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On the Transmission and Phonology of *The Battle of Brunanburh*

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The Old English poem *The Battle of Brunanburh*, which forms the annal for the year 937 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, commemorates the victory won in that year by an army of West Saxons led by Æþelstan king of Wessex and his brother Eadmund over a combined army of Irish Norse and Scots under their respective kings Anlaf and Constantine. The poet gives the site of the battle as *ymbe* ('around') *Brūnanburh* (line 5);[1] but the place-name continues to resist firm localization;[2] indeed, there is evidence of confusion or ignorance about the site of the battle as early as the tenth century.[3] Much of the recent scholarly work on the poem addresses itself to this problem. Textual and linguistic questions have been largely set aside since the publication of Alistair Campbell's authoritative edition of 1938.[4] Campbell gave very close attention to these matters, and his thoroughness and acuity seldom leave much scope for disagreement; but a few of his conclusions might, after over fifty years, usefully be reviewed. Here I shall concentrate on some uncertainties about the poem's early transmission and original linguistic character.

An outline of the relationships between the manuscript texts of the poem is a necessary preliminary to discussion. *The Battle of Brunanburh* (hereafter *Brb*) survives in four manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: MSS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 173 (A, known as 'The Parker Chronicle'), in which the poem is written in a mid-tenth century (post-955) hand; British Library, Cotton Tiberius A.vi (B), written in the period 977-9; British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.i (C), where the poem appears in a mid-eleventh century hand; and British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.iv (D), also of the mid-eleventh century.[5] Campbell showed beyond reasonable doubt that none of these four manuscript texts of *Brb* derives, directly or indirectly, from any of the others.[6] The two latest texts, C and D, are clearly independent of each other, for D has corruptions not repeated in C in 5

heordweal for C's *bordweall*, 10 *heted* for *hettend*, 20 *ræd* for *sæd*, 23 *heora flyman* for *hereflymon*, 24 *mycelscearpum* for *mylenscearpum*, etc., and C has corruptions independent of D in 3 *ealdorlagne* for D's *ealdorlangne*, interpolated 7 (*and*/*ond*) in 20 and 31, 27 *liþes* for *lides*, 40 *her* (also B) for *he*, interpolated *his* in 41, and 57 *broðor* for *gebroðor*. Neither D nor C can derive from the earlier B, which alone is corrupt in 6 *heaðolina* for *heaþolinda*, 18 *forgrunden* for *ageted*, 42 *forslegen* for *beslegen* (D *-slægen*), and 67 *afylled* for *gefylled*. Finally, none of these texts can derive from the fourth and earliest, A, for it has many corruptions which they do not repeat: 13 *secgas hwate* for B, C, D *secga swate*, 26 *þæ* for *þara* (D *þæra*) *ðe*, 26 *æra gebland* for *earg ebland*, 35 *cnearen* for *cnear on*, 49 *culbodgehnades* for *cumbolgehnastes,* 56 7 *eft hira land* for *eft ira* (C, D *yra*) *land*, and 62 *hasewan padan* for *hasopadan* (C *hasu-*, D *hasuwadan*). Campbell was also able to show that texts B and C do not derive independently from the archetype of all four texts, but from an intermediate text which I shall call *B/C (Campbell's B-C), the evidence for which is the corrupt reading *her* for *he* in 40, which only B and C contain.[7] Consequently, the B and C texts constitute a single witness to the archetypal text at points where they agree; only where they differ do their readings have independent value, and in such cases the decisive factor will be which variant has the support of A or D (or both).

Campbell advanced two further theories about *Brb*'s transmission, both of which seem to me more questionable: firstly, that *B/C and D derive from a text which was distinct from, and later than, the archetype, and of which A was independent; and secondly, that the archetypal text was not an accurate reflection of the poet's words because all four texts share corrupt readings at certain points.[8] The stemma below represents Campbell's reconstruction of *Brb*'s textual history:

*Z (earliest version)

*X (archetype)

A   *Y

*B/C

B

C   D
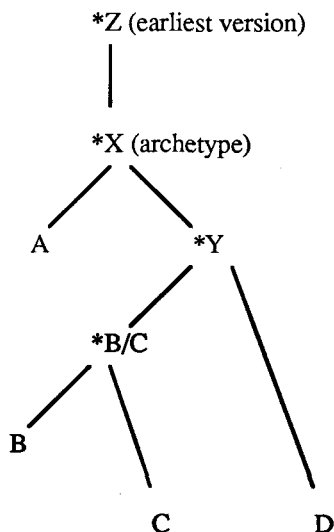
The evidence for the existence of the text represented here by *Y is the agreement of B, C and D against A in two readings regarded by Campbell as inferior to A's: 18 *guman* beside A's *guma*, and 71 *brade brimu* for A's *bradbrimu* (or *brad brimu*). The first of these variations is given below in context (lines 17b-20b), with C acting as representative of the B, C and D texts:

A	C
Þær læg secg mænig	Þær læg secg monig
garum ageted, guma norþerna	garum ageted, guman norðerne
ofer scild scoten, swilce Scittisc eac	ofer scyld scoten, swilce Scyttisc eac
werig, wiges sæd.	werig, wigges sæd.

[There lay many a man destroyed with spears, northern men shot over the shield, likewise Scottish, weary, sated with war.]

In 18b, A's *guma norþerna*, 'northern man', is grammatically nominative singular (my translation makes the phrase plural only because modern English does not offer an easy way of rendering the singular of the original), in agreement with singular *secg mænig*, 'many a man', in the previous line. The B, C and D version of the phrase, *guman norðerne*, is nominative plural.[9] *Andreas* 1116b-1118 provides a partial parallel to the construction in A:

3

þa wæs rinc manig,
guðfrec guma, ymb þæs geongan feorh,
breostum onbryrded to þam beadulace.
[Then was many a man, warrior eager for strife, excited in his
breast to the battle for the youth's life.][10]

where *guðfrec guma* follows the singular number of *rinc manig*. There is no
metrical distinction between A's version of *Brb* 18b and that of the other texts; but
that singular forms, as in A, were originally used in agreement with the singular
secg mænig in the previous line is suggested by the adherence to singular number
subsequently throughout the sentence in all texts (*scoten, Scittisc, werig, sæd*). The
form *guman* in B, C, D might, as Campbell suggests, have arisen by dittography of
the initial *n* of *norðerne*; but whether or not copying error was involved, *guman*,
once introduced into the text, was evidently acceptable to subsequent copyists (the
scribes of *B/C, B, C and D) as a plural, presumably because it is semantically, if
not grammatically, appropriate in a context of reference to a plurality of men.
However, it is obvious that the same consideration could form the basis of an
argument that this corruption might have arisen in two independent lines of
transmission, so it may be unwise to rely too heavily on the pattern of variants in
this passage as evidence for the existence of the hypothetical *Y.

The second textual variation adduced by Campbell as evidence of *Y is
between 71a *ofer bradbrimu* (or *brad brimu*) in A, and B, C, D *ofer brade brimu*,
where Campbell preferred A's version. There is no difference in meaning; both
readings give 'over the broad seas'. Furthermore, both seem acceptable
grammatically and metrically, whether *bradbrimu* in A is treated as a compound or as
two separate words, *brad brimu*. The lack of inflection in A's *brad* (assuming that it
is an independent word) is normal Old English for the accusative plural neuter which
is required grammatically here. In B, C and D, the *-e* of *brade* represents a
development in the accusative plural neuter of adjectives first attested in early West
Saxon texts and common in later West Saxon.[11] Such a form need arouse no
suspicion in a text dating from c. 937.[12] Thus *brad* and *brade* are equally convincing
grammatically and historically as archetypal readings. The metrical criterion is
similarly indecisive. If A's reading represents a compound *bradbrimu*, the verse
ofer bradbrimu scans as Bliss's type d3b (x x ´ ` x).[13] Alternatively, if (with
Campbell) we take *brad* and *brimu* as separate words, the verse becomes an example
of Bliss's 2C2b (x x ´ | ` x), a type in which double alliteration (here on *b*) is

permissible (if not very common) in *Beowulf*.[14] The variant in B, C and D, *ofer brade brimu*, scans as 3Blb (x x $\stackrel{\angle}{}$ x | $\stackrel{\angle}{\smile}$x, here with resolution of the second stress), a type in which double alliteration is frequent in *Beowulf*.[15] Thus when all factors are taken into account it seems impossible to be certain of A's priority here; and this, together with the slight uncertainty about the significance of the variants in line 18b, weakens the case for Campbell's *Y.[16]

