

Appendix I

ALAN BLISS: 1921–1985

Peter J. Lucas

WHEN ALAN BLISS died in Dublin in November 1985 the scholarly world lost one of the leading English philologists and medievalists of his generation. Following study in Oxford after the Second World War under the supervision of J. R. R. Tolkien, whose lectures on *Finn and Hengest: The Fragment and the Episode* he subsequently edited and published (London, Allen & Unwin, 1982), in his scholarship Alan embraced a wide field, Old and Middle English, the history of the English language, and medieval French philology including Anglo-Norman.

While professor in Malta he wrote *The Metre of Beowulf*, published by Blackwell in 1958, revised edition 1962, reprinted with corrections 1967. This book refined and developed the earlier work of the nineteenth-century German scholar Eduard Sievers, providing a coherent system in which much diverse information is codified in a unitary form. It proved seminal in stimulating a great deal of further scholarship on Old English poetic metre and style. While many metrists disagree with at least parts of Bliss's analysis, his views were always carefully considered and cogently argued. I recall once remarking to him what a logical subject Old English metre is, to which he replied, "I wish everybody thought so."

By the time *The Metre of Beowulf* was published in 1958 Alan had become Professor of English Language in the University of Istanbul, but he did not stay there long and moved to Dublin in the late 1950s, where he worked in the Department of Old and Middle English at University College Dublin then being developed by Professor the Reverend T. P. Dunning. With Tom Dunning he produced an exemplary edition of *The Wanderer* (London, Methuen, 1969), and eventually Alan himself became Professor of Old and Middle English. He developed the curriculum so that a wide variety of courses were taught in Old and Middle English Literature, History of the English Language, Old Norse, Germanic Philology, Anglo-Norman and Hiberno-English, a field in which Alan's work was also seminal.

When he died Alan was working on an edition of the *Purgatorium Hibernicum*, only an extract of which could be included in his ground-breaking *Spoken English in Ireland 1600–1740* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1979), on an edition of Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, and on the structure of verse clauses in *Beowulf*. All his published work was of the highest standard: accurate, critical, and penetrating.

Bibliography of Works by Alan Bliss on Old English Metre in Chronological Order

- Bliss, Alan J., *The Metre of Beowulf* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1958, revised edition 1962, reprinted with corrections 1967).
- . *An Introduction to Old English Metre* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1962). Re-issued with an Introduction by Daniel Donoghue, *Old English Newsletter Subsidia* 20 (Binghamton, SUNY, 1993).
- . "The Appreciation of Old English Metre," in *English and Medieval Studies presented to J.R.R. Tolkien on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn (London, Allen & Unwin, 1962), 27–40.
- . "Some Unnoticed Lines of Old English Verse," *Notes and Queries* 216 (1971), 404.
- . "Single Half-Lines in Old English Poetry," *Notes and Queries* 216 (1971), 442–49.
- . "The Origin and Structure of the Old English Hypermetric Lines," *Notes and Queries* 217 (1972), 242–48.
- . "Auxiliary and Verbal in *Beowulf*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1981), 157–82.
- †———. *The Scansion of Beowulf*, ed. Peter J. Lucas, *Old English Newsletter Subsidia* 22 (Kalamazoo, Medieval Institute and Richard Rawlinson Center for Anglo-Saxon Studies, Western Michigan University, 1995).