



How oral must an oral poem be? The eEdition as argument



Daniel Paul O'Donnell

Cædmon's Hymn: an (almost) indisputably oral poem



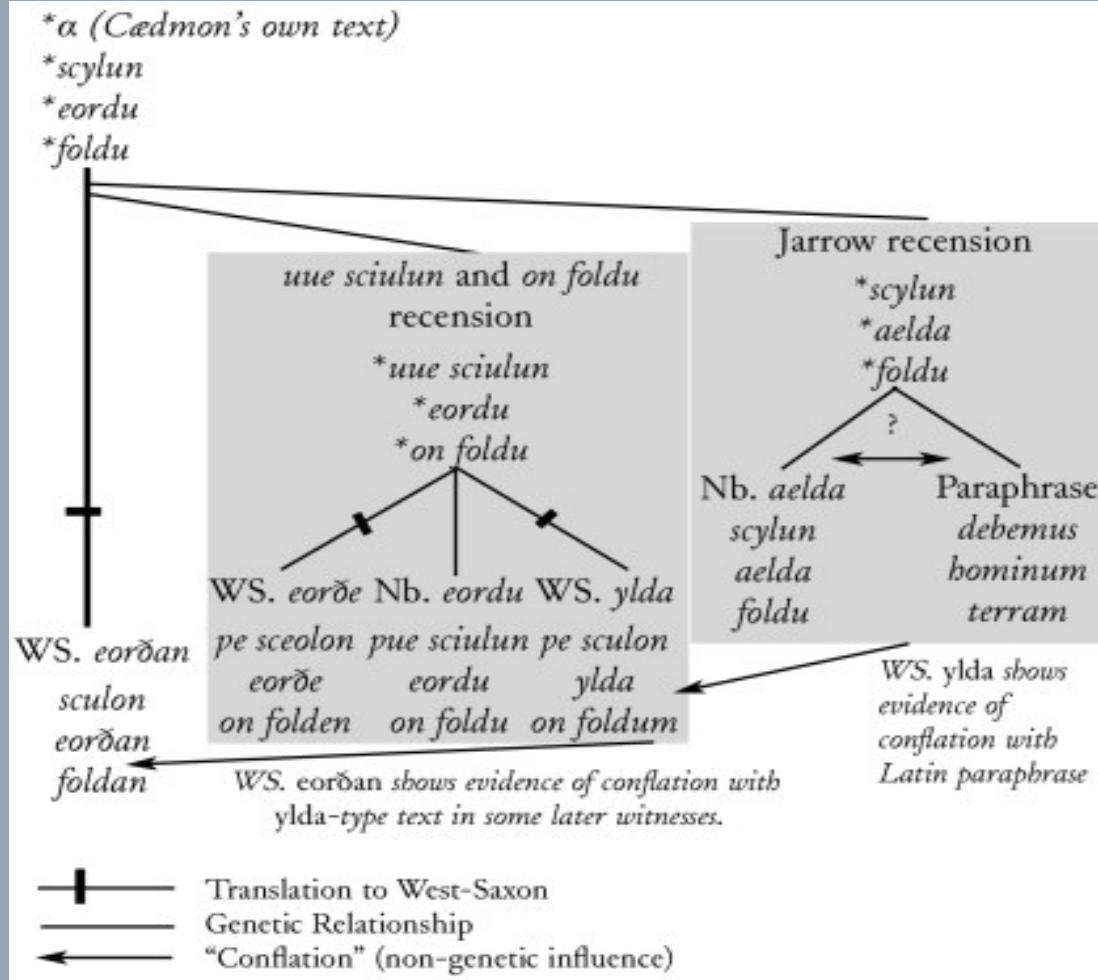
Cædmon panel, Whitby

Cædmon's Hymn has longitudinally stable text

	<i>aelda</i>	<i>ylda</i>	<i>eordu</i>	<i>eorðan</i>	<i>eorðe</i>
1a	Nu	Nu pe	Nu pue	Nu²	Nu pe
3b	gihuaeſ	gehpiſc	gihuaeſ	gehpaſs	gehpaſs ³
4b	or	ord	or	or ⁴	4b missing
	astelidæ	astealde	astalde	onstealde	
5a	scop	gescop	scoop	sceop ⁵	sceop
5b	aelda	ylda	eordu	eorðan	eorðe
7a	tha	--	ða	þa	þa
	middungeard	middangearde	middungeard	middangeard	middangeard
8b	tiadæ	tida	tiade	teode	teode ⁶
9a	firum	firum on	firum on	firum	fyrum on
	foldu	foldum	foldu	foldan	folden
9b-10	--	--	--	--	6b added after 9