Campbell's deduction that the archetype of *Brb* was corrupt is also doubtful. There are three points in the poem where, in his judgement, all four texts show corruptions traceable to the archetype: 12 A *dænnede* (the second *n* inserted superscript), B, C *dennade*, D *dennode*; 32 *flotan* (all texts); and 41 *gefylled* (all texts). The first of these had already provoked a large body of discussion and speculation by the time that Campbell published his edition, and his commentary offers a thorough review of the various suggestions that had been made. There is no need to repeat Campbell's discussion in its entirety here, to which the reader is referred.[17] The chief problem is that neither of the verbs *dænnian nor *dennian is recorded elsewhere in Old English, nor are there any certain cognates in other Germanic languages. Following Madden, Campbell emended to *dunnade*, 'became dark'; and in view of the apparent impossibility of making any sense of the manuscript forms, emendation does seem the only policy open to an editor. But if an emendation is to inspire confidence as a genuine restoration of an earlier reading, it should be possible to see how the corrupt readings the editor has replaced might have arisen from what he replaces them with. Campbell assumes that the archetype already contained the corruption *dennode* (or *dennade*) for *dunnode*, and would explain this original error by reference to 'the large number of times in which *e* occurs in the passage' (i.e. in lines 12b-13a).[18] He regards A's *dænnede* as a secondary corruption of *dennode/dennade* in the archetype, 'due simply to the unfamiliarity of the form'. This reconstruction of the chain of error is not especially compelling, though one must agree that the archetypal form is likely to have been *dennade* or *dennode*, as attested by *B/C and D. The difficulty with Campbell's reconstruction is that neither *dænnede* nor *dennode/dennade* represents any known Old English word, so that the vital criterion of intelligibility cannot be applied to the problem. It is likely enough that one or other of these forms was intelligible to the Anglo-Saxon copyists of the poem, for *dennode/dennade* (unlike *dænnede*) was written or transcribed several times in the text's history (in *B/C, B, C and D); but it seems impossible, in the midst of so many uncertainties, to maintain with any measure of confidence that the archetype contained a corrupt form. The archetypal

form was probably either *dennade* or *dennode*, as Campbell concludes; but without knowing what (if anything) it meant, or what (if anything) it replaced and why, it seems to me dangerous to assume corruption. After all, the form *dennode* shows the inflexional characteristics of a weak verb of the second class in the past tense singular; it looks as if it ought to mean something. Perhaps it represents a true Old English verb which happens to be unrecorded elsewhere.

The second reading cited by Campbell as evidence of the corrupt condition of the archetypal text of *Brb* was 32 *flotan*. B's version is representative of the text of the passage in question:

B

Fife lagon
on ðæm campstede ciningas geonge
sweordum aswefede, swilce seofone eac
eorlas Anlafes, unrim herges
flotan and Scotta.
[Five young kings lay dead on the battlefield, put to sleep with swords, likewise seven of Anlaf's chiefs, (and) a countless number of the hostile force of *flotan* and Scots.][19]

Campbell was dissatisfied with *flotan* which he saw as a genitive singular ('of the sailor') in a context demanding the genitive plural ('of the sailors'). He emended to the normal Old English form of the genitive plural, *flotena*, to achieve grammatical agreement in both case and number with the genitive plural *Scotta*. The emendation does not involve any metrical difficulties; but Dobbie has since drawn attention to 'fleet', 'crews of ships' as an attested meaning of *flota* which, if accepted here, would allow the singular genitive, used in a collective sense, to stand.[20] Emendation, and the assumption that the archetype was corrupt, seem inappropriate here when the grounds for defending the manuscript reading are so good.

The third and last reading identified by Campbell as a corruption deriving from the archetype text of *Brb* is 41 *gefylled*. It occurs in a passage the transmission of which I attempted to trace in detail some years ago.[21] This is A's version of lines 40b-44a:

A

He wæs his mæga sceard,
freonda gefylled   on folcstede,
beslagen æt sæcce,   and his sunu forlet
on wælstowe   wundun fergrunden,
giungne æt guðe.
[He was *sceard* of(?) kinsmen, *gefylled* of(?) friends on the
battlefield, deprived in strife, and left his son in the place of
slaughter, destroyed by wounds, the young (man) in the battle.]

There are two parallel sets of problems here which centre on the adjective *sceard*, the
past participle *gefylled*, and the two genitive plural nouns *mæga* and *freonda* which
respectively depend on them. The usual meaning of *sceard* in Old English is
'notched', 'hacked', 'gashed' or 'mutilated', and *gefylled* would normally mean
'killed'. Thus the first part of the sentence (I ignore the problem of the genitives for
the moment) seems to say that 'He' (40b *He*, referring to Constantine, King of
Scots) 'was mutilated . . . killed' in the battle. However, the poet has just described
(37-39) how Constantine survived the battle and returned to Scotland. Campbell
notes the apparent inconsistency represented by *gefylled* and emends it to *befylled*,
'deprived', 'bereft', so that verse 41a comes to mean 'bereft of friends', as a
reference to heavy Scottish losses in the field. Campbell's emendation effectively
irons out the problem of the relationship between the genitive *freonda* and the past
participle (now *befylled*), though one would expect a dative (*freondum*) rather than a
genitive noun in the kind of construction Campbell's emendation creates. But
Campbell does not emend *sceard*, interpreting it metaphorically in the unique sense
of 'deprived', and interpreting the genitive *mæga* like *freonda*, as if it were a dative
('He was deprived of kinsmen . . .'). The main point to be made here is not
Campbell's inconsistent editorial policy in the face of two parallel textual difficulties,
but simply the fact that *mæga sceard* and *freonda gefylled*, equally resistant to
interpretation, seem to be identical in their grammatical structure and to represent
variations of each other in the sentence in which they occur. They thus represent
two closely linked problems of interpretation. Where we find, as we do here, two
parallel examples in close proximity of a highly distinctive construction, it seems to
me unsafe to assume corruption simply on the grounds that it is unique. So far as
Campbell's replacement of *gefylled* by *befylled* is concerned, our knowledge of Old

English, and of the syntax of poetry in particular, is not extensive enough to inspire confidence in an emendation which leaves untouched the problem of the meaning of *sceard* and that of the syntax of the genitives. Again, it seems to me that the difficulties of interpretation here are not necessarily a sign that the text (as it appears in A, at least) is corrupt. One can understand why Campbell, as an editor, felt it necessary to emend here, and certainly the intelligibility of the passage is enhanced (for modern readers, at least) as a result; but *befylled* is not convincing as a restoration of the original reading at this point in the text.

Campbell gave more detailed attention than most editors would today to the question of the linguistic character of the archetype of *Brb* (*X in the stemma given above) and of the original composition (*Z); but his methods, and some of his conclusions, are open to challenge. Campbell makes no use of metrical-phonological tests to determine any aspects of the original language of *Brb*. Nor, it seems to me, does he sufficiently emphasise that when an Old English poem survives, as *Brb* does, only in a copy or copies, the only aspects of the phonology of the original that can be established with certainty are those that are either common to all forms of the language at the time when the poem was composed, or confirmed by metrical criteria. As we shall see below, Campbell preferred other, more questionable methods. But his neglect of metrical-phonological tests could be defended from several points of view. For one thing, *Brb* is datable within unusually narrow limits by non-linguistic criteria (between 937 and 955), so the metrical-phonological tests which he might have used, which were originally devised as methods of dating Old English poems, would be of little value in this regard. Another defence lies in the fact that *Brb* is, as Old English poems go, a rather short text. In poems composed in regular Old English alliterative metre, the only testable words are those which may vary in Old English generally, according to dialect or date, in the number or length of the syllables they contain; and even these words, which never account for more than a tiny proportion of the total in any one poem, will offer valuable evidence only when they occur in certain metrical contexts. The limitations of the metrical-phonological approach are increased still further by present uncertainties about how the evidence it yields should be interpreted, and widespread scepticism about its ultimate value, at least for dating.[22] Nevertheless, I propose to look at this evidence briefly, for it raises some important but somewhat neglected questions about the nature and composition of Old English verse.

