading *-ne* for *he*, we must resist the temptation so to save Beowulf. It matters too much for an editor to do it to his text, whatever speculation he may indulge in in his notes.

At line 3005 we are put in the position of dissolving as editors a fairly clear statement in the text as we have it in the manuscript:

¹ See H. M. Smyser, 'Ibn Faḍlān's Account of the Rūs, with Some Commentary and Allusions to *Beowulf*' in (*Franciplegius*) *Medieval and Linguistic Studies In Honor of F. P. Magoun, Jr.*, edited by J. B. Bessinger and R. P. Creed (New York and London, 1965), 92-119, esp. pp. 98-100 and 109-10.

² Thus in Davis (see n. 6, p. 259).

³ First proposed by F. Klaeber, 'Beowulfiana', *Anglia*, 1 (1926), 221-2; based on an interpretation in H. Patzig, 'Zum Beowulf-Text', *Anglia*, xlvii (1923), 104.

⁴ First proposed in Kemble's first edition.

⁵ See Fred C. Robinson, 'Two Non-Cruces in *Beowulf*', *Tennessee Studies in Literature*, xi (1966), 155-60.

⁶ The problem is often discussed; earlier views are referred to in the following three recent discussions: E. G. Stanley, 'Hæthenra Hyht in *Beowulf*' in *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur*, edited by S. B. Greenfield (Eugene, Oregon, 1963), pp. 136-51, esp. pp. 142-6; A. J. Bliss, 'Beowulf Lines 3074-3075' in J. R. R. Tolkien, *Scholar and Storyteller*, edited by Mary Salu and R. T. Farrell (Ithaca and London, 1979), pp. 41-63; and B. Mitchell, 'Beowulf, Lines 3074-3075: The Damnation of Beowulf?', *Poetica*, xiii (Tokyo, 1982), 15-26.

þæt ys sio fæhðo ond se feondscipe,
 wælnið wera, ðæs ðe ic [wen] hafo,
 þe us seceað to Sweona leoda,
 syððan hie gefricgeað frean userne
 caldorleasne, þone ðe ær geheold
 wið hettendum hord ond rice
 æfter hæleða hryre, hwate Scildingas,
 folcred fremede oððe furður gen
 eorlscipe efnde.

(*Beowulf* 2999–3007a)

‘That is the enmity and the hostility, the deadly hatred of men, of which I have [expectation], which the people of the Swedes seek from us when they learn that our lord is dead who had maintained against enemies hoard and realm, achieved national benefit after the fall of princes, (maintained) active Scyldings, or furthermore performed heroism.’ In that statement *hwate Scildingas* is awkward. Did Beowulf, after the fall of princes, ever come to maintain—as ruler presumably—the Scyldings, i.e. the Danes? ‘War Beowulf König von Dänemark?’ asks the conservative Hoops,¹ and contrasting the occurrence at 3005 with the virtually identical line at 2052 in a quite different context into which it fits well, and after discussing the variously bold solutions to the problem, he concludes that 3003–7, far from referring to the Danes, refer to Beowulf’s energetic rule over the Geats: ‘In diesem Zusammenhang ist *Scildingas* eine Unmöglichkeit.’² And he emends to *scildwigan* ‘shield-clad warriors’, and all is smooth and clear. In conversation (and perhaps elsewhere, but she seems not to have published it), the late Professor Dorothy Whitelock improved Hoops’s emendation palaeographically, by suggesting that an earlier text had *-uigan* so that the three minims were misread, not as *-ui-* but as *-in-*, and final insular *s* is not as far from *n* as round *s* would be. That conveniently disposes of Beowulf as maintainer of the Danes. The convenience of silencing the witness of the only manuscript to an important matter is not, however, adequate justification for it. It is too speculative for tinkering with the text; if we believe it, by all means let us say so in the interpretative commentary. The ease with which we can undermine the witness should also make us chary of attaching too much weight to the unlikely reading of 3005b. Otherwise we might have been tempted to look to this line as binding together satisfyingly the two halves of the poem, Beowulf’s rise and first glory as maintainer of the Danes and his noble rule and death in the defence of the Geats.

¹ *Beowulfstudien* (see n. 3, p. 233), pp. 78–88.

² p. 88.

The crux at *Beowulf* 456–62, though in part more easily emended, has important implications too. The manuscript reads:

Hroðgar maþelode,	helm Scyldinga:
fere fyhtum þu	wine min Beowulf,
ond for arstafum	usic sohtest.
Gesloh þin fæder	fæhðe mæste;
wearþ he Heapolafe	to handbonan
mid Wilfingum;	ða hine gara cyn
for herebrogan	habban ne mihte.