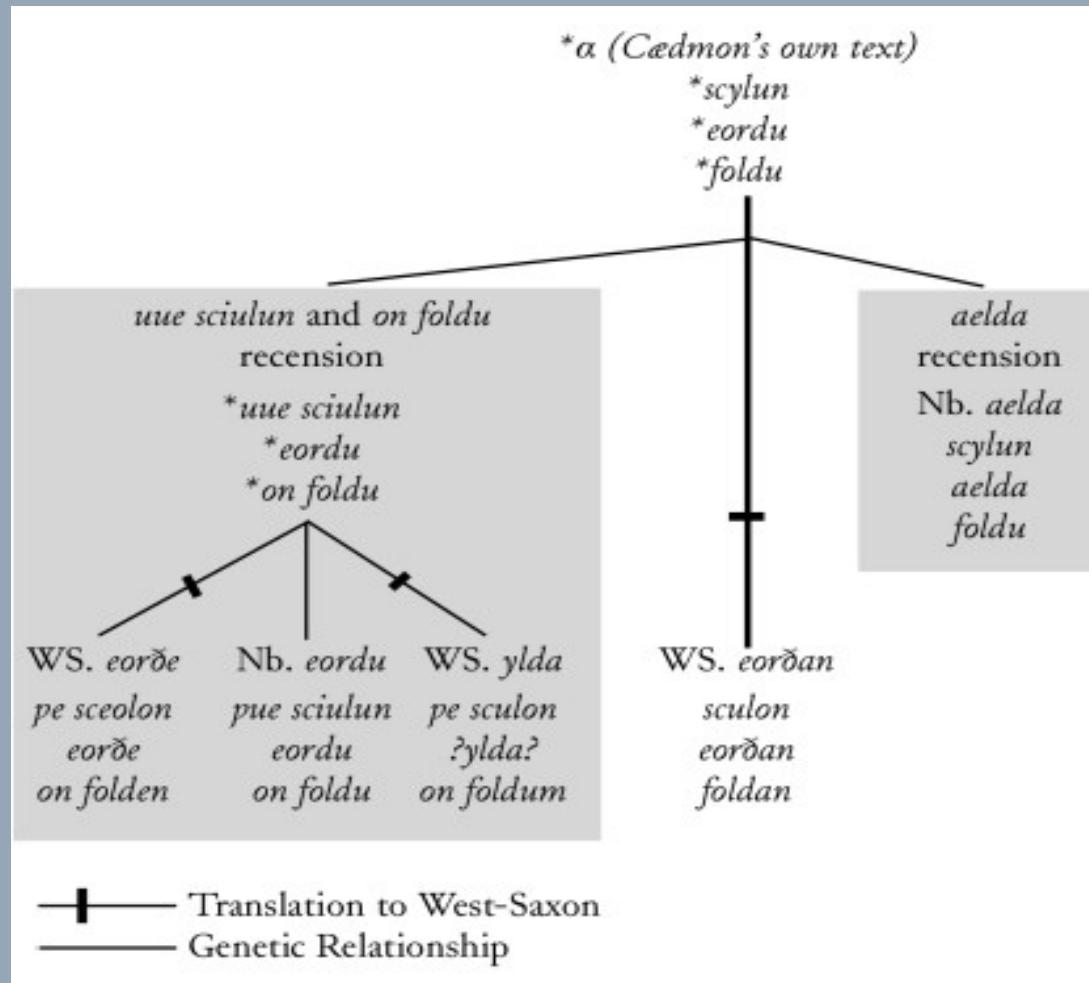
Recensional variation in Cædmon's Hymn (O'Donnell 2005 § 5.2)

Inter-recensional variation can be largely explained



Recensional and cross-recensional development (O'Donnell 2005 § 5.37)

Recensions (mostly) also internally stable



Recensional and cross-recensional development (O'Donnell 2005 § 5.37)

Northumbrian *aelda*-recension: Few variants



Northumbrian *aelda* recension

A critical edition of the probable recension archetype

Based on M with collations from P.

Nu scylun¹ hergan hefaenricaes uard,
metudæs maecti, end his modgidanc,
uerc uuldfadur— sue² he uundra gihuæs,
eci dryctin, or astelidæ!

5 He aerist scop aelda barnum
heben til hrofe, haleg sceppend;
tha³ middungeard, moncynnæs uard,
eci dryctin, æfter tiadæ
firum foldu, frea allmectig.

Apparatus (Substantive variants)

2b end] and P. 5b aelda] aeldu P. 6a til] to P. 6b sceppend] scepen M.

Northumbrian *aelda* recension (O'Donnell 2005)

West-Saxon *eorðan-* recension: More variable



West-Saxon *eorðan* recension

A critical edition of the probable recension archetype

Based on T1 with collations from B1, Ca, N, O¹, To.

Nu sculon² herigean heofonrices peard,
meotodes meahte, ond his modgeþanc,
peorc pulsorfæder— spa³ he pundra gehƿæs,
ece drihten, or onstealde!