There are six verses in *Brb* which contain apparently disyllabic words or first elements of compound words ending in an unstressed vowel followed by *r*, *l* or *n*:

3b   ealdorlangne tir

14b   mære tungol

15b   Godes condel beorht

49b   cumbolgehnastes

51a   wæpengewrixles

55a   ofer deop wæter

The unstressed vowels in the second syllables of these words and elements (*o* of *ealdor-*, *tungol*, *cumbol-*, and *e* of *condel*, *wæpen-*, *wæter*) are parasite vowels which arose in prehistoric Old English (or earlier, perhaps, in some cases) before the liquid or nasal consonants as a result of the latter becoming syllabic after the loss of the unstressed vowels which originally followed them.[23] But metrists disagree about the conditions under which these parasite vowels are to be regarded as scribal and ignored in scansion. A. J. Bliss, to judge from his treatment of comparable verses in *Beowulf*, would doubtless have ignored the *o* of *cumbol-* in 49 and the *e* of *wæpen-* in 51 and treated these elements as monosyllabic, scanning both verses as $\acute{}$: x $\grave{}$ x (Bliss's type 1A1). One of the chief justifications for this policy is a statistical one: in verses in *Beowulf* consisting, like *Brb* 49b and 51b, of a single compound word, the metrical contour: $\acute{}$ x : x $\grave{}$ x is attested *only* by verses in which the unstressed syllable of the first foot contains a parasite vowel followed by *r*, *l*, *m* or *n*. Verses in *Beowulf* scanned by Bliss as 1A1 include 2728a *dogorgerimes* and 2903b *ealdorgewinna*, in both of which the metrically offensive vowel is written by the scribe, and 1326a *eaxlgestealla*, 1714a *eaxlgesteallan* and 1931a *maþmgestreona*, in which it is not. J. C. Pope, on the other hand, scans all these first elements except the last as disyllabic, although he seems unsure of the propriety of this.[24] Campbell's scansion of *Brb* 49b and 51a agrees with Pope's scansion of comparable *Beowulf* verses, not with Bliss's.[25] Bliss and Pope agree, however, that the unstressed vowels should always be suppressed in *Beowulf* in verses of the type of *Brb* 3b *ealdorlangne tir* ($\acute{}$ $\grave{}$ x | $\acute{}$, Bliss's type 3E2, and so scanned by Campbell). The statistical support for this policy is even more impressive than before: the metrical contour: $\acute{}$ x $\grave{}$ x | $\acute{}$ seems to be attested in eleven *Beowulf* verses, but in all of them the second (unstressed) syllable of the verse ends with a vowel plus *r*, *l*, *m* or *n*.[26] Bliss's suppression of the unstressed vowels in such compounded elements in both 1A1 and 3E2 verses has the obvious virtue of consistency which Pope's policy lacks. However, not even Bliss is entirely consistent in his treatment of parasite vowels: probably all metrists would agree (as do Pope and Bliss) that in *Brb*

14b, 15b and 55a, in which the kinds of word under examination occur in uncompounded form, disyllabic pronunciation is required metrically; for in 55a, monosyllabic pronunciation of *wæter* produces a metrical contour (x x $\acute{-}$ | $\acute{-}$) which Old English poets generally avoid; and in 14b and 15b, monosyllabic *tungol* and *condel* would produce verses short of the four syllables which Old English poets seem to have regarded as the requisite minimum.[27] The word *tungol* does not occur in *Beowulf*; but *condel* appears twice (1572a *rodores candel*, 1965b *Woruldcandel scan*) and in both cases metrical considerations indicate disyllabic forms. The word *wæter* is common in *Beowulf*, and indeed is sometimes used in verses closely analogous in form and meaning with *Brb* 55a *ofer deop wæter*: *Beowulf* 509b *on deop wæter*, 1904a *drefan deop wæter*, 1989b *ofer sealt wæter*, 2473a *ofer wid wæter*, in all of which, as Klaeber notes in his edition, the metre requires disyllabic pronunciation of *wæter*.[28] According to Klaeber's lists, no short-stem word in *Beowulf* with parasite vowel except *wæter* can be shown to have been disyllabic by metrical criteria.

It is possible that poets had the option of monosyllabic or disyllabic pronunciation of at least some words involving parasiting. Evidence that might be used to support a theory of such flexibility is the *Beowulf* poet's use of the word *symbel*, 'feast', which must, according to the standard metrical criteria I have appealed to above, be disyllabic in 1010b *symbel þicgan* (otherwise the verse is one syllable short) but monosyllabic in 1728b *symbelwynne dreoh* (Bliss's type 3E2, discussed above) and (probably) in 2431a *geaf me sinc ond symbel* (2B1b, x x $\acute{-}$ | x $\acute{-}$, whereas if *symbel* is disyllabic the verse is of type 1A1a(i) with disyllabic anacrusis, x x $\acute{-}$ | x $\acute{-}$ x, which is virtually unparalleled in *Beowulf*). We are driven to consider the possibility of choice because attempts to identify a system of constraints under which the poets worked have generally foundered. Lehmann, who recently looked at the problem from a phonological angle, concluded that in *Beowulf* the overriding criterion was the 'weight' of the stressed syllable of the word in question: words such as *tungol* and *symbel*, with 'heavy' (metrically long) stem syllables, were disyllabic, and those with 'light' (metrically short) stem syllables monosyllabic.[29] But Lehmann's conclusions do not account very satisfactorily for the anomalies represented by *wæter* and *symbel* in *Beowulf*; and they also ignore the implications of the strong statistical basis underlying Bliss's metrical classifications, from which Lehmann often diverges.

The range of evidence offered by *Brb* alone is of course far too narrow to provide a safe basis for general conclusions about forms with parasiting in Old

English poetry; but there are many advantages in a theory which sees the metrical employment of these elements – at least in compound form – as having developed out of metrical norms established before the period of parasiting in Old English. For example, if a verse such as *ealdorlangne tir*, which would have the metrical contour: ´ ` x | ´ before parasiting, was spoken by poets as ´ x ` x | ´ after parasiting, then clearly parasiting generated a metrical contour which had not previously existed – an idea that some metrists would be inclined to resist. But the nonexistence of this new contour in verses other than those in which elements subject to parasiting appear could be explained by a theory of 'bound' metrical types, usable only when elements of certain kinds were involved. The main attraction of this theory is that it enables us to assume that all words and elements in Old English that were subject historically to parasiting were pronounced with the new vowel by poets, rather than in a special archaic way as monosyllables in the service of an artificial fossilization of traditional metrical patterns. But it also has far-reaching implications both for the composition of Old English poetry and for our metrical analysis of it. One implication is that the poets might have composed, not in conformity with a certain range of permissible metrical contours, but rather according to conventions governing the grammatical and morphological structure and relationships of elements and words within the verse. Perhaps all metrical types were originally 'bound' to a limited range of patterns of this kind. If modern analysis were to take account of the syntax, grammar and morphology of verses, as well as to their metrical patterns, evidence might emerge in support of a theory of gradual developments within the Old English metrical system in response to sound-changes in certain kinds of word. Such apparent inconsistencies as the metrical employment of the element *symbel*(-) in *Beowulf* might be explained on the grounds that parasiting, though complete in the language of the *Beowulf* poet, had not yet been thoroughly assimilated into the metrical system. The new disyllabic form of the word was already being used in old-established patterns, as in 1010b *symbel þicgan* (´ x | ´ x, type 2A1a[i]); but its use in 2431a *geaf me sinc ond symbel*, which would have been x x ´ | x ´ (type 2B1b) before parasiting, is threatening to produce a new metrical type (1A1a[i] with disyllabic anacrusis). The closest parallel to this verse elsewhere in *Beowulf* is 1248a *ge æt ham ge on herge* - according to Bliss, the only example in the poem of a verse of type 1A1b(i) with disyllabic anacrusis.[30] Thus in this latter case, perhaps, a new metrical contour has been created by parasiting and in 1248a we see the first signs of its generalization to verses which do not contain parasited forms.

