

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

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



Cædmon panel, Whitby

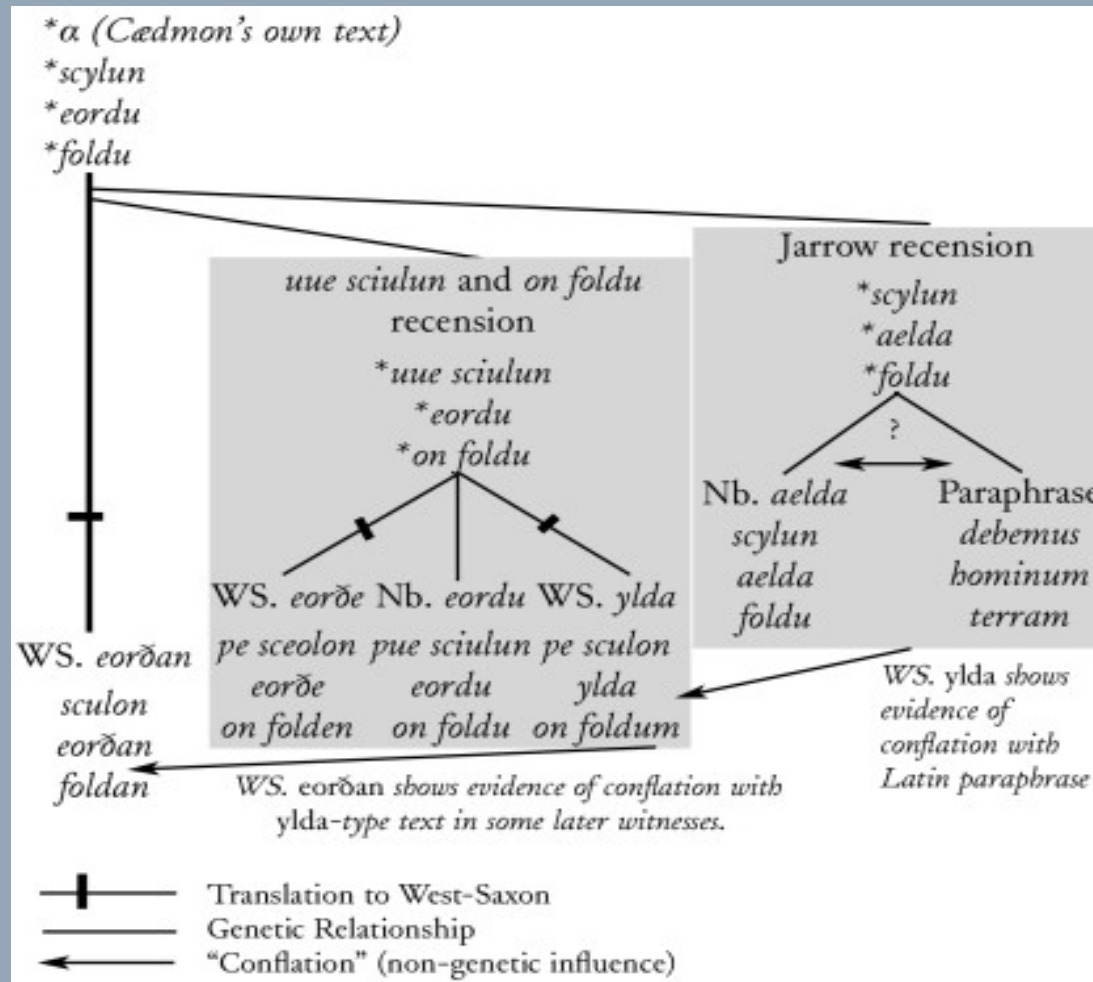
# Cædmon's Hymn has longitudinally stable text