(*Beowulf* 456–62)

The editions record the many suggested emendations for manuscript *fere fyhtum* (457) and *gara* (461), readings which give neither sense nor alliteration.¹ It is easy, but ultimately unprofitable, to add to the number of suggested emendations: no one seems to have thought that *fere-fyhtum* ‘In fights fit for soldiers’ might be a possible reading, with *fere* ‘fit for military service’, recorded only in late Old English, however; emendation of *wine* to *fengel* ‘prince?’, the meaning and etymology of which are not certain. Whether *gara* is really to be emended to *Wedera* has seemed doubtful to several commentators—Klaeber’s remarks in the Second Supplement are very apt: ‘None of the three emendations, *Wedera*, *Wulgara* (Malone), *wigana* (Holthausen), is entirely satisfactory’² nor, one might add, the thirteen compounds with a first element beginning with *w* and with *cyn* as second element, of which John R. Byers selects *wine-cyn* as best for palaeographical reasons,³ or Joseph F. Tusso’s unlikely compound *wara-cyn* with *wara-* gen. pl. of *wār* ‘seaweed—sand, shore’.⁴ With so much uncertainty it is best to have the courage to admit defeat and leave the text unemended and marked with obelisks for the two unsolved cruces, relegating some of the proposed emendations to the notes. Hoops’s attempt to provide an interpretation of these lines on the basis of the supposed psychological associations of this context seems unacceptable to me seeing that the context is of modern manufacture.⁵

¹ See Dobbie, ASPR, iv, 140–1, summing up the many emendations.

² Prepared in 1949–50, published 1950; p. 466.

³ ‘A Possible Emendation of *Beowulf* 461b’, *Philological Quarterly*, xlv (1967), 125–8, esp. on the palaeography p. 128.

⁴ ‘*Beowulf* 461b and Thorpe’s *wara*’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, xxix (1968), 259–62, esp. p. 261. The use made of Thorpe’s edition may well be the result of a reprint in 1962 designed to help beginners because of Thorpe’s half-line by half-line translation; for details see Greenfield–Robinson No. 1635.

⁵ *Beowulfstudien* (see n. 3, p. 233), pp. 97–8.

Zum Verständnis von Hrothgars Verhalten gegenüber Beowulf sowie zur Beurteilung der verschiedenen Deutungsversuche für den umstrittenen

I do not mean to suggest that there is no place ever for scholarly subtlety and flair; but rather that editors should be cautious and not indulge their fancy too readily. Sievers on *Genesis B* provides the best example in Old English scholarship of the application to an edition of literary flair informed by profound philological learning. His characterization of *Genesis A* as a dry paraphrase only occasionally somewhat more elevated in style and rising to the high point of bad taste in the paraphrase of the biblical genealogies at lines 1055–236 is in contrast with his characterization of the passage from lines 235 to 851 as erring on the side of verbosity and digressiveness.¹ Sievers was proved right in his combination of literary judgement and philological knowledge by the famous discovery in 1894 of fragments of an Old Saxon verse paraphrase of Genesis, one of which corresponds to a passage of the Old English *Genesis*, allowing us to see how the translator

Ausdruck **geslōh** 459 ist es wichtig, daß man den psychologischen Zusammenhang der Verse 457f. mit dem Folgenden richtig erfaßt. Hrothgar beginnt seine Ansprache damit, daß er auf den Gegensatz hinweist zwischen der Art, wie Beowulf an den dänischen Hof kommt, und der, wie einst sein Vater kam: „Du kommst, uns zu helfen,—dein Vater kam einst als Hilfsbedürftiger: *Geslōh þin fæder fæhðe mæste* etc.“. Dadurch wird das Peinliche für die Dänen, daß der König fremde Hilfe annimmt, gemildert: Beowulfs Hilfe ist gewissermaßen der Dank für das, was Hrothgar einst für seinen Vater getan hatte.

¹ E. Sievers, *Der Heliand und die angelsächsische Genesis* (Halle, 1875), p. 7:

Aber sehr bald (mit v. 112 ff.) verfällt der dichter in eine trockene, nur selten etwas gehobenere paraphrasierung des biblischen textes, die sich hernach bei v. 852 ff. fortsetzt und in den bearbeitungen der geschlechtsregister von Gen. 4 und 5 in der achten und neunten fitte [= 1055–1236] den hönepunkt von geschmacklosigkeit erreicht.

