Beowulf 1889b, *Andreas* 1221b and Old English Poetic Style

A remarkable and long-recognised feature of the style of Old English poetry, which sets it apart from both Old English prose and Modern English usage, is the systematic use of the uninflected infinitive with a progressive meaning after a finite verb of motion or perception (upon which the uninflected infinitive depends). The following examples from across the corpus, which contain preterite singular forms of *cuman* plus an uninflected infinitive, will suffice to illustrate the idiom:[1]

> Þā *cōm fēran* frēa ælmihtiġ
> ofer midne dæġ, mǣre þēoden,
> in neorxnawang nēode sīne (*Genesis A* 852–855)
> [Then the almighty lord, the renowned king, of his own will, came walking into Paradise in the afternoon.]
>
> Sēo eft ne *cōm*
> tō lide *flēogan* (*Genesis A* 1478b–1479a)
> [She never came again flying to the ship.]
>
> ætsomne *cwōm* LX monna
> tō wǣġstæþe wicgum *rīdan* (Riddle 22.1–2)
> [Sixty men in total came riding on horses to the shore.]
>
> Hyse *cwōm gangan*, þǣr hē hīe wisse
> stondan in winċsele (Riddle 54.1a)
> [A young man came walking to where he knew she stood in the corner.]
>
> Þā *cwōm* Wealhþēo forð

1 Poems other than *Beowulf* are cited from Krapp & Dobbie (1931–1953). Macrons and other diacritics have been silently added. *Beowulf* is cited from the fourth edition of *Klaeber's Beowulf* (Fulk, Bjork & Niles 2008). Translations are mine unless otherwise specified.

gān under gyldnum bēage þǣr þā gōdan twēġen

sæton suhterġefæderan (*Beowulf* 1162b–1164a)

[Then Wealhtheow came forward walking under a golden diadem to where the two good men sat, nephew and uncle.]

Wæs sīo wrōht scepen

heard wið Hūgas, siððan Hiġelāc *cwōm*

faran flotherġe on Frēsna land (*Beowulf* 2913b–2915)

[Enmity with the Franks was made hard after Hygelac came faring with a sea-army in Friesland.]

It would be ungrammatical to translate the pertinent constructions with Modern English bare infinitives (*came walk, *came fly, *came ride, etc.). The only satisfactory way to render the uninflected infinitives is by using the *-ing* forms of the corresponding verbs in Modern English. The reason is that, in each of these examples, the action referred to by the infinitive was conceived of as happening at the same time as the action denoted by *c(w)ōm*.[2] Although this idiomatic way of expressing progressiveness is not completely restricted to poetry, authors of Old English prose generally preferred to rely on the present participle of the dependent verb rather than on its bare infinitive. Thus, alternative progressive expressions such as *c(w)ōm fērende*, *c(w)ōm flēogende*, *c(w)ōm rīdende*, *c(w)ōm gongende*, and *c(w)ōm farend*e, which are the norm outside Old English poetic texts, are almost non-existent in verse.[3]

The progressive use of the infinitive after a finite verb of motion or perception is extensively attested in *Beowulf*, as could be expected from such a stylistically

2 For a more detailed account of this idiomatic construction, see Callaway (1913: 89–92, 194–199, 221–224), Mitchell (1985: §§955, 967–969, 1543) and Ogura (1996; 2002: 80–93). Finite verbs of rest can also take uninflected infinitives (Gaaf 1934).

3 Ogura (2002: 83) classifies *The Battle of Maldon* 65a, *þǣr cōm flōwende*, as an instance of a finite verb of motion with a dependent present participle. Alternatively, Mark Griffith, in his ongoing edition of the poem, takes *flōwende* as an adjective dependent on the noun *flōd* in l. 65b.

conservative work. On the basis of the high incidence of the construction in that poem, Eduard Sievers argued in a short paragraph of his 'Die Metrik des *Beowulf*' that preterite plural *bǣron* in l. 1889b should be emended to *beran*, an uninflected infinitive, even though *bǣron* is not inadequate in terms of grammar, sense, and metre (1885: 224). This is how ll. 1888–1890a are edited in the fourth edition of *Klaeber's Beowulf*:

> Cwōm þā tō flōde felamōdiġra,
> hæġstealdra [hēap], hringnet bǣron,
> locene leoðosyrċan.
> [Then, the band of extremely brave young men came to the flood, they bore ring-nets, linked limb-mails.]