This theory obviously requires more thorough investigation and testing than I

have space for here.[31] I did, however, want to give some attention to the metrical-phonological approach to the language of *Brb*, inconclusive though its results are, partly to illustrate some fundamental questions about Old English verse, and partly to emphasise how different Campbell's approach is to the problem of the poem's original linguistic character. Campbell, in attempting to reconstruct the phonology of the archetypal text of *Brb* (*X) and of the original composition (*Z), gave all his attention to non-structural forms. His starting-point was the linguistic character of A, the earliest text of the four, which contains several forms which are not typical of standard late West Saxon. Campbell lists these forms under twelve headings, as given below. For the purposes of the discussion which will follow, I have added notes of all correspondences between A and other texts of *Brb*; listed all comparable forms elsewhere in the A text of *Brb* or in other parts of the A scribe's work on the Chronicle (i.e. annals 925-55 inclusive); attached Campbell's own comments on each phonological category which are awkwardly tucked away in an Appendix to his edition;[32] indicated certain correspondences between these linguistic features and those of another Old English text copied in the first half of the tenth century – the Old English *Orosius* in the Lauderdale manuscript;[33] and finally, added some notes on the distribution of comparable forms in Old English poetic texts generally. The value of encumbering Campbell's list with all this additional information will, I hope, become apparent later in the discussion. References to *Brb* and to the poem in the 942 annal, *The Capture of the Five Boroughs (CFB)*, are by line, and to the prose by annal numbers as given in Plummer's edition of the *Chronicle*.[34]

1. 18 *ageted* (also C, D), 23 *-fleman*, 32 *geflemed*, 33 *nede* (also B), 66 *eiglande* (cf. B *eglande*), with *ē* for the i-mutation of *ēa*. Cf. *CFB* 9 *nyde, CFB* 11 *aslysde*, 944 *aflymde* with *y*, beside *CFB* 9 *gebegde* with *e*. Also 45 *-geslehtes*, 47 *hlehhan* with *e* for the i-mutation of *ea*. These forms with *e* are 'non-W.-S.' according to Campbell, p. 167. *Oros.* has *e* (for the i-mutation of *ēa*) in *alesan, fiftene, geflemed, geflemde* (all 1x), *hehst-* 2x, *oðewde* 2x, *oðewed*; but early West Saxon *ie* predominates in this position generally; Bately, p. xliii; Cosijn, I, §§ 94, 97, 100. In some Old English poems, *e* forms predominate in some of these words and elements. Thus the element (-)*ned*(-) with *e* is invariable in the *Metres of Boethius* (7x), and predominates in the *Paris Psalter* (12x, beside forms with *y* 6x) and in *Andreas* and *Elene* in the Vercelli Book. In other poems, (-)*ned*(-) is a minority form. *Christ and Satan* 461 has *geflemed* with *e*, and so also *Genesis* 1020 *flema* (beside 2115 *flymde*), *Exhortation to Christian Living* 69 *gefleman*. The element

eg- with *e* is fairly common in verse, e.g. *Genesis* 1415 *egstream*, *Maxims* I l5, *Whale* 16, *Wulf and Eadwacer* 5 *eglond* (beside 4 *iege*, 6 *ige*), *Metres of Boethius* 1.16 *eglond* (beside *i* 5x in this text), *Elene* 66, 241 *egstreame*, *Beowulf* 577 *egstreamum.* For the i-mutation of the short diphthong *ea, Oros.* always has *i* (e.g. [-]*sliht-* 5x, *hlihhan*); Bately, p. xlii; Cosijn, I, § 14. Forms with *e* are rare in the verse, though Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, §§ 200(3) and footnote 1, 204(5), 223, notes the occurrence of *e* in *Guthlac* 1357 *behlehhan*, *Elene* 650 *morðorslehtes*, and in *Brb*, and associates these forms particularly with verse, rather than with identifiably Anglian texts which tend to show forms in which *ea* by fracture escapes i-umlaut and is smoothed to *æ*.

2. 44 *gelpan* with undiphthongized *e* after palatalized *g*. Cf. 2 -*gifa* with *i*. This *e* is 'non-W.-S.' (Campbell, p. 167). In *Oros., e* occurs in 113/11, 27 *gelp(e)* (the noun, beside *gielp[e]* 2x, and in the verb *ie* or *i* in *gielpað* 2x, *gilpað* 1x); Bately, p. xli; Cosijn, I, § 14. *The Metres of Boethius* have *gelp(-)* 4x, beside forms with *i* 4x, *y* 2x; but there are no other examples with *e* in Old English verse.

3. 8 -*mægum* (also C, D), 28 *lægun*, 40 *mæga* (also D), with unretracted *ǣ* (from West Germanic) before a back vowel in the next syllable. Cf. *CFB* 2 *maga*. In this position *ǣ* is 'definitely W.-S., but is archaic, or, at least, not usual in the normal W.-S. of the tenth century' (Campbell, pp. 167-68). In *Oros., mæga(s)* occurs 5x, *lægon*, *lægan* 1x each, and there are no forms with *a*; Cosijn, I, §§ 57-58. In Old English verse generally, forms of these elements and words with *ǣ* occur sporadically, but they are frequent only in the Exeter Book poems *(freo-, hleo-, winemæga, -um* 6x, *Christ* 96 *mægan, Guthlac* 195 *mægum, Christ* 45 *lægon*, 1155 *lægun* with *æ*, beside *a* in *magas, maga, magum* 8x, *lagun* 1x).

4. 33 *gebeded* with *ē* for earlier *ǣ* the i-mutation of *ā* (W. Gmc. *ai*). Cf. 12, 28 *fæge*, 56 *æwisc-*, 60 *hræ*; also *CFB* 8 *ær*, *CFB* 10 *hæþenra*, 945 *sæ*. The *e* form is 'non-W.-S.' (Campbell, p. 167). Bately notes no *e* forms in this context in the *Oros.*, and there are no further instances of this verb with *e* elsewhere in Old English verse.

5. 6 -*linde* (fem. ō-stem noun) with acc. pl. -*e*. Cf. *CFB* 11 *þraga* with -*a*. The -*e* inflection in *Brb* is 'non-W.-S.' (Campbell, p. 167). *Oros.* has -*e* in *healfe* (98/11, 127/9), but -*a* is usual in other ō-stem nouns; Cosijn, II, § 15. In verse, the

inflection is usually *-e* in the acc. pl. (*Exodus* 301, *Beowulf* 2365, *Judith* 191, 303, *Battle of Maldon* 99).

6. 29 *giunge* (cf. D *iunga*), 55 *giungne* with *iu* for earlier *u* after palatalized *g*. Campbell comments: 'archaic for the tenth century' (Campbell, p. 168). *Oros.* has only *-eo-* or *-io-* in this word; Cosijn, I, § 48(2). The verse usually has *eo* or *io* in this element, with *iu* appearing only in *Christ and Satan* 509 *giunga* and *Metres of Boethius* 26.67, 86 *giunge*, neither text having any *eo* or *io* forms.

7. 10 *crungun,* 22 *legdun,* 27 *gesohtun,* 28 *lægun,* 47 *þorftun* (also C), 48 *wurdun* with *-un* in the past pl. of verbs. Cf. category 10 below and *Brb* 4 *geslogon,* 9 *ealgodon,* 24 *wyrndon,* 58 *sohton* with *-on.* The *-un* forms are 'archaic for the tenth century' (Campbell, p. 168). In *Oros.*, *-un* occurs only 1x (29/33 *fortendun*); *-on* is the commonest form, with *-an* fairly frequent (219x); Bately, pp. xlv-vi; Cosijn, II, § 76. I have not searched the poetry thoroughly for examples of *-un* in the past plural of verbs, but it seems to be rare. The Exeter Book contains a sprinkling, especially in the poems near the beginning of the manuscript (e.g. *Guthlac* 181 *wurdun,* 887 *gesohtun,* 492, 878, 927 *sohtun, Christ* 1359, *Juliana* 293 *sohtun, Christ* 1155 *lægun*).

