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# THE LANGUAGE OF LA3AMON'S *BRUT* (I)

Haruo Iwasaki

1. The language of Lazamon's *Brut* belongs to the period of early Middle English when the tendency to simplify the linguistic structure which first developed in late Old English was being realized. It is therefore of great importance apart from its literary value for a historical study of the English language. There are two texts of *Brut* preserved in the Cotton collection in the British Museum: Caligula A. ix and Otho C. xiii.\* The former was presumably written in 1200 or thereabout and the latter about a half century later.

The aim of this article is to compare these two texts and to reveal some features of the traditional poetic language in its transitional stage in the first half of the thirteenth century. As it is impossible to cover here all the phenomena presented in the two texts, this article will be restricted largely to an inquiry as to how the words and grammatical forms in the C-text are changed in the O-text. The words will be given in alphabetical order with specimens followed by their modern rendering. The numbers in brackets indicate frequency and those in parentheses indicate line-number. The materials will be studied in two separate sections: vocabulary and grammar. The text used is 'LA3AMON: *BRUT*' (ed. by G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie, EETS 250, 1963) and the lines here under investigation are 1-5117.\*\*

## VOCABULARY

### NOUNS

2. C **aldorman**: O **man** [1]

Numbert hehte þe alder-mon (712) Numberd hepte þe man  
(=the man was called Numbert)

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\*Here referred to as the C-text and the O-text respectively.

\*\* N. Bøgholm's similar investigation, *The Layamon Texts: A Linguistical Investigation* (Einar Munksgaard, Copenhagen 1944), came to my attention after this article had been finished. Comparison with and criticism of this book will be made in another article.

3. **C aþelene:** O folk [1], cnihtes [1]  
of æþelene hire fædere (1639) of hire fader cnihtes  
(=of her father's knights)
4. **C aþeling:** O kniht [1], frendes [1]  
Heo axeden aþelinges (2681) ...axede þe cnihtes  
(=They asked the knights)
5. **C æhte:** O godes [1], seoluer [1]  
þa æhte heo nomen (4698) þe godes inomen  
(=they seized the goods)
6. **C balu:** O care [1], wowe [2], harm [1]  
þu scalt...muchel balu habben (3669) ...mochel care habbe  
(=thou shalt have great sorrow)
7. **C beorn:** O man [2], cniht [3], kempe [1], children [1]  
beornes þer fullen (2267) cniptes þar fullen  
(=knights fell there)
8. **C blanken:** O hors [2]  
Lihteð of eowre blanken (2924) Of ȝoure hors a-liptep  
(=Alight from your horses)
9. **C burstan:** O harme [6], lure [1]  
for hora muchela burstan (500) for hire mochele arme  
(=by reason of their great harm)
10. **C compe:** O fihte [6], werre [1]  
þer heo weren on kompen (2103) þare hii weren on fihte  
(=where they were in the combat)
11. **C duȝeðe:** O men [3], cnihtes [2], folke [4], leode [4]  
Seie þu bi-fore mire duȝ[ð]en (1501) (S)ei bi-fore mine men  
(=Say thou before my people)
12. **C faiesip:** O deape [1]  
faie-sip þes kinges (1415) Rudibras his deape  
(=the death of King Rudibras)
13. **C folde:** O grunde [4], lond [1]  
and he feol to folde (1443) and he ful to grunde  
(=and he fell to the ground)
14. **C friðe:** O paise [2]  
inne griðe and in friðe (1261) in gripe and paise  
(=in concord and in peace)
15. **C gael:** O feo [2], truage [2]