And here is the same passage with Sievers's emendation adopted:

> Cwōm þā tō flōde felamōdiġra,
> hæġstealdra [hēap], hringnet beran,
> locene leoðosyrċan.
> [Then, the band of extremely brave young men came to the flood bearing ring-nets, linked limb-mails.]

As can be seen, if Sievers's emendation is accepted, then this passage would feature another instance of the well-attested poetic usage of the uninflected infinitive with a progressive meaning after a finite verb of motion. Sievers found the presence of *cwōm* in 1888a such an obvious cause for emending l. 1889b that he did not even feel the need to state it explicitly. All he said about this verse is that emendation of *bǣron* to *beran* is warranted *aus stilistischen gründen* ('on the grounds of style') and straightaway proceeded to adduce two additional pieces of evidence in support of his view. First, that the left side of *æ* is underpointed in the manuscript. This underpoint, which is plainly visible in Norman Davis's revision of Julius Zupitza's facsimile of the codex (1959: 86–

87), was tentatively interpreted by Sievers as an indication of scribal correction of *bǣron* to *beron* (a possible spelling variant of the infinitive in the scribes' dialect).[4] Second, Sievers contended that emendation to *beran* would make this verse metrically more acceptable. Although he did not explain why, the reason is that A2a verses like *hringṅet bǣron*, with a long second lift, tend not to occur in the off-verse (Bliss 1967: 46).

Sievers's emendation has not fared well among editors of *Beowulf*. All of them, with the notable exceptions of Moritz Trautmann (1904), F. Holthausen (1929), and W. J. Sedgefield (1935), prefer to retain the manuscript reading at this point.[5] That this should be so is hardly surprising. Editors of Old English verse are reluctant to emend a particular reading if it is free from glaring errors of grammar and versification. And for all the stylistic appropriateness of Sievers's proposal, preterite plural *bǣron* makes grammatical sense in the context of l. 1889b. Its subject, *hēap*, is a singular collective noun, to be sure, and singular collective nouns generally take singular verbs. But if a sentence with a collective noun as subject is followed by a coordinate sentence with the same subject, then it is normal for the verb to change to the plural (Andrew 1948: §65), as in the following example:

> Weorod eall ārās;
> ēodon unblīðe under Earna Næs (ll. 3030b–3031a)
> [The band all rose; they went joyless under Eagles' Cliff.]

4 On the appearance of *-on* for *-an* in unstressed syllables, see Campbell (1959: §377), Fulk, Bjork & Niles (2008: cxl, §19.4) and Hogg (2011: §6.60). Some infinitives in *-on* in the *Beowulf* manuscript: *onġyton*, l. 308b; *breġdon*, l. 2167b; *hladon*, l. 2775a.

5 Holthausen's *Beowulf* went through eight editions (1905–1948). He emended *bǣron* to infinitival *beron* only in the first six. Sedgefield emends to *beran* only in the third of his three editions. See the textual note to l. 1889b in *Klaeber's Beowulf* (Fulk, Bjork & Niles 2008: 64). Interestingly, Fulk (2010: 210–211) retains the manuscript reading but translates 'bearing' rather than 'bore'.

Although the singular collective noun *weorod* is the subject of the two sentences in this passage, the verb in the first sentence is singular (*ārās*) while that in the coordinate sentence is plural (*ēodon*). The situation here is thus analogous to that in ll. 1888–1890a as they appear in nearly all the editions of the poem. A sentence with a collective noun as subject (*hēap*) and a singular verb (*cwōm*) is followed by a coordinate sentence with the same subject and a plural verb (*bǣron*). Moreover, even though the metrical pattern of *hringnet bǣron* is not frequent in the off-verse, unambiguous examples are attested in *Beowulf* (e.g. 2293b, *hordweard sōhte*, or 3065b, *meduseld būan*).