8. 8 *from,* 15 *condel,* 21 *ondlongne,* 25 *hond-* with *o* for Prim. Gmc. *a* in stressed syllables before nasal consonants. Cf. 3 *-langne,* 6 *hamora,* 8, 29, 49 *camp-,* 9, 27, 56, 59, 66 (-)*land*(-), 26 *gebland,* 33 *manna,* 45 *blanden-,* 72 *wlance* with *a*; also A 933 2x, 944, 945 2x, 946 (-)*land*(-), *CFB* 9 *handa, -mannum, CFB* 11 *lange,* 931 *mon, CFB* 10 *-clommum.* The *o* forms are 'archaic for the tenth century' (Campbell, p. 168). In *Oros.*, both *a* and *o* appear, with *o* proportionately more common overall than in the A text of *Brb.* Agreements and contrasts in detail are as follows: *Brb* 89 *from, Oros. from* (frequent; *fram* is rare); *Brb* 21 *ondlongne, Oros. ondlong* 3x (*andlang, ondlang* 1x each); *Brb* 25 *hondplegan, Oros. hond*(-) 5x (but *a* 18x in this element); *Brb* 3 *-langne, Oros.* (-)*lang*(-) 7x (but *o* predominates); *Brb* 26 *gebland,* 45 *blanden-, Oros. snawgebland* (100/10); *Brb* 9, 27, 56, 59, 66 (-)*land*(-), *Oros. land* (frequent, though *o* is slightly commoner in this element); *Brb* 33 *-manna, Oros. man*(*n*-) 15x (but *o* predominates heavily, occurring 464x). *Brb* 15 *condel,* 6 *hamora,* 8, 29, 49 *camp-* and 72 *wlance* are words unrepresented in *Oros.*; Bately, p. xl; Cosijn, I, § 5. Note Bately's observation that in *Oros.* 'there is a tendency for *o* to be used in words of frequent occurrence and *a* in less common

words'; but no such pattern appears in *Brb*. I have not attempted a complete survey of the verse for comparable forms, but of the words and elements with *o* in *Brb*, *from* is more numerous than *fram* in the Junius Manuscript poems, the Exeter Book poems, and *Metres of Boethius*; *condel*(-) with *o* is the only form in the Exeter Book poems (9x), and in *Metres of Boethius* (1x: 13.57 *merecondel*), while other poems have only forms with *a*; *ondlong*(-) with *o* in both elements occurs 2x in the Exeter Book (both instances in *Guthlac*, 1277 and 1287); and finally in the element *hond*(-), forms with *o* predominate in the Exeter Book poems (*a* occurs only 1x), and *Metres of Boethius* contains one form with *o* (29.60 *honda*) and no *a* forms.

9. 16 nom. sg. fem. *sio* with *īo*; 48 nom. pl. *heo* with *ēo*. Cf. 8, 51 *hi*; also *CFB* 11 *hie*, 946 *hie*. Both *sio* and *heo* are 'either archaic or dialectal' (Campbell, p. 168). In *Oros.*, *sio* is common (25x), but outnumbered by *seo* (80x); for the nom. pl. of the third-person pronoun, both *hi* and *hie* are common, *heo* rare (6x); Bately, pp. xliii-iv; Cosijn, I, §§ 38, 69. In Old English verse, the only long texts in which *sio* predominates over *seo* are *Beowulf* (*sio* 15x, *seo* 13x) and *Metres of Boethius* (*sio* 32x, *seo* 4x). The third person pronoun, nom. pl. *heo* seems to be a minority form in those longer poetic texts which contain any instances at all.

10. 5 *clufan* (also B, D), 6, 23 *heowan* (also B, D), 12 *feollan* (also B, C), 52 *plegodan* (also B), 53 *gewitan* (also B), 60 *letan* (also B), 70 *becoman* (also B), 71 *sohtan* (also B), 72 *ofercoman* (also B), 73 *begeatan* (also B) with *-an* in the past pl. of verbs. Cf. *CFB* 8 *wæran*, 946 *sealdan, woldan*. In *Oros.*, *-an* is fairly common but far outnumbered by *-on* (see category 7 above).

11. 6 *lafan*, 24 *-scearpan*, 43 *wundun*, with *-an* or *-un* for the normal *-um* of the dat. pl. of nouns and adjectives. Cf. 4, 48 *ecgum*, etc. with *-um* (10x); also *CFB* 9 *-mannum*, 10 *-clommum*. In *Oros.*, *-um* predominates heavily, though *-an* appears occasionally in both nouns (*beorgan, gifan*) and adjectives (*godan, miclan*), as does *-un* in nouns (*cierrun, mattucun, scipun*, etc.); Bately, p. xlv; Cosijn, I, § 114.

12. 9 *gehwæne* (also C, D), 17 *mænig*, 62 *þane*, with *æ* or *a* for Prm. Gmc. *a* in stressed syllables before nasals. Cf. 61 *þone*. For the *Oros.*, Bately's glossary records *þæne* in 17/17 (*þone* is the usual form), *mænig* 16/12 (beside forms with *o* or *a*).

Campbell divides these twelve features of the A text into two groups, the first (1-9) 'archaic and dialectal', the second (10-12) 'late'; but all, he concludes, derive from the archetype, and the first group from the original composition.

In reviewing these conclusions, the general value of non-structural forms as evidence of the language of earlier poetic texts which have not survived must be considered briefly. The best evidence in support of a form's origin in an archetype is its occurrence in two or more independent manuscript witnesses, though the possibility of chance coincidence must always be borne in mind. In weighing the likelihood of coincidence, the usual practices of the scribes who wrote the form in question must be considered, not only in the remainder of the text itself, but in the whole of their contributions to the manuscripts in question. A correspondence between two texts may safely be judged to reflect their archetype when the form is unusual in the context of both scribes' work. When it is atypical of only one scribe, the question is more difficult to decide; for if a scribe usually writes a particular form, his transmission of it from his exemplar and his own imposition of it against his exemplar may be impossible to distinguish, unless, of course, his exemplar is extant, which is not the case with any of our four *Brb* texts. This procedure will eliminate correspondences between texts which are plainly unreliable as evidence of the state of the archetype; but its chief drawback is that, if rigorously applied, it will, like the structural criterion for establishing authorial forms which I discussed earlier, yield only a small body of positive evidence. The reason for this is clear; it was a general tendency of Old English scribes to impose their own preferred spellings on the material they copied. The chances are slight of any distinctive early or original forms surviving this process of normalization, and the chances of correspondences in such forms between two or more texts are even slighter. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that correspondences between A, the text with the most non-standard forms, and other texts occur sporadically in only five of Campbell's twelve categories. The test of significant correspondences between texts cannot help us to assess the age, in terms of the poem's history, of most of the unusual forms in A. Other methods are called for; but the evidence from correspondences is worth looking at more closely.

Correspondences between A and other texts of *Brb* occur in categories 1, 3, 7, 10 and 12 of Campbell's list. In category 1, 18 *ageted* in A, C and D is a special case: a rare poetic word invariably spelt with non-WS *e* in all recorded instances;[35] so *ageted* is almost certain to have been the archetypal form in *Brb* 18. The agreement between A and B in 33 *nede* is possibly significant, though judgement is

hampered by the scarcity of comparable words with mutated *ēa* in the A scribe's work. Except in *Brb*, A's scribe usually writes late West Saxon *y* in this position, with *CFB* 9 *nyde* particularly conspicuous. B's scribe also writes *y*, though in annals 886 and 942 (*CFB* 9) he writes (-)*nede* (note also *e* in 894 -*leste* of *meteleste*). The same kind of difficulty of interpretation arises over the agreement of A and B in the *e* of *Brb* 66 *eiglande, eglande*, 'island'. A's scribe writes no further instances of this element, though the commonest spelling in the A *Chronicle* generally is *ig*, with *ieg, eig* and *eg* all rare.[36] B's scribe varies between *i* (8x) and *e* (6x).[37] There is no regular pattern of correspondence here between these two manuscripts of the *Chronicle*,[38] and consequently it is impossible to be at all sure that the archetype of *Brb* had *e*- in line 66. We should notice, however, D's corruption *þisne iglande*, which looks as if it may well have originated in a misreading of *þis eiglande*, as in A.

