



TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN OLD ENGLISH METRE

Edited by

RACHEL A. BURNS and
RAFAEL J. PASCUAL

ARC HUMANITIES PRESS



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In memory of A. J. Bliss

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PREFACE

THE LIFE OF this book began in October 2019, when the CLASP project (A Consolidated Library of Anglo-Saxon Poetry) hosted nine speakers at a workshop in Oxford, arranged by myself and Rafael Pascual. Our desire was to celebrate the rich tradition and vibrant innovation in the fields Old English (OE) and Anglo-Latin metre. Moreover, we wanted to make the field of OE metrical studies more accessible to a new generation of scholars, and to stimulate fresh research among those who might not have yet been attracted to considering metre in their work. This spirit of accessibility and pedagogy is central to the CLASP project, which will make a wealth of text and data freely available to the academic community and the interested public alike. Notably, in the context of the present volume, the project will provide metrical scansions of the OE and Anglo-Latin verse corpora, and a record of scribal and editorial emendations to the manuscript texts.

The book was largely compiled during the time of the coronavirus pandemic. Across a period of unprecedented distance and disconnect between colleagues, this volume has been a much-valued point of connection between us, the editors, and our contributors around the world. By publishing this as an open-access collection, funded by CLASP, we hope it will continue to bring people and ideas into contact with one another.

My personal thanks go to Jane Roberts, whose guidance following the examination of my PhD thesis contributed to my continuing enthusiasm for the study of metre, and ultimately to the conception of the workshop that initiated this volume. I would also like to thank Luisa Ostacchini and Eugenia Vorobeva for their editorial assistance.

Rachel A. Burns
University of Oxford

A NOTE ON THE CLASP PROJECT

CLASP (A CONSOLIDATED Library of Anglo-Saxon Poetry) is a research project based at the University of Oxford, and the present volume is an output of the project. This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (under grant agreement No 695262). Led by Principal Investigator Andy Orchard, the research team at the time of writing are Rachel A. Burns, Colleen Curran, and Rafael J. Pascual. The project is producing an interactive digital library with texts and translations of the surviving 60,000 lines of Old English and Anglo-Latin poetry composed between 670 and 1100 CE. Users of this library will be able to search the texts for features of sound, metre, spellings, diction, syntax, formulas, themes, and genres.

A second edited volume is due to follow, concerning the Anglo-Latin facet of the CLASP project, and focusing on the sources, innovations, and transmission of the Anglo-Latin poetic tradition.



ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Alfred</i>	<i>The Death of the Ætheling Alfred</i>
<i>And</i>	<i>Andreas</i>
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
<i>ASPR</i>	George Philip Krapp and Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie, eds, <i>The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records</i> , vols. 1–6 (1931–1953).
<i>Beo</i>	<i>Beowulf</i>
<i>ChristC</i>	<i>Christ III</i>
<i>Dan</i>	<i>Daniel</i>
<i>DOE</i>	Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey et al., eds, <i>Dictionary of Old English: A to I</i> online (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2018).
<i>Dream</i>	<i>The Dream of the Rood</i>
<i>EEMF</i>	<i>Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile</i>
<i>EPS</i>	<i>English Philological Studies</i>
<i>ES</i>	<i>English Studies</i>
f. or fol.	folio
<i>JdgII</i>	<i>Judgement Day II</i>
<i>JEGP</i>	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
<i>JGL</i>	<i>Journal of Germanic Linguistics</i>
Klaeber 3	Friedrich Klaeber, ed. <i>Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg</i> , 3rd ed. (Boston: Heath, 1950).
Klaeber 4	R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, eds., <i>Klaeber's Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg</i> (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).
<i>Mald</i>	<i>The Battle of Maldon</i>
<i>MÆ</i>	<i>Medium Ævum</i>
MnE	Modern English

MS/MSS	manuscript/manuscripts
<i>N&Q</i>	<i>Notes & Queries</i>
<i>NM</i>	<i>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</i>
OE	Old English
OHG	Old High German
PGmc	proto-Germanic
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
<i>SN</i>	<i>Studia Neophilologica</i>
st.	stanza

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INTRODUCTION

Rafael J. Pascual*

METRE AND ITS sister discipline, metrical grammar, are essential to the interpretation of Old English poetry and to its recitation.¹ In a language in which many pronouns, conjunctions, and adverbs have identical forms, it is metrics that often allows one to disambiguate and establish the correct relationship between the words of a clause in verse. Take *The Wanderer* line 12a, “þæt biþ in eorle,” for example: it is the scansion of the half-line that tells us that “þæt” is to be interpreted not as a pronoun anticipating the clause in lines 13–14, but as a conjunction at the head of the noun clause that functions as the object of *wāt*, in line 11b.² Similarly, it is only knowledge of metrical grammar that confirms that *The Seafarer* 19b, “hwīlum ylfete song,” is to be construed not with “dyde” in line 20a, but with “gehȳrde” in 18a.³ Proficiency in metre thus enables the teacher of Old English poetry to respond to basic questions about the meaning of the texts. It also helps with the recitation of verse (an area in which students approaching the subject

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1 For a full index of key technical terms used in this chapter and volume, readers should consult the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices.

2 Pronouns that anticipate subordinate noun clauses are of course very frequent in Old English verse: see, for example, Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, *A Guide to Old English* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 66–67. If “þæt” in line 12a of *The Wanderer* were a pronoun anticipating the noun clause “þæt hē his ferðlocan fæste binde” (line 13), however, then line 12 would break an important alliterative rule. Pronouns that appear outside the first drop of the verse clause (which is in this case in line 11b, “ic tō”) ought to be stressed, according to Kuhn’s first law. If “þæt” were stressed, then the alliteration of line 12 would fall on the second rather than the first lift of the on-verse. Useful summaries of Kuhn’s first law can be found in A. Campbell, “Verse Influences in Old English Prose,” in *Philological Essays: Studies in Old and Middle English Language and Literature in Honour of Herbert Dean Meritt*, ed. James L. Rosier (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), 93–98 at 94; Peter J. Lucas, “On the Role of Some Adverbs in Old English Verse Grammar,” in *Papers from the 5th International Conference on English Historical Linguistics*, ed. Sylvia M. Adamson, Vivien A. Law, Nigel Vincent, and Susan Wright (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1990), 293–312 at 294; Haruko Momma, *The Composition of Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 56–64; and Jun Terasawa, *Old English Metre: An Introduction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 93–97.

3 If line 19b, “hwīlum ylfete song,” were the beginning of a new clause, as it is often interpreted, then the finite verb “dyde,” in line 20a, would have to be stressed for being outside the first drop of the clause (“hwīlum”), which would in turn result in an anomalous alliterative pattern (alliteration would fall on the second rather than the first lift, as in the example from *The Wanderer* discussed above). Line 19b is thus best taken as part of the previous clause, whose verb is “gehȳrde” in line 18a. See Peter R. Orton, “*The Seafarer* 6b–10a and 18–22,” *NM* 83 (1982): 255–59.

for the first time are naturally interested). Old English poetry is nowadays often recited as if it were prose, with little concern for its idiosyncratic rhythms.⁴ Old English poets, however, took good care to predicate their lines upon a rhythmical contrast across the caesura. If the on-verse has the rhythm of, say, a Type D, then the off-verse will as a rule feature one of the other four basic rhythmical types.⁵ The ability to read verses out loud according to their metrical contours, coupled with a noticeable pause at the caesura (the purpose of which is to enhance the contrast of rhythms within the line), makes the recitation of Old English poetry a more authentic experience, and also one that is more enjoyable and rewarding for the students.⁶

The study of metre also helps to make sense of the rhetoric and style of Old English poetry. The contrast between youth and age that is so central to the structure of *Beowulf*, for example, or the epistemological contrast between the poet and his audience, on the one hand, and the characters within the story, on the other, can be effectively compared to the contrast of rhythms upon which the poetic line is predicated.⁷ The implication of course is that a poet accustomed to structuring his lines around contrast would naturally replicate this technique at a macrostructural level. Similarly, the poets' fondness for rhythmical heterogeneity, manifested in the existence of five basic types and a very substantial number of subtypes, can be seen as the metrical equivalent of variation (which Frederick Klaeber defined as "the very soul of Old English poetical style").⁸ Variation consists, in the words of Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, of "a double or multiple statement of the same concept or idea in multiple words, with a more or less perceptible shift in stress."⁹ From a metrical point of view, Old English verse consists of a succession of multiple rhythms, most of which restate in multiple forms the same underlying conceptual pattern of four positions, with perceptible shift in stress. Both diction and metre are governed by the principles of repetition and variation, and so one can justifiably speak of metrical and lexical

⁴ See, for example, Mitchell and Robinson, *Guide*, 101–2. On the importance of metre for the belletristic recitation of Old English poetry, see A. J. Bliss, *An Introduction to Old English Metre* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 1, and Eric Weiskott, "A Plea for Pronunciation," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching* 22 (2015): 41–42.

⁵ A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 135–38.

⁶ Speaking of Latin hexameter verse, G. B. Nussbaum said that, given that the Roman poets composed mainly for the ear, and not for the eye (even if of course they relied on writing as a memory-aid), "to read Vergil authentically is to read him aloud": see Nussbaum, *Vergil's Metre: A Practical Guide for Reading Latin Hexameter Poetry* (London: Bristol Classical, 1986), 1. The same applies to Old English poetry, which was likewise composed mainly for the ear.

⁷ This point was famously made by J. R. R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 22 (1936): 245–95 at 273–74. See also R. D. Fulk, *Interpretations of Beowulf: A Critical Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), xi.

⁸ *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. Frederick Klaeber (Boston: Heath, 1950), lxxv.

⁹ See his *The Art of Beowulf* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 40.

variation as two interrelated features of Old English poetic art.¹⁰ Students are often very responsive to associations of this kind, which demonstrate that metre and style can be taught in mutually illuminating ways.

First-hand acquaintance with metre is essential if one is to have informed opinions about such important topics as the history of Old English poetry and its textual criticism. The incidence of verses featuring non-parasiting and non-contraction in a given poem is a reliable indicator of its date of composition. The abundance in *Beowulf* of verses like 1136a, “wuldortorhtan weder,” and 1275b, “dēapwiċ sēon,” in which disyllabic “wuldor” and monosyllabic “sēon” scan according to their prehistoric values (monosyllabic **wuldr* and disyllabic **seohan*, respectively), indicates the earliness of *Beowulf* relative to, say, the works of Cynewulf, in which the incidence of such verses is substantially lower.¹¹ Little more than a basic understanding of the four-position principle suffices to identify instances of metrical non-parasiting and non-contraction in a poem—and yet, without that understanding, they inevitably escape the notice of the student of verse. A knowledge of metre is of the greatest service in the criticism of Old English verse texts.¹² Defective scansion corroborates beyond reasonable doubt that manuscript “hador” at *Beowulf* 414a, “under heofenes hador,” is to be interpreted not as the noun *hādor* (brightness), but as a scribal error for *haðor* (confinement).¹³ Metrics helps us not only to detect and emend corrupt verses, but also to rule out unwarranted emendation proposals. In *Beowulf* 985a, “steda nægla gehwylċ,” for example, metrical considerations discourage most editors from accepting emendation of resolved “steda” to unresolvable *stīðra*, as some have proposed.¹⁴ Thus, no matter whether one aligns oneself with the

10 On repetition and variation as organizing principles of Old English verse, see Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003), 57–58. See also R. D. Fulk, “Rhetoric, Form, and Linguistic Structure in Early Germanic Verse: Toward a Synthesis,” *International Journal of Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis* 1 (1996): 63–88, especially 66–68.

11 R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 66–121. In *Beowulf* 1136a, omission of *o* in “wuldor” produces a regular four-position Type E verse with resolution of “weder.” In 1275b, disyllabic scansion of “sēon” makes for a regular A2k (on which see Geoffrey Russom’s contribution to this volume).

12 On this topic, see, for example, R. D. Fulk, “Textual Criticism,” in *A Beowulf Handbook*, ed. Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 35–54.

13 The unresolvable disyllable *hādor*, with a long root vowel, creates an aberrant metrical pattern of five positions: xx / x / x (prepositions like *under* are not as a rule found in anacrustic positions). The resolvable disyllable *haðor*, on the other hand, produces a regular Type B verse with both lifts resolved: xx / x / . If the manuscript reading were correct, moreover, this would be the only instance in which *hādor* is a noun rather than an adjective. See Klaeber’s *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 141. Metrical considerations are often independently corroborated by linguistic evidence.

14 Unresolvable *stīðra* would produce a variety of Type D (/ x / xx \) which should feature double alliteration.

liberal or the conservative school of textual criticism, metre remains an invaluable tool for the scholar of Old English poetry.¹⁵

That metre can be relied upon as a text-critical tool is confirmed by the essential correctness of Eduard Sievers's system of scansion. Sievers's most penetrating insight into the workings of Old English versification is that a half-line is metrical, regardless of its number of syllables, if it consists of exactly four structural constituents, known as "positions" (*Glieder* in Sievers's original terminology). Verses of more than four syllables are adjusted to the four-position scheme by resolution, a process of syllabic equivalence according to which a short stressed syllable and its unstressed successor are metrically analogous to a single long stressed syllable. For example, *Beowulf* 1631a, "foldweġ mæton," and 76a, "folcstede frætwan", are both four-position Type A2a verses because disyllabic *-stede* undergoes resolution, thereby occupying, like monosyllabic *-weġ*, a single position. Sometimes, however, resolution must be suspended for the verse to comply with the four-position rule. In line 31a, "lēof landfruma", the potentially resolvable sequence *-fruma* must scan as a disyllable, as otherwise the half-line would consist of only three positions. Does this mean that Sievers's rule of resolution is arbitrary and his four-position principle therefore illusory? A few years after the publication of Sievers's work, Max Kaluza discovered a virtually perfect correlation in *Beowulf* between the operation of resolution and the etymological length of the endings involved.¹⁶ Resolution obtains if the ending was short in early Old English; if the ending was long, then resolution is suspended. That resolution correlates with a non-metrical entity which was not part of Sievers's original formulation is indicative of the correctness of his analysis.¹⁷

¹⁵ For favourable attitudes to a more liberal treatment of verse texts, see, for instance, Kenneth Sisam, "Notes on Old English Poetry," *RES* 22 (1946): 257–68; Michael Lapidge, "Textual Criticism and the Literature of Anglo-Saxon England," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of Manchester* 73 (1991): 17–46. For a more conservative approach, see E. G. Stanley, "Unideal Principles of Editing Old English Verse," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 70 (1984): 231–73. For a recent scholarly debate over the authenticity of a number of manuscript readings, see Eric Weiskott, "Three-position Verses in *Beowulf*," *N&Q* 60 (2013): 483–85; Seiichi Suzuki, "Three-position Verses in *Beowulf* and *Genesis A*: Syntagmatically-induced Exceptions to the Four-position Principle," *JGL* 29 (2017): 50–84; and Rafael J. Pascual, "Three-position Verses and the Metrical Practice of the *Beowulf* Poet," *Selim* 20 (2013–2014): 49–79; Rafael J. Pascual, "Manuscript Evidence and Metrical Authenticity: A Response to Seiichi Suzuki," *JGL* 29 (2017): 85–99.

¹⁶ Max Kaluza, "Zur Betonungs- und Verslehre des Altenglischen," in *Festschrift zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag Oskar Schade* (Königsberg: Hartung, 1896), 101–33.

¹⁷ See R. D. Fulk, "Early Middle English Evidence for Old English Meter: Resolution in *Poema morale*," *JGL* 14 (2002): 331–55; Rafael J. Pascual, "Bliss's Rule and Old English Metrics," *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews* 32 (2019): 209–13. Old English metrical theory and its dependability have been the subject of considerable scholarly debate in recent decades. Of all the alternatives to Sieversian metrics that have been proposed, the most well-known probably is Geoffrey Russom's word-foot theory, a model informed by modern linguistics. See Geoffrey Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). In 2005, Thomas A. Bredehoft proposed his own and purportedly more flexible

The study of metrics also allows us to distinguish convention from stylistic embellishment and poetic licence. Both *Beowulf* 440a, “lāð wið lāpum,” and 841a, “lāþes lāstas” have double alliteration, but metrical considerations suggest that only the double alliteration of 841a can be considered a non-structural ornament, since in 440a it is a formal requirement demanded by the system of versification.¹⁸ Likewise, the absence of double alliteration from a verse like 665a, “cwēn tō ġebeddan,” which has the same metrical structure as 440a, makes this half-line stand out as a poetically meaningful licence.¹⁹ The past plural form of *āleġdan* is stressed in 34, “ālēdon þā | lēofne þēoden” (“then they laid the beloved lord,”) but in 3141, “āleġdon ðā tōmidde | mārne þēoden” (“then they laid the renowned lord in the midst,”) it fails to receive stress, despite the strong similarity of context.²⁰ The poet thus signalled metrically the contrast between a ship burial and a barrow burial with cremation.²¹ The name element *-wulf* is almost

version of Russom’s model, but it has been shown that Bredehoft’s theory suffers from important structural flaws. See Thomas A. Bredehoft, *Early English Meter* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); and for negative assessments of his theory, see Mark Griffith, “Review of *Early English Metre*, by Thomas A. Bredehoft,” *N&Q* 56 (2009): 98–99; Eric Weiskott, *English Alliterative Verse: Poetic Tradition and Literary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 72; Rafael J. Pascual, “Ælfric’s Rhythmical Prose and the Study of Old English Metre,” *ES* 95 (2014): 803–23. More recently, a new theory has been propounded, according to which morphology is more central to metrical behaviour than stress. See Nicolay Yakovlev, “The Development of Alliterative Metre from Old to Middle English” (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 2008). Yakovlev’s theory has been applauded as an improvement on Sievers by some: see, for example, Weiskott, *English Alliterative Verse*; Ian Cornelius, *Reconstructing Alliterative Verse: The Pursuit of a Medieval Meter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). The notion that the main factor behind Old English metre is morphology, however, is problematic: see Rafael J. Pascual, “Alliterative Metre and Medieval English Literary History,” *Atlantis: Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies* 40 (2018): 221–30; Leonard Neidorf and Rafael J. Pascual, “Nicolay Yakovlev’s Theory of Old English Meter: A Reassessment,” *Neophilologus* 104 (2020): 245–53.

18 In 440a, Bliss’s caesura falls in position 1, whereas in 841a it falls in position 2. On double and ornamental patterns of alliteration in Old English verse, see Andy Orchard, “Artful Alliteration in Anglo-Saxon Song and Story,” *Anglia* 113 (1995): 429–63; and, more recently, Mark Griffith, “Extra Alliteration on Stressed Syllables in Old English Poetry: Types, Uses and Evolution,” *ASE* 47 (2018): 69–176.

19 See Mark Griffith, “Verses Quite like *cwen to gebeddan* in *The Metres of Boethius*,” *ASE* 34 (2005): 145–67.

20 Both verses, 34a and 3141a, occur in the context of a funeral (Scyld’s and Beowulf’s, respectively). Also, “ālēdon”/“āleġdon” is in the clause-initial drop in both of them, and so it should be unstressed, but in 34a the finite verb receives a rhythmical stress because the poet has not included any stress-word in that half-line (i.e. it is a particle verse). On the aesthetic potential of particle verses, see R. D. Fulk, “Particle Verses in Old English and Eddic Poetry,” in *Early English Poetic Culture and Meter: The Influence of G. R. Russom*, ed. M. J. Toswell and Lindy Brady (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2016), 21–37. Notice that the alliteration in 3141a is on *m*.