In spite of the grammatical acceptability and the relative metrical adequacy of *bǣron* in l. 1889b, Sievers's emendation should not be lightly dismissed. There are compelling reasons to construe the point that he identified beneath the *a* of *bæron* as an indication that infinitival *beron* is the correct reading here. Underpointing is a common strategy for Anglo-Saxon scribes to signal the deletion of an erroneously transmitted letter or series of letters (see, for example, Muir 1994: 41–42). The CLASP database of errors and emendations includes a number of interesting examples of underpoints used as deletion marks in Scribe A's portion of *Beowulf* (where l. 1889b occurs).[6] Thus, in l. 5 of fol. 153^{r} (l. 1079b), manuscript *moste* is corrected to *mæste* through underdotting of *o* and superscript addition of *æ*; in l. 17 of 154^{v} (1135b), an underpoint marks deletion of the *g* of *gewitiað* (which has also been erased) and a superscript *b* indicates correction to *bewitiað*; in l. 15 of fol.158^{v} (l. 1302a), the *o* of *on* is underpointed and *i* is added in superscript; in l. 2 of fol. 161v (1424b), the second *e* of *geseah* is underpointed and *æt* is added in superscript (*eah* has additionally been crossed out with a single horizontal line). As can be seen, it is underpointing that systematically signals deletion of an erroneous letter or letters in all of these examples, regardless of whether they also

6 On the phenomenon of scribal self-correction in the *Beowulf* manuscript, see Orchard (2003–2004) and Neidorf (2015).

feature additional erasure or crossing out. Unlike in these four examples, the underpoint of *bæron* in l. 1889b is not supplemented by superscript material, but this would of course have been unnecessary, given that deletion of *a* through underpointing suffices to correct *bæron* to *beron* (as in *Exhortation to Christian Living* 21b, for example, where the mere underdotting of the *a* of *æ* corrects manuscript *byrdæn* to *byrden*).

Even though the metrical type represented by *hringṅet bæron* is not completely absent from the off-verse, a detailed survey of its incidence in *Beowulf* reveals a remarkably strong preference for the on-verse. According to my search of the CLASP metre database, there are 73 unambiguous instances of the / \ | / x pattern with a long second lift. Of these, 64 (or 87.7%) occur in the first half of the line, while only nine (or 12.3%) occur in the second half.[7] The variety with a short second lift (to which emended *hringṅet beran* belongs) shows, on the other hand, a larger incidence in the off- than in the on-verse. Out of a total of 62 instances, 41 (or 66.1%) are to be found in the second half of the line.[8] Off-verses like *hringṅet bæron* are thus not impossible in *Beowulf*, to be sure, but their great rarity, coupled with the clear preference for verses like *hringṅet beran* to appear in the second half of the line, should serve as an extra warning for editors to be more critical of manuscript *bæron* at l. 1889b. That Sievers's emendation has much to commend it can in fact be made clearer by reference to one particular

7 Of the 64 on-verses, 28 show the basic / \ | / x pattern, without resolution: 306a, 820a, 1033a, 1111a, 1214a, 1224a, 1331a, 1490a, 1548a, 1624a, 1663a, 1891a, 2031a, 2064a, 2193a, 2213a, 2220a, 2254a, 2300a, 2306a, 2327a, 2334a, 2339a, 2405a, 2552, 2987a, 3034a, and 2436a. 18 show resolution of the first lift: 27a, 381a, 401a, 490a, 517a, 552a, 1176a, 1435a, 1519a, 1553a, 1590a, 1650a, 2016a, 2017a, 2404a, 2474a, 2553a, and 2757a. Another 16 instances show resolution of the second lift: 467a, 819a, 1047a, 1198a, 1205a, 1558a, 1607a, 1670a, 1802a, 1852a, 2043a, 2072a, 2154a, 2616a, 2979a, and 3006a. And, finally, two examples show resolution of both lifts: 522a and 1267a. Of the nine off-verses, four have the basic pattern without resolution: 367b, 1264b, 2278b, and 2293b. And five have a resolved first lift: 457b, 1650b, 1704b, 1997b, and 3065b. From this count, I have excluded *-sceaft* compounds for being prosodically ambiguous. I have also excluded 406a, *searonet seowed* (or *sēowed*?), and 1275b, *dēaþwīċ sêon*, as it is not clear whether *sêon* stands for *sĕ(o)han* or *sēoan*. 1633b has been excluded for reasons that will become clear further below. A2a verses like *Beowulf* 2357a, *frēawine folca*, with a resolved half-lift, have not been included because suspension of resolution in the second lift is possible only after a monosyllabic half-lift.

example of the short variety of type A2a in the poem, as the following passage will show:

> Đā iċ snūde ġefræġn sunu Wīhstānes
> æfter wordcwydum wundum dryhtne
> hȳran heaðosīocum, hringṅet beran,
> brogdne beaduserċean, under beorges hrōf. (ll. 2752–2755)
> [Then, after the speech, I heard of Wihstan's son promptly obeying his wounded lord, sickened by battle, bearing the ring-net, the interlocked battle-shirt, under the roof of the barrow.]