Ganz andern charakter hat der zwischen v. 234 und 852 liegende abschnitt, den ich im folgenden zum unterschied von der hauptmasse A mit B bezeichnen will. Wenn in A die trockenheit der darstellung vielfach in dem ängstlichen anklammern an die worte der respectvoll verehrten quelle ihren grund hat, so läuft die darstellung in B oft gefahr, in das entgegengesetzte extrem zu verfallen und durch redseligkeit und weitschweifigkeit der hier hervortretenden grösseren gedankenfülle wieder abbruch zu tun. Dass auch die metrische form eine durchaus andere ist, lehrt ein einmaliges durchfliegen eines stückes von A und B, ja selbst schon ein blick auf den verschiedenen raum, den die mehrzahl der verszeilen in beiden teilen einnimmt. Die auffallende wiederholung der geschichte von der schöpfung der engel und ihrem falle in den versen 12–77 und 246–336, die sich mit der annahme eines dichters für die gesammte Genesis nicht wol verträgt, hat bereits Göttinger a. a. o. 20f. bemerkt, allerdings ohne daraus weiterführende schlüsse zu ziehen.

Sievers is referring to E. Göttinger's Göttingen dissertation (1860), for which see Greenfield-Robinson No. 3210.

works.¹ Should the editor of *Genesis B*, before he begins his task of editing the Old English poem, try and translate it back into Old Saxon guided by the extant material? Probably not: it may be a useful exercise though not immediately helpful in editing, for too much will remain uncertain in the reconstructed Old Saxon exemplar.

The knowledge that *Genesis B* has an Old Saxon source enables the editor to explain some of the wording in it with reference to Old Saxon instead of to Old English, as has been done ever since Sievers showed the way. There are, however, dangers in that. We may indeed get back to the wording as it might have been in an Old Saxon text, but we cannot be sure that the translator did not find an Old English word rather similar in sound or appearance, but not close in sense to the Old Saxon original. Sisam begins his paper, 'The Authority of Old English Poetical Manuscripts',² with a discussion of *gewrinc* at *Genesis* 317: *sum heard gewrinc*. He dismisses as giving a weak effect Grein's emendation *geswinc*, 'which,' Sisam says, 'renders *tribulatio* in some Biblical texts'. He refers to OS *gethuing* 'torment' and suggests that we read *sum heard gepwinc*. That may well be what the source had: **sum hard githuing*; but if Old English had no cognate of *githuing* it is bad editorial practice to thrust in an Old Saxonism mainly because *gewrinc* is unfamiliar; methodologically Grein's *geswinc* seems all right. Elsewhere I have tried to rescue *gewrinc* 'a wringing; torment, grief'.³ Probably it is a somewhat unidiomatic rendering of an underlying *githuing*, and vaguely similar to it in sound and spelling.

We have to remember always how good our works of reference are; they enable us to find a lexical or semantic or grammatical parallel if it exists anywhere in the Germanic languages. We could not now edit competently without them. Yet they are a danger. The seemingly meaningless *be wurman* in the opening half-line of

¹ See K. Zangemeister and W. Braune, 'Bruchstücke der altsächsischen Bibeldichtung aus der Bibliotheca Palatina', *Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher*, iv (1894), 205–94 (also offprint). A fuller bibliography for the Old Saxon *Genesis* than is provided by Greenfield–Robinson, pp. 228–33, is to be found in J. Meier, 'Bibliographie zur altsächsischen Bibeldichtung (Heliand und Genesis)', *Bibliographien zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 7, edited by U. Pretzel and W. Bachofer (Berlin, 1975), pp. 61–137.

² See n. 2, p. 233.

³ Cf. *Genesis B*, l. 696; according to Krapp, ASPR, i, 24, the manuscript has 'hell gepwin with a letter following erased', which has been interpreted as *hellgepwinc* since F. Dietrich, 'Zu Cädmon', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum*, x (1856), 317. See also E. G. Stanley, "'Sum heard gewrinc" (*Genesis B* 317)', *Notes and Queries*, ccxxiii (1978), 104–5.