21 Insertion of the stress-word “tōmidde” (in the middle) prevents “ālēdon” from receiving metrical stress. Of course, in the case of a cremation, it is important to place the corpse in the middle of the pyre, so that no leg or other limb is left behind, while the location of the corpse in a funeral ship is not as important.

always unstressed in the poem, as the rules of prosody demand, but on a very few special occasions it has been accorded rhetorical stress: 343b, “Bēowulf is mīn nama,” and 1024b, “Bēowulf ġepāh.”²² The former verse contains the first occurrence of the name in the poem and is uttered by the protagonist when he introduces himself to Wulfgar. In line 1024b, stress on *-wulf* suggests that the poet wanted to emphasize Beowulf’s ursine nature precisely at a moment in which he is portrayed as drinking mead, the honey-based liquor *par excellence*.²³

Knowledge of metre enables close reading of the sort that is so highly valued in the realm of literary hermenutics, and so metrics considerably enhances any reading of Old English poetry. It is thus only natural for CLASP to undertake initiatives such as the present volume, *Tradition and Innovation in Old English Metre*, which is intended as an invitation to this rich field of study. Scholars already working in the area will no doubt find it serviceable; the collection, however, has been assembled with a particular reader in mind: the advanced student of Old English literature with little or no knowledge of versification, but with an interest in developing research proficiency in the subject. Such students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the basics of metre as laid out, for example, in John C. Pope and R. D. Fulk’s *Eight Old English Poems* or Jun Terasawa’s *Old English Metre: An Introduction* before proceeding to read those essays in the volume that most call their attention. The glossary of metrical terms and the select bibliography at the end of the collection should also prove useful. The reader will notice that some of the chapters are contributed by some of the most eminent living Old English metrists, but it should not be judged from the title that generational differences among the contributors correlate in any significant way with differences in methodology or approach. All the essays in the collection introduce innovations in metrical study by building on scholarly tradition, and each of them does so in a manner that is reflective of the author’s particular interests and style.

The collection opens with R. D. Fulk’s essay, “Metre as an Editorial Concern in The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, with Particular Reference to the Old English *Soul and Body* Poems,” in which Fulk elaborates on a point that he made in his plenary address to the Oxford Medieval English Research Seminar in October 2019. In this essay, Fulk first discusses a number of editorial readings in the *ASPR* that contravene well-known and widely acknowledged principles of verse construction. Fulk’s discussion shows

²² If *-wulf* is unstressed, then these two verses would feature a three-position pattern: lift, drop, lift. A half-stress on *-wulf* makes for a four-position Type E verse (in the case of 343b, with resolution of *nama*).

²³ The assumption here is that giving prosodic emphasis to *-wulf* during recitation would have made audiences construe the hero’s name as the kenning “bee-wulf,” i.e. “bear.” As has been argued, however, the hero’s name is probably theophoric and does not contain the element “bee” in it: see, for example, R. D. Fulk, “The Etymology and Significance of Beowulf’s Name,” *Anglo-Saxon* 1 (2007): 109–36. It might be that the poet did not know the etymology of the hero’s name, or that he simply construed the name in a non-etymological way on a few occasions. Another verse in which *-wulf* receives stress is 1310b, “Bēowulf fetod”, although here there appears to be no motivation for stress on the deutertheme beyond the introduction of metrical variety.

that an insufficient grasp of the principles of Old English poetic metre can only lead to infelicitous editorial choices. He then focuses on the reading of *Soul and Body II* line 5a in the *ASPR*: “lic ond sawle,” emended from manuscript “lic ond sawl.” Fulk shows this emendation to be unnecessary in the light of recent developments in our understanding of Old English apocope and syncope. The monosyllabic form “sāwl” is—contrary to the standard account—a relatively late development, probably of the ninth century. The seemingly surprising scribal substitution of monosyllabic “sāwl” for disyllabic “sāwul” (the likely authorial form) then confirms rather than contradicts our traditional assumptions about metrics and poetic chronology.

Jane Roberts and Peter Lucas provide insightful examinations of the metre of, respectively, *The Dream of the Rood* and *Exodus*. They both rely on Bliss’s scansional system to characterize the metrical styles of these two poems and to assess in what ways they differ from that of *Beowulf*. In “*The Dream of the Rood*: ‘not on the whole metrically deficient’?,” Roberts focuses on three features: A3 half-lines, hypermetric lines, and what she describes as “obstreperous verses” (i.e. verses with unusual metrical contours). She invites scholars to see deviations from the metrical practice of *Beowulf* as manifestations of *The Dream of the Rood* poet’s artistry rather than as signs of technical inferiority. Lucas, in his “On the Metre of *Exodus*,” gives a comprehensive and vivid account of the poem’s prosody, verse grammar, and alliteration. He also observes that the metrical style of passages of direct speech differs significantly from that of descriptive and narrative passages. The compositional technique of the poem, he concludes, is far more sophisticated than has generally been recognized. Both Roberts and Lucas offer tables of scansion at the end of their contributions. These materials should prove useful to scholars who wish to pursue the interesting lines of inquiry opened by the authors of these two chapters.

The Battle of Maldon is served by two of the essays in the volume. In “*The Battle of Maldon* and the Vengeance of Offa,” Mark Griffith puts forward a new and ingenious solution to the apparent lack of narrative and stylistic coherence of lines 285–86 (a long-standing problem in the criticism of the poem, about which a consensus has never been reached). Griffith’s explanation not only manages to make sense of the perplexing reference to Offa and “þone sælidan” at this juncture in the poem; it also demonstrates that the *Maldon* poet was ready to deviate from well-established metrical rules in order to achieve particular narrative effects. The poet’s stylistic practice is also the focus of Mark Atherton’s “Rhyme and Reason in *The Battle of Maldon*.” Here, Atherton systematically identifies patterns of rhyme in the poem and analyses them in the larger context of the Old English verse corpus. He reaches the conclusion that the poet consciously relied on chains of half-rhymes in order to highlight moments of considerable narrative significance, such as the arrival of the English on the battlefield and Byrhtnoth’s preparation for combat. This distinctive feature, Atherton argues, sets *The Battle of Maldon* apart from other well-known and stylistically more conservative works like *Beowulf* and *The Wanderer*.

A thorough study of Old English metrics should address the issue of hypermetric lines, and hypermetricity is at the core of contributions by Megan E. Hartman and

Matthew D. Coker. In "Hypermetric Narrative in the Old English *Daniel*," Hartman sees individual artistry where others have seen stylistic deficiency or evidence for composite authorship. She demonstrates that the fluctuation between normal and hypermetric lines in the middle section of *Daniel* is the means by which the poet was able to develop the central theme of his work: Nebuchadnezzar's shift from pride to humility. Along similar methodological lines, Coker, in his "*Elene* 582–89: Hypermetrics, Revelation, and Judgement," contends that it is no coincidence that the poem's greatest moment of revelation occurs in its only set of hypermetric lines. Rather, Coker maintains, the shift from normal to hypermetric lines that takes place toward the middle of the poem reflects Cynewulf's conscious attempt to signal the theme of movement from concealment to revelation that is so central to his text. Both Hartman and Coker discern a close connection between poetic form and narrative theme in Old English verse, thereby showing that metrical studies are of crucial importance to the literary criticism of the poetry (a belief that is also at the heart of Griffith's and Atherton's contributions).

Two contributions deal with poems composed in untraditional styles. Kazutomo Karasawa focuses on the two most prominent stylistic anomalies of *Maxims I*: its unpaired half-lines and its unusually heavy hypermetrics. These two phenomena are genuine features of the poet's style, according to Karasawa, and should therefore be treated as such by future editors of *Maxims I*. He also provides an explanation for various aspects of the use of single half-lines and heavy hypermetrics in the poem by modifying Bliss's theory about the origin of its metre. Caroline R. Batten, in her "Anaphora and Stylistic Flexibility in the Metrical Charms," identifies a correlation between metrical irregularities and anaphoric structures in the charms. This correlation, she suggests, indicates that the irregularities of these texts are not blunders of taste, as they have all too often been defined; they are rather functional features that direct the audiences' attention to the magical language contained in the charms' anaphoric structures. Karasawa's and Batten's essays thus approach the metres of *Maxims I* and the charms on their own terms, and in so doing they demonstrate that the poetic landscape of Anglo-Saxon England was more heterogeneous than an exclusive focus on the metre of *Beowulf* would make us believe.

S. C. Thomson and Rachel A. Burns are concerned with interactions between scribal practice and metrical prosody. Thomson, in "Struggling to find the point: The scratched metrical pointing of *Guthlac A* in the Exeter Book," examines metrical marks scratched in dry-point in the Exeter Book and, more particularly, in the text of *Guthlac A*. These marks, which reflect a late reader's desire to engage with the rhythm of Old English poetry, were not always correctly introduced. Instances of erroneous marking are interpreted by Thomson as evidence of the evolution of alliterative verse (i.e. the dry-pointer was sometimes unable to mark the metre of *Guthlac A* because of this poem's relatively early date of composition). In "Mind the Gap: Inter-word Spacing and Metrical Organization in Old English Verse," Burns provides a detailed statistical analysis of the degree of blank spacing between words in a sample of several folios from the *Beowulf* manuscript. She finds the data suggestive of the sort of scribal sensitivity to metrical structure that Thomson identifies in the Exeter Book. In the absence of an Anglo-Saxon *ars poetica*,

Burns vindicates the value of scribal evidence to our understanding of Old English rhythmical structure. These two contributors show that the disciplines of manuscript, linguistic, and literary studies are more intimately related than is often assumed.

The last two essays in the collection deal with aspects of metrical theory. John C. Pope is nowadays remembered mainly for his EETS edition of the *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, but in his own day he was well-known for his musical theory of Old English poetry. Haruko Momma's contribution, "Metre vs. Rhythm: John C. Pope reads Sievers," presents and discusses so far unpublished materials from the John Collins Pope Papers housed at Yale University Library (including Pope's neo-Old English poem, "The Lay of Humptig, Son of Dumpt," and his transcription of a letter from Eduard Sievers to Albert S. Cook, dated 1891). In the light of the evidence furnished by the Pope Papers, which afford valuable insights into the opinions of one of the most eminent scholars in the history of the discipline, Momma argues that Pope's and Sievers's theories should be understood as complementary rather than mutually exclusive interpretations, and invites scholars to give renewed attention to Pope's findings. In the final essay in the collection, "The Mystery of Type A2k," Geoffrey Russom first argues that Sieversian metrics is unable to offer a coherent account for verses like *Beowulf* 1731b, "hlēoburh wera," with suspension of resolution in the second lift, and that such inability is an indication that Sievers's theory is in need of update. He then provides an explanation for that verse type's existence and distribution within the context of the word-foot theory of Old English metre.

As a sign of respect to the tradition of Old English metrical scholarship, this CLASP volume is dedicated to the memory of A. J. Bliss, the medievalist and metre specialist whose monograph on *Beowulf*, first published in 1958, contributed fundamentally to our understanding of the composition of that poem. The collection thus closes with two appendices that are concerned with the figure of Bliss and his work: Peter Lucas's personal memoir and Mark Griffith's "Some Corrections to Alan Bliss's Indices to *The Metre of Beowulf*, together with his last known views on the Metre of the Poem." The third appendix contains the glossary of metrical terms referred to above. Bliss memorably stated that "the appreciation of Old English metre cannot be learned in a day, but it can be learned without great difficulty, provided it is approached in the right spirit."²⁴ We hope to make it easier for those interested in Old English poetry to approach the study of its metre in the right spirit, namely with an awareness that without metre there is no poetry.

Chapter I

METRE AS AN EDITORIAL CONCERN IN THE ANGLO-SAXON POETIC RECORDS, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE OLD ENGLISH SOUL AND BODY POEMS

R. D. Fulk*

GEORGE PHILIP KRAPP and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, the editors of the standard scholarly edition of Old English poetry, were notably loath to introduce emendations into the text of *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* to remedy metrical defects.¹ Quite a few unemended lines of verse in their edition defy metrical norms.² More regrettable is that some of the emendations they have introduced are metrically implausible, suggesting that the editors' reluctance to emend *metri causa* is predicated not on any principled distrust of metre as an indicator of textual corruption—or, at least, metre made to serve as the sole criterion for emendation in any given instance—but on an insufficient grasp of the principles of Old English poetic metre. To offer one of many examples, in line 1347 of *Christ III* the Exeter Book reads “leoftum”, which is emended to “leofstum” in *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*:

“Onfōð nū mid frēondum mīnes fæder rīce
þæt wæs ær woruldum wynlice gearo,
blæd mid blissum, beorht ēðles wlite,
hwonne gē þā lifwelan mid þām lēofstum,
swāse swegldrēamas, gesēon mōsten.” (lines 1344–48)

[Receive now with your friends my father's kingdom, which was delightfully prepared before the ages, splendour with contentment, bright homeland's beauty, at a time when you will be allowed to see among those most beloved the riches of life, your own heavenly delights.]³

The emended form, however, produces a verse that is metrically no more plausible than the unemended one. Verses of this type, with just one lift, to which the honoree of this volume gave the name “light verses,” are restricted to the on-verse, and then they normally appear

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1 *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, ed. George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, 6 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931–1953).

2 Dozens of editorial defects in the edition, many of them metrical, have been pointed out by Daniel Donoghue, *Style in Old English Poetry: The Test of the Auxiliary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 178–99.

3 All poetry is quoted from Krapp and Dobbie's edition, but macrons have been added as an aid to scansion. Translations are the present writer's.

only in the clause onset.⁴ Moreover, the form *lēofstum* makes no phonological sense. The vowel of the superlative suffix is not normally syncopated in verse.⁵ It is syncopated in a few adjectives in West Saxon, but only those that normally show umlaut, such as *hiehsta* (highest) and *ieldest* (oldest). The superlative of *lēof* (beloved) is never so syncopated in any dialect. Moreover, nearly all Old English poetry presents evidence of having been composed in an Anglian dialect, and so syncope should not normally be expected in superlatives in verse. The correct form here in line 1347, as both grammar and metre demand, is *lēofostum*. Presumably, Krapp and Dobbie emended to the syncopated form because they wished to tamper with the manuscript reading as little as possible.

Similarly, following in the track of Christian Grein and subsequent editors, Krapp and Dobbie supply the word “frōfre” (consolation) in line 658 of *Juliana*, to mend the alliteration and the sense.⁶

	Ponne ēow miltse giefēð
fæder ælmihtig,	þær gē frōfre āgun
æt mægna gode,	mæste þearfe
æfter sorgstafum.	(lines 657b–60a)

[Then the father almighty will grant you mercy, if you shall have consolation from the God of hosts, the greatest requirement after your troubles.]

The word *frōfre* is not in the manuscript, and the metre, alliteration, grammar, and sense require that a noun alliterating on *f* be supplied here. Ferdinand Holthausen objected to *frōfre*, calling it a metrically impossible restoration, and his point is well taken: this would have to be a verse of Bliss’s Type 2A1a with disyllabic anacrusis, though Bliss points out that this type never takes even monosyllabic anacrusis in *Beowulf*.⁷ Holthausen suggested *frīdes* (peace), or *gefēan* (joy), and Moritz Trautmann suggested *freme* (advantage).⁸ Any of these would furnish good sense, syntax, alliteration, and metre.

To offer one further example, in Krapp and Dobbie’s edition of the Exeter Book they have emended line 84 of *Riddle 40*, a translation of Aldhelm’s *Riddle 100*, *Creatura*:

Ic eorþan eom	æghwær brædre
ond wīðgelra	þonne þes wong grēna;
ic ūttor ēaþe	eal ymbwinde,
wrætlice gewefen	wundorcræfte. (lines 82–85)

4 A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 6–23.

5 For definition of syncope and other key terms in this chapter and volume, readers should consult the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices.

6 *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie*, ed. Christian W. M. Grein, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Wigand, 1857–1858).

7 Ferdinand Holthausen, Review of Chr. W. M. Grein, *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie*, ed. Rich. P. Wülcker, vol. 3, pt. 1 (2nd ed., 1897), *Beiblatt zur Anglia* 9 (1899): 353–58 at 356; Bliss, *Metre*, 40.

8 Moritz Trautmann, “Berichtigungen, Erklärungen und Vermutungen zu Cynewulfs Werken,” *Bonner Beiträge zur Anglistik* 23 (1907): 85–146 at 97.

[I am on all sides broader than the earth and more widespread than this green expanse;
I easily encompass everything from the outside, woven magnificently with amazing skill.]

The word “ēaþe” (easily) in line 84 is not in the manuscript, and in this instance, unusually, the editors have emended solely to remedy a metrical defect, though that defect is of the most elementary and striking sort, seeing as a verse must contain at least four syllables. In this case, ironically, it was Holthausen who proposed the unmetrical emendation, which produces the same illicit type as in the last example, though with monosyllabic rather than disyllabic anacrusis, and in the on-verse, where the problem is less obvious.⁹ The word *ēaþe* corresponds to nothing in Aldhelm’s poem, but at all events these lines are only a very loose translation of Aldhelm’s hermeneutic Latin. The comparative form of the same word, *ȳð*, which is monosyllabic, would produce a metrical verse, but the comparative form is never used in poetry without the comparative particle *þȳ*. Trautmann supplied “fela” (greatly), corresponding to “multo” in Aldhelm’s poem, and this seems the most probable solution.¹⁰

The emendation that is the topic of this chapter is likewise motivated by the consideration that a verse must contain more than three syllables. In line 5 of *Soul and Body II* in the Exeter Book the manuscript reads “saw!”, which Krapp and Dobbie have emended to “sawle”:

Hūru, ðæs behōfaþ	hæleþa æghwylc
þæt hē his sǣwle sið	sylfe bewitige,
hū þæt bið dēoplic	þonne sē dēað cymeð,
āsundrað þā sibbe,	þā þe ær somud wæron,
lic ond sǣwle! (lines 1–5)	

[By all means, it behooves every hero that he attend to the destiny of his own soul, how profound it will be when death arrives, parts that relationship, those which were formerly united, body and soul!]

Manuscript *saw!* would be nominative, in apposition to “þā þe” (those which) in the preceding line, the subject of “wæron” (were), whereas “sǣwle” is accusative, appositive to “þā sibbe” (that relationship), also in the preceding line. The emendation has the support of the other version of this poem, preserved in the Vercelli Book (*Soul and Body I*), where in the corresponding line the manuscript reads “sawle”.

Yet despite the seeming need for the extra syllable to satisfy the requirements of the metre, the emendation is actually unnecessary. In Old English, the nominative singular of the word for “soul” is spelt alternately as a monosyllable and as a disyllable: the commonest spellings are *sawl*, *saul*, *sawel*, *sawol*, and *sawul*. The nominative singular of the word appears at one other place in *Soul and Body II*, where it is likewise spelt as a

⁹ Ferdinand Holthausen, “Zur Textkritik altenglischen Dichtungen,” *Englische Studien* 37 (1907): 198–211 at 208.

¹⁰ Moritz Trautmann, *Die altenglischen Rätsel (Die Rätsel des Exeterbuchs)* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1915), 27, 104.

monosyllable: “ond þē þīn sāwl sceal” (57b). Despite the spelling, a disyllabic scansion is required to produce a verse of Sievers’s Type B, as otherwise the verse would be defective: verses of just three metrical positions, though permissible in the on-verse when they begin a verse clause, ought not to appear in the off-verse. In the version of the poem in the Vercelli Book, the corresponding verse (62b) is spelt identically. It is therefore quite possible that in line 5a of the poem in the Exeter Book, manuscript “sawl” is to be scanned as a disyllable. The question to be settled, then, is whether the emended or the unemended form in 5a is to be preferred.

Perhaps the most fundamental principle of textual editing is that emendations should not be introduced without need, a principle akin to Occam’s razor. Since the verse “līc ond sāwl” is not defective, either metrically or in any other way, it should not be emended. Yet the question remains which is likelier to be what the author intended, the nominative form in the Exeter Book or the accusative in the Vercelli manuscript. To be sure, the nominative affords simpler syntax, since it shares the case of the nearer antecedent, which must be skipped over if the author intended an accusative form, in agreement with the more remote antecedent. Yet if *sawle* in the Vercelli Book is not the correct form, it must be assumed that the Vercelli scribe (or an antecedent scribe in the poem’s transmission history) altered *sawl* to *sawle* for the sake of the metre, and it has been shown with abundant evidence that, in general, Anglo-Saxon scribes usually paid no attention to the metre when they copied native poetry.¹¹ Still, it is difficult to see why the Exeter scribe would have changed *sawle* in his exemplar to *sawl*—a change more difficult to explain than the Vercelli scribe’s putative change of *sawl* to *sawle*—and the use of *sāwl* as a nominative form later in the Vercelli poem tends to support the assumption that “līc ond sāwl” in the Exeter Book is more original.