The second half of l. 2754 is occupied by an off-verse that is identical to the emended version of l. 1889b proposed by Sievers, and in which the uninflected infinitival form *beran* is likewise dependent upon a previous finite verb, this time of perception (*ġefræġn* in l. 2752a).

There is a crucial piece of evidence outside of *Beowulf* in support of the emendation of l. 1889b. The metre of l. 1221b of *Andreas*, *bǣron ūt hræðe*, is notoriously irregular. It can scan only as an expanded type D, a metrical variety that on account of its phonetic heaviness and compulsory double alliteration is strictly restricted to the first half of the line (cf. *Andreas* 903a, *blīðe beorht cyning*, and 919a, *wordum*

8 There are, thus, 21 on-verses. Of these, 14 have the basic pattern, without resolution of the first lift: 242a, 284a, 629a, 643a, 657a, 817a, 1256a, 1432a, 1682a, 2035a, 2588a, 2947a, 3000a, and 3172a. The remaining seven verses have resolution of the first lift: 67a, 69a, 776a, 786a, 1015a, 2191a, and 2959a. Of the 41 instances in the off-verse, 30 show an unresolved first lift: 281b, 303b, 572b, 838b, 908b, 994b, 1065b, 1288b, 1289b, 1510b, 1731b, 1834b, 1896b, 1914b, 1964b, 2007b, 2060b, 2110b, 2174b, 2334b, 2417b, 2460b, 2545b, 2551b, 2663b, 2754b, 2956b, 2969b, 3019b, and 3081b. The remaining verses show resolution of the first lift: 64b, 215b, 619b, 1112b, 1278b, 1525b, 1869b, 1925b, 2158b, 2265b, and 3131b. I have excluded possible instances in which the second position is occupied by the second element of a prefixed adjective or noun (1287b, 2972b), a monosyllabic deuterotheme (1310b, 2906b, 2613b), or a heavy derivative suffix (1457b, 1807b, 2457b, 2256b, 3135b), because Bliss, following Campbell's prosodic analysis (1959: §§88–89), scan all of them as type A1. If in all of these examples the linguistic element in second position bears some degree of metrical stress, as seems probable (Fulk 1992: §§210–213), then they all classify as type A2a with a short second lift. This means that the real number of A2a verses with short second lifts in the off-verse would be 51 out of a total of 72 (or 70.8%).

wīs hæleð). This verse, moreover, is problematic in terms of grammar and sense, as the context in which it occurs shows:

> æfter þām wordum cōm werod unmæte,
> lyswe lārsmeoðas, mid lindġecrode,
> bolgenmōde; bǣron ūt hræðe
> ond þām halgan þǣr handa ġebundon. (ll. 1219–1222)
> [after those words a very great host came, false teachers with a troop armed with shields, swollen with anger; *bǣron ūt hræðe* and there they bound the saint's hands.]

L. 1221b is difficult to translate because preterite plural *bǣron* lacks an object. Kenneth R. Brooks, assuming that 'weapons' is its implicit object, would translate 'they rushed out in force' (1961: 105). Richard North and Michael D. J. Bintley prefer to take St Andrew as the understood object of the verb and therefore translate as '[they] bore him out quickly' (2016: 183). Neither rendering is satisfactory, however, because this usage of a transitive verb without an explicit object is not appropriate to Old English poetry. In his detailed survey of the metre of *Andreas*, K. Stevens proposed that manuscript *bæron* be emended to infinitival *beran* (1981: 24–25). L. 1221b would then feature an acceptable metrical pattern for an off-verse (unexpanded type D with resolution of *beran*) and the passage would then also make better sense:

> æfter þām wordum cōm werod unmæte,
> lyswe lārsmeoðas, mid lindġecrode,
> bolgenmōde, beran ūt hræðe,
> ond þām halgan þǣr handa ġebundon.

