

Leeds Studies in English

Article:

Christine Fell, 'Old English Beor', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 8 (1975), 76–95

Permanent URL:

https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=121493&silos_library=GEN01



Leeds Studies in English
School of English
University of Leeds
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>

OLD ENGLISH BEOR

By CHRISTINE E. FELL

Four of the Old English words for alcoholic drinks¹ appear to have survived into modern English with only slight changes of pronunciation and orthography. OE *beor*, *ealu*, *medu* and *win* seem to be immediately recognizable as the etymons of modern English 'beer', 'ale', 'mead' and 'wine'. In English today 'mead' and 'wine' are used of two discrete drinks; 'beer' and 'ale' are used more or less interchangeably of a third drink. A number of writers from the sixteenth century onwards have drawn a technical distinction between 'ale' and 'beer', reserving the word 'beer' for a malt-based liquor to which hops have been added, and using the word 'ale' of the unhopped variety. Andrew Boorde for example distinguished carefully between the two: "Ale is made of malte and water; and they the which do put any other thyng to ale then is rehersed, except yest, barme, or godesgood, doth sofystical theyr ale. Ale for an Englysshe man is a naturall drynke Bere is made of malte, of hoppes and water: it is a naturall drynke for a Dutche man. And now of late dayes it is moche vsed in Englande to the detryment of many Englysshe men".² Nevertheless this distinction has never really penetrated common usage, and the words 'beer' and 'ale' are mostly used without technical discrimination of meaning. A difference that lingers in the connotative value is reflected in the way poets use 'ale' as the more evocative of the two terms. Autolykus claimed that "a quart of ale is a dish for a king", Milton (*L'Allegro*) savoured "the spicy nut-brown ale" and Chesterton (*The Rolling English Road*) remembered "When you and I went down the lane with ale-mugs in our hands / The night we went to Glastonbury by way of Goodwin Sands". A survey of the word 'ale' and its compounds in *The English Dialect Dictionary*, *The Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* and in drinking songs indicates that in regional speech it has always been the more popular word of the two. More recently we might note that The Campaign for the Preservation of Real Ale did not choose to call itself The Campaign for the Preservation of Real Beer.

But, emotive distinctions apart, 'beer' and 'ale' in modern English both mean a malt-based alcoholic drink, and it is therefore commonly assumed that they had the same meaning in OE. In Bosworth-Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* we find the word *beor* translated as 'beer' with the comment: "Beer, made from malted barley, was the favourite drink of the Anglo-Saxons". This is not corrected in Toller's *Supplement* or Campbell's *Addenda*. After a twenty-line entry in the *Dictionary* where almost all known references to *beor* are used to support the translation 'beer', there is a further five-line entry

pointing out that *beor* carried as a secondary meaning "a beverage made of honey and water". The evidence here is restricted to the glosses where OE *beor* translates Latin *ydromellum*. This usage obviously did not seem sufficiently significant to Bosworth, Toller, or Campbell for them to probe it further. A fairly recent publication with a section on the drink of the Anglo-Saxons is by Wilfrid Bonser.³ His opening sentence on the subject of *beor* is virtually a paraphrase of Bosworth-Toller: "But the favourite drink then was beer (*beor*) which occurs in written records from *Beowulf* onwards". The evidence for this statement is neither offered nor investigated.

When translating OE into modern English we are normally wary of the etymological fallacy, avoiding the translation of *wif* as 'wife' or of *eorl* as 'earl'. But there are undoubtedly very many occasions where we have not been wary enough, where an OE word is still regularly translated by its modern form rather than by a word that accurately reflects its semantic change. At present I am concerned with only one instance of this. If we examine the evidence for the Bosworth-Toller primary definition, it becomes obvious that when *beor* occurs in OE we have no data whatever in support of the translation 'beer'.

The origin of the word *beor* is obscure. It has cognates in all the West Germanic languages, but not in Gothic, not even Crimean Gothic. The one Biblical reference where we might have expected it in Gothic, where for example the Anglo-Saxon gospel (Luke i. 15) tells us that John the Baptist drank neither *win ne beor*, the Gothic word used is *leipu*. There has been some dispute about the word *bjórr* in North Germanic. F. Kluge⁴ thought it a loan word into Norse from OE, but offers no firm evidence for this theory, and though the opinion that ON *bjórr* may be of foreign origin is found in Cleasby-Vigfusson's *Icelandic Dictionary*, and Kluge's theory is mentioned by Jan de Vries,⁵ the word is fully established by itself and in compounds early in Norse poetry, both scaldic and Eddic. Basically two different etymologies have been put forward, though with varying refinements. One links the words 'beer' and 'barley': "Das wort kann aus **beura-* oder **beuza-* entstanden sein, und in beiden Fällen zu **bewwu* 'gerste' (vgl. *bygg*) gehören".⁶ The other links 'beer' with monastic Latin *biber* 'a drink',⁷ an etymology which would satisfactorily explain the absence of a cognate in Gothic. The uncertainty about the origin of the word 'beer' must prompt the question whether an automatic assumption that the meaning of 'beer' and all its cognates is and was 'a drink made from barley' has not affected the conclusion of those philologists who pursue an etymological link.

In order to establish the meaning and connotations of OE *beor* it is necessary to compare the references to *beor*, *ealu*, *medu* and *win*, to look at the type of compounds formed on them, and to see if distinctions can be drawn between the kinds of written material in which they are used. An analysis of the various compounds in Bosworth-Toller (including *Supplement* and *Addenda*) provides the following statistics. There are only ten compounds based on the word *beor*, seventeen on *ealu* and seventeen on *medu*. In contrast there are fifty on *win*. These numbers are necessarily approximations excluding

additions provided by orthographic variants and emendations. The compounds can be roughly divided into two types, functional and emotive. The functional compounds include such examples as *wingearð* and *winbelg*, where any emotional overtones are imperceptible. The emotive compounds of much more frequent occurrence, familiar to all readers of OE poetry, are used less to define the referent with precision than to recall a mood, usually a mood of nostalgia. When the poet of *Beowulf* calls Heorot a *medoheal* this appears to be partially functional in that the word does describe a hall where mead may well be provided. When on the other hand he calls the path leading to Heorot a *medostig*, he is describing, not a function of the path, but the anticipations of the people travelling on it. In isolated instances it may be impracticable to draw distinctions between the two types of usage. A word like *ealuwage* could obviously be included under either heading. But from a general survey of these compounds it emerges that they noticeably fall into distinct groups, and this grouping is informative as the accompanying table (p. 79) shows. Almost all the compounds on *medu* fall into the group that I distinguish as emotive, and the contexts in which *medu* compounds occur are almost all the heightened contexts of poetry, not the practical ones of law or charter. The poet of *The Wanderer* expresses the sense of loss and longing in the search for "þone þe in meoduhealle . . . mec freondleas[n]e frefran wolde" ⁸ (27-8). *Beowulf* is full of examples, from Scyld's triumph over his enemies summarised as *medosetla ofteah* ⁹ (5) to Beowulf's equally triumphant return from Grendel's mere:

modig on gemonge meodowongas træð (1643).