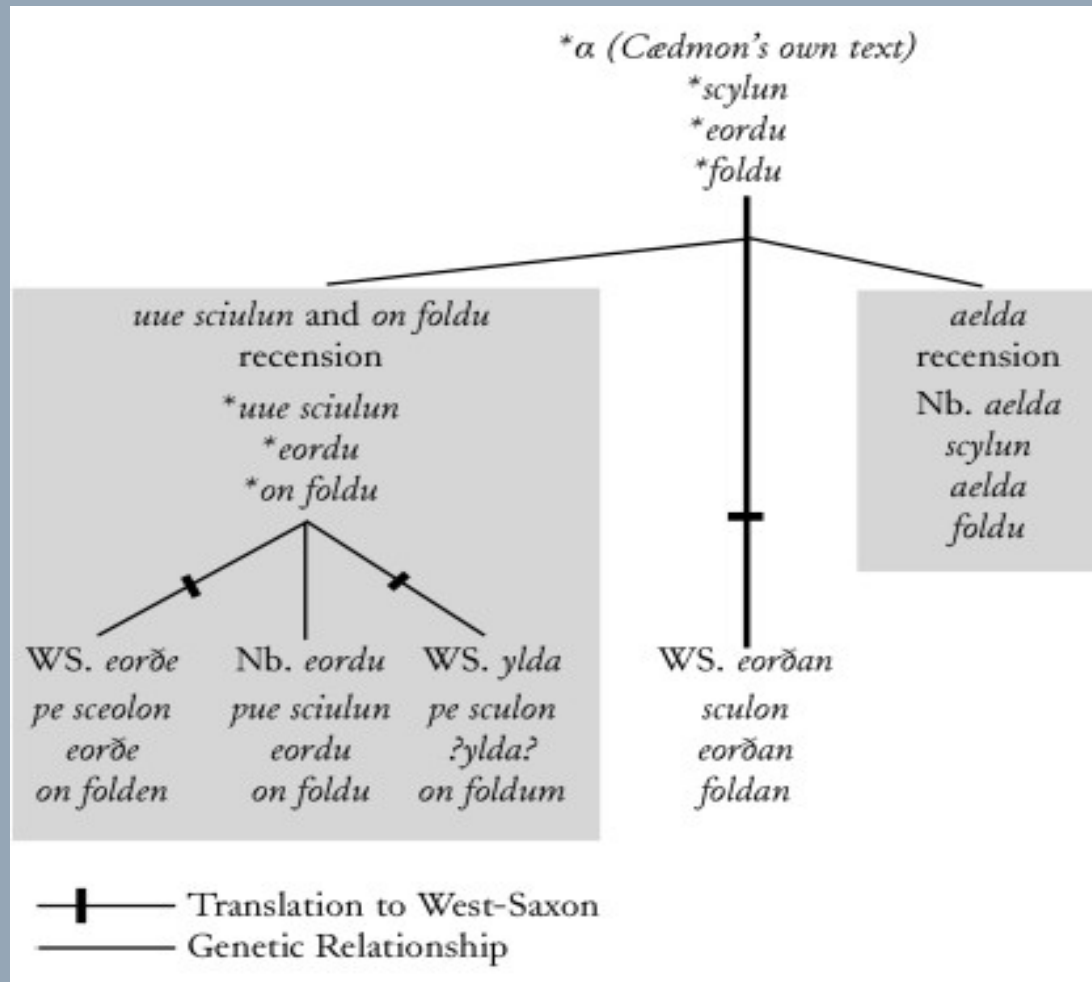
	<i>aelda</i>	<i>ylda</i>	<i>eordu</i>	<i>eorðan</i>	<i>eorðe</i>
1a	<b>Nu</b>	Nu pe	Nu pue	<b>Nu<sup>2</sup></b>	Nu pe
3b	gihuaes	<b>gehpilc</b>	gihuaes	gehpæs	gehpæs <sup>3</sup>
4b	or	<b>ord</b>	or	or <sup>4</sup>	<b>4b missing</b>
	astelidæ	astealde	astalde	<b>onstealde</b>	
5a	scop	<b>gescop</b>	scoop	sceop <sup>5</sup>	sceop
5b	<b>aelda</b>	<b>ylda</b>	<b>eordu</b>	<b>eorðan</b>	<b>eorðe</b>
7a	tha	--	ða	þa	ða
	middungeard	<b>middangearde</b>	middungeard	middangeard	middangeard
8b	tiadæ	<b>tida</b>	tiade	teode	teode <sup>6</sup>
9a	<b>firim</b>	<b>firim on</b>	<b>firim on</b>	<b>firim</b>	<b>fyrum on</b>
	foldu	<b>foldum</b>	foldu	foldan	folden
9b-10	--	--	--	--	<b>6b added after 9</b>

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

# Inter-recensional variation can be largely explained



# Recensions (mostly) also internally stable



# Northumbrian *aelda*-recension: Few variants



## Northumbrian *aelda* recension

### A critical edition of the probable recension archetype

Based on **M** with collations from **P**.