Deor has been much discussed.¹ Hertha Marquardt regards the kennings for sword as among the finest in the poetry of the Anglo-Saxons;² not once, however, is the sword described as a *wurm*, a snake, i.e. a battle-snake. Yet Icelandic Skaldic verse has kennings in which the sword is called a snake, including uses of the word *ormr*.³ Kemp Malone in his edition⁴ refers to the standard discussion of Skaldic kennings and regards *wurman*, late Old English for *wurmum*, as 'swords'. Whether that is really likely at the beginning of a poem where the sense cannot be guessed at may seem doubtful. Rieger regarded *be wurman* as a confused spelling for *be wornum*;⁵ there is no need to make use of the fact that late Old English phonology has such spellings,⁶ for the difficulty is not with *wurman*: it lies with *be* if the sense is 'in multitudes'. We should expect a similar construction with *heapum*, and that does not occur. Nevertheless I prefer Rieger's feeble interpretation to Malone's imaginative Skaldicism; the latter requires knowledge to which we have access, but which the Anglo-Saxons are not likely to have had.

At *Beowulf* 1020 I also prefer the feeble emendation to the daring *Rettung*. The manuscript reads

Forgeaf þa Beowulfe brand Healfdenes
segen gyldenne sigores to leane.
(*Beowulf* 1020-1)

Dobbie sums up the suggestions admirably in his notes,⁷ and in his text he adopts Grundtvig's emendation *bearn Healfdenes* 'Healfdene's son' for manuscript *brand Healfdenes* 'Healfdene's sword' as a kenning for Hrothgar. Such kennings are not uncommon in Skaldic verse,⁸ but they do not occur in Old English verse.

Philological knowledge of Old English dialects may help an editor; and it may lead him astray. I am not now thinking of

¹ See F. Klaeber, 'The First Line of *Deor*', *Anglia Beiblatt*, xxxii (1921), 38-40, and compare for a modification of his own views the review of W. J. Sedgefield's *Anglo-Saxon Verse Book* in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, xxiii (1924), 123-4.

² *Die altenglischen Kenningar*, Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft 14, Geisteswissenschaftliche Klasse 3 (1938), 222.

³ See R. Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden*, Rheinische Beiträge und Hülfsbücher zur germanischen Philologie und Volkskunde 1 (1921), 154.

⁴ *Deor* (London, 1966), pp. 6-7.

⁵ M. Rieger, *Alt- und angelsächsisches Lesebuch* (Giessen, 1861), p. 82.

⁶ Cf. A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 320.

⁷ ASPR, iv, 167-8.

⁸ See Meissner (for details see n. 3, this page), pp. 274-7.

wundini golde at *Beowulf* 1382; if the sight of such an odd form leads editors to daring speculations—speculations convincingly disposed of by Sisam¹—it is best emended away to the normal *wundnum golde*. But rather I am thinking of a number of more closely textual points. Editors brought up in a strong, neogrammatical tradition experience many temptations here. At *Beowulf* 1278b the manuscript reading *þeod* in *sunu þeod wrecan* does not make sense; we should read, as editors, following a suggestion of Ettmüller's,² almost all incline to, *suna deað*; Anglian gen. sg. *sunu* is retained by many in the half-line, and not emended to southern *suna*. Having retained *sunu* editors sometimes emend to Northumbrian *deoð* rather than more usual *deað*; *deoð* may help to explain how the confusion might have arisen,³ though there are no unambiguous parallels in the poem for Northumbrian *ēo* written instead of normal *ēa*.⁴

The word *sunu* causes difficulty elsewhere in *Beowulf*; thus at 1226b:

dædum gedefe,	Beo þu suna minum dreamhealdende!
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Wealththeow has two sons who are referred to elaborately at line 1189 (the end of the preceding bit) when *Beowulf* goes to sit with them. Probably we should therefore emend *suna* to *sunum*, unless we believe (in spite of *cnyhtum* 1219) that only the elder son, Hrethric, is referred to. Such an emendation of the ending is of course not a mere regularization: it involves the sense of the passage.

For the last fifty years or so most editors have refrained from regularizing endings and other spellings. Thus A. N. Doane, in the section of his introduction in which he discusses vowels of unstressed syllables,⁵ speaks of the frequency of levelling of final vowels in *Genesis A*, R. T. Farrell does the same for *Daniel*,⁶ P. J. Lucas exemplifies what he calls 'Instability in the vowels of

¹ *Studies*, p. 36 and n.; cf. E. G. Stanley, 'The Date of *Beowulf*: Some Doubts and No Conclusions' in *The Dating of Beowulf*, edited by C. Chase, Toronto Old English Series 6 (1981), 208.