- ne na gael heo[m] senden (4589) ne non truage sende  
 (=nor any tribute send to them)
16. C **griðe**: O **paise** [2]  
 i griðe he heold his kine-lond (1342) in paise heold...  
 (=he held his kingdom in peace)
17. C **gume**: O **man** [3], **cniht** [1]  
 þa com an gume ærnen (4260) þo com þar a man erne  
 (=then came a man running)
18. C **zeld**: O **truage** [1]  
 and sette zeld a pisse londe (3584) setten truage...  
 (=and set tribute in this land)
19. C **zeuen**: O **zeftes** [7]  
 þa hefde Brutus þa zeue (897) þo hafde Brutus þe zeft  
 (=Then had Brutus the gift)
20. C **zisle**: O **hostage** [6]  
 zisles heo him zeouen sone (2728) Hostages him bi-toke  
 (=they soon gave him hostages)
21. C **haures**: O **spiars** [2]  
 haures he sende (746) spiars he [s]ende  
 (=he sent spies)
22. C **hærre**: O **lauerd** [3]  
 and habben me for harre (2712) and habbe me for louerd  
 (=and have me for lord)
23. C **heleðes**: O **cnihtes** [1], **folk** [2]  
 þa heleðes weren bliðe (891) þe cniptes weren blipe  
 (=the knights were glad)
24. C **heretoge**: O **heuedling** [1], **cheueteine** [1]  
 hæfden he to here-toze enne hæh-iborene mon (4980) hadden hii anne heued  
 ling... (=they had for leader a high-born man)
25. C **hired**: O **men** [1], **cnihtes** [2], **folke** [3], **ferde** [2], **londe** [2]  
 mid al his hirede he wes þer (1687) mid alle his cnihtes...  
 (=he was there with all his retinue)
26. C **kempe**: O **cniht** [7]  
 kempen þer feollen (1082) cniptes þer follen  
 (=knights fell there)
27. C **leode**: O **men** [5], **cnihtes** [1], **þeode** [3], **londe** [14], **folke** [17]  
 An preost wes on leoden (1) A prest was in londe

(=There was a priest on earth)

28. **C maðmas: O godes** [3]  
alle his maðmas (445) alle his godes  
(=all his riches)
29. **C mensca: O mansipe** [1]  
mid mensca heold his riche (1268) mid mansipe held his riche  
(=he held his kingdom with honour)
30. **C mode: O heorte** [2]  
þe leof hire weis on mode (2240) þat leof hire was on heorte  
(=who was dear to her in mind)
31. **C quides: O word** [3]  
gif þu brekest þine quides (4904) gif þou brekest þin word  
(=if thou breakest thy word)
32. **C scalkes: O men** [1], **cnihþes** [1], **kempes** [1]  
þa scalkes weoren stronge [940] þe kempes weren stronge  
(=the heroes were strong)
33. **C seg: O man** [1], **cnihþ** [1], **gleomen** [1]  
Ful sooh seide þe seg (3997) Sop saide þe man  
(=Full sooth said the man)
34. **C sibbe: O paise** [1]  
Sæhte and sibbe he luuede (3039) Seþte and pais he (1)ofuede  
(=he loved concord and peace)
35. **C sot: O fol** [3]  
Cniht þu ært muchel sot (723) Cniht þou art mochel fol  
(=Knight, thou art a great fool)
36. **C soþschipe: O folie** [1]  
þa zet nolde þe leod-king his soþschipe bi-læuen (1510) ...his folie bleue  
(=Yet would not the king leave his folly)
37. **C stunde: O wile** [1]  
In are lutle stunde (921) in a lutel wile  
(=In a little while)
38. **C tiðind: O tiding** [23]  
þa tiðind com to Corineum (690) þe tiding com to Corineum  
(=The tidings came to Corineus)
39. **C þanc: O þoht** [1]  
þat þu þi þanc for-hele (2176) þat þou þi þoht hele  
(=that thou concealest thy thoughts)