Nu scylun<sup>1</sup> hergan hefaenricaes uard,  
metudæs maecti, **end** his modgidanc,  
uerc uuldurfadur— sue<sup>2</sup> he uundra gihuaes,  
eci dryctin, or astelidæ!

- 5 He aerist scop **aelda** barnum  
heben **til** hrofe, haleg **sceppend**;  
tha<sup>3</sup> 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, O<sup>1</sup>, To.

Nu sculon<sup>2</sup> herigean heofonrices peard,  
meotodes meahte, ond his modgeþanc,  
peorc puldorfaeder— spa<sup>3</sup> he pundra gehpæs,  
ece drihten, or onstealde!

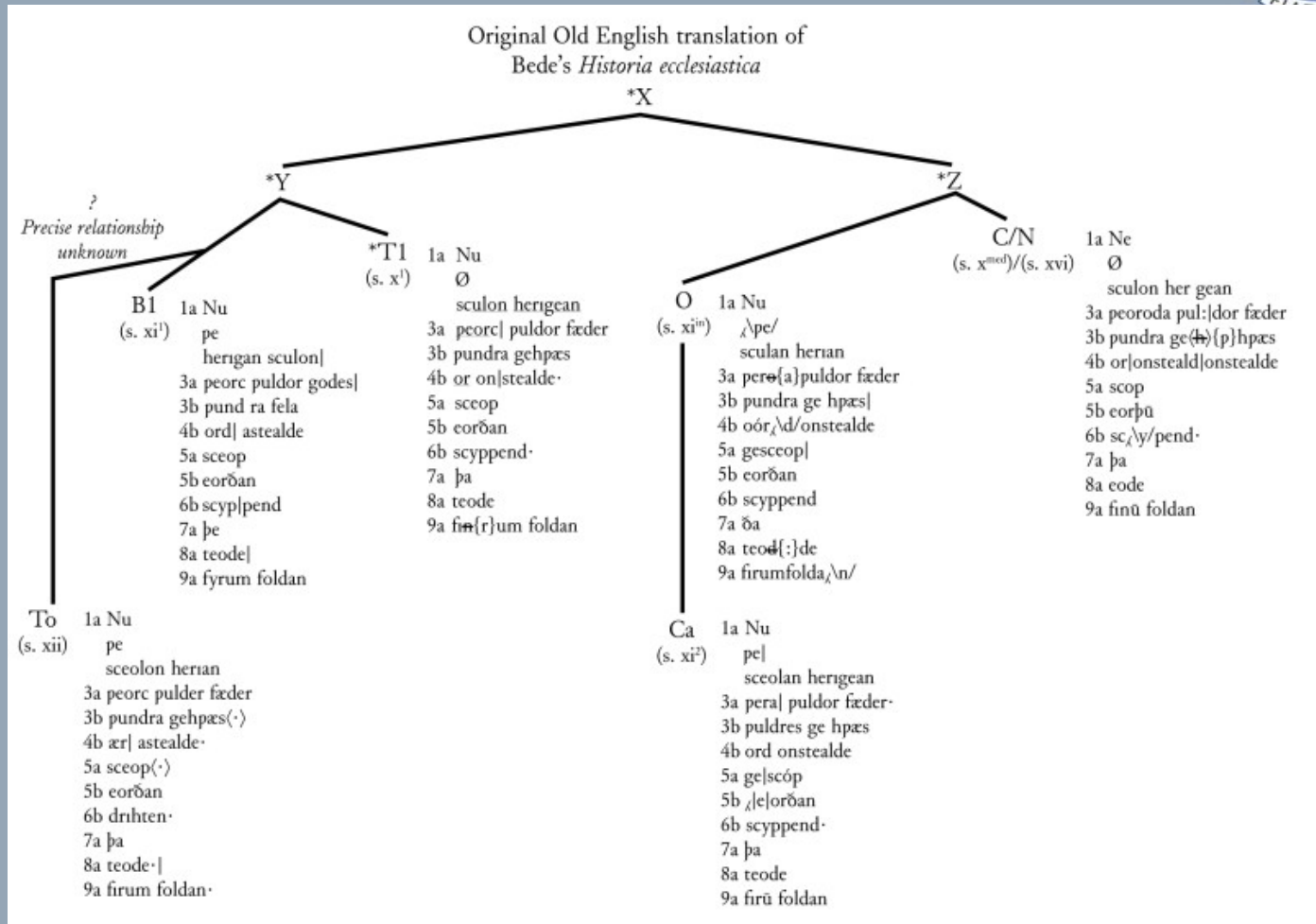
- 5 He ærest sceop eorðan bearnum  
heofon to hrofe, halig scyppend;  
þa<sup>4</sup> middangeard, moncynnes peard,  
ece drihten, æfter teode  
firum foldan, frea ælmihtig.