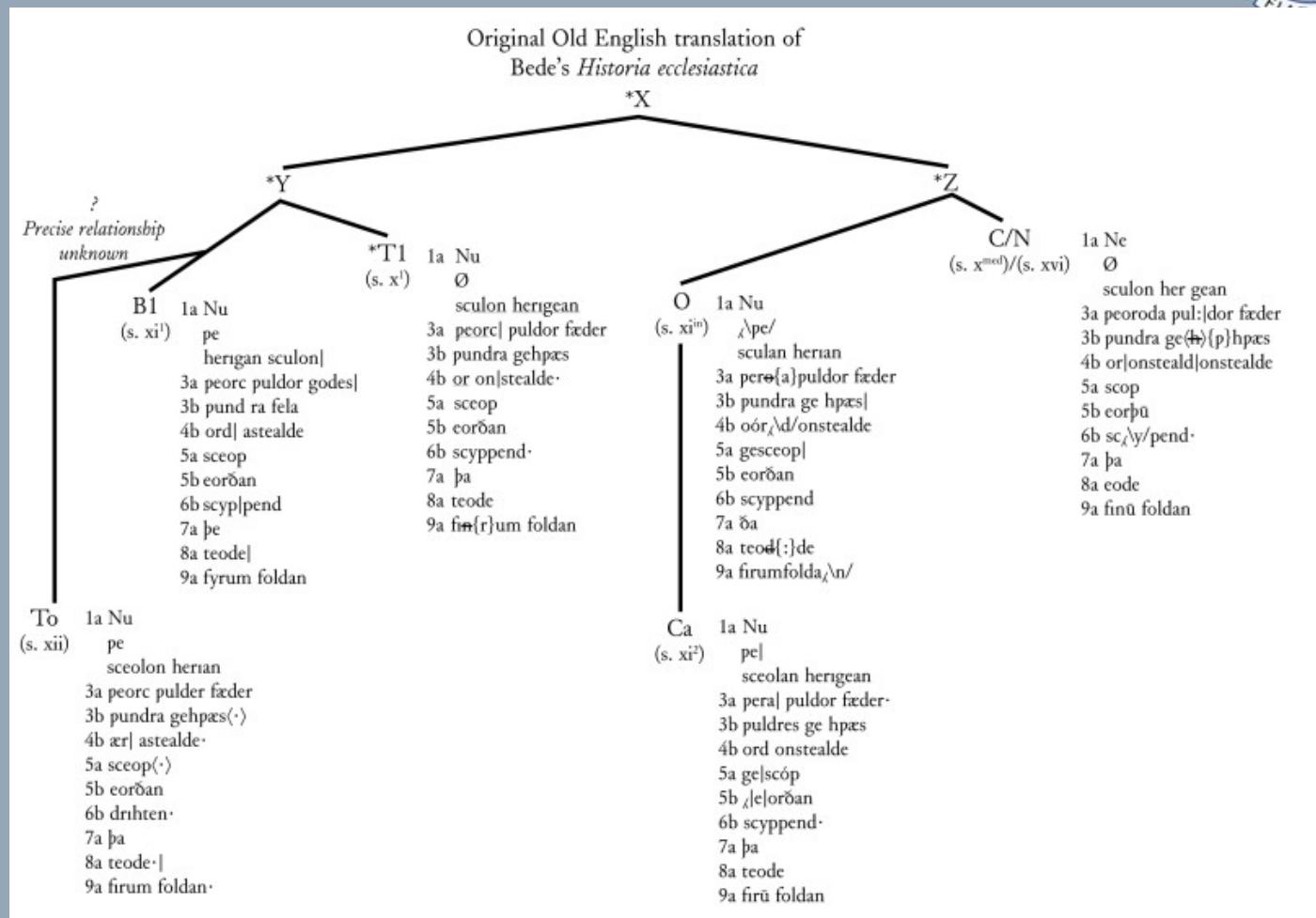
5 He ærest sceop eorðan bearnum
heofon to hrofe, halig scypend;
þa⁴ middangeard, moncynnes peard,
ece drihten, æfter teode
firum foldan, frea ælmihtig.

Apparatus (Substantive variants)

1a [Nu] Ne Nu pe B1 To O (Post-Correction) Ca. 1a [sculon herigean] herigan sculon
B1. 3a [peorc] peoroda N pero O (Pre-Correction) pera O (Post-Correction) Ca.
3a [pulsorfæder] pulsorgodes B1. 3b [pundra] pulsres Ca. 3b [gehƿæs] gehƿæs N
fela B1. 4b [or] ord B1 Ca O (Post-Correction) ær To. 4b [onstealde] astealde B1 To.
5a [ærest] ares Ca. 5a [sceop] gesceop O Ca. 5b [eorðan] eorþum N. 5b [bearnum]
bearnumunum O (Pre-Correction). 6b [scypend] drihten To. 7a [þa] þe B1. 8b [teode]
teodde O (Pre-Correction) eode N. 9a [firum] finum N. 9a [foldan] folda O
(Pre-Correction).