More positive conclusions are possible in other cases. In category 3 of Campbell's list, the agreement of A with C and D in 9 -*mægum*, and with D in 40 *mæga*, probably does bear witness to forms with *æ* in the archetype, for these are relatively isolated spellings: the C and D manuscripts of the *Chronicle* normally have *a* in comparable forms.[39] In category 7, the correspondence between A and C in 47 *þorftun* (cf. also 855 *sætun* in both manuscripts) is also very probably a reflection of the archetype: -*un* is neither scribe's preferred spelling in the past plural indicative of verbs, and in C the scribe seldom varies from -*on*. In category 10, the agreements between texts A and B in past plurals of verbs with -*an* are plainly unreliable, for -*an* is the commonest form in both the A and B scribes' work. The -*an* spellings in B may therefore be the scribe's own impositions, rather than forms retained from his exemplar and deriving from *X, as Campbell supposed. However, the D MS has -*an* only sporadically beside the usual -*on*,[40] and the overlap between the first three instances of -*an* in the A and D texts of *Brb* (56 *clufan*, 6, 23 *heowan*) is therefore conspicuous. These particular instances, at least, are probably archetype forms. Finally, the agreement in category 12 between A, C and D in 9 *gehwæne* with *æ* is difficult to interpret because there are no further instances of *(ge)hwæne* (or *hwane, hwone*) elsewhere in the *Chronicle* with which to compare it.

When correspondences of doubtful significance are eliminated, we are left with the following forms from Campbell's twelve categories which can be fairly confidently attributed to the archetype of *Brb*: 18 *ageted* (33 *nede* and 66 *eig-* are possibly to be included here); 8 -*mægum*, 40 *mæga*; 47 *þorftun*; 5 *clufan*, 6, 23 *heowan*. This short list can perhaps be supplemented slightly on the basis of textual

correspondences unnoticed by Campbell. In line 60, A has *bryttian*, B *bryttigean*, C *brittigan* and D the corruption *bryttinga*. The form *bryttigan*, approximating to the forms attested in B and C, probably underlies the error in D; and if so, this form, with Anglian -*ig*-,[41] is likely to derive from the archetype. A number of originally dialectal spellings in poetic words and elements in all four texts may, like *ageted* with *ē,* be confidently traced back to the archetype: 6 *heaþo*-, 48 *beadu*- (*beado*-), with Mercian *ea* by u-umlaut of earlier *æ*, 25 *mecum* with non-West Saxon *ē* for Prim. Gmc. *ǣ*, and 61 *saluwig*- with early or Anglian *a* (earlier *æ*) before *l*. Another probably significant point, not noted by Campbell, is that of A's six past plural indicative endings in -*un* (Campbell's category 7), three appear in B with -*on* (10 *crungon*, 22 *legdon*, 28 *lagon*); and one of A's -*on* forms reappears in B (24 *wyrndon*). This relationship between A and B seems to hold good for the *Chronicle* as a whole: of A's -*un* spellings elsewhere in the manuscript (there are some thirty-seven instances), about half appear in B with -*on*, the rarer form in that manuscript.[42] It would appear that the distribution of forms in these two manuscripts owes as much to their common origin as to the latest scribes, and it is therefore quite likely that the archetype of *Brb* had other instances of -*un* beside 47 *þorftun*.

Even with these additions, however, the number of forms (ignoring general Old English forms) which may be firmly attributed to the archetype on the basis of correspondences between the texts of *Brb* is small. For the reasons given earlier, this was predictable. But on what grounds was Campbell justified in tracing to the archetype (and in some cases to the original composition) forms which are confined to the A text?

Some discussion of the compilation of the *Chronicle* and the question of sources is necessary at this point. It was mentioned earlier that *Brb* forms one of a series of annals for the years 925-955, written in or after the latter year and then circulated to various centres where it was copied (sometimes with modifications) into existing texts of the *Chronicle* as a continuation (Campbell's 'Continuation 2, part 1'). We do not know from what source or sources the compiler drew his material, though plainly he had little to go on for the period in question: the meagreness, in contrast with earlier parts of the *Chronicle*, of the record for these years has often been noticed. It probably cannot be proved that the compiler was not himself the author of the two poems (*Brb* and *CFB*) that appear in his continuation; but it seems probable that he was not. *Brb* is a panegyric on an English victory at a particular time and place, and so was probably composed very shortly after the battle

was won, when the sense of its importance was still strong. It would be difficult to argue that it was composed as late as 955, long after both the victory and the death of the English leader Æþelstan. This is an important point; for if *Brb* was available as a source to the compiler of Continuation 2, part 1, this would help to explain the various phonological distinctions between *Brb* and the adjacent prose annals in A.

Campbell explained these distinctions quite differently. He regarded *Brb* as representing a revival of an older style of alliterative verse in the tenth century, occasioned by an important national victory in an age of 'antiquarian interest, and literary enthusiasm'. Scattered remarks in the Introduction to his edition emphasise this view: the poets of *Brb* and the other *Chronicle* poems in regular alliterative metre incorporated archaic and dialectal forms 'to adorn their work';[43] the *Brb* poet derived such forms from 'the early poems he so carefully studied';[44] his work was the product of 'eager study' of earlier poetry;[45] *Brb* and these other poems are 'careful in metre and style, full of evidence that the poets had meticulously studied earlier Old English verse';[46] and *Brb* in particular represents 'an artificial preservation, or rather, perhaps, resurrection of the old style'.[47] The fact that Campbell was writing before the application (in the fifties) of oral-formulaic theory to Old English verse probably has little bearing on his views on *Brb*: Campbell was aware of the existence of traditional poetic collocations in *Brb*, for he lists those verses in the poem which are found elsewhere in Old English poetry in the same or similar form.[48] The oral-formulaic theory (and its more recent adaptation to account for demonstrably formulaic composition by poets who seem to have been literate) is not a direct challenge to Campbell, the essence of whose view of the *Brb* poet is that he was a conscious archaiser, reviving a moribund poetic tradition on the basis of a scholarly study of older poetry in manuscript form. One is forcefully reminded of W. P. Ker's condemnation of *Brb* as 'academic laureate work'.[49] Composition along the lines envisaged by Campbell might well be expected to result in verse distinguished only by its technical correctness and archaic flavour.

A more direct challenge to Campbell's theory is posed by Kenneth Sisam's idea of 'a general Old English poetic dialect, artificial, archaic, and perhaps mixed in its vocabulary, conservative in inflexions that affect the verse-structure, and indifferent to non-structural irregularities, which were perhaps tolerated as part of the colouring of the language of verse'.[50] The non-structural 'archaic and dialectal' phonological forms of the A text of *Brb* might, according to this theory, be explained as normal 'colouring' introduced by a poet working in a thriving tradition, rather than as signs of revivalism. Sisam's theory has been eagerly adopted by

editors of Old English poems in order to explain the majority of those apparently archaic or non-West Saxon forms which crop up occasionally in most of our surviving Old English verse texts, and only recently have there been signs that scholarly faith in the idea is beginning to crumble. The charge, recently levelled by David Dumville, that it has been exploited by editors as a 'soft option' seems just.[51] Another relevant and related comment of Dumville's is that an Old English poet (Dumville is writing specifically of the *Beowulf* poet), though he may well have made use of stylistic elements such as syntax and vocabulary which would have been considered inappropriate or archaic in prose, could not have 'ignored the realities of his language's sound-system'.[52] The implication of this remark seems to be that the phonological forms Old English poets used were probably strictly contemporary ones.