Yet if *sāwl* is the more original form, it remains to be explained why this should have been substituted for the disyllable *sāwul* (or similar) apparently intended by the poet. On first examination, this seems counterintuitive. It is a familiar pattern that when West Germanic forms like **taikna* lost the inflection, the stem remained monosyllabic for a time, just as, for example, Modern Icelandic *vatn* (water), from **watna*, is monosyllabic to this day. Only later was the final resonant syllabified, with the result that Old English *tācen* (sign) occurs beside *tācn*. The monosyllabic form is thus the earlier of the two. Why, then, should a scribe have substituted monosyllabic *sāwl* for an earlier disyllabic form? The opposite sort of substitution might have been expected, given the chronology.

This peculiarity of the word *sāwl* was remarked already nearly thirty years ago by the present writer.¹² Some of the chief reference grammars then available assumed that *sāwl* represents the reflex of Proto-Germanic **saiwalō* by loss of medial *a*, with subsequent loss of

11 On scribal disregard of the metre, see especially Rafael J. Pascual, “On a Crux in *Beowulf*: The Alliteration of Finite Verbs and the Scribal Understanding of Metre,” *SN* 87 (2015): 171–85; and Leonard Neidorf, *The Transmission of Beowulf* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

12 R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 91n55.

the inflection.¹³ A problem with this analysis, however, is that wherever in poems that appear to be early compositions the metrical value of the word can be determined, it is consistently disyllabic. This would be rather a surprising scansion if the word became monosyllabic at an early date. For example, in *Beowulf*, the syllabic value of pertinent examples of the word can be determined in four instances (1406b, 2693a, 2820a, 3033b), and in each instantiation the word is disyllabic. Non-parasiting—that is, failure of a final sonorant consonant (*r*, *l*, *m*, *n*) following an obstruent to develop an excrescent vowel before it, for example as in *tācn* rather than *tācen*, as determined by the metre—is exceptionally common in *Beowulf*, with twenty-two indubitable instances, whereas parasiting is comparatively rare, at just five instances. Given that four out of four metrically unambiguous instances of *sāwul* in *Beowulf* must be regarded as disyllabic, it is implausible that the word should have been rendered monosyllabic at an early date. Even more significant is the observation that etymologically nonsyllabic *l* in the relevant phonological environment never undergoes parasiting in the corpus of poetry on which these conclusions are based, and this seems a rather severe impediment to the supposition that monosyllabic *sāwl* is an early form and disyllabic *sāwul* a later development. The spelling evidence in Anglian prose texts also tells decisively against the supposition that *sāwul* could have been reduced early to a monosyllable, since the spelling is almost exclusively *sawul* in the Old English gloss on the Vespasian Psalter, whose language represents a relatively early stage in the development of the West Mercian dialect, and whereas the spelling *saul* does occur occasionally in late Northumbrian texts, the usual spelling is *sauel*. Both metrical and orthographic considerations thus point to the conclusion that monosyllabic *sāwl* is a relatively late development, probably of the ninth century. This conclusion agrees with the evidence of early texts, such as that on the Bewcastle Column, probably of the seventh or early eighth century, in which the word is spelt *sowhula* (a plural form).¹⁴ Medial vowels had almost certainly undergone syncope before this.¹⁵ Accordingly, a disyllabic nominative form could not have arisen at this time on an analogical basis, since there would have been no disyllabic stem in the paradigm to serve as a model. Neither is monosyllabic *sāwl* likely to be a form characteristic of a particular Anglian dialect, given the Anglian evidence offered above.

Indeed, the only unambiguous instances of the nominative singular scanning as a monosyllable in Old English verse are these:

þæt sīo sāwl wære (*Metres of Boethius* 20.182b)

Swā dēð monnes sāl (*Metres of Boethius* 20.210b)

þæt sīo hālige sāwl (*Soul and Body I* 127b)

¹³ See A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, reprinted from the corrected sheets of the first edition of 1959 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977); and Karl Luick, *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*, ed. Friedrich Wild and Herbert Koziol, 2 vols. (only vol. 1, in two parts, published), 1914–1940 (rpt. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964).

¹⁴ See, for example, Éamonn Ó Carragáin, “Christian Inculturation in Eighth-Century Northumbria: The Bewcastle and Ruthwell Crosses,” *Colloquium* 4 (2007). The text of the inscription is edited in Henry Sweet, *The Oldest English Texts* (London: Oxford University Press, 1885), 124.

¹⁵ Luick, for example, *Historische Grammatik*, I, 1, 321, dates the loss of the medial vowel in **sāwalu* > **sāwlu* to the end of the sixth century.

It is of no small significance that the instance in *Soul and Body I* corresponds to nothing in *Soul and Body II*, but it is contained in the address of the saved soul to the pious body, which several scholars have argued is a late addition to the Vercelli poem, as suggested by some of its formal peculiarities.¹⁶

We are now in a better position than we were thirty years ago to understand why *sāwl* behaves in this surprising fashion. It is true that it is to be expected that unstressed *a* should have been syncopated in a medial open syllable after a heavy syllable, as in, for instance, the Proto-Germanic dative plural **þeudānumiz* > **þeudānum* > OE *þeodnum* (lords). There is an exception, however. It has been pointed out more recently that in the conservative language of the Old English gloss on the Vespasian Psalter, showing a relatively early state of the Mercian dialect, syncope does not occur when the inflection is *-u* (nominative singular feminine or nominative/accusative plural neuter), as with feminine *īdelu* (vain) < **īðalō*, and neuter *lumberu* (lambs) < **lambazō*.¹⁷ This must originally have been the case in all the Old English dialects, but the irregularity that the nominative singular feminine and the nominative/accusative plural neuter were the only cases bearing a vocalic inflexion without syncope of the middle vowel led to analogical changes within the paradigm in all dialects, though those changes are only inchoate in early Mercian. Therefore, it is to be expected that the middle vowel would have remained unsyncopated in **saiwalō* > **sāwulu*, and monosyllabic forms of the nominative singular, both orthographic and metrical, are due to the later analogical extension of the monosyllabic stem from the oblique cases, where syncope had taken place, into the nominative.

It remains to be explained, then, why the nominative singular of OE *sāwul* does not end in *-u*. This word appears to be the only feminine common noun with an originally

¹⁶ Some of the departures from metrical norms in this portion of the poem are these: *gōde word sprecað* (131b) is a verse of type D*, a type restricted to the on-verse in most poetry because of the requirement of double alliteration; *ealles swā micles* (149a, alliteration on *m*) is a light verse that occurs in the middle of a clause rather than at its start; *ond āhōfe mē on ēcne drēam* (151b, alliteration on *h*) is a hypermetric verse paired with a normal verse, and the verb *āhōfe* (raised) bears the alliteration that rightly belongs to *ēcne* (everlasting); and in *ac þæt wolde god* (154b) the verb similarly takes alliterative precedence of the noun *god* (God). Peter Orton, following the earlier lead of Stopford Brooke, and supported by Douglas Moffat, argues for later composition of the Blessed Soul portion of the poem by an inferior poet. See Orton, "Disunity in the Vercelli Book *Soul and Body*," *Neophilologus* 63 (1979): 450–60; Orton, "The Old English *Soul and Body*: A Further Examination," *MÆ* 48 (1979): 173–97; Stopford A. Brooke, *The History of Early English Literature*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1892), II, 166; Douglas Moffat, *The Old English Soul and Body* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), 41–44. Orton discusses 154b ("Disunity," 454). He also says that *swylc* in 141 ought to be stressed because it is an indefinite adjective that follows the word it modifies (*wuldor*), and the monosyllabic value of *sāwl* in 127b is inconsistent with the earlier poet's usage ("Disunity," 455–56).

¹⁷ See R. D. Fulk, "The Roles of Phonology and Analogy in Old English High Vowel Deletion," *Transactions of the Philological Society* 108 (2010): 126–44. On the reconstruction of the latter form, see R. D. Fulk, *A Comparative Grammar of the Early Germanic Languages* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2018), §7.38.

disyllabic stem and a heavy initial syllable.¹⁸ All other originally disyllabic stems of feminine common nouns had a light initial syllable, and thus they would have lost *-u* in the nominative singular by regular phonological rule. And disyllabic stems that developed from monosyllabic stems, for example *ceaster* (town) < **ceastr* < **cæstru* < **kastrō*, had also lost *-u* on a regular phonological basis. It is thus no improbable supposition that **sāwulu*, being morphologically so isolated, followed the pattern of other disyllabic feminine nouns and lost *-u* on an analogical basis.

On the basis of the preceding analysis, it may be concluded that the manuscript reading *sawl* at *Soul and Body II* 5a need not be emended to accusative *sawle* for the sake of the metre, since the form *sawl* may stand for earlier *sawul*. Since verse 5a appears to contain just three syllables, fewer than the minimal four required, it might be argued that *sawl* should be emended to *sawul*. Yet the editors of *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* do not make it a policy to emend *metri causa* in connection with apparent disruptions of the metre due to parasiting. For example, they do not alter *hleahtr* to non-parasited *hleahtr* in the verse “hihtleasne hleahtr” (*Genesis A* 2389a), though this unmetrical verse would be rendered a normal Type E if they did so. Rather, readers of the standard edition of Old English verse who are metrically minded are accustomed, with few exceptions, to thinking of the text as a diaphane to be looked through, with older and dialectally different linguistic forms employed by the poets underlying the forms used by late scribes who brought the linguistic forms into closer alignment with their own usage.

Yet a broader and more significant conclusion may be drawn from these observations about the metrical behaviour of Old English *sāwul*. In the end it may be seen that the metrical and orthographic behaviour of OE *sāwul*, with treatment from an early date as a disyllable, far from being a worrisome defeat of expectations, is precisely what recent analysis of syncope and apocope in Old English should lead one to expect. That analysis and the conclusion that the treatment of certain words as monosyllables or disyllables in the scansion of Old English poetry is indicative of poetic chronology are thus mutually supportive, and all the more so because, prior to a close examination of the derivation of *sāwul*, the word might have been thought to contradict the usual chronological conclusions. That it instead supports those conclusions thus seems of no small consequence.

¹⁸ So say Karl Brunner, *Altenglische Grammatik nach der Angelsächsischen Grammatik von Eduard Sievers*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1965), §254.2; and Richard M. Hogg and R. D. Fulk, *A Grammar of Old English, Volume 2: Morphology* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), §2.36. Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, §588.5n5, mentions two proper nouns in early texts that retain *-u* (later *-o*): *Wantsumu* (a river) and *Aebbino* (a woman's name). Compare also *sowhula* on the Bewcastle Column, cited above. Some nouns bearing the PGmc. suffix **-ipō* would originally have had a structure parallel to that of **sāwulu*, but these must have levelled the syncopated stem of the oblique cases into the nominative singular at an early date: see Fulk, “Roles of Phonology and Analogy,” 140–41.

Chapter 2

THE DREAM OF THE ROOD: “NOT ON THE WHOLE METRICALLY DEFICIENT”?

Jane Roberts*

Introduction

This short chapter on *The Dream of the Rood* is a stab at unfinished business. Long ago I got into metre when looking for tools to help me disentangle the Guthlac poems. And later, because I worried that two Exeter Book poems in particular felt to me like *Guthlac A*, I scanned *Christ III* and *Vainglory*. The results, to my mind, set them apart both from *Guthlac A* and from each other. But a follow-on nagging worry was that, metrically as in so many other ways, the Vercelli Book's *Dream of the Rood* could have a lot in common with *Christ III*.¹ Also, I promised Éamonn Ó Carragáin, when he was completing *Ritual and the Rood*,² that I'd try to substantiate this suspicion, but somehow I never did. So, when asked to contribute a short paper to the CLASP seminar, a foolhardy venture, scanning *The Dream of the Rood*, popped into my mind. Foolhardy because it's the Old English poem we all know best. The Anglo-Saxons too knew its materials well, leaving us memories across four centuries of phrases spoken by Christ's cross: in the runes on the high cross in Ruthwell, in scattered phrases in an Old English homily,³ and in verses incized into the metalwork of the Brussels Cross. The Appendix to this chapter attempts to list the poem's verses according to the classificatory system developed by Alan Bliss.⁴ It is, after all, the theory of scansion adopted in much important work relating to Old English metre, for example in monographs by Ashley Amos and Robert Fulk and in Jun

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1 For the close relationship of the Vercelli Book and the Exeter Book, see Jane Roberts, “A Context for the Exeter Book: Some Suggestions but No Conclusions,” in *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Medieval England*, ed. Michiko Ogura (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 31–48 at 38: “The poets and preachers of these two compilations share the ability to seize on powerful imagery, be it the cross, more often than not drenched in blood, on the final day (*ChristC* 1064–65, 1085, 1101–102, 1112, Vercelli Homilies II.12, XV.92–93, XXI.165 and 199 and *Dream* 48).”

2 Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images of the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (London: British Library, 2005). For the Ruthwell *tituli* cited below, the text is from Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, 79–80, 180–81, and I draw on his translations. In the Ruthwell Cross transliterations square brackets surround probable reconstructions and curly brackets surround speculative supplies.

3 See Dorothy M. Horgan, “*The Dream of the Rood* and a Homily for Palm Sunday,” *N&Q* 29 (1982): 388–91.

4 A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967).

Terasawa's excellent introduction.⁵ In the body of the chapter I shall do little more than present a few observations under three headings: A3 verses; hypermetric lines; and some obstreperous verses.⁶ Yet, in selecting these features for examination, I hope to indicate that, when compared with the longer poems of the corpus, this is a poem that has more in common with *Christ III* than with *Beowulf*.

The Vercelli poem, a satisfying whole, is simple in structure: the narrator states that he will relate the vision he has had of the cross (27 lines), reports in direct speech the words spoken to him by the cross (lines 28–122), and talks of his life of prayer and expectation of heaven (lines 123–56). For approximately half the inner speech the cross tells the story of the crucifixion from its own point of view (lines 28–77), with vivid detail; the Ruthwell Cross and the Brussels Cross contain material analogous to this part of the poem. In the second part of the inner speech (lines 78–121), the cross instructs and comforts the narrator. The vocabulary does not seek to dazzle in any showy way. The compounds, though some are rare, are straightforward in make-up,⁷ with only a couple giving problems of understanding. Both of these are hapax legomena, well handled in Swanton's edition: the unusual extension in reference of *-hlemm* from sound to wound in "inwidhlemmas" (wicked blows, line 47); and the sense "hill" otherwise unrecorded in Old English in "ofer holmwudu" (above the trees of the hillside, line 91).⁸ Overall, the *Dream* is a satisfying whole rather than a work "that has undergone extension by an inferior poet whose work we see in the second half of the poem, perhaps as early as line 78."⁹

5 Ashley Crandell Amos, *Linguistic Means of Determining the Dates of Old English Literary Texts* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1980); wisely, she did not comment on the metre of the *Dream*. R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), comments from time to time on the *Dream*, although it was not in the corpus he scanned. Jun Terasawa, *Old English Metre: An Introduction*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon, vol. 7 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2011).

6 For a full index of key technical terms used in this chapter and volume, readers should consult the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices.

7 Attested once only in the Corpus of Old English are "ærgewin" 19, "bealuwara" 79, "ealexgespanne" 9, "feorgbold" 73, "holmwudu" 91 (often emended), "inwidhlemmas" 47 (cf. *Christ III* 1109 "niðhycgende"), "langunghwila" 126. Restricted to Old English poetry are: "ealdgewyrhtum" 100, "eorðwege" 120, "forðgesceaft" 10, "forðwege" 125, "hilderincas" 61, 72, "hreoewcearig" 25, "limwerigne" 63 (otherwise only the Ruthwell Cross inscription), "modsefa" 124, "moldern" 65, "reordberend" 3, "reordberendum" 89, "sigebeam" 13, 127, "prymfæst" 84. Note, however, that the exploitation of connotations in "beswyled" 23 and "byrigde" 101 might be considered poetic. Conversely, E. G. Stanley, "Studies in the Prosaic Vocabulary of Old English Verse," *NM* 72 (1971): 385–418, clutches at one possibly prosaic word, *-þenian*.

8 Throughout, quotations from *DOTR* are taken from Michael Swanton's edition (see fn16) and the manuscript source; quotations from other poems are taken or adapted from *ASPR*. Manuscript images can be found in EEMF Vol. 19, and at *The Digital Vercelli Book*, ed. Roberto Rosselli Del Turco et al. (2017), http://evt.labcd.unipi.it/demo/evt_v1-3/dotr/. I understand *-u*, where *-a* might be expected, as plural, with the not unusual confusion of these unaccented back vowels. The early Middle English poet *Lazamon* has two instances of *holm* "hill"; perhaps a borrowing from Old Norse, the meaning is also attested in place-names.

9 Peter Orton, *The Transmission of Old English Poetry* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 159. Cf. Leonard Neidorf, "The Composite Authorship of *The Dream of the Rood*," *ASE* 45 (2017): 51–70 at 68 for further discussion of "inferior versification in the second half of the poem."

Let us begin by taking a quick look at the material shared by the Ruthwell Cross inscriptions and *The Dream of the Rood*.¹⁰ In passages quoted from the Vercelli Book poem, I want to defamiliarize you with the text, resorting to a layout I sometimes used in teaching. Lines are not justified to the left. The eye is therefore forced to identify the head-stave, and to recognize that verse lines end more tidily than they begin. An exception is line 40, which will be discussed below. The capitals and marks of punctuation reflect those in the manuscript. Alliterating sounds are indicated in bold font. Highlighting indicates obvious overlap. For the inscriptions I give modern word separation and suggest verse divisions:

Ruthwell Cross, First titulus

- (1) [+*ond*]geredæ hinæ ġod almeittig [.] þa he walde on ġalġu gistīġa modig f[*ore*]
[*allæ*] men [b]uġ[a]{*ic ne dorste*}[...]

[Almighty God stripped himself. When he willed to mount the gallows, courageous before all men, I dared not bow [...]]

- (2) [ahof] ic riicnæ kȳningc . hēāfunæs hlafard hælde ic ni dorstæ [b]ismærædu
unċet men ba æt[ġ]ad[re] [i]c [wæs] miþ blodi bist[e]mi[d] bi{ġoten of þæs
ġumu sida}

[I [*lifted up*] a powerful king, the lord of heaven. I dared not tilt. Men insulted the pair of us together; I was drenched with blood po{ured from the man's side} [...]]

39-49 Ongyrede hine þa geong hæleð þæt wæs god ælmihtig
 strang 7 stiðmod. gestah he on gealgan heanne
 modig on manigra gesyðhe. þa he wolde mancyn lisan.
bifode ic þa me se beorn ymbclypte. ne dorste ic hwæðre bugan to eorðan
 feallan to foldan sceatum Ac ic sceolde fæste standan.
 Rod wæs ic aræred. ahof ic ricne cyning
 heofona hlaford. hyldan me ne dorste
Purhdrifan hi me mid deorcan næglum. on me syndon þa dolg gesiene
 opene inwidlemmas. ne dorste ic hyra nænigum sceoððan.
bysmeredon hie unc butu ætgædere eall ic wæs mid blode bestemed.
begoten of þæs guman sidan. siððan he hæfde his gast onsended.

¹⁰ Matthew D. Coker, "The Dream of the Rood and the Function of Hypermetric Lines," *N&Q* 66.1 (March 2019): 8–19, argues for an underlying stanzaic structure.

[The young man the stripped himself—that was almighty God. Powerful and stern of heart he mounted the high gallows, proud in the sight of many when he was intent on redeeming mankind. I trembled when that man embraced me, and nevertheless I dared not bow to the ground, fall to the earth's surface. But I had to stand firm. I was raised up a cross, I lifted up the mighty king, heavens' lord, I did not dare bow. They pierced me through with dark nails, the wounds are still visible in me, gaping wicked blows, and I dared not harm any of them. They taunted both two of us together, I was all drenched with blood poured from the man's side when he had sent forth his spirit.]

Ruthwell Cross, Second *titulus*

- (1) [+] krist wæs on rodi hweþræ þer fusæ fêarran kwomu æþþilæ til anum ic þæt al bi[hêâld] s[aræ] ic w[æ]s . mi[b] so[r]ġu[m] gidrœ[fi]d h[n]a[ġ]{*ic þam secgum til handa*}

[Christ was on the cross. But eager ones came thither from afar, the noble ones [came] together. I looked upon all that: I was terribly afflicted with sorrows; I bowed {to the hands of the men}]

- (2) miþ strelum giwundad alegdun hiæ hinæ limwœrignæ. gistoddu[n] him [æt his lic]æs [hêâ]f[du]m [bih]êâ[ld]u[n] [h]i[æ] [þ]e[r]{*hêâfunes dryctin*}[...]