West-Saxon *eorðan* recension (O'Donnell 2005)

Pattern of variation is more significant than amount



Variation, *eorðan* recension (O'Donnell 2005 § 7.62)



C-O-Ca Recension

C/N	O	Ca
1a Ne Ø	1a Nu ƿƿeð	1a Nu ƿƿel
3a peoroda pul: dor fæder	3a pere{a} puldor fæder	3a peral pulðor fæder
3b pundra ge{+}(p)hpæs	3b pundra ge hpæs	3b puldres ge hpæs
4b or onsteald onstealde	4b oðr ðal onstealde	4b orðl onstealde
5a scop	5a gesceop	5a ge scóp
5b corþa	5b corðan	5b , e orðan
6b scyþ/pend-	6b scyppend	6b scyppend·
8a code	8a teod{:}de	8a teode
9a finu foldan	9a firumfolda, n/	9a firū foldan

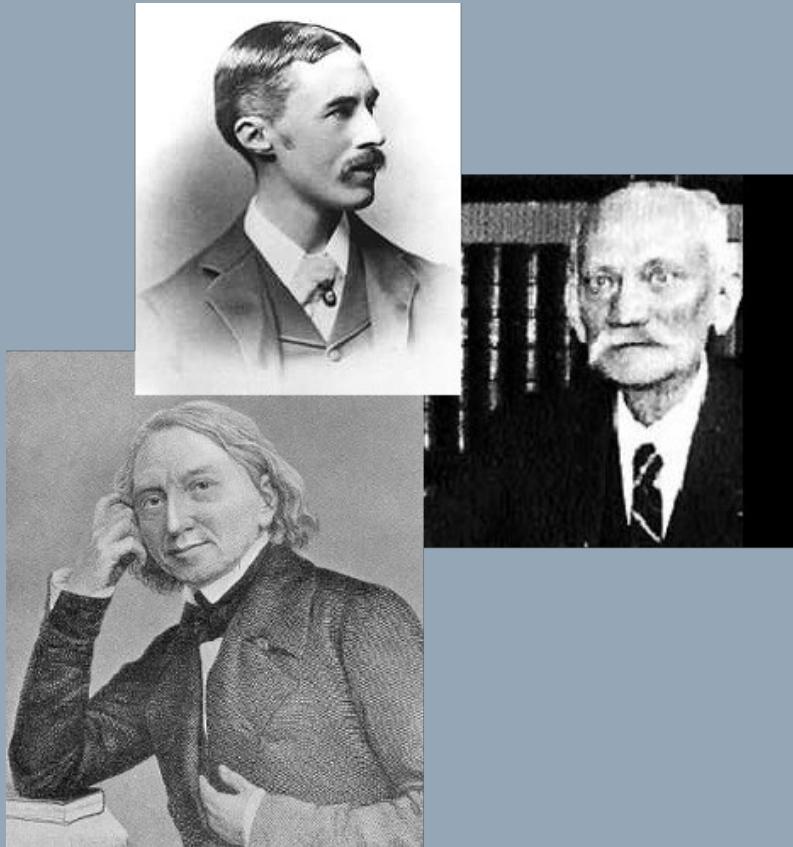
T1-B1-To Recension

	T1	B1	To
1a	Nu	Nu pe	Nu pe
	sculon herigean	herigan sculon	sceolon herian
3a	puldorfæder	puldorgodes	pulderfæder
3b	gchpac s	fela	gchpac s
4b	or	ord	ær
	onste alde	astealde	astealde
6b	scyppend	scyppend	drihten
7a	þa	þe	þa

B1 Performance

- 1 Tl singan? Cwæð he¹: Sing me frumsceaft. Pa
 B1 singan? ða cwæð he¹: Sing me frumsceaft. Pa
- 2 Tl he ða þas andsware onfeng, þa ongan he sona singan in herenesse²
 B1 he ða þas andsware onfeng, þa ongan he sona singan on herunge²
- 3 Tl Godes Scyppendes þa fers ⁊ þa word³ þe he næfre gehyrde⁴,
 B1 Godes Scyppendes ða uers ⁊ þa word godes³ þe he næfre ær ne
 gehyrde⁴,
- 4 Tl þær⁵ endebyrdnesse þis is⁶
 B1 ne heora⁵ endebyrdnesse⁶
- 5 Tl Nu⁷ sculon herigean⁸ heofonrices weard,
 B1 Nu we⁷ herigan sculon⁸ heofonrices weard
- 6 Tl meotodes meahte ⁊ his modgeþanc,
 B1 metodes mihte ⁊ his modgeþanc
- 7 Tl weorū wuldorfæder⁹, swa he wundra gehwæs¹⁰
 B1 weorū wuldorgodes⁹ swa he wundra fela¹⁰
- 8 Tl ece Drihten or¹¹ onstealde¹².
 B1 éce drihten ord¹¹ astealde¹²
- 9 Tl he ærest sceop eorðan beamum
 B1 he ærest sceop eorðan beamum
- 10 Tl heofon to hrofe halig scyppend;
 B1 heofon to hrofe halig scyppend
- 11 Tl þa¹³ middangeard moncynnes weard,
 B1 þe¹³ middangeard mancynnes weard
- 12 Tl ece Drihten, æfter teode
 B1 éce drihten æfter teode
- 13 Tl firum foldan, frea ælmihtig.
 B1 fyrum foldan frea ælmihtig
- 14 Tl Pa aras he from þem slæpe, ⁊ eal, þa þe¹⁴ he slæpende song, fæste¹⁵
 B1 Pa aras he fram þam slæpe, ⁊ eall ðæt¹⁴ he slæpende sang he hyt
 fæste¹⁵
- 15 Tl in¹⁶ gemynde hæfde. ⁊ þem wordum sona monig word in þet ilce
 B1 on¹⁶ gemynde hæfde. ⁊ þam wordum sona monig word in □ ylce
- 16 Tl gemet Godes wyrdes¹⁷ songs togeþeodde¹⁸. Pa com he on
 morgenne¹⁹
 B1 gemet gode wyrdes¹⁷ sanges þær togeþeodde¹⁸. Pa cóm he on
 morgen¹⁹
- 17 Tl to þem tungrefan, þe²⁰ his ealdorman wæs: segde him hwylce gife
 B1 to ðam tungrefan, se ðe²⁰ his ealdorman wæs: sede him hwylce gyfe
- 18 Tl he onfeng²¹; ⁊ he hine sona to þære abbudissan gekedde ⁊ hir þa²²
 B1 he onfangen hæfde²¹; ⁊ he hine sona to þære abbodessan gekedde ⁊
 hyre □²²
- 19 Tl cyðde ⁊ segde. Pa heht heo gesomnian calle þa...
 B1 cyðde ⁊ sede. Pa het heo gesamnian calle þa...