This raises questions about the degree to which the forms in Campbell's list are genuinely archaic and dialectal. Is it possible that these forms are in fact contemporary with a poet working soon after 937? In order to answer this question, it seems that we must examine Campbell's forms against the background of Old English in the first half of the tenth century. The choice of contemporary Old English texts for comparison is limited by the rather small number of manuscripts which have been dated palaeographically to this particular period; but there are two extensive prose manuscripts, the phonology and morphology of which have been thoroughly investigated: the Lauderdale MS of the Old English translation of the *Orosius*, and the Tanner MS of the Old English version of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*. Both of these manuscripts are, of course, copies of works composed earlier – in the ninth century (though neither work has been dated very precisely). The case against Campbell would, I believe, be unfairly weighted if both these texts were ransacked for forms similar to those in Campbell's list, so I choose to compare only the *Orosius* with *Brb*. The relevant forms from *Oros.* were given above under each of Campbell's twelve categories. The validity of the comparison is based on a rough correspondence between the date of the *Brb* text in A and that of the Lauderdale *Orosius*. The kind of written English used by scribes in the first half of the tenth century when copying older material is not the ideal standard against which to measure forms which may originate in a new work composed in the same period; but perhaps the results of the comparison may justify the exercise. Campbell's theory was that the A text's non-standard forms are derived from a reading of poetic texts in manuscript. This idea will be reexamined here in the light of the comparisons made with forms in the extant poetry which were

included earlier, along with the *Orosius* material, in Campbell's twelve categories.

As it turns out, most of the phonological peculiarities of the A text of *Brb* to which Campbell drew attention are present in the *Oros*. In one category (3, *mægum*, *lægun* etc. with *æ*), the matching forms predominate in both texts. In five (1, i-mutation of *ēa* to *e*; 2, *gelp-* with *e*; 5, *-e* in the nom. and acc. pl. of ō-stem nouns; 9, *sio*, *heo* as a plural; and 11, *-an* or *-un* for inflectional *-um*), the non-standard forms are in a minority in both *Brb* and the *Orosius*. In three others (7, *-un* in the past pl. of verbs; 10, *-an* in the past pl. of verbs; and 12, *æ* in *mænig*), minority forms occurring in both texts are somewhat more frequent proportionately in *Brb* than in the *Orosius*. It is difficult to summarize the situation in category 8 (*o/a* before a nasal): there are few correspondences in detail; and although both texts contain a mixture of forms, it is not the same kind of mixture. Only in categories 1 (i-mutation of *ea* to *e*), 4 (*gebeded* with *e* for *æ* the i-mutation of *ā*) and 6 (*giung-* with *iu*) is there no match between the two texts.

On the other hand, comparison of the forms in Campbell's list with those in Old English poetry yields a striking set of detailed correspondences with one text in particular, the Old English *Metres of Boethius*. Thus in category 1, *Brb* 33 *nede* matches the invariable *e* in this element in *Metres*; in category 2, *Brb* 44 *gelpan* matches four instances of *e* in this element (verb and noun) in *Metres* (beside *i* 4x, *y* 2x); in category 6, *Brb* 29, 55 *giung-* with *iu* matches the two instances of *iu* in *Metres* in this element (no other forms occur); in category 8, three of *Brb*'s *o* spellings (*from*, *condel*, *hond-*) represent the invariable or dominant form in the *Metres*; and finally in category 9, *Brb*'s *sio* matches the preponderant *sio* (as opposed to *seo*) in the *Metres*.

The main difference between *Brb*'s relationship with the *Orosius* and that with the *Metres* is that the matching forms tend to predominate in the latter text whereas they are mostly minority forms in the *Oros*. This makes the general level of phonological correspondence with the *Metres* the more striking; for if the non-standard forms in the A text of *Brb* are to be explained as a result of the poet's reading of manuscripts (as Campbell supposed), the *Metres* looks more like the kind of text he might have been influenced by than the Lauderdale *Orosius*. But the significance of the correspondences is not at all easy to pin down. Like the *Orosius*, the *Metres* are in a mid-tenth-century manuscript;[53] but the most interesting point about this text for our discussion is that it is both an Alfredian translation and also a verse-text – two facts which complicate considerably the task of contextualizing the phonological peculiarities of the A text of *Brb*. Are the non-standard forms in *Brb* to

be explained somehow by reference to the fact that *Brb* is a poem, or on the basis of the degree to which these forms constitute a distinctive component in early West Saxon texts? A satisfactory answer to this question would seem to require a detailed comparison of non-standard forms in identifiably early West Saxon prose works with similar forms in the poetic corpus. Meanwhile, the following hypothesis is offered very tentatively. To begin with, it seems unlikely that we shall ever be able to say anything very definite about the dialect in which the poem was originally composed; but it may be possible to learn something of the written forms used when the poem was first committed to parchment. A scribe of any experience would probably not have attempted to reproduce the sounds of the words he heard if someone else dictated the poem to him. He would probably articulate the words in his own accent and write them accordingly, or follow whatever spelling tradition he was accustomed to use. I suggest that the scribe who first committed *Brb* to parchment was such an experienced copyist who had worked a good deal with texts (perhaps in both prose and verse) dating from the reign of Alfred or slightly later. His spelling was by no means fixed, but showed the special mixture of genuine dialectal early West Saxon with non-West Saxon forms which is such a striking feature of 'classic early West Saxon' prose texts, and an even more striking feature of the *Metres of Boethius*. The origins of this peculiar mixture of forms remains uncertain, but the Mercian assistance received by King Alfred in his programme of English translations has often been invoked to explain it.

Emphasis on West Saxon scribal traditions as the source of the phonological peculiarities of *Brb* might be defended by reference to the poet's evident interest in Æþelstan and his family as West Saxons. The poem celebrates the military achievements of a king of Wessex, presenting the victorious army as essentially a Wessex force (lines 20-24) with stalwart Mercian support (lines 24-28), not as an equal partnership of West Saxons and Mercians. Æþelstan and Eadmund are the leaders of the English force, both of them of royal West Saxon blood, *afaran Eadwardes* ('sons of Edward'), and it is to Wessex (59 *Wesseaxena land*) that they return in triumph after their victory (lines 57-59). It would not be surprising to find a scribe of West Saxon training involved at an early stage of the transmission of this particular poem.

In conclusion, it still seems to me probable that there was a stage in the poem's transmission corresponding to Campbell's *Y, though the case for it does not seem as strong as he maintained. I am much less certain than Campbell was that the archetype (*X) was corrupt, for reasons given earlier. I do not claim to have found

better answers than Campbell did to any of the bigger questions about the early linguistic character and composition of *Brb*, though it does seem possible to defend alternatives to some of his views. The phonological differences between the A text of *Brb* and the prose annals in A which were written by the same scribe probably call for some explanation (I say 'probably' because the brevity of the prose annals means that these differences are not always clearly defined). Against Campbell's view of the poet as a literate archaizer, someone who consciously used old-fashioned forms culled from his reading of manuscripts of older poetry, I prefer to explain these differences on the basis of what I take to be the different origins of the poem and the prose annals, and of the previous experience of the first scribe of *Brb*. Many of the non-standard forms we find in the A-text of *Brb* belong within a recognizable tradition exemplified by 'classic early West Saxon' texts in both prose and verse; but the closest affinities are with the poetic *Metres of Boethius*, a work by Alfred himself and preserved in a roughly contemporary manuscript.

There is plenty of work still to be done on the early textual history and language of *The Battle of Brunanburh*, not just in the area covered by this paper. There are other aspects of the poem's early transmission which remain unexplained. For example, why is the A text of *Brb* so corrupt, despite its very short period of transmission? Some of its corruptions, notably 13 *secgas hwate* for *secga swate*, 35 *cnearen* for *cnear on*, 49 *culbodgehnades* for *cumbolgehnastes*, and 56 7 *eft hira land* for *eft ira* (C, D *yra*) *land*) are highly distinctive. None of them looks to me like a copying error. They rather suggest the sort of mangling of words which might result when a scribe tries to write a partly unfamiliar version of his own language to dictation. As the three later texts of *Brb* have escaped this distortion, it must have been suffered by some version between the archetype and the A text (or by the A text itself). But what part could recitation of the poem have played in transmission once the continuation of the Chronicle which included *Brb* had been compiled and disseminated? This is just one of my own list of unsolved problems about the early transmission of *The Battle of Brunanburh*.