[Wounded with arrows, they laid him down limb-spent, and took their stand at the head and feet of his corpse; there they looked on {the Lord of heaven}]

56–64

cwiðdon cyninges fyll crist wæs on rode.

hwæðere þær fuse feorran cwoman

to þam æðelinge ic þæt eall beheold.

Sare ic wæs mid {sorgum} gedrefed hnag ic hwæðre þam secgum to handa

eaðmod elne mycle genamon hie þær ælmihtigne god

ahofon hine of ðam hefian wite forleton me þa hilderincas

standan steame bedrifen eall ic wæs mid strælum forwundod.

Aledon hie ðær limwerigne gestodon him æt his lices heafdum

beheoldon hie ðær heofenes dryhten 7 he hine ðær hwile reste

[they bewailed the king's fall. Christ was on the Cross. There came nevertheless from afar unhesitating people to the prince: I saw it all. I was sorely wrecked with sorrowing, yet with great valour, obedient I bowed to the men's power. There they took hold of almighty God, lifted him up from that toilsome torment. The soldiers then left me to stand drenched with sweat. I was all troubled with arrows. They put down there the man fully dead, stood at the ends of his body, looked there upon heaven's lord, and he stayed there for a short time.]

It is obvious that similar verses were in the heads of the deviser of the Ruthwell *tituli* and of the author of the later Vercelli Book poem. Later again, inlaid silver panels on the Brussels Cross recall phrases to be found in *Dream* lines 42 and 49:

+ ROD IS MIN NAMA GEO IC RICNE CYNING BÆR BYFIGYNDE BLODE BESTEMED

[My name is Cross. Long ago trembling I carried a mighty king drenched with blood.]

A few remembered details and words intruded into a translation of the Palm Sunday narrative cast as a homily:

7 hi asetton hine in ða byrgenne. þe wæs gecorfen on ðam beorhtan stane

[and they placed him in the sepulchre, which was hewn in that lustrous stone]

(cf. *Dream* 66b)

his swiðran sidan gewundedon and his fet and his handa mid næglum þurhdrifon

[they wounded his right side and pierced his feet and hands through with dark nails]

(cf. *Dream* 20, 46)

hi ða [-sona] to ðære rode becomon 7 [-heo him sona to aleat]

[they came then [at once] to the cross and [it bowed to them at once]]

(cf. *Dream* 59)

In addition, the homily in three places had the obsolescent verb *-gyrwan* rather than *-scridan*, the verb preferred in the West Saxon Gospels. The poem has three instances of this verb, in lines 16, 23 and 77, and its “ongyrede” (stripped, line 39) is paralleled on the Ruthwell Cross. The homily, which survives in three copies and one fragment, underwent alterations seemingly made to bring the text more closely in line with the wording of Matthew’s gospel, chapters 26–27, with consequent loss of resonances from the *Dream* tradition, for instance the detail that the cross bowed to the hands of men.¹¹ So what was the source of the Ruthwell Cross inscriptions? There must have been songs in circulation, maybe even some written down.¹² I like to think of a song learned from mouth to mouth, perhaps the sort of poem his mother had in the book she gave young Alfred, that “book of English poetry.”¹³ The runes on the cross look like a selection made to surround and complement the vine scrolls of the narrow sides. Ó Carragáin has pointed out that the major panels are all provided “with *tituli* that recalled intoned

¹¹ Tadashi Kotake, “The Broxbourne Fragment of an Old English Passion Narrative,” *N&Q* (2021): 25–35.

¹² Cf. Coker, “*The Dream of the Rood*,” 8–19, who argues that the poem’s hypermetric lines resemble “an ancient tradition of sung, stanzaic verse.”

¹³ *Asser’s Life of King Alfred: Together with the Annals of Saint Neots, erroneously ascribed to Asser*, ed. William H. Stevenson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 20 (§23.2–3): “quendam Saxonicum poematice artis librum.”

lections and well-known chants, in Latin and in English.”¹⁴ As they were read, memory could have kicked in, a few words triggering more.

The distribution of hypermetric verses within the *Dream* has been discussed endlessly. For the most part they cluster in the earlier part of the poem. What is striking is the disagreement among those who dare identify them as to just which are the hypermetric verses. Even the lists of Pope and Bliss do not agree.¹⁵ Michael Swanton admires the poet’s “discriminating play of metre over syntax” and his “blocks of hypermetric verse used contrapuntally to accommodate significantly more complex thematic material”; then discreetly, in a footnote identifies “major blocks” (lines 20–23, 30–34, 39–43, 46–49, 59–69), adding that lines 6–10 “may have been corrupted at some stage,” and he refers his readers to Pope, Stevick, and Hieatt.¹⁶ Were I to go over the differing tallies that have been put forward, little space would be left to look at the three topics I have chosen for discussion.

Whereas short or “normal” lines tend to come in sequences without much by way of a pause at the caesura, the extended lines fall more obviously into two parts. Some of lines 109–11 are likely to be read aloud as units without marked pausing at the caesura:

hider eft fundað
on þysne middangeard mancynn secan
on domdæge dryhtne sylfa
ælmihstig god and his englas mid.
þæt he þonne wile deman se ah domes geweald
anra gehwylcum swa he him ærur her
109 on þyssum lænum life geearnaþ.
ne mæg þær ænig unforht wesan.
for þam worde . þe se wealdend cwyð.

[the Lord himself, he who has power over judgment, will hasten here again into this earth to seek mankind on Judgment Day, God almighty, and his angels with him, wanting

¹⁴ Éamonn Ó Carragáin, “Who then read the Ruthwell Poem in the Eighth Century?,” in *Aedificia Nova. Studies in Honor of Rosemary Cramp*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov and Helen Damico (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2008), 43–75 at 75; see also 61–62.

¹⁵ John C. Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf: An Interpretation of the Normal and Hypermetric Verse-forms in Old English Poetry*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 101, lists 64 to 66 verses (for 101a, “barely hypermetric as it stands,” and 133, emendations are suggested); Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, 159–66, lists none later than line 75.

¹⁶ *The Dream of the Rood*, ed. Michael Swanton, Old and Middle English Texts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971) (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1987; rev. ed. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1987, 1996), 60–61; Pope, *Rhythm of Beowulf*; Constance B. Hieatt, “A New Theory of Triple Rhythm in the Hypermetric Lines of Old English,” *Modern Philology* 67.1 (1969): 1–8; Robert D. Stevick, “The Meter of ‘The Dream of the Rood,’” *NM* 68.2 (1967): 149–68.

then to judge each and everyone according to their desserts in this transitory life, and none there can be without dread for the sentence that the ruler [of all] will pronounce.]

A riff, once under way, can easily accommodate a light verse, for example “on þyssum lænum” line 109.¹⁷ By contrast, the verses in hypermetric lines seem to demand a pause for breath. In them the caesura is especially marked where the second half-line opens with a lengthy lead-in. (Cast your eye back over lines 39–49 and 56–64, cited in the Introduction.) Little attention has been given to the poem’s light verses.

A3 Verses

Recognition of this Sievers Type conflicts with a two-stress norm. Here I wish to begin with a question. In which Old English poems are the A3 verse types generally clause-initial?¹⁸ That seems to be the case for *Beowulf*, and there, indeed, only two clause openings are without the sentence particle otherwise deemed usual in the initial dip, the prepositional phrase “Æfter þæm wordum” (line 1492), “Æfter ðæm wordum” (after these words, line 2669). Stanley describes *þæm* in these phrases as a resumptive pronoun by way of partial exculpation for their use. It could be worth following up the practice in other longish poems. For example, examination of *Christ III* showed the use there of non-clause-initial prepositional phrases: “mid þy mæstan” (with the greatest, line 1008), “of minre sidan” (from my side, line 1448).¹⁹ In contrast, *Maldon* looks to be without any such verses. The *Dream* may be too short to play such games, but it does have some such A3 verses, all of them in the latter part of the poem: lines 103–11 show two of them in context, “on þyssum lænum” (line 109a); and “for þam worde” (line 111a). A further instance occurs in line 138: “on þyssum lænan life gefetige” (will bring me from this transitory life). The overall distribution of A3 verses can vary markedly from poem to poem. The proportion of verses with Bliss a1 contour in the *Dream* (see pp. 32–33) resembles *Guthlac A*, where there are considerably more than in *Guthlac B*, the latter metrically more akin to the four Cynewulf poems and *Beowulf* than is *Guthlac A*.

A well-known matter of debate for A3 verses is how to view an alliterating finite verb in verses such as: “**stodon on staðole**” (stood in position, line 71); “**gebiddaþ** him

¹⁷ Carol Braun Pasternack, “Stylistic Disjunctions in *The Dream of the Rood*,” *ASE* 13 (1984): 167–86 at 182, draws attention to how “on þyssum lænum life” is “pushed past the normal half-line break”—a feature worth exploring in the corpus. Cf. “on þyssum lænan life gefetige,” *Dream* 138; also *Guthlac A* 646–47 “in þone torhtestan| þrynesse þrym.” The caesura after a genitive, as in “7 adomes ealdgewyrhtum” line 100, is less unusual.

¹⁸ E. G. Stanley, “Some Observations on the A3 lines in *Beowulf*,” in *Old English Studies in Honour of John C. Pope*, ed. Robert B. Burlin and Edward B. Irving, Jr. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 139–64, points to significant features in differentiating among these verses. Also see Peter Orton, “Anglo-Saxon Attitudes to Kuhn’s Laws,” *RES* 50 (August 1999): 287–303 at 293–95.

¹⁹ Jane Roberts, “Some reflections on the Metre of *Christ III*,” in *From Anglo-Saxon to Early Middle English: Studies Presented to E. G. Stanley*, ed. Malcolm Godden, Douglas Gray, and Terry Hoad (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 33–59 at 38.

to *pyssum beacne*” (they pray to this sign, line 83a); “*hlifige under heofenum*” (tower under the heavens, line 85a); “*onwreoh wordum*” (reveal in speech, line 97a); “*gebæd ic me þa to þam beame*” (I prayed to the cross, line 122a); “*wuniaþ on wuldre*” (they live in glory, line 135a); and “*wunedon on wuldre*” (lived in glory, line 155a). Can the finite verb take precedence over nouns and adjectives, or is it to be somehow muted within a long initial dip? In these lines, where the verb alliterates, it is (I quote Fulk) “more difficult to justify Bliss’s position.”²⁰ All these verses are clause-initial.

By the way, a *Dream* verse that fails the Rule of Precedence magnificently is “*weop eal gesceaft*” (all creation wept, line 55b), where the verb is the head-stave and must of course alliterate, but this is “not out of the ordinary” in the onset of an off-verse.²¹

Hypermetric Verses

To generalize, hypermetric verses come in two shapes: Type I with three stresses and Type II with two stresses. They generally occur in pairs, cropping up in clumps, with Type I in the on-verse and Type II in the off-verse; but sometimes there are singletons.²² Some poems hold strictly to this distribution, for example *Beowulf*, *Judith* and *Guthlac B*; in addition, their poets, it would seem, did not begin hypermetric lines with finite verbs. *The Dream of the Rood*, like *Guthlac A*, has three stresses in the on-verse, of which the first may be an alliterating finite verb. Coincidentally, in none of these three poems has a phrase-division been identified between the first and second stresses of Type I.²³

Lines 39–49, cited above, show a clustering of hypermetric verses in *The Dream of the Rood*. Quite a few of the extended lines begin with finite verbs: “*bifode*” (trembled, line 42), “*Þurhdrifan*” (pierced through, line 46), “*bysmeredon*” (taunted, line 48), “*ahofon*” (lifted up, line 61), “*Aledon*” (put down, line 63), “*beheoldon*” (looked upon, line 64).²⁴ For Bliss, these are all Type II, with long introductory dip, but for Hutcheson

²⁰ Fulk, *History of Old English Meter*, 159, discussing *Beowulf* 109a “ne gefeah he þære fæhðe.” Cf. Mark Griffith, “Alliterating Finite Verbs and the Origin of Rank in Old English Poetry,” in *Old English Philology: Studies in Honour of R. D. Fulk*, ed. Leonard Neidorf, Rafael J. Pascual, and Tom Shippey (Cambridge: Brewer, 2016), 103–21 at 106: “The big picture does not support Bliss’s conclusions from *Beowulf*.”

²¹ Klaeber’s *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008 [2014 reprint]), Appendix C, §41.

²² See Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, chap. 14, 88–97, and his “Index to the Scansion of the Hypermetric Verses in Old English”, 139–61; “Appendix D”, 129–34, supplies distributional information for the two types.

²³ A list of such verse is to be found in A. J. Bliss, “On the Composition of Hypermetric Verses in Old English”, *N&Q* 217 (July 1972): 242–48 at 244–45.

²⁴ Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, 163, gives no scansion for “*Ongyrede hine þa geong hæleð*” 39a. Fulk, *History of Old English Meter*, 343–44n155, observes that it is “not a known verse type,” citing Bliss. For Pope, *Rhythm of Beowulf*, 101, the verse is hypermetric.

they are three-stress on-verses,²⁵ a stance I find more persuasive. It does of course mean that anacrusis must now be noted for these verses, in a poem in which the presence of anacrusis is in any case relatively frequent,²⁶ two syllables even in the first verse of line 10: “ealle fægere þurh forðgesceaft ne wæs ðær huru fracodes gealga (all radiant throughout created time—assuredly it was not there a felon’s gallows).”²⁷ And anacrusis should be recognized in “gewiton of worulde dreamum” (departed from the joys of the world, line 133a), a verse not in Bliss’s tally of hypermetric verses, as well as in eight of the eleven on-verses Bliss describes as Type II. Interestingly, in conversation with colleagues Alan Bliss would point to line 133a together with several other verses as having a hypermetric look to them.²⁸ In some cases, deciding whether to describe a verse as normal or hypermetric is not easy.

The *Dream* has just one three-stress type in the off-verse: “strang 7 stiðmod . gestah he on gealgan heanne” (line 40). The finite verb “gestah” has the force of “weop” in “weop eal gesceaft” (line 55). Yet, even here, despite the alliteration, Bliss opts for a Type II classification, choosing to repress the verb, a decision at odds with his recognition of the alliteration of the finite verb in *Christ III* 1424b “Læg ic on heardum stane” (I lay on hard stone). If the verb *gestigan*, which we see on the Ruthwell Cross (compare “+ond] geredæ hinæ ġod almeittig [...] þa he walde on ġalġu gistiġa,” First *titulus* (1)), was in the poet’s ear, he foregrounded it in his working of inherited verses. Whichever way one chooses to scan these verses, it is worth remembering that, as Carol Pasternack points out,²⁹ the initial verbs overwhelm not just the action verbs of the earlier part of the poem but again, in lines 122–46, verbs that involve prayer, being and not having.

25 See B. R. Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), 9.

26 Leaving aside the extended lines, see: “begoten mid golde” 7a; “forwunded mid wommum” 14a; “gegyred mid golde” 16a; “bewrigene weorðlice” 17a; “beheold hreowcearig” 25a; “bewrigen mid wolcnum” 53a; “þæt ic bealuwara weorc” 79a; “gebiddaþ him to þyssum beacne” 83a; “se ðe ælmihtig god” 98a; “mid his miclan mihte” 102a; “gebæd ic me þa to þam beame” 122a; “afysed on forðwege” 125a; “geriht to þære rode” 131a; “geseted to symle” 141a; “mid bledum 7 mid blisse” 149a; “se sunu wæs sigorfæst” 150a; “to midre nihte” 2b.

27 As now Alfred Bammesberger, “*The Dream of the Rood*, lines 9B–10A: Is the Elimination of *Ealle* Defensible?,” *N&Q* 66.2 (June 2019): 168–69 at 169. The behaviour of *eall* disturbs some metricists. It can be stress-bearing, as in “weop eal gesceaft” 55b or “ic þæt eall beheold” 58b, or, as here, without metrical stress. For “ealle” 10a as a “floating modifier,” see Daniel Donoghue, “*Dream of the Rood* 9b: A Cross as an Angel?” in *Old English Philology*, ed. Leonard Neidorf, Rafael J. Pascual, and Tom Shippey, 276–91 at 288. See also Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre*, 34n128.

28 Peter Orton, *The Transmission of Old English Poetry* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 159: “The late Professor Bliss used to point to several individual a-verses in the second and third sections of the poem that look as though they were meant to be hypermetric (98a *se ðe ælmihtig god*, 102a *mid his miclan mihte*, 125a *afysed on forðwege*, 133a *gewiton of worulde dreamum*, 153a *Anwealda ælmihtig*), though all are linked to normal b-verses.”

29 Pasternack, “Stylistic Disjunctions,” 175.

Some Obstreperous Verses

Noteworthy is the appearance of meaningful compounds and therefore of secondary stress in four *Dream* verses:

þæt ic **b**ealuwara weorc [79a, that I the torment of dwellers in iniquity]

7 min **m**undbyrd is [130b, and my protection is]

for þan ic **þ**rymfæst nu [84b, because firm in glory I now]

ongunnon him þa sorhleod galan [67b, they then began to sing a lament]

Even if *-wara* in the first of these verses were to be discounted as a bound morpheme, there remain three off-verses to contravene Bliss's observation that "no instances of secondary stress" occur in *Beowulf* in Type 3B.³⁰ With 30,000 lines of poetry in all, we are prowling over what is, linguistically speaking, a small corpus. Nevertheless, it could be interesting to pursue the overall distribution of compounds in this verse type farther.

Four verses are not catered for in the classification system followed. They are, in Bliss's terms, remainders. None has ever, so far as I am aware, been criticized for sense. Three might be classified as Bliss's 3A (a type so rare as to be generally considered non-occurring):³¹

þrowode hwile 84a [b: for þan ic **þ**rymfæst nu]

[suffered for a time; now therefore I firm in glory]

æghwylcne anra 86a [b: þara þe him bið **e**gesa to me]

[each and everyone of those have dread of me]

marian sylfe 92b [a: swylce swa he his **m**odor eac]

[Mary herself, just as indeed his mother he]

Hutcheson views "**þ**rowode hwile" as "a problematic A type," invoking Fulk's Rule of the Coda.³² The foreign name present in "**m**arian sylfe" means the verse is best left unscanned. Comparable with "**æ**ghwylcne anra" are two verses in poems recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: *The Battle of Brunanburh* 64a "grædigne guðhafoc" (greedy warhawk) and *Death of Edward* 28a "soþfæste sawle" (a righteous soul). For Neidorf, they represent "the efforts of late Old English poets to compose metrically acceptable verses after the degeneration of tertiary ictus."³³ There is another in *Guthlac A*, "gæstlicne

³⁰ Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, §59.

³¹ Hutcheson, *Old English Metre*, 116–17, lists from his corpus verses that present similar problems. For recent discussion of the unmetrality of the type, see Rafael J. Pascual, "Ælfric's Rhythmical Prose and the Study of Old English Metre," *ES* 95.7 (2014): 803–23.

³² Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre*, 116.

³³ Leonard Neidorf, "Metrical Criteria for the Emendation of Old English Poetic Texts," in *Old English Philology*, ed. Neidorf, Pascual, and Shippey, 52–68 at 63.

goddream" (spiritual joy, line 630),³⁴ giving an instance in an Exeter Book poem as well as *The Dream of the Rood* instances in the Vercelli Book. It is likely, therefore, that they attest to varying practice among poets. The fourth in this group of remainders is even weightier:

anwealda ælmihtig 153a [b: englum to blisse.]
[the Lord almighty to the joy of the angels]

All four happen to be in the later part of the poem, but that does not necessarily make it "inferior."

Although a short poem, the anomalies that are piling up point to a poet of originality and power who is akin to the author of *Christ III*, a poem that derived much from homiletic materials.³⁵ Indeed, as has been argued from the poem's closing lines, "*The Dream of the Rood*, like its companion pieces in the Vercelli manuscript, is a homiletic text."³⁶

Conclusion

How are we to rate the *Dream's* metre? There are opposing views. Fulk's summing up, "not on the whole metrically deficient,"³⁷ gives it a gentle verdict. Stanley's verdict that, like *Maldon*, it is not a "metrically inexact" poem,³⁸ I find withering. To some extent, the answer depends on the standard by which the poem is measured, and the standard most often invoked for comparison is *Beowulf*. Bliss's description of the metre of *Beowulf* is becoming accepted as the most useful analytical tool available, and, as Fulk points out, "the most convenient of its advantages is its allowance of very little ambiguity of classification, coupled with great subtlety and variety of classificatory types."³⁹ But even so subtle a tool can blind us to the flexibility of the metre carried in the heads of poets. For example, Bliss follows Sievers for the most part in subordinating one of the stresses in heavy verses, arguing that "there is no real need to distinguish heavy verses from

³⁴ Discussed by Jane Roberts, "A Metrical Examination of the poems *Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B*," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 71.C.4 (1971): 91–137 at 112.