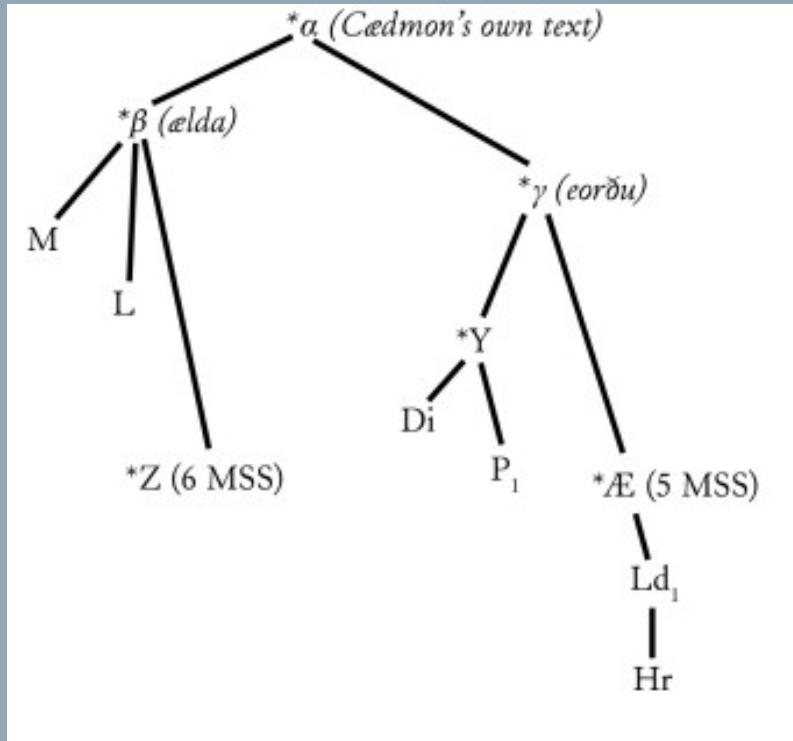
Editorial issues



Famous editors

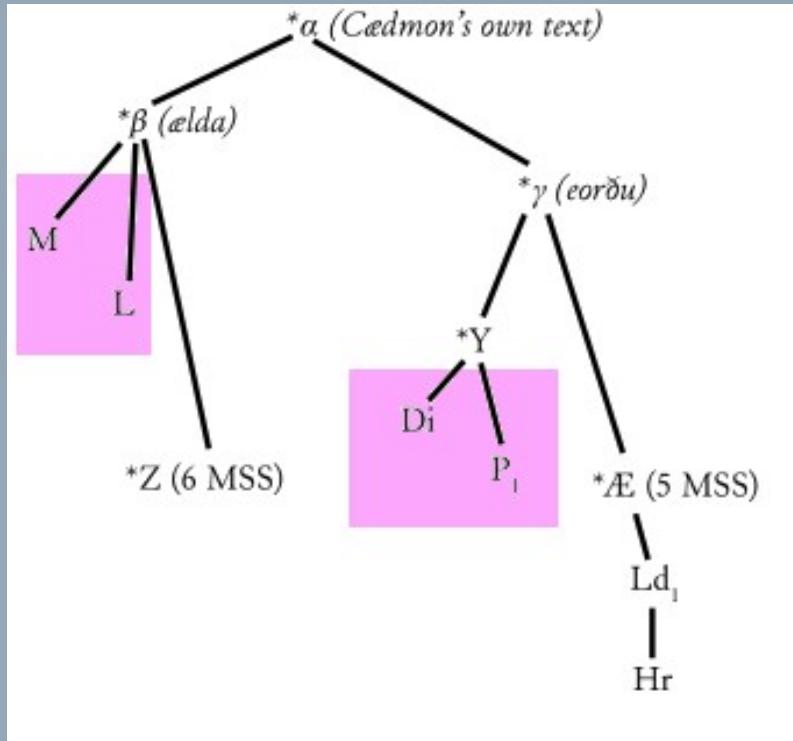
(Bottle of wine to person who gets them all)