40. C **pein**: O **man** [4], **cniht** [4], **eorl** [1]  
 his peines weoren kene (1074) his men weren kene  
 (=his men were keen)
41. C **peode**: O **londe** [2], **kinedom** [1], **cnihtes** [1]  
 and alle pine peode (2462) an(d a)lle pine cnihtes  
 (=and all thy knights)
42. C **wansipe**: O **wowe** [1], **harme** [1]  
 and wonien in wansiðe (1542) and wonie ine wowe  
 (=and live in misery)
43. C **wælkempe**: O **cniht** [2]  
 mid alle his wælkempan (1096) mid alle his cniptes  
 (=with all his knights)
44. C **wif**: O **wimmen** [2]  
 and þa scipen to-drazen and þa wif drenchen (755) ...þe wimmen adrenche  
 (=and destroy the ships and drown the women)
45. C **wintre**: O **zer** [2]  
 Feowerti wintre he walde pes leode (2135) Fourti zer he held pis lond  
 (=He governed this land for forty years)

46. The most striking fact about the nouns is that in the O-text some of the words denoting 'man' have been replaced by other words familiar to us or have entirely been suppressed. These words denoting 'man', which were required in Old English poetry to maintain alliteration, are still to be found in the C-text and help to retain the colourfulness typical of alliterative poetry. Their frequent disappearance in the O-text, however, tends to take from it the richness and power characteristic of alliterative poetry and often destroys the alliteration at the same time. *Æþeling*, *aldorman*, *scalk*, *seg*, *wælkempe* are not used in the O-text; *beorn*, *pein* are sometimes retained, but they are more often replaced by *man*, *cniht* etc; *gume* and *kempe* are very frequently to be found in both texts and yet in the O-text they often give place to *man* or *cniht*.

*Hired* is one of the words that are used only in the C-text. It is also dropped as the first element of compound words in the O-text. *Leod* as well as *hired* is usually dropped in the O-text as the first element of compound words.

It is also noteworthy that some of the nouns are replaced by French equivalents: *zisle* (O: hostage), *gael* (O: truage), *griðe* (O: paise), *haur* (O. spiares) etc.

## ADJECTIVES

47. C **ærest**: O **forste** [2]  
 pet wes þa eæraste mon (2121) and...wa(s) þe forste man  
 (=that was the first man)
48. C **æðel**: O **god** [6], **bold** [2], **murie** [1], **riche** [1]  
 þe æðele wes to neode (332) þat god was to neode  
 (=who was good at need)
49. C **æðelest**: O **selest** [1], **wisest to neode** [1]  
 æðelest alre kingen (1306) selest alre kinge  
 (=the noblest of all the kings)
50. C **ba**: O **bope** [10]  
 ba bi daie and bi nith (1042) bope bi daize and bi nipt  
 (=both by day and by night)
51. C **blipe**: O **glad** [1]  
 þa leoden weoren þe bliðre (1264) þe leoden were þe gladdere  
 (=the people were the gladder)
52. C **drihtliche**: O **dohtie** [1], **gode** [2], **riche** [1]  
 wið-uten his driht-liche scipen (4010)...his gode sipes  
 (=without his good ships)
53. C **eð**: O **glad** [1], **bet** [1]  
 eð him wes on heorten (1117) glad he was on heorte  
 (=he was glad in mind)
54. C **fæine**: O **glad** [2]  
 þe duc þer-fore fain wes (2442) þe duk þar-fore glad was  
 (=The duke was therefore glad)
55. C **feie**: O **dead** [3]  
 monie þer weoren fæie (3960) mani dead weren  
 (=many were dead there)
56. C **feole**: O **many** [6]  
 on feole kunne wisen (860) in many cunnes wise  
 (=in many kind of wise)
57. C **lipe**: O **lef** [1], **icweme** [1]  
 liðe him beo Drihten (2) lef him beo Driste  
 (=may the Lord be gracious to him !)
58. C **lut**: O **lutel** [2], **feue** [1]  
 inne lut zere (195) ine feue zere