> [after those words a very great host came bearing out quickly, false teachers with a troop armed with shields, swollen with anger, and there they bound the saint's hands.]

As can be seen, the uninflected infinitive *beran*, which is now dependent on *cōm* in l. 1119a, is used intransitively to refer to an action that is simultaneous with the act of motion. That the metre of *Andreas* 1221b and the sense of the above passage are so satisfactorily restored by editorial *beran* is a reliable indicator that manuscript *bæron* is a scribal substitution.

In his piece on the metre of *Andreas*, Stevens argued that 'the scribe mistook an original *beran* for *bēron*, the Anglian preterite plural, and West-Saxonised it' (1981: 24). This is an eminently reasonable hypothesis, and also one that can easily account for the scribal substitution of *bæron* for authorial *beran* at *Beowulf* 1889b. We know that the scribes were in the habit of replacing many of the dialectal forms in their exemplars with their Late West Saxon equivalents (e.g. *dydon* for original *dēdon* at *Genesis A* 142a, *Daniel* 196b, and *Beowulf* 1828b).[9] They were in fact so accustomed to this process of dialect substitution that sometimes they applied it mechanically to linguistic forms that did not require it. Take *Beowulf* 407a, *Wæs þū, Hrōðgār, hāl*, and 1171b, *ond tō Ġēatum spræc*, for example. Here, preterite singular *wæs* and *spræc* appear instead of *wes* and *sprec*, the imperative singular forms that the context so obviously demands. The probable reason for this is not difficult to discern. Forms like *wes* and *sprec* are homonymic in Mercian: they can be either imperative singular or preterite singular (Campbell 1959: §743). It is likely that the scribe, who often substituted West Saxon *wæs* and *spræc* for the Mercian preterites *wes* and *sprec* in his exemplar, mistook

9 Each of these verses would consist of only three positions if *dydon* were authorial. On the unmetricality of three-position verses, see Pascual (2013–2014) and Neidorf (2016: 55–57). On the scribal substitution of *dydon* for *dēdon*, see Sievers (1885: 498), Fulk (1992: §355.4), Neidorf (2017: §67) and Pascual (2017: 90).

the Mercian imperative singular *wes* and *sprec* at ll. 407a and 1171b for preterites, thereby erroneously replacing them with *wæs* and *spræc* (Fulk, Bjork & Niles 2008: cxxx; Neidorf 2017: §65).[10] Preterite plural *bæron* at l. 1889b is probably the result of a similar confusion. If infinitival *beran* was spelled *beron* in the scribe's exemplar, it is only natural that he misconstrued it as a non-West Saxon preterite plural (which would also have been spelled *beron*) and then Saxonised it to *bæron*.[11]

There is further corroboration that manuscript *bǣron* is a scribal error for infinitival *beran* at both *Beowulf* 1889b and *Andreas* 1221b. In an essay published in 1994, Peter Richardson showed that uninflected infinitives dependent upon finite verbs of motion or perception perform a specific narrative function in Old English verse. In particular, Richardson argued that the poets used this idiomatic construction in order to organise their plots into smaller and discrete segments of narration. Thus, the occurrence of these uninflected infinitives marks the beginning of new and significant scenes, while the individual events within these scenes are narrated using simple preterites. The trip to the dragon's lair, for example, opens with the finite verb *ġewāt*, upon which the uninflected *scēawian* depends:

> *Ġewāt* þā twelfa sum torne ġebolgen
> dryhten Ġēata dracan *scēawian*; (2401–2402)
> [Then the lord of the Geats, as one of twelve, swollen with anger, departed seeking for the dragon.]

10 For similar scribal substitutions, see, for example, Fulk (2004) and Neidorf (2018).

11 The distinction between unstressed *o* and *a* can be seen to be weakening as early as the ninth century (Campbell 1959: §377; Hogg: 2011: §6.60). Brooks rejects emendation of *bǣron* to *beran* at *Andreas* 1221b because 'this involves two spelling deviations in the same word' (1961: 105). North and Bintley concur (2016: 279). They appear not to have considered the possibility that the *Andreas* scribe's exemplar read *beron* rather than *beran*.