The poet of *The Seafarer* expressing isolation in terms of the company of birds replacing that of men, says that entertainment consisted of:

huilpan sweg fore hleahtor wera
mæw singende fore medodrince (21-2).

The comparison works on a strictly aural basis with the sound of the birds contrasting with the sounds of conviviality, but *medodrince* breaks the pattern, unless we hear it as the sound of revelry by night, rather than read it as a word for drink.

There is only one *medu* compound that can be singled out as not of this type and not occurring in poetic contexts. This is *meddrosna* 'dregs of mead', found once only in a medical text (see below p. 85). *Win*, on the other hand, which among these four words has by far the greatest number of compounds, is found more often in functional than in emotive contexts. The great range of compounds must stem partly from the exigencies of translation, for there is a fair amount of vineyard terminology in the Bible, and of Biblical translation and commentary in OE. But we also know of vine-cultivation in Anglo-Saxon England, and thirty-five of the fifty compounds are functional and descriptive, such as *winrepan*, *wingetred*, *wingearðseax*, and so

Compounds on *beor*, *ealu*, *medu* and *win*
 (Compounds that are unmistakably functional are in italics)

<i>beorbyden</i>	æfterealu	<i>meddrosna</i>	<i>æppelwin</i>	winhate
<i>beordræste</i>	brydealu	meduærn	<i>mæssewin</i>	winhorn
beorhyrde	ealobenc	medubenc	winærn	winhus
beorscealc	<i>ealuclýfe</i>	meduburh	<i>winbeam</i>	winian
beorscipe/ gebeorscipe	<i>ealofæt</i>	medudream	<i>winbelg</i>	winland
beorsele	<i>ealahus</i>	medudrenc	<i>winbeger</i>	winleaf
beorsetl	<i>ealugafol</i>	medudrinc	<i>winberige</i>	winlic
beortun	ealugal	medufull	<i>winboh</i>	winreced
beorpegu	ealugalness	medugal	winbrytta	winreafetian
gebeor	<i>ealogeweorc</i>	meduheall	winburh	winrepan
	<i>ealumalt</i>	medurædenn	<i>winbyrele</i>	winsæd
	ealuscop	meduscenc	<i>winclyster</i>	winsæl/sele
	ealuscerwen	meduscerwen	<i>wincolc</i>	winsester
	<i>ealebetun</i>	meduseld	<i>wincynn</i>	wintæppere
	ealowæge	medusetl	windrenc	wintiber
	ealowosa	medustig	windruncen	wintreow
	<i>ealaðwyr</i> t	meduwang	windrync	wintreowig
		meduwerig	<i>winfæt</i>	wintrog
			wingal	wintunne
			<i>wingearð</i>	wintwig
			<i>wingearðboh</i>	winpegu
			<i>wingearðhocgas</i>	winwringe
			<i>wingearðhring</i>	winwyrçend
			<i>wingearðseax</i>	
			<i>wingearðwealh</i>	
			wingemang	
			<i>wingetred</i>	

on. When we examine the fifteen that might be classed as emotive, such as *winærn* or *winbrytta*, compounds that look on the surface exactly analogous to *meduheall* or *sincbrytta*, we find in fact that these words, unlike the compounds on *medu*, are just as likely to turn up in practical as in poetic material, *Winærn* glosses *taberna* in the Corpus glossary and in the related Epinal and Erfurt glossaries. *Winbrytta* occurs as a gloss on *tabernarius*.¹⁰

This preliminary analysis should elucidate the types of compound on the remaining two words, *beor* and *ealu*. *Ealu* and its earlier form *ealað*, are found regularly in practical and functional compounds. It is noteworthy too, that though *ealu* does occur in compounds indicating festivity, it clearly does not carry the emotional load that *medu* does. This is one instance where the etymological derivatives can point to the semantic contrast of the original. An *ealahus* is an 'ale-house', whereas a *meduheall* is a 'mead-hall'. That the translation 'ale-house' correctly conveys the tone of *ealahus* is borne out by the number and kind of references to these places in the laws. Æthelred's third code of laws, for example, specifies the fine to be paid for a brawl in an *ealahus*.¹¹ From words such as *ealugeweorc*, *ealugafol* and *ealumalt* it is clear that we have a range of terms indicating the practical aspects of brewing, similar to those for wine-making given us by the *win* compounds. There are no compounds on *medu* that serve such a purpose. It is tempting to suppose that the ubiquity of poetic mead like that of poetic gold is largely a nostalgic fiction of the Anglo-Saxons, since prevalence of the one receives as little support from linguistic evidence as prevalence of the other does from archæology. It is particularly noticeable in the elegies that only compounds on *medu* and *win* are found, none at all on *ealu* or *beor*. Poets of *The Seafarer*, *The Wanderer*, *The Ruin* and *The Husband's Message* recall *meduburh*, *meduheall*, *medudream* and *winsæl*, not to mention *wlonc* and *wingal* inhabitants, but never a *beorsele* or *ealuwæge*. Similarly in the heroic poetry, it is unthinkable that the men at Maldon should have been urged on to their duty by a reference to what they said over the ale-cups rather than what they *æt meodo spræcon* (212); and Hnæf's men who at Finnsburg so well repaid the bright mead would have lost in stature had their payment been only for *ealu*. In short, I suspect that the strongly emotive terminology of *medu* is very closely linked with the loyalties and patterns of the heroic code, a code which looks much more to an ideal past than an actual present, and in which the relationship between loyalty and the provision of drink is neatly underlined by *Wealhðeow*:

Pegnas syndon geþwære, þeod ealgearo,
druncne dryhtguman
(*Beowulf*, 1230-31).

It is also significant in this connection to note two prose uses of the word *medu*. In the Anglo-Saxon charters there are frequent references to the payment of food-rents, and to the nature of the goods in which rent was paid. Thus ale, honey and malt are specified for this purpose in various documents. But the references to *medu* are

of a quite different kind. No-one is required actually to deliver *medu*, but money is provided to *mede* (*ad medonem*)¹² for drinking on a specific feast day. This is much more like a formulaic than an accurately descriptive statement, the money being provided for the supply of festive drink stronger than the customary *ealu*, rather than specifically for 'mead'.

In the well-known description of the Este which Wulfstan gave to King Alfred incorporated into Alfred's translation of Orosius, Wulfstan reports that their kings and lords drink *myran meolc*, the poor and the slaves drink *medo*. He then moves on to the unrelated subject of the frequent fighting among them. He returns to the subject of drink, as if in answer to a horrified question about the absence of ale, and emphasises with a double negative that "ne bið þær nænig ealo gebrowen mid Estum, ac þær bið medo genoh".¹³ In a previous statement Wulfstan commented on the quantity of honey available among the Este, *swyðe mycel hunig*, and it is likely that the availability of honey and consequently mead, is mentioned because it is surprising and unlike the English situation. Otherwise there would be no point in drawing attention to it.