### Apparatus (Substantive variants)

1a Nu] Ne N 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 puldorfaeder] puldorgodes B1. 3b pundra] puldres Ca. 3b gehpæs] gephpæs N  
fela B1. 4b or] ord B1 Ca O (Post-Correction) ær To. 4b onstealde] astealde B1 To.  
5a ærest] æres Ca. 5a sceop] gesceop O Ca. 5b eorðan] eorþum N. 5b bearnum]  
bearnunum O (Pre-Correction). 6b scyppend] drihten To. 7a þa] þe B1. 8b teode]  
teodde O (Pre-Correction) eode N. 9a firum] finum N. 9a foldan] folda O  
(Pre-Correction).



# 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 ∅	1a Nu ˈnʊ	1a Nu nʊ
3a peoroda pul: dor fæder	3a peo̯e(a)puldor fæder	3a peo̯a puldor fæder·
3b pundra ge(þ){p}hpæs	3b pundra ge hpæs	3b puldres ge hpæs
4b or onsteald onstealde	4b o̯rˌa/onstealde	4b o̯rd onstealde
5a scop	5a gesceop	5a ge scóp
5b eorþu	5b eo̯ðan	5b ˌe/orðan
6b scˌy/pend·	6b scyppend	6b scyppend·
8a eode	8a teo̯(:)de	8a teode
9a firu foldan	9a firumfoldaˌn/	9a firu foldan



# T1-B1-To Recension

	T1	B1	To
1a	Nu	Nu þe	Nu þe
	sculon herige an	herigan sculon	sceolon herian
3a	puldorfæder	puldorgodes	pulderfæder
3b	gehpæt s	fela	gehpæt s
4b	or	ord	ær
	onstealde	astealde	astealde
6b	scyppend	scyppend	drihten
7a	þa	þe	þa



# B1 Performance

- 1 Tl singan? **Cwæð he<sup>1</sup>**: Sing me frumsceaft. Ða  
 B1 singan? **ða cwæð he<sup>1</sup>**: Sing me frumsceaft. Ða
- 2 Tl he ða þas andsware onfeng, þa ongon he sona singan **in herenesse<sup>2</sup>**  
 B1 he ða þas andsware onfeng, þa ongan he sona singan **on herunge<sup>2</sup>**
- 3 Tl Godes Scyppendes þa fers ⁊ þa **word<sup>3</sup>** þe he **næfre gehyrde<sup>4</sup>**,  
 B1 Godes Scyppendes ða uers ⁊ þa **word godes<sup>3</sup>** þe he **næfre ær ne gehyrde<sup>4</sup>**,
- 4 Tl **þære<sup>5</sup> endebyrdnesse þis is<sup>6</sup>**  
 B1 **ne heora<sup>5</sup> endebyrdnesse<sup>6</sup>**
- 5 Tl **Nu<sup>7</sup> seulon herigean<sup>8</sup>** heofonices weard,  
 B1 **Nu we<sup>7</sup> herigan seulon<sup>8</sup>** heofonices weard
- 6 Tl meotodes meahthe ⁊ his modgeþanc,  
 B1 metodes mihte ⁊ his modgeþanc
- 7 Tl weorc **wuldorfæder<sup>9</sup>**, swa he wundra **gehwæs<sup>10</sup>**  
 B1 weorc **wuldorgodes<sup>9</sup>** swa he wundra **fela<sup>10</sup>**
- 8 Tl ece Drihten **or<sup>11</sup> onstealde<sup>12</sup>**.  
 B1 éce drihten **ord<sup>11</sup> astealde<sup>12</sup>**
- 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 **þa<sup>13</sup>** middangeard monncynnes weard,  
 B1 **þe<sup>13</sup>** middangeard manncynnes 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 Ða aras he from þæm slæpe, ⁊ eal, **þa þe<sup>14</sup>** he slæpende song, **fæste<sup>15</sup>**  
 B1 Ða aras he fram þam slæpe, ⁊ eall **ðæt<sup>14</sup>** he slæpende sang **he hyt fæste<sup>15</sup>**
- 15 Tl **in<sup>16</sup>** gemynde hæfde. ⁊ þæm wordum sona monig word in þæt ilce  
 B1 **on<sup>16</sup>** gemynde hæfde. ⁊ þam wordum sona monig word in  ylce
- 16 Tl gemet **Godes wyrdes<sup>17</sup>** songes **togeþeodde<sup>18</sup>**. Ða com he on **morgenne<sup>19</sup>**  
 B1 gemet **gode wyrdes<sup>17</sup>** sanges **þær togeþeodde<sup>18</sup>**. Ða cóm he on **morgen<sup>19</sup>**
- 17 Tl to þæm tungerefan, **þe<sup>20</sup>** his ealdomon wæs: sægde him hwylce gife  
 B1 to ðam tungerefan, **se ðe<sup>20</sup>** his ealdoman wæs: sæde him hwylce gyfe
- 18 Tl he **onfeng<sup>21</sup>**; ⁊ he hine sona to þære abbudissan gelædde ⁊ hire **þa<sup>22</sup>**  
 B1 he **onfangen hæfde<sup>21</sup>**; ⁊ he hine sona to þære abbodesan gelædde ⁊ hire <sup>22</sup>
- 19 Tl cyðde ⁊ sægde. Ða heht heo gesomnian ealle þa...  
 B1 cyþde ⁊ sæde. Ða het heo gesamnian ealle þa...