A series of events (including Beowulf's long soliloquy and his last speech to his men) follows, all of which are narrated in the preterite. Then, the construction appears again in ll. 2542–2545a:

> *Ġeseah* ðā be wealle se ðe worna fela
> gumcystum gōd gūða ġedīġde,
> hildehlemma, þonne hnitan fēðan,
> *sto[n]dan* stānbogan, strēam ūt þonan
> *brecan* of beorge;
> [He who, good in manly virtues, had survived many wars, military conflicts, when the troops clashed, saw then stone arches standing, a stream bursting forth from the barrow.]

Here, the function of the idiom is to indicate that the trip scene has ended, and that a new scene (the encounter with the dragon) has begun. The next uninflected infinitive occurs a few lines later, when Beowulf challenges the dragon:

> Lēt ðā of brēostum, ðā hē ġebolgen wæs,
> Weder-Ġēata lēod word ūt faran,
> stearcheort styrmde; stefn in *becōm*
> heaðotorht *hlynnan* under hārne stān. (ll. 2550–2553)
> [Now that he was infuriated, the man of the Weather-Geats let words go out from his breast, the stout-hearted one shouted; his voice came in thundering battle-clear under the grey stone.]

The ensuing events are then narrated in the preterite. The dragon perceives the human voice and responds breathing fire from within its lair. The earth resounds and Beowulf gets ready to fight. The challenge scene comes to an end with the hero swinging his shield at the dragon, which has just coiled in preparation for sudden attack. The reptile's

subsequent assault on the Geat, expressed through a finite verb of motion with two dependent infinitives, marks the beginning of the new combat scene:

Ġewāt ðā byrnende ġebogen *scrīðan*,

tō ġescipe *scyndan*. (ll. 2569–2570a)

[Then, coiled and burning, it came gliding, rushing to its fate.]

More examples of these uninflected infinitives, the narrative function of which is to highlight the transitional character of the passages in which they occur, can be found in Richardson's essay on the subject.

Beowulf 1889b and *Andreas* 1221b occur at narrative junctures where one should expect to find an uninflected infinitive dependent upon a finite verb of motion or perception. In the lines preceding 1889b, Hrothgar, having bid farewell to Beowulf, rewards the hero with twelve additional treasures. The king then has the premonition that he will not see the Geat again. Beowulf, rejoicing in his rewards, departs from Heorot with his companions. All of these events are narrated in the preterite (ll. 1866–1887). A new scene (and a new fitt) opens then, with Beowulf and his men now on the coast, ready to embark back to Geatland (1888–1890a).[12] Emendation of *bǣron* to *beran* at 1889b puts an uninflected infinitive precisely where it should be, separating the last scene at Heorot from Beowulf's return scene to the Danish coast. The coastguard then welcomes the Geatish party. Their boat is loaded with treasures and horses. Beowulf gives an ornamented sword to the coastguard as reward right before embarking (ll. 1890b–1903a). At this point, the construction of a finite verb with a dependent infinitive reappears:

Ġewāt him on naca

drēfan dēop wæter, Dena land ofġeaf. (ll. 1903a–1904)

12 As Andy Orchard showed, many (though not all) 'fitt-divisions come at logical pauses in the narrative sequence' (2003: 96).

[The boat set out onward, stirring the deep water, left the land of the Danes.]

Its function here is of course to mark the end of the Danish part of the poem and the beginning of Beowulf's homecoming. Similarly, *Andreas* 1221b also occurs at the opening of both a new scene and a new fitt. Right after St Andrew, encouraged by God, reveals himself to the Mermedonians (ll. 1206–1218), a crowd of enemies seizes him and binds his hands. The emended uninflected infinitive at 1221b would thus mark the end of the saint's invisibility and the onset of his torture. In the lines that follow, the Mermedonians, emboldened by the devil, pull the saint across the countryside to carry him to prison. At this point, an uninflected infinitive occurs again:

> Sār eft ġewōd
> ymb þæs beornes brēost, oðþæt beorht *ġewāt*
> sunne sweġeltorht tō sete *glīdan*. (1246b–1248)
> [Pain pierced through that man's heart yet again, until the bright sun, shining in the sky, went gliding to its setting.]

The construction here indicates the end of the trip to prison and the beginning of the incarceration scene.