Finally I deal with the fourth word *beor* and with much less material to work from than for any of the other three. Of the nine compounds two, *beorbyden* and *beordraste* are clearly functional, the others are all rather vague terms indicating conviviality in general. *Beorscipe*, *beorþegu* and *beorsele* are found in poetry and prose in general descriptions of feasting and drinking. On the one hand there is no brewing terminology linked with *beor* as it is with *ealu* and on the other no parallel emerges with the emotional range of the *medu* compounds. Compared with the fairly clear implications of the *ealu*, *medu* and *win* lists of compounds, *beor* emerges as colourless and unsatisfactory.

The comparative evidence from ON is instructive here. Norse has only a few compounds on *bjórr* which is used with comparative rarity except in verse. There are innumerable compounds on ON *öl* and *vin* as there are on OE *ealu* and *win*, and these include a whole range of the practical type, with terminology for the skills and implements of brewing and wine-making. There are comparatively few compounds on *mjóðr*, one of them, *mjóðrann* from *Atlaqviða*, noticeably of the emotive type, the others less interesting such as *mjóðdrykkja*. They occur largely either in the poems of the Edda or in the *Fornmanna sögur*, and my suggestion that mead for both Anglo-Saxon and Viking was an archaic and rare drink, replaced, on the whole, in their own times by malt-based liquor, is borne out by the fact that it is the drink most commonly associated with revelries in Valhalla. Dictionaries regularly quote *Alvíssmál*, as if it were evidence, to show that *öl* and *bjórr* were regarded as synonyms in ON. The actual statement of the poem is:

Öl heitir með mönnum, enn með ásom biórr,
 kalla veig vanir,
 hreinalög iótnar, enn í helio miðð,
 kalla sumbl Suttungs synir.¹⁴

It is absurd to assume that the poet of *Alvíssmál* is offering us a scholarly piece of semantic exposition. This verse is one of a series in which the poet explores as many different ways of naming an object as there are peoples naming it. Since the peoples in question, men, gods, giants etc. are naturally speakers of Old Norse, the poet is restricted to exploring varieties of usage in his own language. Certainly all the words he offers are words for drink, some more far-fetched than others, but unless we are prepared to believe that *öl*, *biórr* and *miðð* are all equally synonymous, we cannot pretend that the first two must be. If we are entitled to draw any conclusions from the link between people and word, it would be that in each stanza the word in common usage is attributed to the speech of 'men', and that *öl* therefore is the most usual word and drink of the three. One might tentatively suggest further that *biórr* being attributed to the gods was somewhat more rare, and that *miðð*, being drunk *í helio* was recognisably a drink of the past. But such conclusions are necessarily tenuous.

OE poetry which uses so many compounds on the four words might be expected to add to our understanding of what *beor* actually signified for its audience. Unfortunately the evidence supplied by the poets does not suggest that they took care to distinguish one drink from another. Like the poet of *Alvíssmál* they were more concerned with the formal demands of their poems than with accuracy. Perhaps, given an Anglo-Saxon poet's need to use both alliteration and the technique of variation, it is inevitable that he should sometimes seem to equate all four beverages. In *Beowulf* Unferð's aggression to the hero provokes the reply that Unferð has said a great deal *beore druncen* (531). In lines 1466-7 when *Beowulf* and Unferð are established on reasonably friendly terms, Unferð cannot remember "þæt he ær gespræc / wine druncen". There are other instances in the poem where *medu*, *ealu*, *beor* and *win* are used in a bewildering variety of compounds in rapid succession. Lines 480-84 of *Beowulf* are fairly typical:

Ful oft gebeotedon *beore* druncne
ofer ealowæge oretmæcgas
þæt hie in beorsele bidan woldon
Grendles gube mid gryrum ecga.
Bonne wæs þeos medoheal on morgentid

Heorot is both a *medoærn* and a *winærn*, the benches are *medobenc* and *ealobenc*. *Wealhþeow* æt *þære beorþege* pours out many a *medoful*.

The poet of *Beowulf* is not the only one who fails to make fine distinctions. The poet of *The Fates of Men* (Exeter Book) warns us against the fate of the drunkard, a man who is both *ealuwosa* and *winsæd*. He is moreover sitting on a *meodubenc*. The warning is followed by another. In the inspired version of Mackie (see n. 8),

Sum sceal on beore þurh byreles hond
meodugal mæcga (51-2)

becomes "Another shall, while at beer, become a man drunk with mead". In *Judith*¹⁵ the Assyrian leader Holofernes, himself *medugal* (26), drenched his followers *mid wine* (29). It was Holofernes however who collapsed *wine swa druncen* (67) and his followers who were struck down *medowerige* (229). I am not sure how far a similar situation exists in Norse poetry. Scaldic verse obviously utilises any word for drink as an interchangeable lexical item in kennings, Eddic verse does not have the need for variation to the same extent that OE poetry does. But certainly in *Þrymsqviða* we are told in one stanza that *öl* was served and in the next that *Þórr* consumed *sáld þriú miaðar*. The highly domesticated valkyries of *Eiríksmál* are instructed to wash the *biórker* and to serve *vín*.¹⁶ It is possible that the poet is making two disparate statements here, but it seems more likely that he is using the words *bjórr* and *vín* of the same drink, and switching the terminology to suit the alliteration.

In moving from the poetry to the prose where alliteration and the use of formulae make fewer demands, we can reasonably expect the claims of accuracy to reassert themselves. In the OE gloss on *Ælfric's Colloquy*¹⁷ a clear distinction is made between *win* and *ealu*, following *Ælfric's* distinction between *uinum* and *ceruisa*.

Hwæt drincst þu?
 Ealu gif ic hæbbe, oppe water gif ic næbbe ealu.
 Ne drincst þu win?
 Ic ne eom swa spedig þæt ic mæge bicgean me win; &
 win nys drenc cilda ne dysgra, ac ealdra & wisra.

In his homily *De Populo Israhel*¹⁸ *Ælfric* points out that when Moses struck the rock in the wilderness and caused a stream of water to gush from it, God, had he been so minded, could just as easily have caused a flow of *win* or what is more of *ealu*:

for þan ðe se ælmihtiga God, þeah ðe he eaðe mihte,
 nolde him win sendan on þam westene þa,
 ne furðan ealu, flowende of ðam stane.

One of the most explicit documents on the subject of drink is the early eleventh-century English translation of the *Rule*¹⁹ of *Chrodegang* who was Bishop of Metz 742-766.