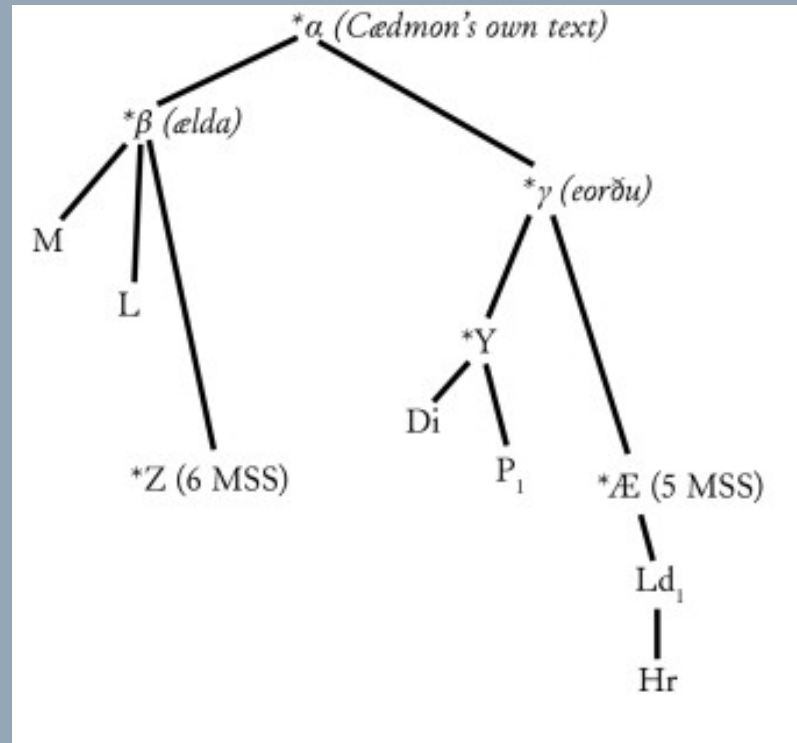
# Editorial issues



Famous editors

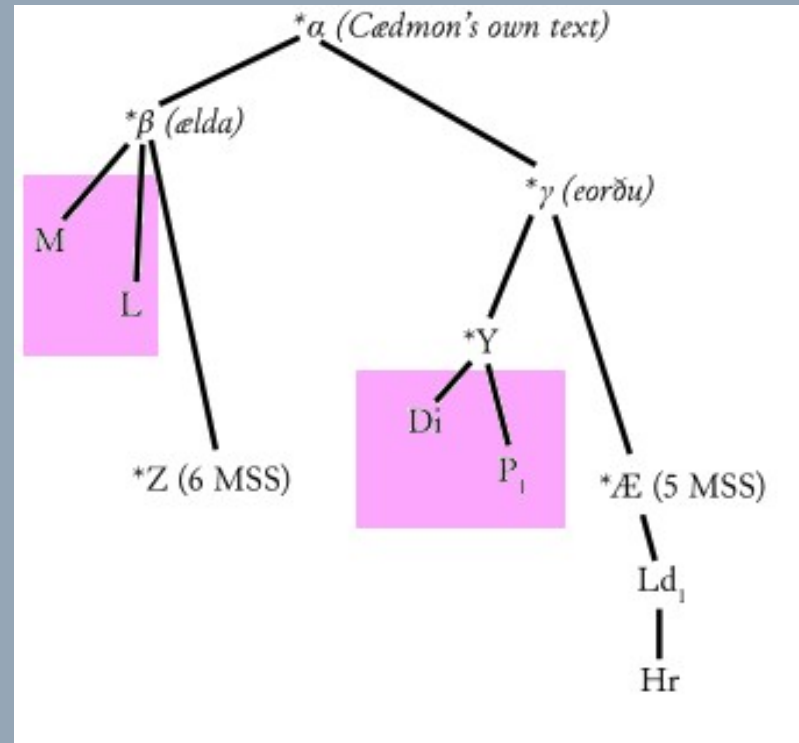
(Bottle of wine to person who gets them all)