NOTES

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, references are to the edited text in Alistair Campbell (ed.), *The Battle of Brunanburh* (London, 1938), hereafter cited as Campbell.

[2] The original meaning of *Brunanburh* was probably either 'the fortification of *Brūna*' (a personal name; *Brūne* may alternatively have been the nominative form), or 'the fortification by the river *Brūna*' (or *Brūne*)'; see Campbell, p. 61.

[3] Ibid., pp. 62-63; P. R. Orton, '*The Battle of Brunanburh*, 40b-44a: Constantine's Bereavement', *Peritia* 4 (1985), 243-50, esp. 249.

[4] See note 1 above.

[5] For descriptions of the MSS, see N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 57-59, 249-55. A fifth MS, British Library, Cotton Otho B.xi, which contained a copy of the *Chronicle* made during the first half of the eleventh century, was badly damaged in the Cotton fire of 1731, with complete loss of the text of *Brb*; but a copy of this MS, made in the sixteenth century by Laurence Nowell, survives as British Library, Additional MS. 43703. Campbell skilfully reconstructed the text of *Brb* in Otho B.xi partly from this transcript, partly from Lambarde's copy of it (made before Nowell revised some details of his original transcript in accordance with texts B, C and D), and partly from Wheloc's edition of 1643, which was based chiefly on the MS; see Campbell, pp. 133-44. But Otho B.xi was, according to Campbell, a direct copy of A, and so has no independent value for establishing the text of the poem.

[6] Campbell, pp. 1-15.

[7] Campbell, p. 8.

[8] Campbell, p. 8 and notes to lines 12, 32 and 41 on pp. 98-102, 108 and 111.

[9] A minor and probably independent peculiarity of A is the *-a* of *norþerna*, perhaps, as Campbell suggests, a slip for the *-e* of the normal nominative singular masculine form of the adjective, made under the influence of final *-a* of *guma*.

[10] The poem is quoted from Kenneth R. Brooks (ed.), *Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles* (Oxford, 1961).

[11] See Campbell, p. 120, note to line 71; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959; rep. 1968), § 641.

[12] See further below, pp. 18-19.

[13] All metrical analyses in this paper follow the system of classification and notation used in A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf* (rev. ed., Oxford, 1967).

[14] Bliss, p. 126.

[15] Bliss, p. 126.

[16] It is in any case difficult, from a general point of view, to see the A text as having the specially close connection with the archetype that Campbell's description of the poem's transmission implies: although A is the earliest text of the four, the number of corruptions it contains shows that it has suffered greatly in transmission – far more than either B or C, both of which were written much later.

[17] It is worth recalling, in view of recent considerations of this passage and its problems (see Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 119), that Campbell argued strongly for placing no trust in *dynede*, 'resounded', the reading in MS. Otho B.xi. As Otho is based on A, *dynede* has no authority for establishing the archetypal form (whatever its interest as a conjecture by an Anglo-Saxon scribe on the basis of a known exemplar form, in this case A's *dænnede*). Furthermore, as Campbell notes, *dynede* 'does not satisfactorily fulfil metrical requirements'. But some recent commentators on these lines have found the meaning of *dynede* ('resounded') so appropriate in the general context that they have tried to project this meaning back on to one or several of the forms attested in A, B, C or D, in spite of the fact that there is no independent reason for associating this meaning with any of them. To decide on the basis of a plainly corrupt reading what the meaning of its archetypal antecedent must have been before establishing its Old English form is obviously an unreliable procedure.

[18] Campbell, p. 102.

[19] Assuming that *flotan* is (or ought to be) a genitive, parallel in case with the genitive plural *Scotta*, both these genitives may be dependent either on 31 *unrim* (giving '. . . a countless number of the hostile force, of *flotan* and Scots') or on *herges* ('. . . a countless number of the hostile force of *flotan* and Scots'). The difference between these two interpretations may be reflected in the edited text of the poem (as in my two translations) only by the presence or absence of a comma after *herges*. Campbell includes the comma, reflecting a preference for the genitives' dependence on *unrim*, and for the typically poetic device of variation which this choice involves. I see no good reason to prefer either interpretation to the other, though I translate above as if the dependence is on *herges*.

[20] E. V. K. Dobbie (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, VI (New York, 1942), p. 148.

[21] See note 3 above.

[22] See Ashley Crandell Amos, *Linguistic Means of Determining the Dates of Old English Literary Texts* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980).

[23] See Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 363.

[24] See John Collins Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, revised ed. (New Haven, 1966), pp. 235-36.

[25] Campbell, pp. 18-19.

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[26] *Beowulf* 104b, 995b, 998b, 1136a, 1187a,1459b, 1782b, 1918a, 2757b, 2894a, 3037b.

[27] In15b, the word *Godes* is resolved and so counts as a single syllable.

[28] Fr. Klaeber (ed.), *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd ed. (Boston, 1950), p. 276.

[29] W. P. Lehmann, 'Post-consonantal *l m n r* and metrical practice in *Beowulf*', in Allan H. Orrick (ed.), *Nordica et Anglica. Studies in Honor of Stefán Einarsson* (The Hague and Paris, 1968), pp. 148-67.

[30] Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, pp. 41, 127.

[31] A valuable discussion of the possibility of phonological archaisms in Old English poetic language with particular reference to parasiting is David N. Dumville, '"Beowulf" and the Celtic World: the Uses of Evidence', *Traditio* 37 (1981), 109-60.

[32] Campbell, Appendix VI, pp. 167-68.

[33] The *Orosius* translation is cited from Janet Bately (ed.), *The Old English Orosius*, Early English Text Society, ss 6 (Oxford, 1980). Reference is also made to P. J. Cosijn, *Altwestsächsische Grammatik*, 2 vols. (Hague, 1883-86), cited by volume and paragraph.

[34] Charles Plummer (ed.), *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel, with Supplementary Extracts from the Others. A Revised Text on the Basis of an Edition by John Earle* (2 vols., Oxford 1892-9; rev. by Dorothy Whitelock, 1952). References to the B, C and D texts of the Chronicle are based partly on Campbell's accounts of the text of *Brb* in these MSS and partly on my own examination of the manuscripts.

[35] *agetan* (*Andreas* 1143, *Fortunes of Men* 16), *agette* (*Riddle* 83.7).

[36] 873 *Tureces iege*, 878 *æþeling(g)a eig(g)e* 2x (all by the first scribe of the MS), 975 (*Death of Edgar* 37) *egbuendra* (fifth scribe).

[37] The instances of *e* are 716 *beardan ege*, 832 *sceapege*, 873 *turkes ege*, 895 *meres eg*, 973 (*Coronation of Edgar* 4), 975 (*Death of Edgar* 37) *egbuend*(-).

[38] Both texts' *eg-* in *Death of Edgar* 37 probably reflects the archetype of that poem.

[39] C, D 755 *lagon, magas*, 755, 823 *magum*. In *CFB* 21, where A has *maga*, C substitutes *mecga*, 'of men', and D, *mægþa*, 'of peoples'.

[40] 729 *æteowdan*, 794 *adruncan*, 797 *astungan*, 851, 870 *naman*, 866 *wurðan*, 894 *woldan*, *foran*, 897 *timbredan*, *oðreowan*, 910 *forforan*, 918 *dorstan*, *bestælon* corrected from -*an*.

[41] Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, § 757.

[42] Instances, in A's orthography, are 519 *onfengun*, 851 *gefengun*, 661 *forþferdun*, 755 *gehierdun*, 867 *hæfdun*, 690 2x, 718, 755 6x, 855, 867, 871, 878 *wærun*.

[43] Campbell, p. 12.

[44] Ibid., p. 14.

[45] Ibid., p. 35.

[46] Ibid., p. 38.

[47] Loc. cit.

[48] Campbell, pp. 38-40.

[49] Quoted by Campbell, p. 164.

[50] Kenneth Sisam, *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), p. 138.

[51] Dumville, '"Beowulf" and the Celtic World', pp. 129, 139.

[52] Ibid., p. 129.

[53] MS BL, Cotton Otho A. vi; see Ker, *Catalogue*, No. 167.