7 gif se eard sy wynes wæstmære, sylle man dæghwamlice
 ælcum breðer fif pundas gewihte wines, gif þa unwedru
 his ne forwyrnað. Gif þonne se eard full win næbbe,
 sylle ma ælcum þreo pund wines 7 þreo pund ealað, 7
 warnien hi wyð druncen. Þær þonne þær win ne byð, wyte
 se bisceop oððe se þe under him ealdor byð, þæt hi
 hæbbon ealswa micel ealoð, swa hi wines sceoldon, þæt
 hi on þam frofar habban. 7 gif hwa on þam (win)landum
 for Godes lufon win wylle forgan, wite se ealdor þæt
 he hæbbe ealoð his rihtgemet. Gif þonne for folces
 synnum gesceote, swa hit oft gescyt, þæt unwæstmernys

on eard becymð, þæt ma ne mæge þæt drincgemett bringan forð, ne on wine, ne on beore, ne on mede, ne on ealoð, þonne smeage se ealdor hit georne on manifealde þing þæt hi drinc hæbbon; 7 nane ne murcnion, ac mid þancgunge 7 mid glædnysse underfon þæt man him þonne don mage, 7 gepenceon þæt Sanctus Iohannes Baptista ne dranc win ne medu, ne nan wiht þe him druncennys of come. Þær þær druncen byð, þær byð leahter 7 syn. Þæs we [g]eornlice biddað 7 myngyað þæt ure preostas syferlice lybbon. 7 for þam þe we ne magon on þisum dagum gelæran þæt hi win 7 beor ne drincon, we huru lærað 7 biddað þæt hi druncen forbugon, for þan ealle þa druncengeornan se apostol Paulus ascryað of Godes rice, buton hi mid rihtlicere dædbote gecyrran.

In comparing the OE and Latin texts of this document we find that as we might expect OE *win* always translates Latin *uinum*. *Ealu* translates *ceruisa* with equal regularity, as it did in *Ælfric's Colloquy*. Where the Latin has three words *uinum*, *sicera* and *ceruisa* OE has four, *win*, *beor*, *medu* and *ealoð*, indicating that *beor* and *ealu* are different drinks. In the passage about John the Baptist's abstinence from *uinum* and *sicera* these are translated by *win* and *medu*. In the final lament that one cannot in these degenerate days insist on abstinence from wine, the Latin only has *uinum*, the English translator adds *beor*: "Þæt hi win & beor ne drincon".

The implication that *beor* and *ealu* are distinct and separate drinks is borne out by a curious passage in the tenth-century BL MS Royal 12 D 17 which O. Cockayne²⁰ prints, with absolute fidelity to the original, in his *Leechdoms*. This passage gives us the startling information that "pund ealoð gewihð vi penegum mare þonne pund wætres. & l pund wines gewihð xv penegum mare þonne l pund wætres ond pund beores gewihð xxii penegum læsse þonne pund wætres". Cockayne evades some of the difficulties of this passage by treating, no doubt rightly, the word *pund* as a measure of capacity not weight, and translating: "a pint of ale weigheth six pennies more than a pint of water" etc. The translation of *pund* as 'pint' is supported by the English text of Chrodegang's Rule quoted above, where *punda* is used to translate Latin *libras*, a word which could refer either to weight or capacity. Nevertheless this translation does not resolve all the problems. Given the same measure of water and a sweet alcoholic drink, the alcohol could not weigh less than the water - and I adduce evidence below to show that *beor* was sweet. One way in which the passage as it stands might make sense is if it were treated as a kind of seller's chart or guide, rather than a descriptively accurate statement. Thus if asked for a *pund beores* one might measure out a quantity that weighed twenty two pennies less than an established weight or quantity of water. This would mean that whereas one would obtain a generous quantity of *ealu* or *win* by this method, one obtained only a minimal quantity of *beor*. This would imply that the potency of *beor* was so great that it was regarded as a short rather than a long drink. An alternative explanation would be that the scribe, who is copying a fairly long list of commodities weighing *læsse* or *mare*, wrote *læsse* in the wrong

place, and that *beor* in fact weighed twenty-two pennies more not less than the same quantity of water. This would make it the heaviest of the drinks cited, since ale weighed only six pennies more, and wine fifteen. The passage is undoubtedly obscure, yet whether it is accurate in its own terms, and misunderstood, or whether it is full of errors, it is quite clear that whoever wrote it down considered *ealu* and *beor* as separate drinks to be tabled and described separately. *Medu* is not mentioned here.

The manuscript in which this material is found is a medical miscellany, which Ker places mid-tenth century.²¹ It is full of references to the alcoholic drinks used in various remedies. The compilation is not directly translated from any known Greek or Latin source, though some of the cures listed are influenced by material in these languages known to the compiler. I have not analysed or listed the references to *win* in this manuscript, though they are very frequent. Since Greeks and Romans were wine-drinkers rather than ale-drinkers, the recommendation of wine in any remedy may stem from their prescriptions, whereas the recommendation of *ealu*, *beor* and *medu* is less likely to do so. The remedies in this manuscript contain two references only to *medu* and one to *meddrosna*. They contain ten references to *beor*, one to *beordræste*, and a contrasting ninety-three references to *ealu*. A later manuscript (BL MS Harley 585), containing similar material is assigned by Ker to the beginning of the eleventh century.²² It contains no references to *medu*, two to *beor*, one to *beordræste* and twenty-three to *ealu*. The prescriptions which include *ealu* contain instructions to *wyl in ealað, ofgeot mid ealo, do in eala, gnid on ealað, cnua on ealað* and *dryp ealo* on various combinations of herbs. The types of *ealu* singled out for mention are *wilisc ealað*,²³ *hluttur eala, god hluttur eala, strang hluttur eala, god ealu, god wilisc eala, hluttur eala wel gesweted, sur ealað, niwe ealað, eald ealað, sur hluttur ealu, awylled ealað, twibrowen ealað* and *niwe ealo ær þon hit asiwen sie*.

The remedies are for diseases ranging from affliction by *deofle . . . & ungemynde* to *wið þære geolwan adle*. Careful distinctions are sometimes drawn between the types of *ealu* to be used. In a cure for lung disease - *wið lungen adle* - the patient has to restrain himself from drinking sweet ale: "Healde hine georne wið geswet eala, drince hluttur eala". Not all cures are so discriminating, some offering a choice between ale and wine, some between *god hluttur eala* and *god wilisc eala*. The emphasis on *god* is frequent, and there are two references to *strang ealu*. One remedy observes that the better the quality of ale, the better the medicine: "Se drenc biþ swa selra swa þæt ealu selre bið".

It is evident from the frequency with which *ealu* in all its infinite variety is recommended, that ale was envisaged as being everywhere available, By contrast both *medu* and *beor* are recommended with the proviso "use if obtainable". One of the two references to *medu* is a recommendation to *wylle swa swiþre medo gif hebbe*. Further on, the same qualification is made with reference to *beor* and *win*: "do on beor swa on win swa on þeorfe meoluc gif þu para oþerra nawper næbbe. gif þu on wine wyrce oþpe on meolce geswet mid

hunige". This tells us two things about *beor*: that it was not necessarily easily obtainable, and that it was sweet. Since both wine and milk require a sweetening agent for this prescription but *beor* does not, the implication is that it was sweet enough already. Another prescription supports this: it recommends a bowl full of *leoht beor* or of *hluttur eala wel gesweted* or *gesweted win*. Again *win* and *ealu* require added sweetening but not *beor*.