# Dobbie (1937 vs. 1942) illustrates danger



Recensional variation from  
Dobbie 1937

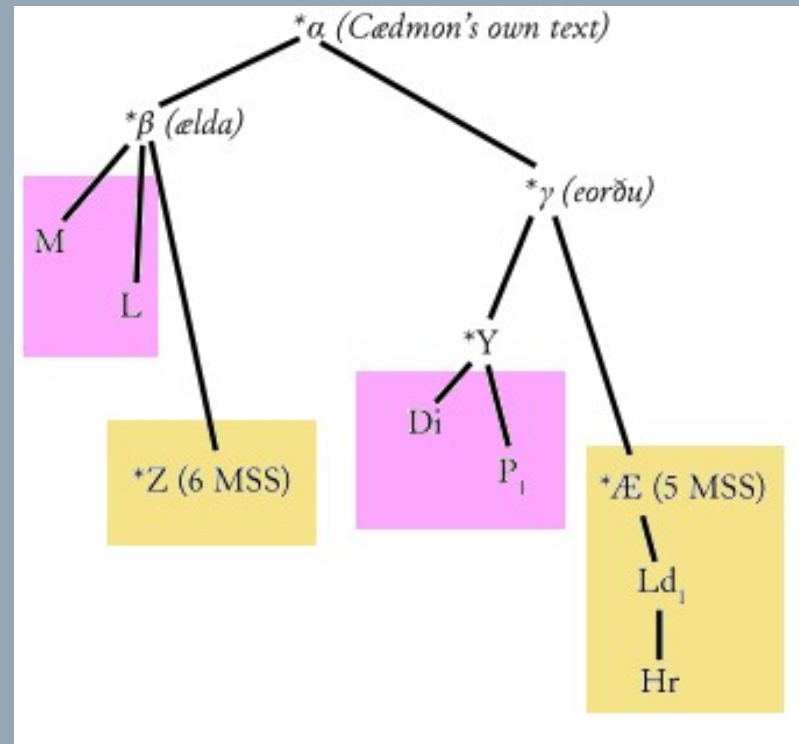
# Dobbie (1937 vs. 1942) illustrates danger