² L. Ettmüller, *Engla and Seaxna Scôpas and Bôceras*, Bibliothek der gesammten deutschen National-Literatur 28 (Quedlinburg and Leipzig, 1850), 113, his l. 764. His text has *sunu þeôdorecan* and in the apparatus he suggests '*suna deað* wrecan?'

³ Cf. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 278(a).

⁴ See Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. lxxx, § 16.2.

⁵ For Doane see n. 2, p. 231; p. 32.

⁶ *Daniel and Azarias* (London, 1974), pp. 15–16.

unaccented syllables, especially in inflexional endings' in *Exodus*;¹ though not regarded as significant the use of *æ* for unstressed *e* in *Christ and Satan* is discussed by M. D. Clubb² who is followed by R. E. Finnegan;³ Klaeber has a particularly good section on the weakening of vocalic distinction in unstressed syllables in *Beowulf*;⁴ and so in almost all editions including Tolkien's *Exodus*.⁵ Tolkien, however, goes against current editorial fashion and emends to regularize, not merely unstressed syllables but all other minor and major irregularities of spelling; he rightly questions nearly all the conclusions drawn from orthographic oddities, many of which are better explained by reference to palaeography than to linguistics, and hardly any of which are of significance in establishing the dialectal origins of a poetic text:

It is futile to preserve forms which are supposed to have linguistic (dialect or period) significance: because the object of the edition is not linguistic, and we are concerned with the *identity* of the word only; no linguistic investigator should use any edited text for gathering statistics; while most of these forms preserved by editors are paleographical in origin, or vitiated as linguistic evidence by suspicion of such an origin. Nearly all of the 'dialectal' forms preserved, for instance, in Klaeber's *Beowulf* text, and classified and commented upon in his introduction, break down entirely under examination. The remainder can safely be relegated to the apparatus.⁶

It is easy to show that regularizing orthographic oddities, especially in endings, facilitates the reading of the texts. For example, *feran* as a misspelling of *feren* pres. subj. pl. at *Beowulf* 254, or the highly confusing spelling *dreamas* for *dreames* gen. sg. at *Daniel* 30:

oðpæt hie [MS me] langung beswac
eorðan dreamas eces rædes

translated by Farrell 'until a longing for the joy of the earth seduced them from eternal counsel'. It is doubtful if the current conservatism is justified. Klaeber seems right to me to emend at *Beowulf* 2710 manuscript *siðas sigehwile* to *siðast* and wrong not to emend *sigehwile* to *sigehwila* (or perhaps to *sigehwil*, since the superlative can be followed by nom. sg. or gen. pl.). Hoops, however, advocated that no emendation should be introduced on the grounds

¹ For Lucas see n. 2, p. 231; pp. 36-7.

² *Christ and Satan. An Old English Poem*, Yale Studies in English 70 (1925), pp. xxiii and lix, n. 100.

³ *Christ and Satan. A Critical Edition* (Waterloo, Ontario, 1977), p. 58.

⁴ pp. lxxi-lxxxiii.

⁵ For details see n. 6, p. 239; p. 36.

⁶ *Ibid.*

that it is possible to explain loss of *t* at the end of *siðast* phonologically;¹ E. von Schaubert in her edition therefore lets the manuscript reading stand, and her note fully explains why she does so.²

Such regularization is not tantamount to the deliberate destruction of valuable linguistic evidence. In fact, the evidence stands out much better if the manuscript forms appear in the apparatus at the foot of the page of text in which they occur. How far one might wish to go in normalizing depends on how much importance one attaches to a particular piece of evidence. Thus in *The Battle of Maldon* at line 61 I should wish to let the form *gofol* stand as perhaps indicative of the Essex origins of the poem, though at line 46 the transmitted form of the word is *gafol*.³ At *Maldon* 212 I think Fred C. Robinson is right to restore as a *Rettung* the transmitted form *gemunu* 1st sg. pres. ind., and not to emend it away;⁴ we do not know enough about Essex English at the end of the tenth century or the beginning of the eleventh to emend the ending away.

In verse, *h* before a consonant alliterates with *h* before a vowel. If we admit emendation in order to regularize the alliteration we must emend manuscript *hroden* at *Beowulf* 1151b to avoid double alliteration in the second half-line:

forhabban in hrepre. Ða wæs heal hroden

‘Then was the hall adorned (*hroden*)’ must be altered to ‘Then was the hall reddened (*roden*)’. Similarly at *Beowulf* line 1318 the scribe wrote *hnægde* for *nægde*, where it does not affect the alliteration:

þæt he þone wisan wordum hnægde

and here too emendation is essential for the sense, ‘laid low’ instead of ‘approached’, following, as all editors have done, Ettmüller.⁵ If sense were the only justification for emending, *hroden* at 1151b would have to be left unemended—gruesome sense can be made of it: ‘adorned with the lives of enemies’, Klaeber’s glossary suggests ‘with the life-blood’;⁶ and C. L. Wrenn,⁷ E. von

¹ *Kommentar* (for details see n. 3, p. 234 above), pp. 286–7.