In these two medical miscellanies *beor* has nothing like the range of adjectives qualifying *ealu*. It is characterised only as *leoht* or *strang* and *swiðe*. But we do learn one more thing about *beor* from this source. For a disease which Cockayne identifies as shingles, we are told that the patient "nane þinga *beor* ne drince, & gemetlice win & eala". Similarly a pregnant woman is warned that she must not *beor drince* nor drink anything else to excess: *ne druncen gedrince*. There are a number of references in the ecclesiastical laws to the penalties imposed on a woman who contrived an abortion *mid drynce oððe mid oðrum mislicum þingum*²⁴ and this warning in BL MS Royal indicates quite clearly that the drink to avoid in pregnancy was *beor*. This supports my earlier suggestion that *beor* was considered a more potent drink than ale or wine. Though Cockayne regularly translates *ealu* as 'ale' and *beor* as 'beer', to the compilers of these manuscripts they were two quite different drinks, *beor* being more sweet, more potent and more rare than *ealu*.

Charters sometimes include drinks among the food rents or tribute to be paid. *Ealu*, *wilisc ealu* and *hluttur ealu* are among the ones specified. Under the duties of the *gebur* in the *Rectitudines* it is said that: "On sumen landa *gebur* sceal syllan huniggafol, on suman metegafol, on suman ealugafol".²⁵ I know, however, of only one reference to tribute paid in *beor*, in a charter of 909 concerning land leased to Denewulf, bishop of Winchester: "þæt mon geselle twelf seoxtres *beoras* & twelf *geswettes wilisc ealoð* & twentig *ambra hluttur ealoð*".²⁶ It is hard to be certain about the Anglo-Saxon measures, but there is no doubt that an *amber* was a considerably larger quantity than a *sester*.²⁷ Both Welsh ale and *beor* therefore were being supplied in very much smaller quantities than ordinary *ealu*.

The Icelandic dictionaries of Cleasby-Vigfusson and Fritzner offer the translation 'beer' or *øl* for *bjórr*, though with some reservations. Yet the Norse evidence does not really point in this direction. ON has two common words for 'ale'; *øl* and *mungát*. The second of these is used for the stronger brews, as a number of references make clear: "var *øl* inn borit ok var þat it sterka *mungát*".²⁸ A choice of drinks, *mungát* or *mjöðr*, is occasionally recorded as at the splendid *jólaboð* given by Gizurr in *Sturlunga saga*: "Þar var *mjöðr* blandinn ok *mungát* heitt".²⁹ *Blanda* is the verb used regularly of *mjöðr*, *heita* of *øl* and *mungat*. An examination of the references to *bjórr* in the Eddic poems shows, significantly, that *blanda* is used of *bjórr* as of *mjöðr*. An indication of its potency and unknown qualities is provided by the contexts. In *Guðrúnargviða önnor* the drink that Grímildr offers Guðrún to induce forgetfulness is *bjórr*, (p. 228, stanza 23). It is a drink of

supernatural power, and the list of ingredients might have served as a recipe for the witches in *Macbeth*, but it seems to me significant that for a drink of power the word chosen is *bjórr*. Similarly in *Sigrðrifomál* the opening lines of stanza 5 link the noun *bjórr*, the verb *blanda* and the idea of supernatural power:

Biór færi ec þér brynþings apaldr,
magni blandinn oc megintíri.

The compound *bjórveig* is also of interest. *Veig* on its own means strong drink, and that the emphasis is on strength is indicated by the metaphorical use of *veig* to mean strength as such. In *Hymisqviða* Tyr's mother offers her son *biórveig*, and the same compound has been suggested for a corrupt reading in *Guðrúnarqviða Önnor*. In *Atlaqviða in Grœnlensca* messengers who reach Gunnar's hall reach also a place where *biórr* is *sváss*. 'Precious' is perhaps the nearest translation, and the word certainly suggests something other than common *öl*. Snorri similarly implies a fairly exotic context in his definition of *bjórsalr*: "Sa salr hin agati er æsir kallþv Brimis sal eða biorsal, þat var hall Priamvs konvngs".³⁰

Two references offer us something more precise by way of definition. A set of Latin-Old Norse glosses in Cod. 1812 4^{to} Gml. Kgl. Samling, a manuscript of Icelandic provenance from circa 1200 or earlier, equates Latin *mulsum* and ON *biórr*.³¹ We know *mulsum* to have been a drink made of honey and water of a type similar to mead. In OE glosses it sometimes is translated by *medu* (see n. 42). Cod. 1812 glosses Latin *medo* rightly by ON *miðþr*, reserving *biórr* for another sweet drink. *Ceruisia* for which the proper gloss would be *öl* is un glossed, though whether because the scribe did not know the word, or because he thought it too obvious to bother with must remain uncertain. The point is that he equated *biórr* with a honey-based drink, not a malt-based drink. The second reference is in *Elis saga ok Rosamundu*.³² Elis in his travels comes upon some men having a magnificent feast which includes a couple of peacocks and a swan and *mikinn pott fullan af biorblandoðu vini*. (A). This phrase is regularly and absurdly translated as "beer mixed with wine"³³ though it is hard to imagine the mentality that could contemplate such a drink with such a feast. A second manuscript (B) offers us the alternative *biór ok blaundodo vini* and a third (D) *mide blondudum med vyne*.

The saga was translated from a French Chanson de Geste by an abbot Robert who was almost certainly the same *bróðir Roðbert* who in 1226 translated *Tristrams saga* for the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonsson. He is a competent translator not given to absurdities, and the earliest manuscript of *Elis saga*, A, is from circa 1250 and therefore close to the author's copy. The French source *Elie de Saint Gille* reads, after the mention of peacock and swan:

Et II boucieus tous plains de vin et de claré.³⁴

Fortunately it is fairly easy to find out what claret meant at this period. Bartholomeus known as *anglicus* finished his work *de proprietatibus rerum* in the decade 1240-1250. He tells us: "Claretum ex vino et melle et speciebus aromaticis est confectum". He then describes the method of making it, concluding "unde a vino contrahit fortitudinem et acumen".³⁵ The translator of *Elis saga* evidently thought *bjórr* or *bjórblandat vín* an acceptable description of a highly spiced, sweetened and pungent wine. It would argue a remarkable degree of ignorance on his part if we insist that he thought of *claré* as a mixture of fermented grain and grape. We can perhaps conclude that the word *bjórr* was less common at a later period since the Icelandic scribe of the fifteenth century manuscript D substitutes mead for *bjórr*. But unlike modern scholars he does not substitute *öl*. It is also clear from a list of drinks in *Sigurðar saga þögla*³⁶ that *öl* and *bjórr* were regarded as different drinks, since they both appear on the list. Such lists are quite common in the sagas deriving from French romance and frequently the native words exist side by side with exotic loan words. In *Göngu-Hrólf's saga*, for example, *hinn dýrasta drykk* includes alongside the native *öl* "enskan mjóð með vildasta víni, píment ok klaret".³⁷

