III Words and Meanings
Laȝamon’s *Brut*, in exploring the boundaries between cultures, stands out from its predecessors for its constant interest in the significance of words and names. More so than in any previous telling, the conflict between the Saxons and Britons centres on the use of the Saxon language in Britain. Laȝamon expands scenes where the Saxons use the unintelligibility of their language to the Britons to their advantage, uses the terms *Saxon* and *Angle* deftly to build momentum towards the transformation of Brut-lond to England, and frames the final takeover in terms of renamings and redefinitions — the Saxon hegemony is both achieved and measured by the influence of their language. It is clear that compared to his precursors Laȝamon has, if not sympathy for the Saxons, a far stronger interest in their language, although Johnson and Wogan-Browne rightly caution, arguing from the trilingualism both of Laȝamon’s sources and of the manuscript context of his finished work, against the “over-simplified view of Laȝamon writing to and for the politically and linguistically oppressed ‘English people’ of this time”.¹ It is not English in and of itself that interests him, but the way that the English language functions as a cultural and political indicator within a