- (=in a few years)
59. C **moni**: O **muchel** [2]  
 moni hunger and moni purst (3102) mochel hunger and porst  
 (=much hunger and thirst)
60. C **muchel**: O **mani** [3], **grete** [3]  
 per comen muchel burstes (1231) pare come manie harmes  
 (=there came many evils)
61. C **sel**: O **gode** [1], **merie** [1], **wise** [1]  
 purh sele mine folke (4156) porh...mine gode caihtes  
 (=through my good folk)
62. C **selest**: O **best** [2]  
 pat us is selest to don (461) wat vs is best to done  
 (=what is best for us to do)
63. C **selre**: O **bet** [1]  
 pat hire þe selre beo (35) pat hire þe bet bifalle  
 (=that it be the better for it)
64. C **stepe**: O **mochel** [1], **bold** [1]  
 and þina stepa main (772) and þine mochele mihte  
 (=and thy great might)
65. C **uneðe**: O **sori** [1]  
 þer-fore hire wes uneðe (2247) þar-fore ȝeo was sori  
 (=therefore she was sad)
66. The adjectives that are seldom used in the O-text are *æðele*, *ba*, *eð*, *stepe*, *uneðe*. *Sel* is originally a comparative, but it is here used as a positive. *Mochel* and *mani* are often used indifferently, but the examples show that they are beginning to be used in their own function: *mochel* for uncountable nouns, *mani* for countable nouns.

#### ADVERBS

67. C **ærest**: O **forste** [1]  
 se[ð]æn heo ærest wes a-reræd (1032)...he was forst arered  
 (=since it first was reared)
68. C **ful**: O **wel** [3]  
 pes kinges heorte wes ful sær (4312)...was wel sor  
 (=The king's heart was very sore)
69. C **rape**: O **sone** [1]  
 oþer þu þenchest beo raðe dead (2165)...beo sone dead



(=or thou thinkest soon to be dead)

70. C *sel*: O *wel* [1]

Sel þe scal iwurðen (1118) Wel þe sal bi-tyde

(=May it go well with thee)

71. C *seoððan*: O *parafter* [6], *after þat* [2], *fram þat* [1]

Seððen comen Sæxisce men (3545) par-after c(o)me...

(=Thereafter came Saxon men)

72. C *swipe*: O *wel* [9], *wnderlich* [1], *mochel* [1]

hit wes him swiðe queme (1214) hit was him wel icweme

(=it was to him most pleasing)

73. C *tosumne*: O *togadere* [8]

þa comen heo to-sumne (1278) þo comen hii to-gadere

(=then they came together)

74. C *wel*: O *swipe* [3]

Æfter Heli king æhte þis lond Lud his sune wel longe (3524) After...swipe

long (=After King Heli Lud his son governed this land very long)

75. As an intensive adverb *swipe* is the most common. *Wel* and *swipe* are often used indifferently. It is curious that *ful*, which is to become the commonest intensive adverb in Middle English and is therefore expected to appear in both texts, is found only in the C-text.

#### RELATIVE PRONOUN

76. C *pe*: O *þat* [numerous]

þe soðe word me seiden (2322) þat sop word me seide

(=who told me sooth word)

77. *pe* (or *þa*) in the C-text is almost always replaced by *þat* in the O-text.

The former is already beginning to give place to the latter especially when the antecedent is modified by *al*, *al þat*, *þat*, *ilke* and the superlative of adjectives. But sometimes, even if the antecedent is modified by these words, *pe* is retained not only in the C-text but also in the O-text (198, 644, 661, 1414, 3198 etc.).