An earlier statement in *Göngu-Hrólf's saga* makes it clear that the mead was thought of as being brought from England, not as an English type of mead. This again suggests the comparative rarity of the drink. In the same way as the OE material indicated that though one could always get *ealu* it might be more difficult to get *medu* or *beor*, so the Scandinavian evidence demonstrates that whereas every farmhouse might brew its own *mungát*, there were fewer possibilities of obtaining *bjórr*. Both references to *bjórr* in *Sturlunga saga*³⁸ concern getting it home from the ships so obviously Iceland was importing it. A letter of 1298 printed in the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*³⁹ specifies that *Ragnidid huspræyia Knuzdotter* is to receive daily an allowance "biors eda af bæztu mungate er hæitiz j biscopsgarde ef bior er eighi till". Fritzner says that *bjórr* "i den sildigere Tid", by which he must mean the fourteenth century, means "udenlandsk indført Öl, forskjelligt fra öl, mungát". It is certainly clearly distinguished from *mungát* in a whole range of references in fourteenth century letters, but that it was an imported foreign beer is arguable.⁴⁰ It was not, for example, used to distinguish hopped beer from a brew without hops, as happened at a later date in England, for a document of 1355 (DN IV, 374) specifically contrasts *bjórr* and hopped ale. The requirements are: "tunnu biors eór tunnu með humla mungaát en bioren er ei til". Other letters include one from King Magnus in 1342 (DN I, 277) instructing the provost and canons of St Mary's church, Oslo, to celebrate the feast of Eirik, King and Martyr, with full honours. As an inducement he arranges for them to be supplied with "priar tunnur með goðom bior" annually on that day. In the regulations regarding provisions for the entertainment of the bishop of Bergen (DN VII, 98), c. 1322-3, the frequent references to *bjórr* and *mungát* show that where direct comparison of quantity is possible *bjórr* was supplied in smaller quantities than *mungát* though in larger quantities than *vín*: "Svarar þa hvar þeirra Thorer oc Arne þrimer tunnum biors, fiorom tunnum munngatz en sira Erlender tvæimer tunnum biors,

halftunnu viins . . .".

The ON evidence fully supports the OE evidence. *Bjórr* is not synonymous with *öl* or *mungát* any more than *beor* is with *ealu*. *Bjórr* in both the gloss and in *Elis saga* is linked with a honey drink not a malt drink. In the Edda the emphasis is on its potency and exotic flavour. In the DN material it is distinguished from both *mungát* and *humla mungát*; it is not always obtainable, but when it is it may be preferred to best quality *mungát* and is obviously a valued commodity.

In turning finally to the OE gloss material we find these conclusions substantiated. There are a variety of Latin words for alcoholic drinks, and to some extent a pattern of Latin-OE equations establishes itself. The Romans borrowed the word *sicera* from Hebrew via Greek, and when it appears in medieval Latin it normally carries the meaning of strong drink in general rather than any one particular variety. The regular OE gloss is "ælces kinnes gewring butan wine and wætere" which clearly derives from Isidore's "Sicera est omnis potio quæ extra vinum inebriare potest".⁴¹ Since it carries this comprehensive meaning, the fact that OE words for individual drinks sometimes translate *sicera* merely indicates that it covered this range of drink, not that it was equated with any one in particular. It clearly had a meaning almost as general as 'alcohol'.

The Latin loan-words *celea* and *ceruisa*, the first reputedly from Celtic and the second from Gallic, both mean a drink produced from grain. Isidore defines both of them in these terms, and the Anglo-Saxons, accepting what they read in Isidore, regularly gloss both words by *ealu*, apart from two translations of *ceruisa* by *swatan* (see n. 1). Significantly neither word is ever glossed by *beor*. *Medu* usually glosses its own Latinised form *medus*, sometimes *mulsum*.⁴² *Beor* also sometimes glosses *mulsum* as *bjórr* does in ON, but it is chiefly found as the regular gloss on Latin *ydromellum*. Repeated occurrences of the same gloss are not unduly significant since glosses tend to be copied one from another, and there is no point therefore in counting the frequency of usage. Variation from the regular pattern is more important. The tenth-century gloss⁴³ which links *beor* and *ofetes was* as alternative glosses for *ydromellum* is especially significant, as is the one in BL MS Cotton Cleopatra A III (assigned by Ker to the mid-tenth century) which offers for *ydromellum* the pair of glosses *beor* and *æppelwin*.⁴⁴ It is clear that *æppelwin* and probably *ofetes was* go back to Isidore's etymology: "Hydromelum, quod fiat ex aqua et malis Matianis".⁴⁵ *Æppelwin* translates this etymology. The use of *beor* in addition indicates that this word already existed to describe the same drink.

Here the contrasting evidence of the OHG glosses is important. These invariably follow Isidore's etymology in translating *ydromellum* by *apfeltranc*.⁴⁶ They do not, however, make the further link with *bior*. It is clear that in OHG any cognate to *ealu* had virtually died out (though its early existence is demonstrated by Old Saxon *alofat* 'ale-cup') and in OHG therefore the word *bior* is reserved for *ceruisa*.⁴⁷

In Germany therefore the word *bior* was used of the malt-based drink that was elsewhere called *ealu* or *ðl/mungát*. In neither Scandinavia nor England did this apply. The OE gloss evidence makes it clear that though there may be confusion between *beor* and *medu* (since both translate *mulsum*), there is never confusion between these two and *ealu*. Similarly the scribe of MS D of *Elis saga* substituted mead for *bior*. Since honey was the only form of sweetening available it is not improbable that the distinctions between a honey-based alcohol (*medu/mjððr*) and a honey-sweetened alcohol (*beor/bjórr*) might become blurred. OE *medu* and *beor* might in certain circumstances or contexts become interchangeable words, but they are never, except poetically, interchangeable with *ealu*. It seems clear that whereas the definitions of OE *ealu*, *medu* and *win* are much the same as the definitions of their derivatives, *ealu* being a malt-based alcohol, *medu* fermented honey and water, and *win* fermented grape-juice, OE *beor* was a drink made from honey and the juice of a fruit other than grapes, as the glosses *ofetes wos* and *appelwin* suggest. That it was both sweet and potent has already been demonstrated. Since the potency of any wine is increased by increasing the proportions of the sweetening agent, and since it is possible to make wines based on certain fruits with a higher alcoholic percentage than wine based on grapes, it may well be that to Anglo-Saxon and Viking *beor/bjórr* was the strongest drink available. Modern ale or beer is not normally more than six percent alcohol, table wines are around twelve percent, but a sweet fruit-juice based alcohol can readily reach eighteen percent. In the absence of any knowledge of distillation in western Europe at this period, a drink of this strength would, I think, have seemed fairly impressive.