² In the ‘Kommentar’ volume of her 1961 edition (for details see n. 4, p. 234), p. 152.

³ See E. V. Gordon, *The Battle of Maldon* (London, 1937), p. 47.

⁴ ‘Some Aspects of the Maldon Poet’s Artistry’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, lxxv (1976), 35–7. In spite of Robinson, Scragg still emends in his edition (for details see n. 2, p. 231), pp. 80–1.

⁵ See n. 2, p. 266; p. 114, his l. 804.

⁶ pp. 328–9, s.v. *feorh*.

⁷ *Beowulf* (London, 1953), p. 124; but W. F. Bolton’s revision (London, 1973), p. 143, emends to *roden*, without comment on why the policy has changed.

Schaubert¹ and G. Nickel *et al.*² do not emend; E. von Schaubert has a particularly good note giving her reasons.³ There are other lines in the poem with double alliteration in the second half: thus 574b *þæt ic mid sweorde ofsloh*, 1251b *Sum sare angeald* (if *Sum* alliterates), 1351b *oðer earmsceapen* (if *oðer* alliterates) and 2916b *hilde gehnægdon* (often emended to *genægdon*).⁴ If lines 1318b and 1351b are emended to regularize the alliteration, perhaps one should follow Holthausen and emend *ofsloh* to *abreat* at 574b; yet no editor does that, not even Holthausen, who toys with the emendation in an article and in the notes (not the text) of his editions.⁵

Hardly any textual problem involves only one point in the text. It is therefore difficult for an editor to formulate a principle justifying an emendation in such a way that other, similar readings do not pull him deeper into conjectural emendation. Consistency in treating the text is an editorial virtue difficult to achieve, unless the policy is consistently not to emend: there is hardly ever a point at which an editor can say in logic rather than in expediency that he knows exactly where to stop on the slippery slope of tinkering with his text. Though consistency is a virtue, expediency is not always a sinful guide. Editing is a practical art. On the whole emendation is truly essential only when a manuscript reading does not make sense; but it is often desirable from the reader's point of view that an editor emends to avoid confusion.

The transmitted text may have orthographic features which can be used as linguistic evidence for date or dialect of the original. Tolkien's caution is right here; *wundini* at *Beowulf* 1382 is an excellent example of the dangers of using an isolated spelling to date a text; but *gofol* at *Maldon* 61 may point to Essex origins. Of course, spellings provide evidence for the language of the scribe of the extant manuscript, and scribal readings which are unlikely to go back to the poet are indications of how the language has changed. Klaeber in his edition of *Beowulf* follows Sievers only

¹ Thus 15th edn., vol. i (1940), p. 45.

² See their note, vol. ii, p. 36. See above, pp. 231–2, for the edition.

³ 17th edn., vol. ii (1961), p. 85. Cf. also K. Grinda, *Anglia*, lxxix (1962), 455 (for details see Greenfield–Robinson No. 747); the reference is in the note by Nickel *et al.*, for which see the preceding note.

⁴ F. Holthausen proposes emendation at 574b to *abreat*, 'Beiträge zur Erklärung des altenglischen Epos', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, xxxvii (1905), 114. 1251b has double alliteration if *sum* is stressed, and 1351b if *oðer* is stressed. Probably 2916, and therefore also 1318, are to be emended because that easily regularizes the alliteration of 2916b.

⁵ See the preceding note, and 4th edn. (Heidelberg, 1919), ii, 119.

rarely in attempts to restore the text to a state nearer to the original. He does so, as we have seen, at line 9b where he leaves out *þara* for metrical reasons:

oð þæt him æghwylc þara ymbsittendra.¹

He does not follow Sievers, unlike many other editors, at 25a, where the scribe gives us *gehwære*, instead of *gehwam* (or *gehwæm*) which in Old English can refer to any gender;² in Campbell's words, 'In IW-S the compound *gehwa* . . . has a special fem. gen. and dat. *gehwære*, *gehwāre*, often introduced by scribes into verse against metre.'³ Line 25 provides an example:

in mægþa gehwære man gepeon.