Recensional variation from  
Dobbie 1937

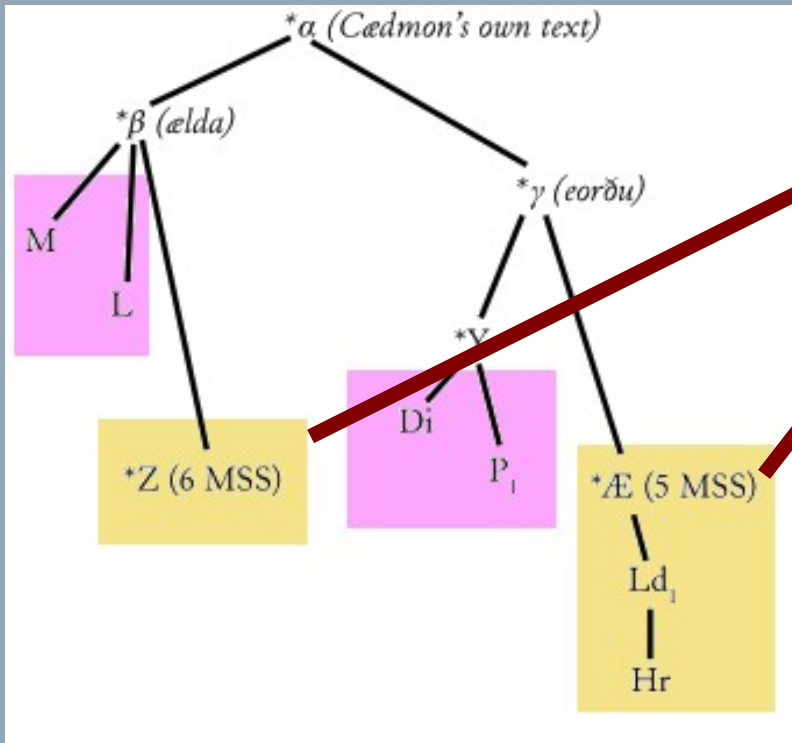


# Dobbie (1937 vs. 1942) illustrates danger



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 meahthe 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 Bd<sub>1</sub> Ln Mg Tr<sub>1</sub> Ld<sub>1</sub> Hr sculon herigean] herigan sculon B  
sculan O; sceolan Ca Ld<sub>1</sub> Hr; sculun Ln; sceolon Tr<sub>1</sub> herigean]  
hergean C; herian O H Bd<sub>1</sub> Ln Mg Hr; herian heri with heri underlined for  
deletion W; herian herian with second herian underlined for deletion Ld<sub>1</sub>;

Dialectal text from Dobbie 1942



# Print edition for 'canonical' editorial texts



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

Based on B1 with collations from Ca, N, O,<sup>1</sup> T1, To.

Nu pe herigan sculon heofonrices peard,  
metodes mihte, ond his modgeþanc,  
þeorc puldorgodes— spa<sup>2</sup> he pundra fecla,  
eccc drihten, ord astealde!

- 5 He ærest sceop eorðan bearnum  
heofon to hrofe, halig scyppend  
þe middangeard, manncynnes peard,  
eccc drihten, æfter teode  
fyrum foldan, frea ælmihtig.

### Apparatus (Substantive variants)

1a Nu] Ne N. 1a we] — T1 N O (Pre-Correction). 1a herigan sculon] sculon herigan T1 O To Ca N.  
3a weorc] weorðe N þere O (Pre-Correction) þera O (Post-Correction) Ca. 3a waldorgodes] puldorgodes  
T1 N O Ca To. 3b wundra] wundra Ca. 3b fecla] geþanc T1 To O Ca geþanc N. 4b ord] or T1 N O (Pre-  
Correction) or To. 4b astealde] onstealde T1 N O Ca. 5a ærest] æra Ca. 5a sceop] geseop O Ca. 5b eorðan]  
eorþum N. 6a hrofe] rofe Ca. 6b scyppend] drihten To. 7a þe] þa T1 To N Ca O. 8b teode] eode N.  
9a fyrum] finum N. 9a foldan] folda O (Pre-Correction).

<sup>1</sup> The 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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

- Up (Table of Contents)
- Previous (Nb *eorðu* recension)
- Next (B1 Performance)
- Down (Index)

## This text

- View (select to change):

Reading text

## Re

- Reading text
- Significant variants
- Substantive variants
- Orthographic variants
- All readings (analytic)
- All readings (parallel)
- 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, O<sup>1</sup>, To.

Nu sculon<sup>2</sup> herigean heofonrices peard,  
meotodes meahte, ond his modgeþanc,  
peorc puldorfæder— spa<sup>3</sup> he pundra gehpæs,  
ece drihten, or onstealde!

5 He ærest sceop eorðan bearnum  
heofon to hrofe, halig scyppend;  
þa<sup>4</sup> middangeard, moncynnes peard,  
ece drihten, æfter teode  
firum foldan, frea ælmihtig.