If the potency of *beor* was noticeably more than that of *win* or *ealu*, so much so that it was consumed as a short rather than a long drink, this might explain the tiny drinking cups found in Anglo-Saxon England and Viking Scandinavia side by side with large beakers and drinking horns. In England the best known examples are those found at Sutton Hoo, made of burrwood and not much more than an inch in height. Others have been found at Broomfield, Taplow, Dover, Faversham and Farthingdown. Similar sized vessels are found in glass. These are mostly late sixth to early seventh century, but from eighth - tenth century Denmark there are a number of silver cups similarly small. The finest is the highly ornate Jelling cup, found in splendid isolation in one of the royal mounds, but other finds include small silver cups in groups of four, five or six accompanied by one larger one.⁴⁸ In the absence of distillation none of these can accurately be described as spirit cups, and it is unlikely that ordinary wine could have been drunk from them, when we remember Chrodegang's ruling that monks were entitled to *quinque libras uini* a day. The fact that similar vessels are found across the Channel rules out any suggestion that what continentals drank in *libras* Anglo-Saxon and Viking sipped delicately as an aperitif or liqueur. If *beor/bjórr* were the sweet, precious, highly alcoholic liquid that the evidence indicates, it could have been drunk in the small quantities for which these cups were designed.

The poetry of the Anglo-Saxons with its technique of variation must have blurred the distinctions between many words, and is perhaps responsible for the decline in precision of meaning which we can trace in the ME use of *beor*. It survives in poetry, sometimes with the general meaning of 'drink' sometimes in contrast with wine. In the *Middle English Dictionary* (s.v. *āle* and *bēr*) the references under *ale* and its compounds are legion, but *beor/bere* is rare. A new development is signalled by the entries in the *Promptorium Parvulorum*⁴⁹ (dated 1440) which show that a shift of meaning is taking or has taken place, since *beere* now glosses *hummulina* and *ceruisia hummuluna* "hopped beer".

Whether hops had previously been used in brewing in England is a separate and complicated subject, but in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries hopped beer became one of the major exports of Flanders, and England one of the major importing countries. The extent and impact of this new imported product completely obliterated the knowledge of *beor/bere* in English with a meaning different from that describing the new import. What the Germans called beer in future the English were to call beer, regardless of the fact that in neither OE nor early ME had the word meant any kind of grain drink, hopped or not. The OE word *ealu* stayed on, at first to distinguish native unhopped beer from the foreign imports, later losing even that degree of precision. In Scandinavia the word *öl* has never been superseded.

H.A. Monckton in his otherwise excellent history⁵⁰ is baffled by the OE evidence and resorts to quoting the rambling compilation of J. Bickerdyke:⁵¹ "The Old English word *beor* had become so weakened and specialised, even as early as the tenth century, that it is to be found in a vocabulary of that date as an equivalent for *idromellum*, a word properly signifying an inferior sort of mead". This is to hold the evidence upside down. The word *beor* had not "become . . . weakened". On the contrary, until we began a large-scale importing of hopped beer from the continent the English word had never meant 'beer'. The corresponding evidence from Scandinavia suggests that the OHG usage was the unusual one and that German had developed differently from its cognate languages in this respect. It lost, as other Germanic languages did not, any word derived from **alub-*, and consequently brought in *bior* to fill the gap. It is only in continental west Germanic and in post medieval borrowings from German that the word is connected with malted barley. Modern English 'beer' is a loan word, though the form it takes may have been influenced by the presence of an obsolescent English cognate. The etymological fallacy has been overworked in the translation of ON *bjórr* and OE *beor* as 'beer', and probably also in the philologists' insistence on linking early forms of 'beer' and 'barley'. Neither OE nor ON usage (between them covering a good deal of the Germanic speaking world) offers much evidence for either the translation or the etymology.

NOTES

- 1 Other words include OE *swatan* found infrequently in prose, and OE *weorod/wered* 'a sweet drink', *Beowulf* 496. *Swatan* also glosses Latin *ceruisa* and must have been a kind of ale. Kluge, *Englische Studien* 8, (1885), 479 points out its survival in Scottish and links it with *swete*. A whole range of specialised terminology for wine, some of which I hope to deal with in a later article, occurs in the OE gloss material.
- 2 Andrew Boorde's *Introduction and Dyetary*, ed. F.J. Furnivall, EETS, ES 10, (1870, reprint 1973), p. 256.
- 3 *The Medical Background of Anglo-Saxon England*, (London, 1963), p. 358.
- 4 "Zur Deutschen Etymologie", *Beiträge Zur Geschichte Der Deutschen Sprache Und Literatur*, 35, (1909), 570.
- 5 *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, (Leiden, 1962), p. 40.
- 6 de Vries, p. 40. See also J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, (Bern and München 1948-59), I, p. 101.
- 7 de Vries, p. 40, and *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. C.T. Onions, G.W.S. Friedrichsen and R.W. Burchfield, (Oxford, 1966), p. 85.
- 8 All quotations from the poems in *The Exeter Book* are from the 2 volume EETS edition; I, ed. I. Gollancz, EETS, OS 104 (1895, reprint 1973) and II, ed. W.S. Mackie, EETS, OS 194 (1934, reprint 1973).
- 9 *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* ed. F. Klaeber, 3rd. ed. (Boston, 1950). All quotations from *Beowulf* are from this edition.
- 10 On *winærn* see T. Wright, *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies*, 2nd. ed., ed. and collated by R.P. Wülcker, 2 vols. (Darmstadt, 1884, reprint 1968), I, col. 50, 6, and I, col. 281, 18; also *Old English Glosses in the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary*, ed. J.D. Pfeifer, (Oxford, 1974), p. 54 (no. 1040), and note and glossary ref. On *winbrytta* see Wright-Wülcker I, col. 129, 9.
- 11 A.J. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, (Cambridge, 1925), p. 64: "and þæt man sylle on éalahuse, bete man þæt at deadum menn mid vi healfmarce 7 æt cwicon mid xii óran".
- 12 A.J. Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 196, 198.
- 13 *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader*, rev. D. Whitelock, (Oxford, 1967), p. 21.
- 14 *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius . . .* ed. G. Neckel, rev. H. Kuhn (Heidelberg, 1962), p. 129. All subsequent references to poems of the Edda are to this edition.
- 15 Ed. B.J. Timmer, (London, 1952, 2nd ed. 1961).
- 16 *Skjaldevers*, ed. Jón Helgason, (Copenhagen, 1968), p. 22.