The Concordance shows that there are six other cases:⁴ *Genesis* 1374, *Andreas* 630, *Elene* 972, *Christ II* 490, *Phoenix* 206, *Precepts* 74. The forms *gehwære* and *gehware* are not found in prose;⁵ it follows that if Krapp and Dobbie had been led by Sievers's cogent arguments to emend *gehwære* (and *gehware*) at each occurrence in order to improve the metre the concordances would not have recorded the late Old English forms. Nevertheless, an editor does not edit for the benefit of lexicography, but to help readers of the text.

A different grammatical and metrical problem occurs at *The Dream of the Rood* 47 where the manuscript has:

opene inwidhlemmas. Ne dorste ic hira nænigum sceððan.

Grein as early as 1865,⁶ and later Sievers,⁷ advocated emendation

¹ Klaeber does not defend the omission in his notes. See above, pp. 247–8, and n. 1, p. 248.

² See E. Sievers, revised by K. Brunner, *Altenglische Grammatik* (Tübingen, 1965, retaining the paragraph reference of Sievers's own, earlier editions), § 341, Anm. 4.

³ See Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 716, n. 4.

⁴ See n. 1, p. 231, for details of the *Concordance* by R. L. Venezky and A. diP. Healey. It is not certain if at *Andreas* 630 the pronoun is dative or genitive; Sievers, *Beiträge*, x (1895), 485, suggests *gehwæm* dat., but Cosijn, *Beiträge*, xxi (1896), 12, suggests (presumably not in disagreement with Sievers, the editor of *Beiträge*—cf. n. 3, p. 242) *gehwæs* genitive; cf. K. R. Brooks's edition of *Andreas* (Oxford, 1961), p. 83.

⁵ I do not, of course, refer here to the spelling *gehwære* of the word *geþwære*, for which see A. S. Napier, *Old English Glosses*, Anecdota Oxoniensia, series iv, vol. xi (1900), p. 3, n. on 1, 66; cf. L. Goossens, *The Old English Glosses of MS. Brussels, Royal Library, 1650*, Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, Klasse der Letteren, xxxvi, No. 74 (1974), 169, gloss 335.

⁶ 'Zur Textkritik der angelsächsischen Dichter', *Germania*, x (1865), 167.

⁷ *Beiträge*, xii (1887), 462.

to *æn(i)gum* to provide alliteration. The use of *ænig* with *ne* may be compared with *The Dream of the Rood* lines 110 and 117:

Ne mæg þær ænig unforht wesan

and

Ne þearf ðær þonne ænig unforht wesan.

There are many similar uses in the poetry, e.g. *Guthlac B* 993

ingong geopenað. Ne mæg ænig þam

and *Elene* 915¹

æhte mine. Ne mot ænige nu.

Krapp in ASPR and M. Swanton do not emend line 47 in their editions of *The Dream of the Rood*, but read *nænigum*.² Swanton's defence for not emending is that 'lack of alliteration in a second half-line is by no means uncommon in V[ercelli] B[ook] verse, while the double negation is common OE usage.'³ That defence is insufficient though each part of it is true. The restoration of alliteration is so easy and obvious here, that the only possible defence for not emending must be that an editor does not emend here for the simple reason that he emends nowhere for metrical reasons alone. That may be a good policy, though some may question if it should not be abandoned where a scribe seems not to have had much of an ear for verse, and there can be little doubt about how to correct him. At *Beowulf* 949b all editors, however conservative, with only one exception,⁴ follow Grein⁵ and insert *n* before *ænig*:-

niwe sibbe. Ne bið þe [n]ænigre gad

and several improve further by altering the ending to either *nænigra* gen. pl. or *nænges* gen. sg., though conservative editors now usually prefer to keep the ending *-re* as a late gen. pl. form.

Emendation of unfamiliar but not necessarily erroneous syntax or style occurs sometimes. At *Beowulf* 2297b some editors insert a form of one of the verbs 'to be'; the manuscript reads *ne ðær ænig mon*, variously emended to *ne wæs* or *næs* or *ne wearð*; but most

¹ MS *ne* may be altered from *na*; see Krapp's apparatus, ASPR, ii, 91; and C. Sisam, *The Vercelli Book*, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 19 (1976), fo. 130^r, l. 2 (but no comment).

² M. Swanton, *The Dream of the Rood* (Manchester, 1970), pp. 93 and 95.

³ pp. 116–17, following Bütow's edition (see n. 6, p. 252), p. 71.