³⁵ See Frederick M. Biggs, "The Sources of *Christ III*: A Revision of Cook's Notes," *Old English Newsletter*, Subsidia 12 (1986).

³⁶ Andy Orchard, "*The Dream of the Rood*: Cross References," in *New Readings in the Vercelli Book*, ed. Samantha Zacher and Andy Orchard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 225–53 at 236. Note, however, that the compiler of the Vercelli manuscript appears to have received it together with a small batch of poetry, as is implicit in the punctuation of this group of texts: see Éamonn Ó Carragáin, "How did the Vercelli Collectar Interpret *The Dream of the Rood*?", in *Studies in English Language and Early Literature in Honour of Paul Christophersen*, ed. Philip M. Tilling, Occasional Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching (Coleraine: New University of Ulster, 1981), 63–104.

³⁷ Fulk, *History of Old English Meter*, 343n155.

³⁸ E. G. Stanley, "Verbal Stress in Old English Verse," *Anglia* 92 (1975): 307–34 at 317.

³⁹ Fulk, *History of Old English Meter*, §64.

normal verses, since their distribution does not differ substantially from that of normal verses.”⁴⁰ Yet, there is a ratio of 1:4 between the Guthlac poems, suggesting it is important to look at their distribution in the wider corpus. Hutcheson argues for the classification of three-stress verses “as a single type,” and Yakovlev too treats “verses with three open-class words ... as a separate metrical category.”⁴¹ It is worth noting, therefore, that the *Dream* has eight such verses. Two of the three on-verses are hypermetric for Bliss: “**e**fstan **e**lne micle” (hasten with great eagerness, line 34a), “**ea**ðmod **e**lne mycle” (with great valour, obedient, line 60a); but the third, “**c**wiðdon **c**yninges fyll” (they bewailed the king’s fall, line 56a), since it opens with a finite verb, is absent from his list of hypermetric verses. The five off-verses, all with four positions occupied, are more easily accommodated as normal verses: “**s**ceadu forð eode” (a shadow went forth, line 54b), “**w**eoþ eal gesceaft” (all creation wept, line 55b), “**s**[tefn] up gewat” (noise drifted up, line 71b), “**h**ider eft fundað” (will hasten here again, line 103b), “**f**eala ealra gebað” (I suffered many of all, line 125b).

By adopting *Beowulf* as the standard by which Old English poems are judged, we are in danger of regarding as unmetrical those verse patterns that by *Beowulf* norms look anomalous. Anacrusis infringing the norms he found in *Beowulf* worried Bliss to the extent of his wondering if some on-verses in the *Dream*, although linked to normal b-verses, might be hypermetric,⁴² but both *Christ III* and *Guthlac A* admit such verses. Bliss provides the most satisfactory tool available for comparative work, but his descriptive system must not become a straitjacket, the criterion by which metrical exactitude is assessed. Once CLASP publishes scansion of the whole corpus in Bliss terms, it may be time to reassess some of Bliss’s decisions. Until then we must work with them, accepting those things with which we disagree, for example cæsuras which are both ill-named and ill-placed.⁴³ As Cable has pointed out, his cæsura hugs syntax, for it is “a word boundary ... and not necessarily an element of meter.”⁴⁴ My summary notations, added in the Appendix to the left of Bliss categories, are meant to show at a glance the overall patterning of the verses, indicating metrical lifts and dips; no internal boundaries are marked.

Much remains to be investigated. There are metrical clues in the manuscript punctuation of the *Dream*. On f. 105r of the Vercelli Book a surprising number of mid-line points (Ó Carragáin identifies thirty-four)⁴⁵ helps the eye identify extended lines. So too, dry-point separators in the Exeter Book occur in hypermetric passages to guide

⁴⁰ Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, §83.

⁴¹ Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre*, 165; Nicolay Yakovlev, “The Development of Alliterative Metre from Old to Middle English” (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 2008), 180 [online].

⁴² See n28 above.

⁴³ Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, chap. 5.

⁴⁴ Thomas Cable, *The Meter and Melody of Beowulf*, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature 64 (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1974), 11.

⁴⁵ Ó Carragáin, “Vercelli Collectar,” 82–84.

the reader in disentangling some verses, but it is impossible to be certain when these were added.⁴⁶ Thanks to Daniel Donoghue's recent monograph, we are now more alert to how the verse syntax itself helped Anglo-Saxon readers navigate the pages before their eyes.⁴⁷ Undoubtedly, recognition of alliteration played a part as they read, yet alliteration, as Pascual puts it, "is not the most fundamental characteristic of Old English verse."⁴⁸ The question as to whether alliteration is functional or ornamental, so often debated, is a good problem with which to end. Alliteration fails in two lines, which nevertheless make excellent sense: "opene inwidhlemmas. ne dorste ic hyra nænigum sceoððan" (line 47, "n[e] ænigum"); and "hwæðere we ðær reotende gode hwile" (line 70). There may be a third failure. A recent paper makes it very plain that some readers report not experiencing a sense of loss of text in lines 76–77,⁴⁹ so perhaps we should recognize "freondas gefrunon, gyredon me golde ond seolfre" as a line held together by assonance. Editors often resort to emendation, and perhaps they are right to do so because of the consistent occurrence of alliteration elsewhere in this poem. Whether or not alliteration is functional is a question I have come to rank with Milton's need to explain why *Paradise Lost* "Rimes not."⁵⁰

Appendix

All verses of the poem are listed in groups in the first column, followed by scansion drawing on Bliss's classificatory categories; a few alternative scansions are indicated. Single-word light verses are placed in italics. Surrounding brackets are added to heavy verses. For hypermetric verses, where we have Bliss's descriptions these are presented; eleven on-verses scanned by Bliss as Type II open with alliterating finite verbs and should be regarded as Type I.

The column to the right shows at a glance the number of positions occupied in each verse. Normal verses generally occupy three to five positions, except for "Hwæðre ic þurh þæt gold" (line 18a). Hutcheson argues that such verses are not "the result of scribal error," identifying seventeen instances in his corpus.⁵¹ Hypermetric verses occupy five or six positions. The following conventions are adopted:

⁴⁶ D. S. McGovern, "Unnoticed Punctuation in the Exeter Book," *MÆ* 52.1 (1983): 90–99, especially 92. Dry-point separators of the Exeter Book are discussed by Simon Thomson in his chapter of this volume.

⁴⁷ Daniel Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read Their Poems* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

⁴⁸ Rafael J. Pascual, review of Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, *Selim* 18 (2010): 197–206 at 198. Cf. Yakovlev, "Development of Alliterative Metre," 24.

⁴⁹ Leonard Neidorf, "The Textual Condition of *The Dream of the Rood* lines 75–7," *N&Q* 67.3 (September 2020): 312–15n11, citing Krapp and Howlett.

⁵⁰ John Milton, *Paradise Lost: A Poem in Ten Books*, 2nd ed. (London: Simmons, 1667).

⁵¹ Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre*, 160. Cf. also *Christ III* lines 1318, 1379, 1430, 1460, 1470 and *Guthlac A* lines 549, 700.

+	anacrusis
/	primary stress
\	secondary stress
.	single dip syllable
-	two or more dip syllables
,	unresolved syllable in coda

ON-VERSES

for þam worde 111a	a1b	- / .
hæt me gemætte 2a	a1c	- / .
on þyssum lænum 109a		- / .
Nu ic þe hate 95a		- / .
hwæt hie to criste 116a		- / .
ne mæg þær ænig 110a		- / .
on þyssan lænan 138a		- / .
he us onlysde 147a		- / .
oð ðæt ic gehyrde 26 ^a	a1d	- / .
Nu ðu miht gehyran 78a		- / .
þæt ðu þas gesyhðe 96a		- / .
hwæðere þær fuse 57a	[~a1c]	- / .
þæt ic wæs áheawen 29a		- / .
iu ic wæs geworden 87a		- / .
þær ic þa ne dorste 35a		- / .
þe ic her on eorðan 137a		- / .
7 eallum þam halgum 154a		- / .
se ðe her on eorðan 145a		- / .
lifiaþ nu on heofenum 134a	a1e	- / .
7 me þonne gebringe 139a		- / .
7 he þonne asette 142a		- / .
feala ic on þam beorge 50a		- / .
Ac hine þær beheoldon 11a		- / .
Ne þearf ðær þonne ænig 117a		- / .
þuhte me þæt ic gesawe 4a	a1f	- / .
þæt he þonne wile deman 107a		- / .

frineð he for þære mænige 112a		- / .
þæt 'ic' ðone sigebeam 127a	a2d	- / \
geweorðode 94a ⁵²	d1a	. / \ .
7 adomes 100a ⁵³	d1a	- / \ .
to þam æðeling 58a	d1b	- / \ .
þæt me weorðiað 81a		- / \ .
seo þe mid wealdende 121a	d1c	- / \ .
Hwæðre ic þær licgende 24a	d1d	- / \ .
hwæt me þa geweorþode 90a		- / \ .
Ac hie þonne forhtiað 115a		- / \ .
hwæðere we ðær reotende 70a	d1e [~ d1d]	- / \ .
for mancynnes 99a	d2a	- / \ .
on þam gealgtreowe 146a	d2b	- / \ .
on domdæge 105a	d3a	. / \ .
of eorðwege 120a		. / \ .
syðþan reordberend 3a	d3b	- / \ .
ofer holmwudu 91a		- / \ .
on þysne middangeard 104a	d5c	- / . \
Hwæðre ic þurh þæt gold 18a	e1e	- /
mycel on mode 130a	1A1a(i)	/ . / .
daga gehwylce 136a		/ . / .
dream on heofonum 140a		/ . / .
begoten mid golde 7a		* / . / .
gegyred mid golde 16a ⁵⁴		* / . / .
men ofer moldan 12a	1A1b(i)	/ — / .
wann under wolcnum 55a		/ — / .
menn ofer moldan 82a		/ — / .
deað he þær byrigde 101a		/ — / .
Rod wæs ic aræred 44a	1A1c(i)	/ — / .

⁵² For similar one-word light verses in Vercelli and Exeter Book poems, see Roberts, "Metrical Examination", 108, 108n92.

⁵³ In this group and comparable D verses, secondary stress is assumed, against Bliss's practice.

⁵⁴ Note that the alternative spelling "gegyrwed" 23 would tip this verse into the next group. Cf. forms in lines 39 and 77.

hilderinca 72a	2Ai	/ . \ .
beama beorhtost 6a	2Aia	/ . / .
eorðan sceatas 37a		/ . / .
heofona hlaforð 45a		/ . / .
wraðra wyrda 51a		/ . / .
pearle þenian 52a		/ . / .
scirne sciman 54a		/ . / .
sarra sorga 80a		/ . / .
leodum laðost 88a		/ . / .
elne mycle 123a		/ . / .
mæte werede 124a		/ . / .
ana oftor 128a		/ . / .
dreames brucan 144a		/ . / .
gasta weorode 152a		/ . / .
mid his miclan mihte 102a		* / . / .
fæger feorgbold 73a	2A2(i)	/ . / \
on lyft lædan 5a	2Cia	. / / .
onwreoh wordum 97a		. / / .
ongan þa word spreca 27a	2C2c	- / / ,
þæt wæs geara iu 28a	3B1b	- / . /
Hwæt ic swefna cyst 1a		- / . /
þæt ic bealuwara weorc 79a ⁵⁶	3B1b	- / \ /
se ðe for dryhtnes naman 113a	3B1c	- / . /
Ac ðurh ða rode sceal 119a		- / . /
þe him ær in breostum bereð 118a	3B1d	- / . /
swylce swa he his modor eac 92a	3B1e	- / . /
he ða in heofenas astag 103a	3B*1c	- / — /
gyredon me 77a ⁵⁷	3E1	/ \ . /
æلميhtig god 93a	3E2	
æلميhtig god 106a		

56 With secondary stress in the second thesis.

57 The pronoun *me* is under stress also in lines 86 and 135; cf. “to ðam” 129. Cf. *Christ III* 1032, 1305, 1352, 1430, 1441, 1449, 1475, 1480, 1484. Similar verses occur in *Beowulf*, for example, 2948, but seem relatively infrequent.

heofonlicne ham 149a		
ælmhtig god 156a		
se ðe ælmhtig god 98a		* / \ . /
HYPERMETRIC ⁵⁸		
beswyled mid swates gange 23a	1Aia(2A1a)	* / - / . / .
astyred of stefne minum 30a	1A1a(2A1a)	* / - / . / .
Forht ic wæs for þære fæggran gesyhðe 21a	1A1e(1A*1a)	/ - / - / .
fægere æt foldan sceatum 8a	1A*1a(2A1a)	/ - / . / .
feallan to foldan sceatum 43a	1A*1a(2A1a)	/ - / . / .
beornas on banan gesyhðe 66a	1A*1a(1Aia)	/ - / . / .
modig on manigra gesyhðe 41a	1A*1a(1A*1a)	/ - / - / .
uppe on þam eaxlgespanne 9a	1A*1b(1A*1a)	/ - / . \ .
swætan on þa swiðran healfe 20a	1A*1b(2A1a)	/ - / . / .
earme on þa æfentid 68a	1A*1b(2A1a)	/ - / . \
meðe fram þam mæran þeodne 69a	1A*1b(2A1a)	/ - / . / .
Sare ic wæs mid {sorgum} gedrefed 59a	1A*1c(1A*1a)	/ - / - / .
meðe æfter ðam miclan gewinne 65a	1A*1c(1A*1a)	/ - / - / .
wendan wædum 7 bleom 22a	2A1(1A*1a)	/ . / - / .
standan steame bedrifenne 62a	2A1(1A*1a)	/ . / - / .
efstan elne micle 34a	2A1(2A1a)	/ . / . / .
opene Inwidhlemmas 47a	2A1(2A1a)	/ . / . \ .
eaðmod elne mycle 60a	2A3(2A1a)	/ \ / . / .
begoten of þæs guman sidan 49a	2B2a(2C1)	* / - / / .
ealle fægere þurh forðgesceaft 10a ⁵⁹	[2E1a(2B1)]	* / - / . \

with initial finite verb stressed these verses become Type I

gewiton of worulde dreamum 133a		* / - / . / .
bifode ic þa me se beorn ymbclypte 42a	[aig(1A1a)]	/ - / . / .
bæron me ðær beornas on eaxlum 32a	[aid(1A*1a)]	/ - / - / .
gefæstnodon me þær feondas genoge 33a	[aif(1A*1a)]	* / - / - / .
bysmeredon hie unc butu ætgædere 48a	[aif(1A*1a)]	/ - / - / .

⁵⁸ Bliss does not include 39a, 56a, and 133a in his list of hypermetric verses.

⁵⁹ Note that for Bliss this verse did not contain “ealle.” On 9b, cf. n73 below.

Aledon hie ðær limwerigne 63a	[aie(1D1)]	* / - / \ .
beheoldon hie ðær heofenes dryhten 64a	[aie(2A1a)]	* / - / . / .
bedealf us man on deopan seape 75a	[aie(2A1a)]	* / - / . / .
geworhton him þær to wæfersyne 31a	[aif(2A1a)]	* / - / . \ .
þurhdrifan hi me mid deorcan næglum 46a	[aif(2A1a)]	* / - / . / .
gesetton hie ðæron sigora wealdend 67a	[aif(2A1a)]	* / - / . / .
ahofon hine of ðam hefian wite 61a	[aig(2A1a)]	* / - / . / .
Ongyrede hine þa geong hæleð 39a	[~ 2C2f]	* / - / / ,
cwiðdon cyninges fyll 56a	[~ 3B1b]	/ . / . /

REMAINDERS

þrowode hwile 84a		/ \ . / .
æghwylcne anra 86a		/ \ . / .
anwealda ælmihtig 153a ⁶⁰		/ \ . / \ .

OFF-VERSES

þæt hit hleoðrode 26	dib	- / \ .
mid heahfædere 134b ⁶¹	d2a	. / \ .
wæs modsefa 124b	d3a	. / \
on þam siðfate 150b	d3b	- / \ ,
ealdgewyrhtum 100a	1A1	/ . \ .
hiht wæs geniwad 149b	1Aib(i)	/ - / .
crist wæs on rode 56b		/ - / .
hæleð min se leofa 78b ⁶²		/ - / .
hæleð min se leofa 95b		/ - / .
well mid þam halgum 143b		/ - / .
leohte bewunden 5b	1A*ia	/ - / .

⁶⁰ Fulk suggests this verse be regarded as a D* type “with exceptional tertiary stress in the expansion”: John C. Pope, *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. R. D. Fulk, 3rd ed. (New York: Norton, 2001), 147.

⁶¹ As an alternative to eliding the penultimate syllable, Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre*, 61n85, suggests emendation to *-fæder*.

⁶² Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre*, 169n2, argues that in “hæleð min se leofa,” *min* should probably be stressed, making 78b and 95b unmetrical for him.

gode hwile 70b		/ . / .
wita heardost 87b		/ . / .
wuldres ealdor 90b		/ . / .
secge mannum 96b		/ . / .
manegum synnum 99b		/ . / .
dryhtne sylfa 105b		/ . / .
deaðes wo'l'de 113b		/ . / .
beacna selest 118b		/ . / .
æghwylc sawl 120b ⁶⁵		/ . / .
wunian þenceð 121b		/ . / .
bliðe mode 122b		/ . / .
secan mote 127b		/ . / .
to midre nihte	2b	* / . / .
mancynn secan 104b	2A3b	/ \ / ,
unforht wesān 110b		/ \ / ,
unforht wesān 117b		/ \ / ,
ic þæt eall beheold 58b	2B1b	- / . /
hwæðere eft dryhten aras 101b ⁶⁶	2B1d [~2B1c]	- / — /
ongytan meahthe 18b	2C1a	. / / .
gebiden hæbbe 50b		. / / .
gebiden hæbbe 79b		. / / .
hwær se man sie 112b ⁶⁷		. / / .
and fea þencap 115b		. / / .
for guman synnum 146b		. / / .
on godes rice 152b		. / / .
þam þe þær bryne þolodan 149b	2C1c	- / / .
is nu sæl cumen 80b	2C2b	- / / ,
on me bearn godes 83b		- / / ,
Ac hie forð heonon 132b		- / / ,
þær is blis mycel 139b		- / / ,
for ealle men 93b	3Bia	. / . /

⁶⁵ Scanned as with parasiting of the syllabic consonant *-l*.

⁶⁶ *-en* elided.

⁶⁷ The verb is decontracted for scansion.

with secondary stress in the second thesis

7 min m undbyrd is 130b	3B1b	- / \ /
for þan ic þ rymfæst nu 84b	3Bic	- / \ /
ongunnon him þa sorhleodð galan 67b ⁷⁰	3B1e	- / \ /
þæt hit æ rest ongan 19b	3B*ib	- / — /
Ic þæt g yta geman 28b		- / — /
þa ic b ifian geseah 36b		- / — /
se ah d omes gewæld 107b		- / — /
me is w illa to ðam 129b		- / — /
7 eall þeos m ære gesceaft 12b	3B*1c	- / — /
þa us man f yllan ongan 73b		- / — /
7 eall þeos m ære gesceaft 82b		- / — /
þara þe him bið e gesa to me 86b	3B*1e	- / — /
s yllicre treow 4b	3E1	/ \ . /
w ealdes treow 17b ⁷¹		/ \ . /
h ælendes treow 25b		/ \ . /
w ealdendes hræw 53b		/ \ . /
h eofonrices weard 91b	3E2	/ \ . /

HYPERMETRIC

þæt he me wolde on gestigan 34b	aie(1A1a)	- / . / .
oð ðæt hie me on be org asetton 32b	aie(1A1a)	- / . / .
on me syndon þa d olg gesiene 46b	aie(1A1a)	- / . / .
siððan he hæfde his g ast onsended 49b	aif(1A1a)	- / . / .
Hwilum mid s ince gegyrwed 23b	aic(1A*1a)	- / — / .
eall ic wæs mid b lode bestemed 48b	aid(1A*1a)	- / — / .
eall ic wæs mid s urgum gedrefed 20b	aid(1A*1a)	- / — / .
eall ic wæs mid str ælum forwundod 62b	aid(1A*1a)	- / — / .
hwilum hit wæs mid w ætan bestemed 22b	aie(1A*1a)	- / — / .
hnag ic hwæðre þam s ecgum to handa 59b	aie(1A*1a)	- / — / .