- 17 Ed. G.N. Garmonsway, (London, 1939, 2nd ed. 1947, reprint 1965), p. 47.
- 18 *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, II, ed. J.C. Pope, EETS, OS 260, (1968), p. 642.
- 19 *The Old English version of the enlarged Rule of Chrodegang together with the Latin original*, ed. A.S. Napier, EETS, OS 150, (1916, reprint 1971), p. 15.
- 20 Ed., *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England*, Rolls Series, 3 vols. (1864-66), II, p. 298.
- 21 For a description see N.R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon*, (Oxford, 1957), no. 264; printed by Cockayne, *Leechdoms* II, pp. 2-278, 288-358.
- 22 Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 231; printed by Cockayne, *Leechdoms*, III, pp. 2-80.
- 23 Cockayne translates *wilisc* as "foreign". It can however only mean "foreign" in the sense of "British/Celtic". That it records a type of ale originally brewed by the Britons, but not necessarily any longer imported from British territory, is made clear by the charter referred to in n. 26, where *wilisc* ale in the tenth century is being brewed in the Winchester area.
- 24 *Ancient Laws and Statutes of England*, ed. B. Thorpe, (London, 1840). I quote the *Pœnitentiale Ecgberti*, II, 2, p. 368. See also the *Pœnitentiale* IV, 21, p. 380. See *Canons enacted under King Edgar: Modus Imponendi Pœnitentiam*, 10, p. 406, and, Latin text only, *Theodore's Liber Pœnitentialis*, 21, 6, p. 288, for further references.
- 25 *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. F. Liebermann, 3 vols. (Halle, 1903-1916), I, p. 448. Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* p. 454 refers to this text in the note on *vi seastres mealtes*, mentioning that the food rent due at Martinmas from the *gebur* is given in the *Rectitudines* as 23 sesters of beer. She has confused OE *beor* and *bere* (barley). The OE reading is *XXIII systra beres*, and the parallel Latin text has *ordei*.
- 26 Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, p. 38; described by P.H. Sawyer in *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (London, 1968), no. 385, p. 165 as "authentic".
- 27 *Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. F.E. Harmer, (Cambridge, 1914), pp. 73 ff., 79 ff.; also R.E. Zupko, *A Dictionary of English Weights and Measures from Anglo-Saxon Times to the Nineteenth Century*, (Madison, Milwaukee and London, 1968), pp. 5, 155 ff.
- 28 *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, *Íslenzk Fornrit* II, (Reykjavík, 1933), p. 225.
- 29 *Sturlunga Saga* . . . ed. Gudbrand Vigfusson, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1878), I, p. 396.
- 30 *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, (Copenhagen, 1931), p. 87.
- 31 *Aldsta delen af Cod. 1812 4^{to} Gml. Kgl. Samling*, ed. Ludvig Larsson, (Copenhagen, 1883), p. 44. I am most grateful to Dr Ole Widding for letting me check these references in the files of the *Arnemagnæan* dictionary, Copenhagen.

- 32 Ed. Eugen Kölbing, (Heilbronn, 1881), pp. 60-61. MS A is Cod. Delagard. 4-7 folio, a vellum MS in the University library of Uppsala, B is Holm. 6 4^{to} a vellum MS of the late-14th or early-15th century, D is Holm. 7 folio, a 15th-century vellum MS of Icelandic provenance.
- 33 Fritzner, "blandet med øl"; Kölbing, "bier vermengtem weine"; Kölbing again in an appendix to the French text (see below n. 34) "de vin et de bière mêlés".
- 34 Ed. Gaston Raynaud, (Paris, 1879), p. 36, line 1060. If the Norse translator worked from a MS in which the number was omitted or indecipherable his mixture of *bjórr* and *vín* would be a perfectly proper translation.
- 35 Bartholomeus, Anglicus, *de proprietatibus rerum*, (Cologne, n.d.), book 19, ch. *De clareto*. See also Du Cange under *claretum*.
- 36 *Late Medieval Icelandic Romances II*, ed. Agnete Loth, *Editiones Arnarnagnaana Series B*, XXI, (Copenhagen, 1963), p. 175.
- 37 *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, ed. Valdimar Ásmundarson, (Reykjavík, 1885-9), p. 236 (wrongly numbered 136). I am also indebted to Dr Gillian Fellows Jensen for advance access to the text and notes of her forthcoming edition of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*.
- 38 *Sturlunga saga* I, p. 392; II, p. 67.
- 39 *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, ed. C.C.A. Lange and C.R. Unger, (Christiania, 1849-), II, no. 44. The series is subsequently referred to throughout as DN followed by volume and document number.
- 40 If Fritzner is right, then *bjórr* in Norse must have undergone the same semantic shift as *beor* in English, but about a century earlier. In this case the *Sturlunga* and DN references would be examples of the new meaning. The parallel French situation is of interest here, see F. Eyer, "La cervoise et le bière au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance", *Bulletin philologique et historique (jusqu'à 1610) du comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*, 1968 (Paris, 1971), 1, 352. "Chose curieuse, l'aromatisation par le houblon, devenue peu à peu exclusive, coïncide approximativement avec l'introduction du terme "bière" qui va se substituer à celui de cervoise. C'est donc à partir du commencement du xv^e siècle que nous pouvons véritablement parler de bières de France". The date thus links with the English situation, not the Norse.
- 41 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive Originum*, ed. W.M. Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1911), II, book XX, iii, 16.
- 42 E.g. Wright-Wülcker, I, col. 281, 25.
- 43 Wright-Wülcker, I, col. 128, 11. The MS is described by Ker, no. 2, Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Musuem 47 + BL Add. 32246.
- 44 Wright-Wülcker, I, col. 430, 9; Ker, no. 143.
- 45 Isidore, XX, iii, 11. This material has been dealt with by H.E. Kylstra in "Ale and Beer in Germanic", *Iceland and the Mediaeval World: Studies in Honour of Ian Maxwell*, ed. Gabriel Turville-Petre and J.S. Martin, (Clayton, Victoria, Australia, 1974), pp. 7-16. Kylstra's use of the gloss evidence depends on taking two separate sentences of Isidore, running them together,

and treating them as if they were two halves of the same statement. His conclusions therefore depend on a link between *hydromelum* and *medus* for which the original offers no justification.

- ⁴⁶ See Elisabeth Karg-Gasterstädt and Theodor Frings, *Althochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, (Berlin, 1968), s.v. *apfeltranc*, and Elias Steinmeyer and Eduard Sievers, *Die Althochdeutschen Glossen*, (Frankfurt, 1895, reprint 1969), III, p. 155, 55-8; p. 214, 49.
- ⁴⁷ See Karg-Gasterstädt s.v. *bior*, and Steinmeyer III, p. 156, 3-5; p. 697, 59; p. 232, 75; IV, p. 198, 51. The link between *mulsum* and *claré* provided by the ON translations is confirmed by the OHG glosses where both *mulsum* and *claratum* are glossed by *lutirtranc* III, p. 155, 51-4 and p. 697, 57.
- ⁴⁸ D.M. Wilson, "The Fejøl Cup", *Acta Archaeologica* 31 (1960), 147-173. On the glass see D.B. Harden "Glass vessels in Britain AD 400-1000", *Studies presented to E.T. Leeds* . . . ed. D.B. Harden (1956), pp. 132-167. I am indebted to Mrs Leslie Webster of the British Museum and Mrs Else Roesdahl of Århus University for discussing this material with me.
- ⁴⁹ Ed. A.L. Mayhew, EETS, ES 102 (1908, reprint 1973), p. 30.
- ⁵⁰ *A History of English Ale and Beer*, (London, 1966), p. 36.
- ⁵¹ *The Curiosities of Ale and Beer*, (London, 1886), p. 152.