⁴ Nickel *et al.* (cf. n. 2, p. 269), i (1976), 58, without comment in the notes, ii (1976), 32, where the genitive plural ending *-re* for *-ra* is mentioned.

⁵ 1857 (in the *Bibliothek*), 280.

editors now leave the clause without any auxiliary verb,¹ and at 2262b Klaeber's note makes it clear that *Næs* in the half-line *Næs hearpan wyn* is not to be regarded as 'there was not' (and even less to be emended to *nīs* as some editors do),² but is the adverb more fully *nealles*.³ At 811b Chambers reads with the manuscript *he fag wið god*, and his excellent note deplors the insertion of *wæs* after *he*: 'This appears to be a distinct enfeeblement of the MS. reading.'⁴ Klaeber, however, inserts *wæs*, though aware of the occurrence in Old English of the syntactical and stylistic omission of the verb 'to be' as his notes and glossary show; and he also inserts *wæs* after *þæt* at *Beowulf* 1559b, and again E. von Schaubert follows the manuscript in omission, and has a good note. Guided by Klaeber's list, the following further examples are to be noted: 617a *bæd hine bliðne*, 992a *folmum gefrætword*, 1782b *unc sceal worn fela*, and similarly 1857b, 2091b, 2256a, 2363b, 2497b, and 2659b, in all of which the infinite is not expressed after or before a finite verb; and what Klaeber calls 'loosely joined elliptic clauses', 936, 1943a, 2035, and 3062b. Clearly Old English usage is very different from that of Modern English in not requiring the substantive verb to be expressed always, and editors should not close their minds to this difference between the languages. That does not mean that every omission of forms of the verb 'to be' is original. At *Christ II* 619b the manuscript has *se þe ær sungen*, and ever since Thorpe⁵ editors have supplied *wæs* after *sungen*; the metre requires it, as Sir Israel Gollancz says, '[*wæs*], evidently omitted by the scribe after *sungen*'.⁶

It would be possible to go on citing examples of emended or emendable lines. Piety would frequently be called upon to suggest that conservatism is best, that there is much to be said in favour of the scribal products as we have them, and that little is known of the author's original. After so many examples, a few simple conclusions may be found tolerable.

1. Our knowledge of the language of the Old English poets and of the manuscripts in which their works are contained is insufficient for security when it comes to subtle emendations.

¹ See the excellent note in E. von Schaubert's 'Kommentar' (1961) to the 17th edn. (for details see n. 4, p. 234), p. 134.

² See Chambers's edition (for details see n. 1, p. 237), p. 114, n. on l. 2262, defending his inconsistent treatment.

³ See W. Horn, *Sprachkörper und Sprachfunktion*, Palaestra 135 (2nd edn., 1923), 77-8.

⁴ With a comment on the history of the emendation and on the appearance of the manuscript at this point.

⁵ B. Thorpe, *Codex Exoniensis* (London, 1842), p. 39, l. 9, n.

⁶ EETS, os 104 (1895), 40.

2. The scribes of the Anglo-Saxon poetical manuscripts show little respect for the authorial integrity of their exemplars; they modernize the language of the texts they copy and put them into an orthographical shape consonant with a generalized poetic standard language, mainly late West Saxon. They frequently mix up inflexional endings. They often choose the metrically less good of two or more alternative readings theoretically available to them.

3. We cannot get back to the author's original. The quality of Old English verse is not sufficiently good or sufficiently uniform for us to be sure that, where the transmitted text does not make good sense or where it does not seem to belong to the highest flights of poetry, any palmary emendation of ours is likely to restore the poet's original. A feebler emendation is as likely to restore a feeble poet's text as an emendatory, inspired fancy.

4. Where we feel most strongly, we should be most on our guard. When an emendation matters to the overall interpretation of a whole poem or a major part of it we should constantly recall that it is of our own manufacture, and that it therefore cannot bear the weighty conclusions which, in fact, may partly have led us to propose it. When a reading matters in our interpretation of a poem or of an important part or aspect of it we should be at our most conservative. When it does not matter to the interpretation we can relax our conservatism. If we wish to help our readers we can regularize some of the confusing spellings of inflexional endings and straighten out some of the most obvious superficial errors resulting from scribal lassitude, provided that we are quite sure that we are engaged upon nothing other than cosmetic surgery.

5. We should feel happiest as editors when we have demonstrated that a manuscript reading, spurned and excised by previous editors, deserves to stand in the text. A *Rettung* is worth more than a palmary emendation.