#### VERBS

78. C *ahte*: O *hadde* [6]

and his fader ahte al þat lond (4119) ...hadde al þat lond

(=and his father possessed all the land)

79. C *buzen*: O *wende* [5], *come* [1], *fleon* [1]

- and mid þe we wulleð buzen (3862)...we wolle wende  
 (=we will go with thee)
80. C demen: O seie [1], speken [1]  
 Al þis wes idon also þe duc demde (2464) ...þe duk seide  
 (=All this was done as the duke had told)
81. C eode: O wende [2]  
 al pat folc eode an lond (896) pat folk wende a pat lond  
 (=all the folk went on the land)
82. C faren: O wende [9], come [3], feren [1]  
 whi nult þu faren (1899) wi ne(1)t þou wende  
 (=why wilt thou not go?)
83. C ferde: O eode [10], wende [16], faren [1]  
 and he æfter him ferde (3194) and hii him after wende  
 (=and he [they] went after him)
84. C fo: O go [2]  
 Fo we zet to Beline (3015) Go we zet to Belyn  
 (=Let us go again to Belin)
85. C fræinede: O axede [1], seide [1]  
 He fræinede þis leod-folc (3304) He axede pat folk  
 (=He asked the people)
86. C freten: O eten [1]  
 pat heo freten pet corn (1948) pat hii heten corn  
 (=that they ate the corn)
87. C fusden: O wende [4], come [1]  
 and heo him to fusden (3741) and hii him to wende  
 (=and they went to him)
88. C zarewede: O greipede [4]  
 zareweden heom to fehten (4867) greipede ham to fihte  
 (=prepared them for fight)
89. C ilomp: O biful [9], ful [1]  
 and him þa beth ilomp (307) þar-fore him þe bette bi-fulle  
 (=and the better befell to him)
90. C iwat: O eode [1], wende [1], abod [1]  
 þe mete forð iwat (331) þe mete forþ eode  
 (=the meat diminished)
91. C liðen: O wende [22], ferde [1], go [1], beo [2], gliden [1], passi [1]  
 whuder ich mæi liðan (603) woder ich may wende

- (=whither I may go)
92. C **queðe**: O **seide** [7], **spac** [2]  
 Summe queðen ælles (449) Some seiden elles  
 (= Some said otherwise)
93. C **sæhtne**: O **paise** [2]  
 and sæhtne me wið Rom-lede (4380) and paise me...  
 (=and reconcile me with the Rome-folk)
94. C **spilede**: O **spec** [4], **seide** [3]  
 and luueliche spilede (3935) and lofueliche saide  
 (=and lovingly said)
95. C **temen**: O **wende** [2]  
 per-to þu scalt teman (625) þar-to þou salt wende  
 (=Thereto thou shalt proceed)
96. C **teon**: O **go** [1], **eode** [1], **drawe** [1]  
 ich wille teo to-foren (398) ich wole go b(i)-fore  
 (=I will go before)
97. C **trukien**: O **bileue** [1]  
 nulle we þe trukien (2177) nolle we þe bileue  
 (=we will not believe thee)
98. C **welden**: O **habbe** [2], **witie** [2], **don** [1], **holde** [4]  
 þe while þe he mai hit walden (1679) ...hit mai holde  
 (=as long as he may hold it)
99. C **wende**: O **ferde** [4], **tornde** [3], **eode** [2], **com** [1]  
 heo ouer sæ wende (4475) he ouer see verde  
 (=he went overseas)
100. C **wonien**: O **libben** [2]  
 þe wile þeo...wes folc woniende (582)...weren men libbende  
 (=As long as...men were living)
101. C **wurchen**: O **make** [3]  
 He hehte wurchen ane tur (3871) He lette makie...  
 (=He ordered a tower to be built)
102. There are many words in the C-text used to denote 'go': *buzen*, *eode* (pt.), *faren*, *feren*, *fusen*, *fo*, *iwat* (pt.), *liðen*, *temen*, *teon*, *wende*, of which *buzen*, *fo*, *iwat*, *teon*, *temen* are beginning to disappear in the O-text. *Feren* is almost always used in the preterit tense while *faren* seldom appears in the preterit; the latter is usually used in the infinitive, past participle or in the imperative. A similar tendency is also noted in *lipen*, which is seldom used

in the present tense. It often appears in combination with *com* and when thus connected (i. e. *com lipen*) it is not replaced by other words. The only verb to behave like a normal verb is *wende*, but this again will be later restricted to the preterit tense. *Go* is still infrequent in both texts.