Dobbie (1937 vs. 1942) illustrates danger



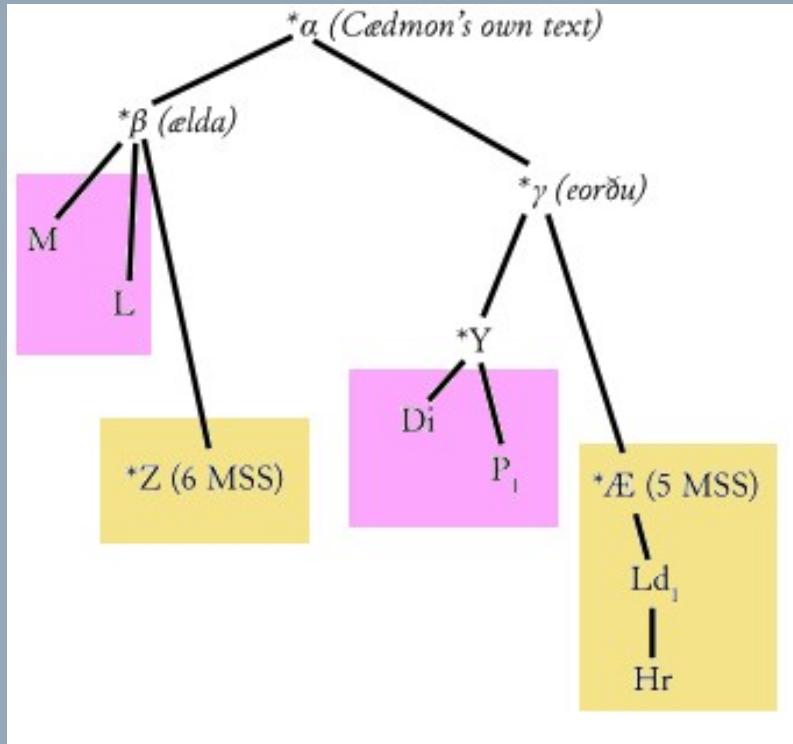
Recensional variation from
Dobbie 1937

Dobbie (1937 vs. 1942) illustrates danger



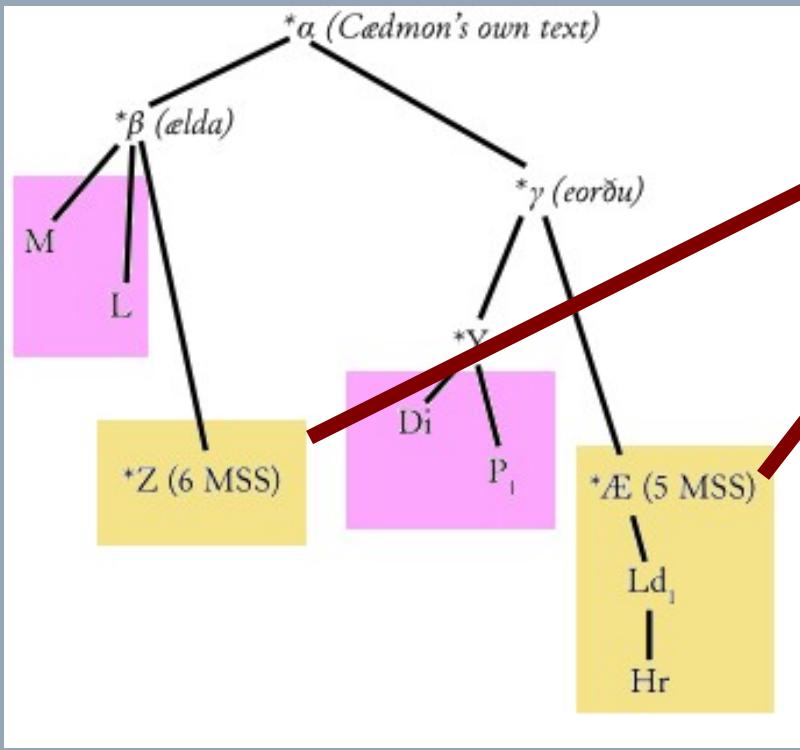
Recensional variation from
Dobbie 1937

Dobbie (1937 vs. 1942) illustrates danger



Recensional variation from
Dobbie 1937

Dobbie (1937 vs. 1942) illustrates danger



Recensional variation from
Dobbie 1937

CÆDMON'S HYMN
WEST SAXON VERSION

Text from MS. Tanner 10 (T), with variants from the other MSS. (for the sigla, see Introd., pp. xcv–xcvii)

Nu sculon herigean heofonrices weard,
meotodes meahte and his modgeþanc,
weorc wuldorfæder, swa he wundra gehwæs,
ece drihten, or onstealde.

5 He ærest sceop eorðan bearnum
heofon to hrofe, halig scyppend;
þa middangeard moncynnes weard,
ece drihten, æfter teode
firum foldan, frea ælmihtig.