⁷⁰ Hypermetric for both Pope and Bliss. Bliss: aie(2A3b).

⁷¹ Scanned with emendation to “wealdendes.”

ne dorste ic hwæðre bugan to eorðan 42b	aif(1A*1a)	- / — / .
þæt wæs god ælmihtig 39b ⁷²	aib(1D1)	- / / \ .
þa hie woldon eft siððian 68b	aid(1D1)	- / / \ .
geseah ic þa frean mancynnes 33b	aid(1D2)	- / / \ .
swylce þær fife wæron 8b	aic(2A1a)	- / . / .
beheoldon þær engel dryhtnes 9b ⁷³	[aic(3E2)]	- / . / .
forleton me þa hilderincas 61b	aie(2A1a)	- / . / .
geseah ic þæt fuse beacen 21b ⁷⁴	aid(2A1a)	- / . / .
Ac ic sceolde fæste standan 43b	aid(2A1a)	- / . / .
reste he ðær mæte weorode 69b	aid(2A1a)	- / . / .
hwæðre me þær dryhtnes þegnas 75b	aid(2A1a)	- / . / .
genaman me ðær strange feondas 30b	aie(2A1a)	- / . / .
heton me heora wergas hebban 31b	aie(2A1a)	- / . / .
ne wæs ðær huru fracodes gealga 10b	aie(2A1a)	- / . / .
7 he hine ðær hwile reste 64b ⁷⁵	[Bliss: aic(2A1a)]	- / . / .
curfon hie ðæt of beorhtan stane 66b	aie(2A1a)	- / . / .
ne dorste ic hyra nænigum sceððan 47b ⁷⁶	aif(2A1a)	- / . / .
gestodon him æt his lices heafdum 63b	aif(2A1a)	- / . / .
þa he wolde mancyn lysan 41b	aid(2A1a)	- / \ / .
Ongunnon him þa modern wyrcan 65b	aie(2A3a)	- / \ / .
genamon hie þær ælmihtigne god 60b ⁷⁷	aie(3E1)	- / \ — /
gestah he on gealgan heanne 40b	[Bliss: aid(2A1a)]	* / — / . / .

REMAINDER

marian sylfe 92b ⁷⁸		/ \ . / .
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⁷² For Pope, *Rhythm of Beowulf*, 101 and Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre*, 105, a normal verse with two syllables of anacrusis.

⁷³ Here Bliss is likely to have scanned the reading “beheoldon þær engeldryhta feala,” adopted by Pope among others.

⁷⁴ Without parasiting, alternatively 3B1d; but cf. “eall þæt beacen wæs” 6b.

⁷⁵ Assuming that Bliss’s “c” is a printing error for aie.

⁷⁶ Note failure of alliteration.

⁷⁷ Fulk points out that “ælmihtigne” should “form a normal verse unto itself of type D, since it comprises four positions”: in Pope, *Eight Old English Poems*, 156–57.

⁷⁸ Verses containing non-Germanic proper names are best left unscanned. Nevertheless “7 adomes” is placed as d1a above.

Chapter 3

ON THE METRE OF EXODUS

Peter J. Lucas*

IN THE CONCLUSIONS to the [previous chapter](#) Jane Roberts draws attention to the fact that the metre of *Beowulf* is often invoked as a standard by which to measure the achievement of other poems. She questions whether comparison with *Beowulf* makes a valid criterion for judgment, and the reasons for this convention are worth brief consideration. *Beowulf* is an epic poem thought to encapsulate the desire for inherent native origins by the Germanic peoples and the Anglo-Saxons in particular. For this reason it was considered more authentic than most other Old English verse, which is Christian. That is a point of view that the Anglo-Saxons themselves would not necessarily have agreed with. Nor does it reflect the interest in Old English as evidenced by the evolution of scholarship. *Exodus*, for example, was known to scholars from 1655 onwards when it appeared in Franciscus Junius's edition of the so-called "Cædmon" poems, *Genesis, Exodus, Daniel, and Christ and Satan*.¹ In this edition, as in the manuscript, the poem was set out as prose, but with metrical pointing. Junius himself undoubtedly had a considerable grasp of Old English metrical form.² *Beowulf* was not known until the description of Cotton MS Vitellius A.xv by Humfrey Wanley in 1705 and the *editio princeps* did not appear until 1815.³ But its subject-matter and probable early date allowed it to leap-frog other material in what was considered important and its length gave it great authenticity as representative of what has been considered a standard of measurement with regard to metre. With these historical considerations in mind we would probably do better when comparing other poems with *Beowulf* not to use this

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1 Franciscus Junius, *Cædmonis Monachi Paraphrasis Poetica* (Amsterdam: Christoffel Cunrad for Adriaen Vlack, 1655); facsimile edition by Peter J. Lucas, *Franciscus Junius's Cædmonis Monachi Paraphrasis Poetica Genesios ac præcipuarum sacrae paginae historiarum*, *Early Studies in Germanic Philology* 3 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000). Reissued as e-book (Leiden: Brill, 2021): <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004455948>.

2 See Peter J. Lucas, "Franciscus Junius and the Versification of *Judith*," in *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. P. E. Szarmach and J. T. Rosenthal, *Studies in Medieval Culture* 40 (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1997), 369–404.

3 George Hickes, William Elstob, Sir Andrew Fountaine, Runólfur Jónsson, and Humfrey Wanley, *Antiquæ Literaturæ Septentrionalis [Thesaurus] Libri Duo* (Oxford: Sheldonian Theatre, 1703/1705), II.218–19; Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin, *De Danorum rebus gestis seculi III et IV. Poëma Danicorum dialecto Anglo-Saxonica* (Copenhagen: Rangel, 1815).

comparison as a criterion for judgment, but rather as a tool to identify characteristics in individual poems.

According to C. L. Wrenn, in his note to *Beowulf* lines 1409–11,

it seems likely that the *Beowulf*-poet has in mind the O.E. poem *Exodus*: for 1410 is a verbal repetition of *Exodus* 58—*enge ān-paðas uncūð gelād*. It is ... not entirely certain, though it seems more likely, that *Exodus* is older than *Beowulf*.⁴

This statement draws on existing controversy as to which was earlier, *Beowulf* or *Exodus*, with *Exodus* coming out slightly ahead.⁵ Both poems are in the epic manner and show use of narrative material that offers a historical perspective which is outside the main narrative frame (the stories of the Flood and the Offering of Isaac in *Exodus* and the Finn episode in *Beowulf*, for example) and may well come from a similar background. Both exemplify classical Old English alliterative metre composed to a high standard. The purpose of the present article is to give some account of the metre of *Exodus*, and to note how it compares with *Beowulf*.

In Table 1 below the incidence of the various types are set out. I have followed the metrical notation of Alan Bliss as the most satisfactory and convenient refinement of the system devised by Eduard Sievers.⁶ One of the great merits of Bliss's work is its coherence and the skill with which so much diverse information is codified in a unitary form. Utilization of the same notation as that used by Bliss for *Beowulf* provides for the greatest possible convenience in facilitating comparison between the two poems. In the Scansion Index below the verses of *Exodus* are analyzed and given their appropriate type designation; this provides the information that is shown in tabular form in Table 1.

A feature of *Exodus* is the minimal use or even avoidance of the “long” subtypes found in *Beowulf*, as a2e, a2f, a2g, and so on. Since *Beowulf* is more than five times as long as *Exodus*, the absence in *Exodus* of some subtypes that occur only rarely in *Beowulf* might well be expected, but there are too many examples for the feature to be explained away by this means. I set out the subtypes here, with the numbers recorded in *Beowulf*, and with illustrative examples showing the alliteration in bold.⁷

4 C. L. Wrenn, *Beowulf with the Finnesburg Fragment* (London: Harrap, 1953), 211.

5 For a summary of this controversy see Peter J. Lucas, *Exodus*, 3rd edn (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 69–70; all references to the poem are to this edition. The present article expands the section on metre on pp. 39–43, incorporating some minor amendments.

6 For a full index of key technical terms used in this chapter and volume, readers should consult the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices. A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, Blackwell, 1967); Eduard Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1893).

7 For the types set out with examples see A. J. Bliss, *The Scansion of Beowulf*, ed. Peter J. Lucas, Old English Newsletter Subsidia 22 (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Medieval Institute, 1995). The statistics from *Beowulf* utilized below are calculated from the figures in this booklet.

Type a2

a2e (6)	Gewat þa ofer w ægholm	<i>Beo</i> 217a
a2f (1)	no ðy ær he þone h eaðorinc	<i>Beo</i> 2466a
a2g (1)	Hyrde ic þæt he ðone h ealsbeah	<i>Beo</i> 2172a

Type d3

d3d (8)	ðeah hie hira b eaggyfan	<i>Beo</i> 1102a
d3e (2)	Ne gemealt him se m odsefa	<i>Beo</i> 2628a

Type d4

d4c (4)	þæt næron e aldgewyrht	<i>Beo</i> 2657a
d4d (1)	þæt we him ða g uðgetawa	<i>Beo</i> 2636a

Type d5

d5d (2)	oferwearp þa w erigmod	<i>Beo</i> 1543a
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Type 1A

1A1c (4)	w esan þenden ic w ealde	<i>Beo</i> 1859a
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Type 1A*

1A*1c (3)	þ egnas syndon ge þ wære	<i>Beo</i> 1230a
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Type 1D*

1D*6 (1)	o ncyð e orla gehwæm	<i>Beo</i> 1420a
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Type 2B

2B1e (1)	Mæg þonne on þæm g old ongitan	<i>Beo</i> 1484a
2B2c (2)	Wæs he se m an to þon leof	<i>Beo</i> 1876b
2B2d (1)	ðy he þone f eond ofercwom	<i>Beo</i> 1273b

Type 2C

2C1d (6)	þæt he me ongean slêa	<i>Beo</i> 681b
2C1e (1)	þara þe he him mid hæfde	<i>Beo</i> 1625b
2C2e (1)	þonne he on þæt sinc starað	<i>Beo</i> 1485b

Type 2E

2E2b (5)	feorhsweng ne ofteah	<i>Beo</i> 2489b
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Type 3B

3B1d (21)	þeah þe hine mihtig God	<i>Beo</i> 1716a
3B1e (1)	Hwæpere him on ferhþe greow	<i>Beo</i> 1718b
3B2c (1)	Ne bið þe [n]ænigre gad	<i>Beo</i> 949b

Type 3B*

3B*1e (7)	þone ðe heo on ræste abreat	<i>Beo</i> 1298b
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While these subtypes known from *Beowulf* are not found in *Exodus*, there are two subtypes not found in *Beowulf* that are present in *Exodus*.

Type d4a	on folcgetæl	<i>Exo</i> 229a
	in randgebeorh	<i>Exo</i> 296b
	On feorhgebeorh	<i>Exo</i> 369a
Type 1A*1b(ii)	wician ofer weredum	<i>Exo</i> 117a

The first of these “new” subtypes (d4a) is notable for being a “short” subtype, so that its presence complements the paucity of “long” subtypes. These features are almost certainly the result of strict discipline in compositional technique.

With regard to alliteration, in *Exodus*, as in *Beowulf*, all instances of the following types (each illustrated by a single example) show double alliteration in the *a*-verse:

Type 1A2	werod wæs wigblac	<i>Exo</i> 204a
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Type 1A*

1A*2	e orlas on u httid	<i>Exo</i> 216a
1A*3	r andbyrig wæron r ofene	<i>Exo</i> 464a

Type 1D

1D2	w onn w ælceasega	<i>Exo</i> 164a
1D3	l að leodhata	<i>Exo</i> 40a
1D4	l agu l and gefeol	<i>Exo</i> 483a
1D5	w æter w æpna ful	<i>Exo</i> 451a
1D6	w era w uldorgesteald	<i>Exo</i> 589a

Type 1D*

1D*2	h are h eorawulfas	<i>Exo</i> 181a
1D*3	e nge a npaðas	<i>Exo</i> 58a
1D*5	w eroda W uldorcýning	<i>Exo</i> 548a ⁸

Type 2A

2A2	h ate h eofontorht	<i>Exo</i> 78a
2A4	M earchofu m or heald	<i>Exo</i> 61a

The proportion of verses of Types 1A1 (94 percent) and 1A*1 (87.5 percent) showing double alliteration in the *a*-verse is similar to that in *Beowulf* (95 percent and 91.5 percent respectively), but there are two examples of single alliteration in types that show “compulsory” double alliteration in *Beowulf* according to Bliss.⁹

1D*1	ð eoda ænigre	<i>Exo</i> 326a
2E2	f rumcneow gehwæs	<i>Exo</i> 371a

One example of crossed alliteration is probably accidental:

Gif onlucan wile	l ifes w ealhstod	<i>Exo</i> 523
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⁸ There are no instances of Type 1D*4 in *Exodus*.

⁹ Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, §§64, 66.

A particular group of verses offers potential difficulty, and their scansion is governed by the interrelationship between metre and verse grammar. The foundations of Old English verse grammar were laid by Hans Kuhn in 1933.¹⁰ Kuhn's First Law of Particles, his *Satzpartikelgesetz*, states that all the particles (including finite verbs) in a verse clause should ideally be grouped together in the first metrical dip. Such particles are unstressed unless they occur outside the first metrical dip, in which case they are considered to be displaced and become stressed,¹¹ as in

þa þær folcmægen	for æfter oðrum	<i>Exo</i> 347, ¹²
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where *for* is a finite verb (particle) not in the first metrical dip and so becomes stressed and participates in the alliteration.

This rule, that a finite verb in the first dip of the verse clause is unstressed, overrides the apparent occurrence of alliteration. For the sake of clarity I set out all the relevant examples in *Exodus*, all of them verses of Types a or d with a finite verb in the first dip of the verse clause, where that verb could potentially participate in the alliteration.

Type a

a1c	wyrpton hie w erige	<i>Exo</i> 130a
	murnað on m ode	<i>Exo</i> 536a
a1d	Bræddon æfter b eorgum	<i>Exo</i> 132a
	brudon ofer b urgum	<i>Exo</i> 222a
a1e	ofercom mid þy c ampe	<i>Exo</i> 21a
a1f	Oferfor he mid þy f olce	<i>Exo</i> 56a

Type d

d1b	Wæron or w enan	<i>Exo</i> 211a
	flugon f ortigende	<i>Exo</i> 453a
d2b	swæfon seledreamas	<i>Exo</i> 36a
	scinon s cylðhreoðan	<i>Exo</i> 113a

¹⁰ Hans Kuhn, "Wortstellung und -betonung im Altgermanischen," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 57 (1933), 1–109, reprinted in his *Kleine Schriften* (Berlin, 1969), I.18–103.

¹¹ The concept of "displacement" was developed by Calvin B. Kendall, "The Metrical Grammar of *Beowulf*: Displacement," *Speculum* 58 (1983): 1–30, subsequently incorporated in his *The Metrical Grammar of Beowulf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹² Similarly, *Exo* 334b–5a: micel angetrum/ **e**ode unforht.

	blicon b ordhreoðan	<i>Exo</i> 159a
	hreopon h erefugolas	<i>Exo</i> 162a
	Hofon h erecyste	<i>Exo</i> 301a
	Cende c neowsibbe	<i>Exo</i> 356a
	Wicon w eallfæsten	<i>Exo</i> 484a
	multon m eretorras	<i>Exo</i> 485a
	weollon w ælbenna	<i>Exo</i> 492a
	sungon s igebyman	<i>Exo</i> 566a
	hofon h ereþreatas	<i>Exo</i> 575a
	heddon h erereafas	<i>Exo</i> 584a
d2c	gesette s igerice	<i>Exo</i> 27a
	gesittað s igerice	<i>Exo</i> 563a
d3a	scean s cirwerod	<i>Exo</i> 125a
d3b	lædde l eodwerod	<i>Exo</i> 77a
	mæton m ilpaðas	<i>Exo</i> 171a
	ageat g ylp werā	<i>Exo</i> 515a

I have previously set out the arguments for scanning such verses as light verses.¹³ In particular, if the finite verbs in those with the pattern *gesittað sigerice* (*Exo* 563a) are stressed there is a breach of Kuhn's Second Law of Particles, which states that the first metrical dip of a verse clause should contain a sentence particle, but in these cases they do not. Also with scansion as light verses several examples of anacrusis are avoided,¹⁴ as, for example, if the following verses were scanned with the finite verb stressed,

++1A1b	ofercom mid þy campe	<i>Exo</i> 21a
++1A1c	Oferfor he mid þy folce	<i>Exo</i> 56a
+1D*2	gesette s igerice	<i>Exo</i> 27a
+1D3	ageat g ylp werā	<i>Exo</i> 515a
+1D*2	gesittað s igerice	<i>Exo</i> 563a

¹³ Peter J. Lucas, "Some Aspects of the Interaction between Verse Grammar and Metre in Old English Poetry," *SN* 59 (1987): 145–75, especially §27. For further discussion see H. Momma, "Metrical Stress on Alliterating Finite Verbs in Clause-Initial A-Verses: Some Doubts and No Conclusions," in *Doubt Wisely: Essays in Honor of E. G. Stanley*, ed. M. J. Toswell and Elizabeth M. Tyler (London: Routledge, 1996), 186–98.

¹⁴ For those that remain see below, [Table 3](#).

they would all show anacrusis, the first two disyllabic anacrusis. However when such verses occur in the *b*-verse the *Exodus*-poet found it permissible to use the alliteration to promote such a finite verb to stress-word status, as in

3E*2	bidon ealle þa gen	<i>Exo</i> 249b. ¹⁵
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Such a feature was noted by Alistair Campbell as reflecting the earlier lay style as opposed to the later epic style largely seen in *Beowulf*,¹⁶ one of the factors that led earlier scholars to consider *Exodus* earlier than *Beowulf*. In this connection it is notable that there was a marked preference (74.8 percent) for stress-first verses in the *b*-verse, as shown in Table 2, where Types 2A, 1A, 3E, 1A* and 2E on their own make up nearly two-thirds of *b*-verses (66.2 percent).

With regard to the distribution of verses, as in *Beowulf* the following types occur only in the *a*-verse: Types a, e, 1A2, 1A*2–3, 1D3–6, 1D*, 2A2, and 2A4. While *Beowulf* shows two examples of Type 1D2 in the *b*-verse, *Exodus* shows this type only in the *a*-verse with double alliteration (133a, 164a, 175a, 223a, 253a). As in *Beowulf* the metre sometimes requires words (or elements in compounds) ending in vocalic *l*, *n* and *r* to be treated as monosyllabic:¹⁷ *mēagollice* (528a), *wealfæstēn* (283a), **þēodeŋ* (277a), probably *þēodmægen* (342a), and *wuldrfæst* (390a). Again as in *Beowulf*, the metre calls for disyllabic forms where the spelling indicates a contraction:¹⁸ *Frēa* (19b), *nēar* (308b), *slēan* (412a), *gæð* (526b), and probably *Liffrēan* (271a).

In two relatively minor respects *Exodus* differs from *Beowulf*:

(1) According to Bliss (*Metre*, §§46–7) there are no instances in *Beowulf* of anacrusis when the caesura is in position (i). But *Exodus* shows one clear exception to this apparent norm:

+2A2(i)	ālȳfed lāðsið	<i>Exo</i> 44a.
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Another possible exception is

+2A2(ii)	forbærned burhhleoðu	<i>Exo</i> 70a
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15 The form *bidon* is emended from MS *buton*.
16 A. Campbell, “The Old English Epic Style,” 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), 13–26, especially 16–17; I thank Rafael Pascual for reminding me of this reference. Cf. Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik*, §§22–5.
17 Friedrich Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd ed., with 1st and 2nd supplements (Boston: Heath, 1950), 276, §3.
18 Klaeber, *Beowulf*, 274–75, §1.

if it is assumed to have resolution of *hleodū* with the ‘short’ vocalic ending. Alternatively, the verse may be scanned

+1D*3	for bær ned bur hhleoðu	<i>Exo</i> 70a
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with the caesura in position (iii), in which case it would be another exception under (2) below. However if the verse were originally as follows (cf. Bliss, *Metre*, §37), it would scan

+1D*2	*for bær ned bur hlīðu	<i>Exo</i> 70a
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and show no irregularities.