Both *Beowulf* 1889b and *Andreas* 1221b occur at moments of transition between narrative scenes, where uninflected infinitives dependent upon verbs of motion are regularly found. In both of them, the form *bæron*, which so closely resembles infinitival *beron*, happens to be in proximity to *c(w)ōm*, one of the two finite verbs of motion that are most frequently used in combination with uninflected infinitives.[13] This series of coincidences alone should suffice to make future editors suspicious of manuscript *bæron* in these two half-lines. When one bears in mind that *bæron* seems to have been corrected to *beron* in the *Beowulf* manuscript, and that substitution of *beran* for *bǣron*

13 The other one is *ġewāt* (Callaway 1913: 90).

restores both metricality and sense to *Andreas* 1221b, then the conclusion that these two verses require emendation appears inescapable. As E. G. Stanley memorably stated, even the sleepiest and most careless of Anglo-Saxon scribes knew his living Old English better than the best modern editor of Old English verse (1984: 257). This statement remains a salutary reminder for editors to be always wary of new proposals to introduce emendations into their texts.[14] Stanley's assertion, however, should not be taken as a carte blanche to disregard compelling arguments in support of emendation when they happen to exist. Both linguistic forms, preterite plural *bǣron* and infinitive *beran*, might well have been written *beron* in the scribes' exemplars. It is therefore not unreasonable to think that some scribes (even alert and careful ones) occasionally mistook one homograph for the other as they copied.[15]

There is one more verse from *Beowulf* that should be addressed in the present context by way of conclusion. L. 1633b, *foldweġ mǣton*, is metrically unusual. As shown above, type A2a verses with a long second lift have a strong preference for the first half of the line in the poem. This verse, moreover, occurs at a point in the narrative where an uninflected infinitive would be most appropriate. Beowulf has beyond hope returned victorious from the bottom of Grendel's mother's mere. His men rejoice in their leader's unexpected success and undo the helmet and the coat of mail from him (ll. 1623–1631). They all then depart from the mere, heading back to Heorot. If *mǣton* at 1633b is emended to *metan*, then the beginning of the Geats' return scene to the Danish hall would be signalled by an inflected infinitive dependent upon *fēr̄don*, a finite verb of motion:

14 As Kenneth Sisam demonstrated (1953: 36–38), however, in regard to some archaic and dialectal words, modern philologists are in a better position to judge than Late West Saxon scribes.

15 It should be noted that, in the case of *Beowulf* 1889b and *Andreas* 1221b, misinterpretation of infinitive *beron* as a preterite plural would have been made likelier by the collective noun subjects *hēap* (*Beowulf* 1889a) and *werod* (*Andreas* 1219b). The relatively long distance between finite verb of motion and dependent infinitive was probably also a factor.

Fērdon forð þonon fēþelāstum

ferhþum fæġne, foldweġ *metan*,

cūþe strǣte. (1632–1634a)

[Rejoicing in their hearts, they went forth from there by walking tracks, traversing the earth-way, the well-known road.]

After a few verses in which the return trip to Heorot is narrated in the preterite, their arrival at the Danish hall is marked, as one would expect by now, by a finite verb of motion with a dependent uninflected infinitive:

oþ ðæt semninga tō sele *cōmon*

frome fyrdhwate fēowertȳne

Ġēata *gongan*; (1640–1642a)

[until all of a sudden fourteen Geats, brave and bold in warfare, came walking to the hall.]

Unlike *bæron* at *Beowulf* 1889b, *mæton* does not have its *a* underdotted in the manuscript. The metre of *foldweġ mǣton*, moreover, is not as irregular as that of *Andreas* 1221b, *bǣron ūt hræðe*. Still, emendation to *metan* at 1633b renders this verse metrically more natural, as type A2a with a short second lift tends to appear more regularly in the second half of the line (cf. 2754b, *hringnet beran*).[16] More importantly, emendation would bring this passage into line with Old English poetic style, as both the beginning and the end of the Geats' return scene to Heorot would then be correctly signalled by an uninflected infinitive dependent upon a finite verb of motion. The possibility that the scribe mistook infinitival *meton* in his exemplar for an Anglian preterite plural and Saxonised it to *mǣton* should therefore be seriously considered by future editors of the poem.

16 Sedgefield appears to have been the only editor in emending *mǣton* to *metan* (Fulk, Bjork & Niles 2008: 55). A. J. Bliss considered the possibility of emendation on metrical grounds (1967: 46–47).

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