Cædmon's Hymn 1 Nu] Ne C; Nu we with we added above the line O; Nu we Ca B H W Bd₁ Ln Mg Tr₁ Ld₁ Hr sculon herigean] herigan sculon B sculon] sculan O; sceolan Ca Ld₁ Hr; sculon Ln; sceolon Tr₁ herigean] herigean C; herian O H Bd₁ Ln Mg Hr; herian heri with heri underlined for deletion W; herian herian with second herian underlined for deletion Ld₁;

Dialectal text from Dobbie 1942



Solution

General Navigation

- Up (Table of Contents)
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This text

- View (select to change):
 - Reading text
- Manuscript variants
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- All readings (parallel)
- View collations from West-Saxon eorðan recension: B1, Ca, N, O, T1, To
- Filiation and transmission (chapter 5)

West-Saxon *eorðan* recension

A critical edition of the probable recension archetype

Based on T1 with collations from B1, Ca, N, O¹, To.

Nu sculon² herigean heofonrices peard,
metodes meahis and his modredhine.
peorc puk
ece drithet
He arest s
heofon to
þa³ midda
ece drithet
firum fold

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Cedmon's Hymn

West-Saxon *eorðan* recension

A critical edition of the probable recension archetype

Based on T1 with collations from B1, Ca, N, O¹, To.

Nu sculon² metodes i
peorc pulle
ece drithet
heofon to i
þa³ midda
ece drithet
firum fold

5

Apparatus (Substantive vari
la Nul) Ne N Nle fr B1 To
postmod. Ca. 2b. geb.
lb. postmod. Ca. 2b. geb.
lb. herigean. O (P
(Pre-Correction) oide N. 9a. fir

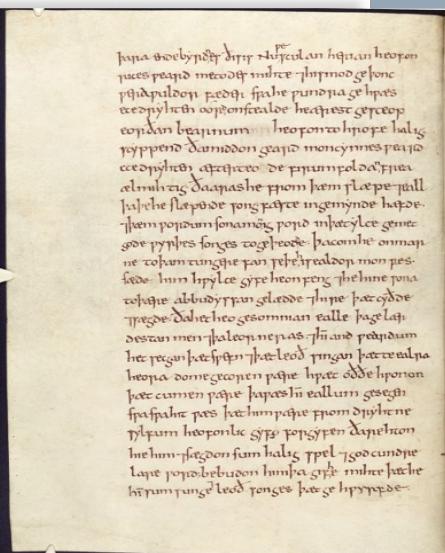
Notes

¹The scribe of O has a
Manuscripts (O) and C
Pre- and post-correction
All readings (parallel)

²'sculon] sculon is either
sculon), or third person
interpretation is supported
interpretation is suggested
(see especially [Mitchell](#))

³The scribe of O has altered
and Chapter 10, note 10, discusses
collation correctly. Other spellings
'sculon' sculon is either first
person singular or third person singular.
Bede's paraphrase, however, is
parallel to the West-Saxon text (see
(Stanley 2002, 3). See above,
personal subject in all three
witnesses, and the fact that the
later manuscripts of the West-Saxon
use 'sculon' (but not 'sculon') in
Ca. Because? For a discussion
comparative, see [Baker](#).

⁴It can be construed
reading has considerable effect
§ C. 8, and esp. [Blickley](#) 1986,



Electronic, print, and facsimile views from O'Donnell 20005

Print edition for 'canonical' editorial texts



Critical Editions

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B1 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 41 (West-Saxon *corðan* recension) A critical edition of the scribal performance

Based on B1 with collations from Ca, N, O,¹ T1, To.

Nu pc herigan sculon heofonrices peard,
metodes mihte, ond his modgepanc,
peorc pudorgodes— spa² he pundra fela,
ece drithen, ord astalde!
5 He ar̄est sceop corðan bearnum
heofon to hrofe, halig scyppend
þe middangeard, manncynnes peard,
ece drithen, æfter teode
fyrum foldan, frea selmihtig.

Apparatus (Substantive variants)

[1a Nu] ñe N. 1a we] — T1 N O (Pre-Correction). 1a herigan sculon] sculon herigan T1 O To Ca N.
3a weorc] peorda N pera O (Pre-Correction) pera O (Post-Correction) Ca. 3a wuldorgodes] pudorfeder
T1 N O Ca To. 3b wundra] pudres Ca. 3b fel] gelþes T1 To O Ca. gelþes N. 4b ord] or T1 N O (Pre-Correction) er To. 4b astalde] onstalde T1 N O Ca. 5a ar̄est] eras Ca. 5a sceop] gescop O Ca. 5b corðan]
corðum N. 6a hrofe] røfe Ca. 6b scyppend] drithen To. 7a þe] ja T1 To N Ca O. 8b teode] eode N.
9a fyrum] finum N. 9a foldan] folda O (Pre-Correction).

¹ The scribe of O has altered his text considerably by correction (see above, Chapter 4: Manuscripts (O) and Chapter 7: Editorial introduction, West-Saxon *corðan* recension). Pre- and post-correction forms are collated separately (where applicable) except in the All Readings (Parallel) Apparatus.

² spa Howlett suggests that *spa* may be intended as an adverb ("thus") rather than a causal conjunction ("as, because"). For a discussion of the evidence, see above, § C.9. The punctuation here assumes *spa* is a conjunction.