(2) According to Bliss (*Metre*, §37), when there is resolution of a secondary stress in *Beowulf*, ‘long’ vocalic or consonantal endings are avoided. *Exodus* shows one exception to this apparent norm:

2A3a(ii)	gylpplegan gā res	<i>Exo</i> 240a
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Against this there are five regular examples,

2A3a(ii)	wælgryre weroda	<i>Exo</i> 137a
	gārwudu rærdon	<i>Exo</i> 325b
	bilswaðu blōdige	<i>Exo</i> 329a
2A3a(iii)	wrætlicu wægfaru	<i>Exo</i> 298a
2A4(ii)	Mearchofu mōr hēald	<i>Exo</i> 61a

and another instance, “beorselas beorna” (564a), that was probably regular with the older *i*-stem plural:

2A3a(ii)	*beorsele beorna	<i>Exo</i> 564a
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Conversely in the sequence of syllables found in Type 1D3, 𐌿|𐌿x, the ending is normally a “long” vocalic or consonantal one in *Beowulf*. Again *Exodus* shows one exception, also possibly 70a (see (1) above),

1D3	beran beorht searo	<i>Exo</i> 219a
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against eight regular examples:

1D3	freom folctoga	<i>Exo</i> 14a
	lāð lēodhata	<i>Exo</i> 40a
	fūs forðwegas	<i>Exo</i> 248a
	ȳð up færeð	<i>Exo</i> 282a
	heard handplega	<i>Exo</i> 327a
	lēof lēodfruma	<i>Exo</i> 354a
	fyrst ferhðbana	<i>Exo</i> 399a
	nacud nȳdboda	<i>Exo</i> 475a

When the proportions of the different types of verse in the two poems are compared some interesting facts emerge. The proportions in *Exodus* differ from those in *Beowulf* in three major ways (1–3) and four minor ways (4–7).

- (1) **Type C:** there are less than half as many verses of Type 2C (i.e. all examples of Type C), so *Exodus* shows 4.2 percent (49 out of 1180) and *Beowulf* 8.6 percent (549 out of 6364).
- (2) **Type B:** there are only about two-thirds as many verses of Types 2B, 3B and 3B*, as *Exodus* shows 10.3 percent (122 out of 1180) and *Beowulf* 15 percent (952 out of 6364). Type 2B is notably infrequent comparatively (1.1 percent in *Exodus* compared with 3 percent in *Beowulf*), and Type 3B is relatively infrequent in the *b*-verse, 8.3 percent in *Exodus* (49 out of 590) as opposed to 13.9 percent in *Beowulf* (442 out of 3182).
- (3) **Type E:** *Exodus* shows more than half as many again of Types 2E, 3E and 3E* as *Beowulf*, 13.6 percent in *Exodus* (161 out of 1180) as opposed to 8.5 percent in *Beowulf* (543 out of 6364). Type 2E occurs more than twice as frequently in the *b*-verse, 6.4 percent in *Exodus* as opposed to 3 percent in *Beowulf*.
- (4) **Types 1A and 1A*:** Type 1A occurs less frequently in the *a*-verse, 38 percent in *Exodus* (40 out of 105) as opposed to 59 percent in *Beowulf* (275 out of 462), and more frequently in the *b*-verse. Type 1A* shows the same trend to a lesser extent.
- (5) **Type 2A:** this type is a little more frequent in *Exodus*, with 22.8 percent of the verses (269 out of 1180), as opposed to *Beowulf* with 19.9 percent (1268 out of 6364), but the greater frequency in the *b*-verse in *Exodus* is notable, 65.8 percent (177 out of 269) as opposed to 48.6 percent (617 out of 1268) in *Beowulf*.
- (6) **Type d:** this type is somewhat more frequent in *Exodus*, with 13.5 percent of the verses (159 out of 1180) as opposed to *Beowulf* with 10.9 percent (691 out of 6364), but the greater frequency in the *a*-verse is notable, 82.4 percent (131 out of 159) as opposed to 73.4 percent (507 out of 691) in *Beowulf*.

- (7) **Type 1D:** the proportion of this type in the *a*-verse is more than twice as high in *Exodus*, 70.3 percent (52 out of 74) as opposed to 32.5 percent (204 out of 626) in *Beowulf*.

These differences imply that the control of the verse medium by both poets was sufficiently developed that they could and did select proportionately from the available stock of metrical variations according to what they needed and felt to be appropriate.

This finding is confirmed by comparison of certain passages within *Exodus* with each other. A threefold distinction between passages of “narration,” “description,” and “direct speech” was proposed by Sister Carolyn Wall.¹⁹ While the distinction between “narration” and “description” is to some extent arbitrary, this mode of analysis is sustainable, as the metrical evidence indicates. When the proportion of the verses in the three types of passage are considered against the norm of the proportions for the whole poem, it becomes evident that passages of direct speech differ from this norm in one way and that passages of description differ from the norm in another way, the two ways being more or less opposed.

For direct speech I have included all the speeches in the poem, Moses’ speech to the Israelites in the desert (259–75), Moses’ speech to the Israelites on the shore of the Red Sea (278–98), God’s speech to Abraham (419–46), and Moses’ speech to the Israelites on the far side of the Red Sea (554–64), a total of seventy-seven lines. Only thirty of these seventy-seven lines (39 percent) show double alliteration in the *a*-verse against a norm for the whole poem of 44 percent (260 out of 590). There are more verses of

Type C, 7.1 percent (11 out of 154) against a norm of 4.2 percent (49 out of 1180),

Type B, 14.9 percent (23 out of 154) against a norm of 10.3 percent (122 out of 1180), and

Type a, 15.6 percent (12 out of 77) against a norm of 11 percent (65 out of 590),

whereas there are fewer instances of

Type E, 7.1 percent (11 out of 154) against a norm of 13.5 percent (159 out of 1180), and

Type D, 5.8 percent (9 out of 154) against a norm of 8.4 percent (99 out of 1180).

For description the outstanding passage is undoubtedly lines 447–87, the return of the pent-up waters upon the pursuing Egyptians. Of these forty-one lines, double alliteration is shown in twenty-nine of the *a*-verses, 70.7 percent as against a norm of 44.1 percent (260 out of 590). There are many more verses of

¹⁹ Sr Carolyn Wall, “Stylistic Variation in the Old English *Exodus*,” *English Language Notes* 6 (1968): 79–84 at 83.

Type D, 13.4 percent (11 out of 82) against a norm of 8.4 percent (99 out of 1180), and Type E, 19.5 percent (16 out of 82) against a norm of 13.6 percent (161 out of 1180),

no instances at all of Type a, and very few of

Type d, 3.7 percent (3 out of 82) against a norm of 13.5 percent (159 out of 1180).

These observations provide a firm foundation on which to confirm that the passage is a *tour de force* of alliterative pyrotechnics. Another passage describing the divine signs associated with the pillars of cloud and fire (98–134) shows the same trend to a lesser extent. Double alliteration in the *a*-verse is at 61 percent (22 out of 36) against the norm of 44.1 percent, there are slightly more verses of

Type E, 15.3 percent (11 out of 72) against the norm of 13.6 percent

and fewer verses of

Type C, 2.8 percent (2 out of 72) against a norm of 4.2 percent (49 out of 1180), and Type B, 6.9 percent (5 out of 72) against a norm of 10.3 percent (122 out of 1180),

and only two instances of Type a.

In between these two extremes of direct speech and description come passages of narration, as an illustration of which I have taken lines 208–58, the Israelite preparations for the exodus journey. Here the proportions of lines with double alliteration in the *a*-verse and of the different types of verses are much the same as the averages for the whole poem.

The contrast between these three different kinds of passage reveals a remarkable ability to mould words into a complex verse form, using a sophisticated compositional technique. The differences in the distribution of Types C, B, E, 1A, 1A*, 2A, d, and 1D between *Exodus* and *Beowulf* likewise reflect remarkable control of the verse medium by both poets. The *Exodus*-poet's succinct style is highlighted by his avoidance of "long" subtypes as well as by his use of "short" subtypes. The power of his brief allusive style is encapsulated in the verse describing the carnage wrought by the returning waters of the Red Sea: "flod blod gewod" (463b), where assonance is used to reinforce the directness and succinctness of the statement. For strong impact crisply delivered, this verse is surely one of the most memorable in Old English poetry. There is ample evidence for the superb craftsmanship shown by the poem.

Index of Scansion

[Square brackets are used to enclose scansion notations that apply to verses that have been editorially reconstructed or supplied. Anacrusis is indicated by a preceding addition-sign (+)]

1	2B1b	2C1a
2	d5b	2A1a(i)
3	2A2(iii)	1D1
4	d3a	3E*1
5	d2b	2A1a(i)
6	3E*1	3E1
7	2A1a(i)	+1A*1b
8	d1c	2A1a(i)
9	2A3b	3B1b
10	d1a	3B1b
11	1D*1	2B1a
12	2C2b	2A1a(i)
13	1A2a(i)	2A1a(i)
14	1D3	3E1
15	1D1	3E2
16	a1c	2A1a(i)
17	1D*2	3B1a
18	2A1a(i)	3E1
19	1A2b(i)	2C2b
20	3B*1c	3B1a(i)
21	a1e	3E2
22	2A2(i)	3B1b
23	3B1c	2A1a(i)
24	a1d	3E2
25	2C1b	2A1a(i)
26	2A2(i)	d3a
27	d2c	3B1b
28	3B1b	1A1a(i)
29	1D5	2C1b
30	a1e	2A1a(i)
31	d1b	2A1a(i)
32	3E1	d3a
33	d1b	2A1a(i)
34	1A*1a(i)	3E2

35	3E2	1A1b(i)
36	1D*2	1A*1a(i)
37	d3b	3B1a(ii)
38	1A*1a(i)	3E2
39	+1D*3	3E2
40	1D3	1D1
41	2A1a(i)	2E2a
42	1A1a(i)	3E2
43	d5b	1A*1a(i)
44	+2A2(i)	2A1a(i)
45	1D1	1A1b(i)
46	1A*1a(i)	2E2a
47	1D5	1A1a(i)
48	d5b	3B1b
49	3B1b	1D1
50	1D1	3E1
51	d1c	2A1a(i)
52	2A1a(i)	2C1b
53	3B1a(i)	2A1a(i)
54	1A1b(i)	1A1b(i)
55	1D*2	2A3b
56	a1f	3E1
57	1A2a(i)	2A1a(i)
58	1D*3	2E1a
59	d2d	2A1a(i)
60	2C2b	3E*2
61	2A4(ii)	2E1b
62	1D1	1A*1a(i)
63	a2c	3E2
64	a1c	2C1a
65	d1a	2A1a(i)
66	d1a	3E1
67	2A1a(i)	3E2
68	1A*1a(i)	d3a

69	a1d	3E3
70	+2A2(ii)	2A1a(i)
71	1D*3	3B1a
72	d3a	1A1a(i)
73	1A*1b	3E1
74	2A1a(i)	3E1
75	d2b	2A1a(i)
76	1A*2a(ii)	1A*1a(i)
77	1D*3	2E2a
78	2A2(i)	1D1
79	1A*1a(i)	3E2
80	1A1b(i)	3B1b
81	2A2(i)	1A*1b
82	d2b	1A1a(i)
83	d2b	2C1a
84	1D1	2A1a(i)
85	3B1b	3E2
86	a1d	d1a
87	2A1	3B1b
88	1A1a(i)	2E2a
89	d1b	2A1a(i)
90	3E2	1A*1a(i)
91	1D1	3B1b
92	2A1a(i)	2A3b
93	2C1b	1A1a(i)
94	d3a	2A1a(i)
95	d1b	1A1
96	1D1	2A1a(i)
97	3E2	1A1a(i)
98	3B*1c	2A1a(i)
99	1D*2	2A1a(i)
100	2A1a(i)	2E2a
101	3E1	3B*1b
102	1D*2	2A1a(i)

103	1D4	1A1a(i)
104	2A2(i)	2A3b
105	1D5	2A3a(i)
106	2A2(ii)	1A1b(i)
107	1D5	3E*2
108	3E*1	2A1a(i)
109	1A*1b	3E*2
110	d3b	2A1a(i)
111	3E1	2A1a(i)
112	d1b	2A1a(i)
113	d2b	1D1
114	1D*3	1A1a(i)
115	1A*1a(i)	3E2
116	2A2(i)	2A1a(i)
117	1A*1b(ii)	d5c
118	[1D2]	2A1a(i)
119	d2a	1A1a(i)
120	d2b	2A1a(iii)
121	2A1a(i)	3E2
122	d2b	2A1a(i)
123	d1c	1A1a(i)
124	d3c	2A1a(i)
125	d3a	2A1a(i)
126	d3c	2A1a(i)
127	1A1b(i)	d2b
128	1A*1a(i)	3E*2
129	1A2a(i)	2E2a
130	a1c	1A*1a(i)
131	1D*2	2C1b
132	a1d	3B1b
133	1D2	3B1b
134	3E2	3B1b
135	2C2b	2E2a
136	1D1	2A1a(i)

137	2A3a(ii)	2E2a
138	2A2(i)	3B1c
139	2A1	2E1a
140	1D5	1A*1a(i)
141	3B1c	1A1a(i)
*	*	*
142	d5b	1A1
143	1A*1b	3B*1c
144	a1d	2C1b
145	3E1	d1a
146	d3b	2A1a(i)
147	1A1a(ii)	2A1a(i)
148	d2b	1A*1a(i)
149	2A3b	2A1a(i)
150	a2d	2A1a(i)
151	a2d	1A*1a(i)
152	2A1a(i)	3B1b
153	d2b	1A*1a(i)
154	3B1b	3E1
155	a1d	d3a
156	1D1	1A1a(i)
157	2A3b	2A1a(i)
158	2A1a(i)	1D1
159	d2b	2A1a(i)
160	2A1a(i)	2A3b
161	[a1d]	[2A1]
162	d2b	2A1a(i)
163	2A1	d2b
164	1D2	2A1a(i)
165	1D5	1A*1a(i)
166	3E1	2A3b
167	3B1a(i)	3E2
168	d2b	2A1a(i)
169	3B1a	1A1b(i)

170	a1d	2A1a(i)
171	1D*3	2A1a(i)
172	d3b	2C2c
173	2A1a(i)	3E2
174	2A1a(i)	2E2a
175	1D2	2A1a(i)
176	1A*1a(i)	3E2
177	d2b	2A1a(i)
178	1D4	1A1a(i)
179	2A1a(i)	3E2
180	a1c	1A*1a(i)
181	1D*2	2A1a(i)
182	1D*2	2A1
183	e1d	2A1a(i)
184	1D1	1D1
185	a1c	d2a
186	3B1b	2A1a(i)
187	3B*1b	1A1a(i)
188	2A1	1D1
189	a1f	2A1a(i)
190	d4b	1A*1a(i)
191	1A*1a(i)	2E2a
192	1A1a(i)	d5b
193	2A3a(i)	2A1a(i)
194	2C2b	2A1a(i)
195	1A1b(i)	3E2
196	2A1	1A1b(i)
197	a1d	d2b
198	d3b	3E1
199	1A*1a(i)	d5c
200	a1d	2E2a
201	1D5	2A1a(i)
202	2A2(i)	3B1b
203	3B1b	1A1a(i)

204	1A2a(i)	3B*1b
205	2A1a(i)	3B*1b
206	3B*1c	1A1a(i)
207	+1A1a(i)	1A1b(i)
208	d3b	3E2
209	3B*1d	2A1a(i)
210	1A2b(i)	3B1b
211	d1b	2A1
212	a1d	2C1a
213	1A1a(i)	3E1
214	d4b	1A1a(i)
215	2A1a(i)	3B*1a
216	1A*2a(i)	2A1a(i)
217	1D1	1A1a(i)
218	1A*1b	1A*1a(i)
219	1D3	2A1a(i)
220	1D5	1A*1a(i)
221	2A2(i)	1A1b(i)
222	a1d	1A*1a(i)
223	1D2	1A1b(i)
224	a1d	d3b
225	d1b	2A1a(i)
226	2A1a(i)	1A1b(i)
227	3B*1b	2A1a(i)
228	+1A1b(i)	2A1a(i)
229	d4a	2A1a(i)
230	3B*1b	2A1a(i)
231	1D2	1D1
232	2E2a	1D1
233	3B1b	1A*1a(i)
234	d4b	2A1a(i)
235	a1c	1A1a(i)
236	d2b	2A3b
237	3B1a(i)	2A1a(i)

238	d2b	2C1a
239	3B1b	3E2
240	2A3a(ii)	1A*1a(i)
241	1D*2	1A*1a(i)
242	d2b	1D1
243	a1c	[2A3b]
244	d3b	2A1a(i)
245	1A1a(i)	3B1b
246	3E2	[2A1a(i)]
247	d2b	1A1a(i)
248	1D3	2E2a
249	2A1a(i)	3E*2
250	d3b	3E2
251	1A1b(i)	3E2
252	a1d	2A1
253	[1D2]	2E2a
254	d3b	1A*1a(i)
255	3B2b	1A*1a(i)
256	d1b	2A1a(i)
257	d2b	2A1a(i)
258	2A1a(i)	3E1
259	a1d	2C1b
260	1D1	2A1a(i)
261	2A1a(i)	3B1a(i)
262	2A1a(i)	3B1a(i)
263	2C1a	2A3b
264	d1b	1A1a(i)
265	1A*1a(ii)	3E1
266	a1e	2A1a(i)
267	1D*3	1A1b(i)
268	2A1a(i)	2C2b
269	+1A*1a(i)	3B1b
270	d1c	2A1a(i)
271	d2b	2A1a(i)

272	1A*1a(i)	d1b
273	a1c	3E1
274	3E2	2C2b
275	1A*2a(i)	3B1c
276	a1c	2A1a(i)
277	3E1	3B1c
278	3B1c	1D1
279	2A1a(i)	3E2
280	3B1b	3B1b
281	2A1a(i)	3E1
282	1D3	2A1a(i)
283	1A2a(i)	1A1b(i)
284	1D*2	1A1a(i)
285	2A1a(i)	2B2b
286	d5b	1A1a(i)
287	2A1a(i)	2C2a
288	[3B1a(i)]	2A1a(i)
289	1D*2	2E2a
290	3E3	1A1b(i)
291	1D5	2C2b
292	3B1b	1A*1a(i)
293	1D*1	1A1a(i)
294	a1c	2A1a(i)
295	a1b	1A1a(i)
296	2A1a(i)	d4a
297	d2c	1A*1a(i)
298	2A3a(iii)	3B1a(i)
299	a1c	2E2a
300	3E1	3E2
301	d2b	2A1a(i)
302	1A*1a(i)	2E2a
303	2E1a	d1a
304	3E2	[3E2]
305	3B*1b	2A1a(i)

306	2A1a(i)	3E2
307	a1d	2A1a(i)
308	3B1b	2A1b
309	1D1	3B1a(i)
310	3B1b	2A1a(i)
311	a2b	1A1a(i)
312	3B1b	2A1a(i)
313	[1D1]	2E1a
314	d3b	3B1b
315	d2a	2E2a
316	a1d	3E2
317	d5b	2A1a(i)
318	d2b	3E2
319	a1d	2C2c
320	d2b	1A*1a(i)
321	d2b	3E1
322	3E2	2A1a(i)
323	d2b	1A*1a(i)
324	d1b	2A1a(i)
325	a1d	2A3a(ii)
326	1A*1a(i)	1A1b(i)
327	1D3	2A3a(i)
328	1D*2	1A*1a(i)
329	2A3a(ii)	3E2
330	3E*2	3B1a(i)
331	a1d	1D1
332	3E1	2A1a(i)
333	1D1	3B1b
334	2A1a(i)	1D1
335	2A1a(i)	d5b
336	1A*1a(i)	3B1b
337	3B1a(i)	d3b
338	3E2	3E*2
339	1A1a(i)	[2B1b]