#### PREPOSITIONS

103. C **at**: O **of** [7]  
 At hire heo nomen læue (638) Of hire he nam leue  
 (=They [He] took leave of her)
104. C **binnen**: O **in** [1], **wipine** [1]  
 and binnen heo i-wenden (2953) and wip-ine wende  
 (=and they went within)
105. C **bute**: O **wipoute** [2]  
 þu liðe al buten læue (2516) þou wendest al wip-houte lefew  
 (=thou wentest all without leave)
106. C **geond**: O **ouer** [38], **in** [3], **into** [1], **porh** [1]  
 geond al Gric-londe (540) ouer al Greclonde  
 (=over all Greece)
107. C **in**: O **to** [4], **into** [1]  
 seoððen Gurmund com in þis lond (988)...com to þisse lond  
 (=after Gurmund came to this land)
108. C **mid**: O **wið** [3]  
 þat þeo wimon was mid childe (135)...was wið childe  
 (=that the woman became with child)
109. C **of**: O **fram** [5], **vt of** [2]  
 fleon of pissen londe (3782) faren fram þis londe  
 (=go from this land)
110. C **on**: O **in** [numerous]  
 þe king wes on mode sar (321) þe king was sor in mode  
 (=The king was sad at heart)  
 þe ær weoren on lond (3451) þat her weren in londe  
 (=who ere were in the land)  
 on his liue he wes swa riche (3512) in his lifue...  
 (=in his life he was so powerful)
111. C **wið**: O **mid** [3], **fram** [2], **to** [5]  
 wið his hird-iferen (3306) mid his ivere  
 (=with his companions)

112. One of the features of the O-text that make the text more like Modern English than the C-text is the frequent substitution of *on* for *in*.

*Mid* and *wið* are still used in their original meanings, but they are beginning to be confused.

*Geond* is almost always replaced by *ouer*. This tendency is already seen in the Final Continuation of *The Peterborough Chronicle*.

#### CONJUNCTIONS

113. C **alse**: O **alse poh** [2]  
alse heo wolden ligger (942) alse poh hii wolde ligger  
(=as though they would lie)
114. C **alse peah**: O **ase** [2]  
alse peah hit seoð weore (3324) ase hit sop were  
(=as though it were true)
115. C **for pan pe**: O **for** [1]  
for pan pa pe keisere wes swa hæh (3747) for pe kaiser...  
(=because the emperor was so noble)
116. C **seoppen**: O **wane** [1], **fram pat** [1] **after pat** [1]  
seoððen Brennes wes deað (2989) after pat Brenne...  
(=after Brennes was dead)
117. C **swulc**: O **as poh** [1], **a(1)se** [6]  
Brut swulc he weoren (4639) ase poh he Brut were  
(=as though he were a Briton)
118. C **pe zet pe**: O **pe zet pat** [1], **pe zet** [1]  
pe zet pe he wes i Rome (4853) pe zet he was in Rome  
(= while he was in Rome)
119. C **pe wile pe**: O **pe wile pat** [9], **pe wile** [2], **wile pe** [1], **wile pat** [3]  
**wile** [3]  
pe wile pe he on liue wes (115) wile he was on liue  
(= while he was alive)
120. C **ponne**: O **wane** [8]  
ponne men gað to bedde (357) wane men gop to bedde  
(=when men go to bed)
121. C **wið pan pe**: O **wið pan pat** [1], **wið pat** [1]  
wið pan pe þu me helpe (4232) wip pat pou (me helpe)  
(=on condition that thou help me)
122. Here contrary to the general tendency the analytical expressions are be-

ginning to be simplified. The typical process may be illustrated by *pe wile*  
*pe.*

*(To be continued.)*