Electronic edition for argument



General Navigation

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This text

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 - All readings (analytic)
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- Witnesses to the West-Saxon *eorðan* recension: B1, Ca, N, O, T1, To
- Filiation and transmission (chapter 5)

West-Saxon *eorðan* recension

A critical edition of the probable recension archetype

Based on T1 with collations from B1, Ca, N, O¹, To.

Nu sculon² herigean heofonrices peard,
meotodes meahte, ond his modgeþanc,
peorc puldfæder— spa³ he pundra gehpæs,
ece drihten, or onstealde!

5 He ærest sceop *eorðan* bearnum
heofon to hrofe, halig scyppend;
þa⁴ middangeard, moncynnes peard,
ece drihten, æfter teode
firum foldan, frea ælmihtig.

Notes

¹The scribe of O has altered his text considerably by correction (see above, Chapter 4: Manuscripts (O) and Chapter 7: Editorial introduction, West-Saxon *eorðan* recension). Pre- and post-correction forms are collated separately (where applicable) except in the All readings (parallel) apparatus.

²**sculon**] *sculon* is either first person plural with an unexpressed subject (i.e. *[p]ue/pe] sculon*), or third person plural with *peorc puldfæder*, 3a, as subject. The former interpretation is supported by the form in Bede's paraphrase, *debemus*; but the latter interpretation is suggested by a lack of convincing syntactic parallels in Old English (see especially Mitchell 1985b), and, perhaps, similar syntax in the *Benedicite* (Stanley



Facsimiles for scholarship

Hana stod bynider diris nesculan hwan heofon
raes peaqid metodir miltre thimod ge hanc
yndpuldon fedri spahe pundra ge hpas
eednylitch oponstealde heastest geseceop
eordan beaminum heofontolnofe halig
ryppend dāmidden geajid moncynnes peaqid
eednylitch affereto de pnumpolada fne
elmlitig dānashe from hem slæpe tall
hahhe flapode song faste ingemynde hāde.
hem posidum sonamōs pond inhatylec genet
gode ryphes songes togeheode. hacombe onman
ne tohan tungie fan refe. healdon mon pes.
fede. him hylce gyfe heon feng thelme rona
tohage abbudyrjan gelædde. thine hat cydde
tragde. Dāhet heo gesomman ealle hagela.
destan men. haleon ne pas. thū and peaqidum
het regan hat hysen. that leod ringan hatt ealha
heora dome ge copen paue hpat odde haponon
hæt cumen paue hapaes h allum gesegn
spasrahit pas hat him paue from dnyltne
hylcum heofonlic gyfe songyfen dāhetton
hie him. flegdon sum halig spel. god cundne
laue pond. be budon him ha grē miltre hache
hi sum jungel leod songes hat se hysrapde.

Digital editions can now serve more than one master



Original Old English translation of
Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*

*X

? Precise relationship unknown

*Y

B1 (s. xi^l) 1a Nu
pe
herigan sculon|
3a peorc puldor godes|
3b pund ra fela
4b ordl astealde
5a sceop
5b eorðan
6b scyplpend
7a þe
8a teode|

*T1 (s. x^l) 1
3
4
5
6
7
8
9

*Z

C/N (s. x^{med})/(s. xvi) 1a Ne
Ø
sculon her gean
3a peoroda pul:|dor fader
3b pundra ge(h){p}hpæs
4b or|onsteald|onstealde

Original Old English text (from Bede's Historia ecclesiastica)

CEADMON

Relief sculpture of a man, identified as Ceadmon, holding a book.

Original Old English manuscript page showing text in two columns.

Three portraits of scholars:

- A man with a mustache, likely John Cotton.
- An older man with glasses, likely George Nennius.
- A man with long hair, likely Adam Sedgwick.

Text fragments from the original Old English manuscript:

goroan
drihten.
ga
teode.|
irum foldan.

japa godbyndr hirfri hifculan heofon
iaces paed modig midre ihymod gfonc
phäduldon fædg. fræt pundra ge hpæs
cedylhleth onsonstealde heafest geseceop
cepian beatum. heftorw hrofe halig
ryppend dameddon gaſd moncyndes ferio
coſpihēt aſſeſſeo de pnumpoladſtneſſ
almilige daupashē pum hem ſlepē gall
ſuhſe ſlapode tōn partē ingemŷnde hæſe
hem poudum ſonamōz poud mātyle ge me
gōe pyphē ſonge tog ſƿeð ſacomicle onmāj
in cōtan cungie far ſƿeð hæſeſſo mon pē
ſeſſe. him hiphē gife heom pug. thēlme pua
tēlhe. abduþr pug glædæ. thēlme hæſeſſe
mæſe. dohē hæſeſſe ſacomician ealle hæſeſſe
destan men. hæſeſſe ne pas. thēlme pug
hæſeſſe hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe.
hæſeſſe. domē grotten pug. hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe.
hæſeſſe. cuum pug. hæſeſſe. in eallum geſeſſ
hæſeſſe. pas. hæſeſſe. pas. hæſeſſe. pas. hæſeſſe.
hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe.
hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe.
hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe. hæſeſſe.