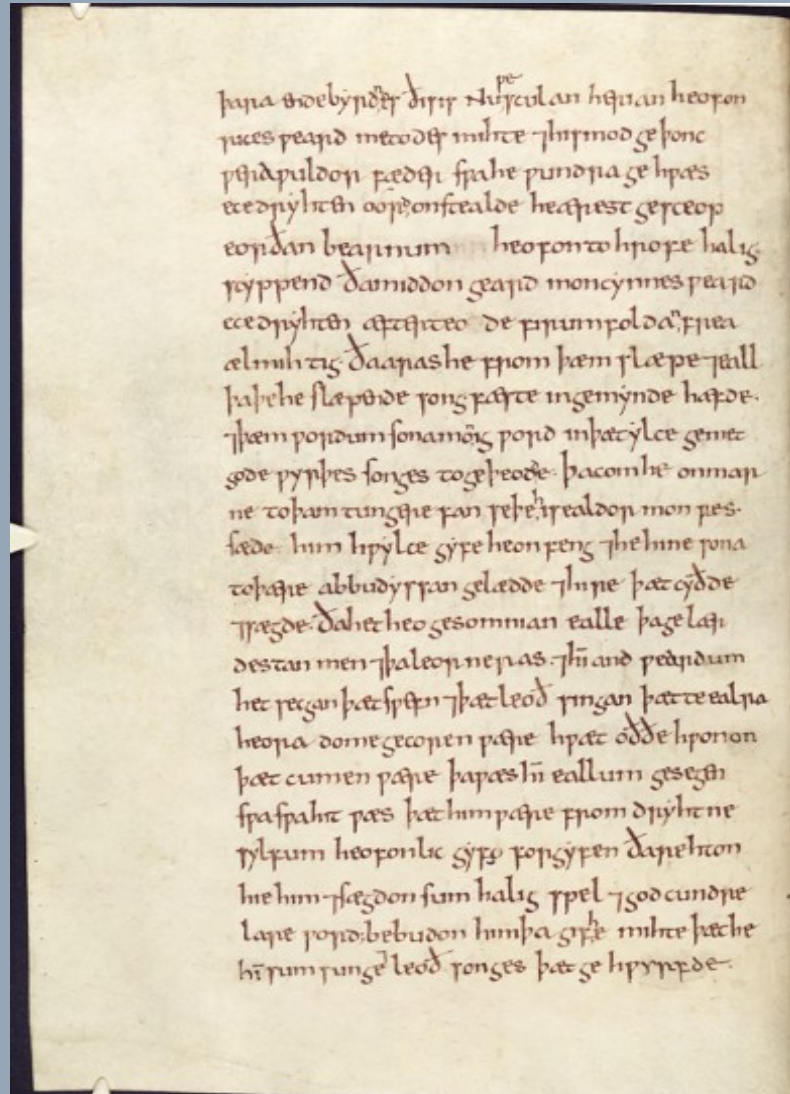
## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The 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.

<sup>2</sup>**sculon** *sculon* is either first person plural with an unexpressed subject (i.e. [*we/pe*] *sculon*), or third person plural with *peorc puldorfæder*, 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





# Digital editions can now serve more than one master



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

\*X

?  
Precise relationship  
unknown

\*Y

\*T1  
(s. x')

\*Z

C/N

(s. x<sup>med</sup>)/(s. xvi)

1a Ne

Ø

B1 1a Nu  
(s. xi<sup>1</sup>) pe  
herigan sculon|  
3a peorc puldor godes|  
3b pund ra fela  
4b ord| astealde  
5a sceop  
5b eorðan  
6b scyppend  
7a þe  
8a teode|



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sculon her gean  
3a peorða pul:|dor fæder  
3b pundra ge(þ)(p)hpæs  
4b or|onsteald|onstealde

þara soeþy pæþ drit stufelan hean heofon  
pues pærd meoðf miltre þimmo geþone  
pæþ puldor pædri fæþe pundra ge hpæs  
ædþyllic on onstealde heafese geþeop  
eorðan bearnum heofon to hiepe halig  
pæppend ðamiddon gearo moncyntes pæro  
ædþyllic æt færo de þrum folda þra  
ælmlic ða pæsthe þrom þam flæpe þall  
þa þe flæpde þong pæte ingemunde hæde  
þam þrom þonæg þom in þeylee geþe  
goe pæstres forges to geþe þa com he on man  
ne to þum eangre þan pæstredon mon þes  
lede þum hpylce gye heon þeng þe hne þona  
to þe abud þan geledde þum þe geþe  
þæge ða he hec gesomman ealle þa ge laþ  
destan men þe sceop ne pas þi and pærdum  
he þe ge þe þe þe leod þum ge þe ealra  
heora dome geapen þa þe hpe æde hþon  
þe cumen þa þe þa þe in eallum geþe  
fæst þa þe þe þe hpe þe þe þe þe  
þe þum heofonle gye þe gye þe dæhten  
he hne þe geþon þum halig ppeþ geode þe  
laþe þe þe þe þe hne þe miltre þe þe  
þe þum þe ge leod þe ge þe ge hpe þe



oroan  
drihten  
a  
eode|  
irum foldan