340	a1d	2A1a(i)
341	1D1	2A1a(i)
342	2A2(i)	2A1a(i)
343	d3b	3E*2
344	2A1a(i)	3E*2
345	d1b	3E2
346	2A2(i)	2E2a
347	d3b	1A1b(i)
348	2A1	1D1
349	3E2	3B1b
350	d3a	1A1b(i)
351	1A1b(i)	2A1a(i)
352	3E2	3B1b
353	2A1a(i)	2C2b
354	1D3	2E2a
355	1A1a(i)	3E2
356	d2b	2A1a(i)
357	3E2	2A1a(i)
358	3E1	2A1b
359	d1b	2A1a(i)
360	d2b	1A1a(i)
361	2A3a(i)	3E*2
362	2A1a(i)	2E1b
363	2A3a(i)	2C2b
364	d1b	2A1
365	a1d	d2a
366	a1d	2A1a(i)
367	a1d	d2b
368	3E2	1A*1a(i)
369	d4a	2A1a(i)
370	1D*2	2A1a(i)
371	2E2a	1A1a(i)
372	2A1	2C1a
373	2A1	2C1b

374	1D*3	3B*1b
375	2C2a	2A1a(i)
376	a1e	1D1
377	3B1b	2A1a(i)
378	a1b	2A1a(i)
379	1D1	d3a
380	a1c	3B1b
381	1D6	2B1b
382	2A1a(i)	2B1b
383	3E*2	2C1b
384	a1d	2A1a(i)
385	2A1a(i)	2A3b
386	1A1	3B1a(i)
387	1A*1b	1A*1a(i)
388	1D*2	+1A1a(i)
389	a1c	1D1
390	2A3b	2A1a(i)
391	d1a	2A1b
392	1D1	1D2
393	d1a	d2a
394	1A1a(i)	1A*1a(i)
395	1A1a(i)	3B1c
396	1A*1b	1A*1a(i)
397	d3b	1A1a(i)
398	2A1a(i)	2E2a
399	1D3	3B1b
400	a2d	1A*1a(i)
401	d3a	2A1a(i)
402	3B1a(i)	d2a
403	1A*1b	2A1
404	2A1a(i)	2B1c
405	1A*1a(i)	3E1
406	a1c	2B1d
407	1A*1a(i)	2E2a

408	2A1a(i)	1D1
409	d3c	1A*1a(i)
410	a1c	1D2
411	[2A1a(i)]	1A1a(i)
412	[2C2c]	2A1a(i)
413	1D2	2A1a(i)
414	1A1a(i)	2C1c
415	2C2d	2B1-
416	2A1a(i)	3B*1b
417	3B1b	1A1a(i)
418	2A1a(i)	3E2
419	a1c	3B1a(i)
420	1A1a(i)	1A1b(i)
421	d1b	1D1
422	a1c	2A1a(i)
423	2A1a(i)	3B1b
424	d3a	2A1a(i)
425	1A*1a(i)	1D1
426	3B1b	2A1a(i)
427	3B1b	1A1a(i)
428	3B1a(i)	1A*1a(i)
429	3B1c	2A1a(i)
430	2A1a(i)	d3a
431	3E1	3B1b
432	2C2b	2A1a(i)
433	2A1a(i)	3B1a(i)
434	2A3a(i)	3B1b
435	a1c	d2a
436	1D1	1A1a(i)
437	1A*1b	2A1a(i)
438	d1b	2A1a(i)
439	a1d	2C1a
440	3B1b	1A*1a(i)
441	1A*1a(i)	1A*1a(i)

442	3E2	2A1a(i)
443	a1c	2C1a
444	d1a	1A1
445	1D1	2A1a(i)
446	2A3b	2A1a(i)
*	*	*
447	1A1b(i)	3E*2
448	2A1a(i)	3E2
449	d3b	1A*1a(i)
450	1D5	1A1b(i)
451	1D5	2E2a
452	d1b	1A1a(i)
453	d1b	1A1a(i)
454	d2b	2A1a(i)
455	1A1a(i)	2B1b
456	1D6	3B*1b
457	1A*1a(i)	3B*1b
458	1A1a(i)	2C1b
459	1D1	1A1b(i)
460	2A1a(i)	2E2a
461	1A1a(i)	3E2
462	2A1a(i)	2E2a
463	2A1a(i)	2E2a
464	1A*3	2C1-
465	3E2	2A1a(i)
466	1A*1a(i)	1D1
467	1A*1a(i)	2A3b
468	1A1b(i)	2E2a
469	2A3a(i)	1A1b(i)
470	1A*1a(i)	3E1
471	1A*1a(i)	1D1
472	2A1a(i)	3B1b
473	3E1	2A1a(i)
474	3E*1	2A1a(i)

475	1D3	2A1a(i)
476	1D5	3B*1b
477	3B2b	1A*1a(i)
478	1D1	3E2
479	3E2	2C2b
480	3B1a	1A1a(i)
481	2A1a(i)	3E2
482	1D1	2A1a(i)
483	1D4	1A1b(i)
484	d2b	2A1a(i)
485	d2b	3B2b
486	3B1a(i)	3E2
487	[2A1a(i)]	2A1a(i)
488	a1d	3E1
489	3E2	3B*1b
490	3E1	2A1a(i)
491	2A4(i)	2A1a(i)
492	d2b	2E2a
493	1A1a(i)	2A3b
494	2A1	2E2a
495	3E1	2A1a(i)
496	d3b	2A1a(i)
497	3E1	2A1a(i)
498	1A*1a(i)	2A3b
499	e1d	1D1
500	3E2	2E2a
501	a1c	1D1
502	1A*1a(i)	2C2b
503	2B1b	1D1
504	d1b	3E2
505	d2b	1A*1a(i)
506	1A*1a(i)	3E1
507	d2a	2E2a
508	a1c	2E2a

509	1D*1	1A*1a(i)
510	2C2b	2A1a(i)
511	1A*1b	3E2
512	3E2	2A1a(i)
513	d2b	2E2a
514	[d3b]	2C1b
515	d3b	2C1b
516	d1b	2A1a(i)
517	d2a	2A1a(i)
518	3E1	2A1a(i)
519	1D1	2E2a
520	d2b	2C1b
521	1A*1a(i)	3B*1d
522	d3b	2A1a(i)
523	3B1b	2A1a(i)
524	1A1a(i)	3E2
525	3E1	2A1a(i)
526	1A1b(i)	2A3b
527	d1b	1A1a(i)
528	d1b	2A1a(i)
529	3B*1b	1D1
530	2A1a(i)	2B1b
531	d1b	2A1a(i)
532	1D*2	3B1b
533	1A*1a(i)	1A*1a(i)
534	2A1a(i)	2A1
535	d3b	2A1a(i)
536	1A*1a(i)	2A3b
537	1A1b(i)	2B1b
538	1D5	1A*1a(i)
539	d2b	2A1a(i)
540	1A*2b	2A3b
541	3E2	d5b
542	1D5	2A1a(i)

543	d3b	2A1a(i)
544	d2c	2A1a(i)
545	2A1a(i)	d3a
546	2B1b	3B1b
547	1A1a(i)	2A1a(i)
548	1D*5	3B1a(i)
549	d1a	1A*1a(i)
550	2A1a(i)	2A1a(i)
551	2A1a(i)	3E2
552	2A1a(i)	1A*1a(i)
553	2A2(i)	3B1b
554	1A1b(i)	3E2
555	3E1	2C1b
556	d1d	1A1a(i)
557	1A1a(i)	2A1a(i)
558	a1d	3B*1b
559	d3a	2A1a(i)
560	d3a	2A1
561	a1c	2A1a(i)
562	3B*1b	1A1b(i)
563	d2c	2C1a
564	2A3a(ii)	2C2c
565	a1c	1A1b(i)
566	d2b	2A1a(i)
567	[3E1]	1A1b(i)
568	3B1b	1A1a(i)
569	2A1a(i)	2C2a
570	2A3(1A*1a)	a1c(1A1a)
571	1A1a(2A1a)	a1d(1A*1a)
572	1A1b(2A1a)	a1c(2A1a)
573	2C1c(2A1a)	a1d(2A3a)
574	a1b(2A1a)	a1d(1A*1a)
575	d2b	2A1a(i)
576	d2b	2A1a(i)

577	1D5	1A1a(i)
578	3E2	2A3a(i)
579	2A1a(i)	3E2
580	d2b	2A1a(i)
581	3B1a(i)	1A*1a(i)
582	2A1a(i)	1D1
583	2A1a(i)	1A*1a(i)
584	d2b	1A1b(i)
585	d2c	2A1a(i)
586	d2a	2A1a(i)
587	1A1a(i)	2C1b
588	1A2a(i)	3E*1
589	1D6	2A1a(i)
590	d3a	3E2

Table 1 Distribution of the main types of verses in bold with subtypes added below in Roman (*Exodus*)

		(1)	(2)	(3)
1 Type a1	(x x x x) x x $\acute{\text{~}}$ x	0	60	0
Type a1b	x x $\acute{\text{~}}$ x	0	2	0
Type a1c	x x x $\acute{\text{~}}$ x	0	24	0
Type a1d	x x x x $\acute{\text{~}}$ x	0	27	0
Type a1e	x x x x x $\acute{\text{~}}$ x	0	4	0
Type a1f	x x x x x x $\acute{\text{~}}$ x	0	2	0
2 Type a2	(x x) x x $\acute{\text{~}}$	0	5	0
Type a2b	x x $\acute{\text{~}}$	0	1	0
Type a2c	x x x $\acute{\text{~}}$	0	1	0
Type a2d	x x x x $\acute{\text{~}}$	0	3	0
3 Type d1	(x x x) x $\acute{\text{~}}$ x x	0	34	4
Type d1a	x $\acute{\text{~}}$ x x	0	7	3
Type d1b	x x $\acute{\text{~}}$ x x	0	22	1
Type d1c	x x x $\acute{\text{~}}$ x x	0	4	0
Type d1d	x x x x $\acute{\text{~}}$ x x	0	1	0
4 Type d2	(x x x) x $\acute{\text{~}}$ x	0	51	9

		(1)	(2)	(3)
Type d2a	$x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{x}$	0	5	5
Type d2b	$x x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{x}$	0	40	4
Type d2c	$x x x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{x}$	0	5	0
Type d2d	$x x x x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{x}$	0	1	0
5 Type d3	$(x x) x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{x}$	0	35	9
Type d3a	$x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{x}$	0	10	7
Type d3b	$x x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{x}$	0	22	2
Type d3c	$x x x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{x}$	0	3	0
6 Type d4	$x x \acute{\text{---}} : x \grave{\text{---}}$	0	5	1
Type d4a	$x \acute{\text{---}} : x \grave{\text{---}}$	0	2	1
Type d4b	$x x \acute{\text{---}} : x \grave{\text{---}}$	0	3	0
7 Type d5	$(x x) x \acute{\text{---}} x : \grave{\text{---}}$	0	6	5
Type d5b	$x x \acute{\text{---}} x : \grave{\text{---}}$	0	6	3
Type d5c	$x x x \acute{\text{---}} x : \grave{\text{---}}$	0	0	2
8 Type e1	$(x x) x x \acute{\text{---}}$	0	2	0
Type e1d	$x x x x \acute{\text{---}}$	0	2	0
9 Type 1A1	$\acute{\text{---}} : x \grave{\text{---}} x$	0	1	3
10 Type 1D1	$\acute{\text{---}} : \grave{\text{---}} x x$	0	9	7
11 Type 2A1	$\acute{\text{---}} x : \grave{\text{---}} x$	0	9	7
12 Type 3E1	$\acute{\text{---}} x x : \grave{\text{---}}$	–	–	–
13 Type 1A1	$\acute{\text{---}} (x) x \grave{\text{---}} x$	30	2	65
Type 1A1a(i)	$\acute{\text{---}} x \acute{\text{---}} x$	18	1	40
Type 1A1a(ii)	$\acute{\text{---}} x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{\text{---}}$	0	1	0
Type 1A1b(i)	$\acute{\text{---}} x x \acute{\text{---}} x$	12	0	25
14 Type 1A2	$\acute{\text{---}} (x) x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{\text{---}}$	8	0	0
Type 1A2a(i)	$\acute{\text{---}} x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{\text{---}}$	5	0	0
Type 1A2a(ii)	$\acute{\text{---}} x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{\text{---}}$	1	0	0
Type 1A2b(i)	$\acute{\text{---}} x x \acute{\text{---}} \grave{\text{---}}$	2	0	0
15 Type 1A*1	$\acute{\text{---}} x (x) x \acute{\text{---}} x$	35	5	47
Type 1A*1a(i)	$\acute{\text{---}} x x \acute{\text{---}} x$	24	4	45
Type 1A*1a(ii)	$\acute{\text{---}} \grave{\text{---}} x \acute{\text{---}} x$	1	0	0
Type 1A*1b(i)	$\acute{\text{---}} x x x \acute{\text{---}} x$	9	1	2
Type 1A*1b(ii)	$\acute{\text{---}} \grave{\text{---}} x x \acute{\text{---}} x$	1	0	0

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		(1)	(2)	(3)
34 Type 2A4	$\acute{\text{—}}\text{—} \acute{\text{—}}\text{—}$	2	0	0
Type 2A4(i)	$\acute{\text{—}}\text{—} \acute{\text{—}}\text{—}$	1	0	0
Type 2A4(ii)	$\acute{\text{—}}\text{x} \acute{\text{—}}\text{—}$	1	0	0
35 Type 2B1	$(\text{x x x x}) \acute{\text{—}} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	1	2	9
Type 2B1–	$\acute{\text{—}} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	0	0	1
Type 2B1a	$\text{x} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	0	0	1
Type 2B1b	$\text{x x} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	1	2	5
Type 2B1c	$\text{x x x} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	0	0	1
Type 2B1d	$\text{x x x x} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	0	0	1
36 Type 2B2	$(\text{x x}) \acute{\text{—}} \text{x x} \acute{\text{—}}$	0	0	1
Type 2B2a	$\text{x} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x x} \acute{\text{—}}$	–	–	–
Type 2B2b	$\text{x x} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x x} \acute{\text{—}}$	0	0	1
37 Type 2C1	$(\text{x x x}) \acute{\text{—}} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x}$	2	1	24
Type 2C1–	$\acute{\text{—}} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x}$	0	0	1
Type 2C1a	$\text{x} \acute{\text{—}} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x}$	0	1	9
Type 2C1b	$\text{x x} \acute{\text{—}} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x}$	2	0	13
Type 2C1c	$\text{x x x} \acute{\text{—}} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x}$	0	0	1
38 Type 2C2	$(\text{x x x x}) \acute{\text{—}} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x}$	0	9	13
Type 2C2a	$\text{x} \acute{\text{—}} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x}$	0	1	2
Type 2C2b	$\text{x x} \acute{\text{—}} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x}$	0	6	8
Type 2C2c	$\text{x x x} \acute{\text{—}} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x}$	0	1	3
Type 2C2d	$\text{x x x x} \acute{\text{—}} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x}$	0	1	0
39 Type 2E1	$\acute{\text{—}} \text{x} (\text{x}) \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	0	1	5
Type 2E1a	$\acute{\text{—}} \text{x} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	0	1	3
Type 2E1b	$\acute{\text{—}} \text{x} \text{x x} \acute{\text{—}}$	0	0	2
40 Type 2E2	$\acute{\text{—}}\text{—} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	1	1	33
Type 2E2a	$\acute{\text{—}}\text{—} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	1	1	33
41 Type 3B1	$(\text{x x}) \text{x} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	12	23	48
Type 3B1a(i)	$\text{x} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	7	4	12
Type 3B1a(ii)	$\text{x} \acute{\text{—}} \text{—} \acute{\text{—}}$	0	0	1
Type 3B1b	$\text{x x} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	5	15	31
Type 3B1c	$\text{x x x} \acute{\text{—}} \text{x} \acute{\text{—}}$	0	4	4

		(1)	(2)	(3)
42 Type 3B2	x x [˘] x x [˘]	1	1	1
Type 3B2b	x x [˘] x x [˘]	1	1	1
43 Type 3B*1	(x x x) x [˘] x x [˘]	2	8	13
Type 3B*1a	x [˘] x x [˘]	0	0	1
Type 3B*1b	x x [˘] x x [˘]	0	6	10
Type 3B*1c	x x x [˘] x x [˘]	1	2	1
Type 3B*1d	x x x x [˘] x x [˘]	1	0	1
44 Type 3E1	[˘] x x [˘]	9	8	20
45 Type 3E2	[˘] [˘] x [˘]	13	8	43
46 Type 3E3	[˘] [˘] x [˘]	1	0	1
47 Type 3E*1	[˘] x x x [˘]	0	3	2
48 Type 3E*2	[˘] [˘] x x [˘]	2	0	10
49 Type 3E*3	[˘] [˘] x x [˘]	–	–	–
50 Reminders		0	0	1
Defective		3	2	5
Hypermetric		5	0	5
Total		260	330	590

[Table note: The numbers in Roman are included in those in bold. In the three columns on the right the first shows the number of *a*-verses with double alliteration, the second the number of *a*-verses with single alliteration, and the third the number of *b*-verses.]

Table 2 The main verse types in *Exodus* shown in percentages

	(1)	(2)	(3)
1–2 Type a	0	11.0 (2)	0
3–7 Type d	0	22.2 (1)	4.7 (8)
8 Type e1	0	0.3 (13=)	0
9 Type 1A1	0	0.2 (17=)	0.5 (15)
10 Type 1D1	0	1.5 (7=)	1.2 (13=)
11 Type 2A1	0	1.5 (7=)	1.2 (13=)
12 Type 3E1	–	–	–
13–14 Type 1A	6.4 (4)	0.3 (13=)	11.0 (2)
15–18 Type 1A*	6.8 (3)	0.8 (11)	8.0 (5)
19–24 Type 1D	7.5 (2)	1.4 (9=)	3.7 (9)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
25–30 Type 1D*	4.2 (5)	0.2 (17=)	0
31–4 Type 2A	10.3 (1)	5.3 (3)	30.0 (1)
35–6 Type 2B	0.2 (11=)	0.3 (13=)	1.7 (12)
37–8 Type 2C	0.3 (8=)	1.7 (6)	6.3 (7)
39–40 Type 2E	0.2 (11=)	0.3 (13=)	6.4 (6)
41–2 Type 3B	2.2 (7)	4 (4)	8.3 (4)
43 Type 3B*	0.3 (8=)	1.4 (9=)	2.2 (10)
44–6 Type 3E	3.9 (6)	2.7 (5)	10.8 (3)
47–9 Type 3E*	0.3 (8=)	0.5 (12)	2 (11)
50 Others	1.4	0.3	1.9
Total	44	55.9	99.9

[Table note: In the three columns on the right (1) shows the percentage of *a*-verses with double alliteration, (2) the percentage of *a*-verses with single alliteration, and (3) the percentage of *b*-verses. To the right of each column the figure in brackets shows the rank of the type in terms of frequency.]

Table 3 Verse types showing monosyllabic anacrusis (*Exodus*)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Type 1A1a(i)	1	0	1
Type 1A1b(i)	1	0	0
Type 1A*1a(i)	1	0	0
Type 1A*1b	0	0	1
Type 1D*3(i)	1	0	0
Type 2A2	2	0	0
Total	6	0	2

[Table note: These verses are included in [Table 1](#).]

Chapter 4

THE BATTLE OF MALDON AND THE VENGEANCE OF OFFA

Mark Griffith*

Three Problems

In the later stages of the poetic fragment now known as *The Battle of Maldon* a comparatively extended narration of battle action comes between the short penultimate speech of Dunnere (lines 258–59) and the final gnomic exhortation of Byrhtwold (lines 312–19). Within the space of some fifty lines, the courageous actions of various followers of Byrhtnoð—Æscferð the Northumbrian hostage, Edward the Tall, Æþeric, Wistan the son of Þurstan, and the brothers Oswold and Eadwold—are briefly adumbrated together with some general battle action, but the exploit and the death of one man in particular is recorded and then celebrated at comparative length with a digressive account of a previous incident:

Ða æt guðe sloh
 Offa þone sælidan, þæt he on eorðan feoll,
 and ðær Gaddes mæg grund gesohte.
 Raðe wearð æt hilde Offa forheawen;
 he hæfde ðeah geforþod þæt he his frean gehet,
 swa he beotode ær wið his beahgifan,
 þæt hi sceoldon begen on burh ridan
 hale to hame, oððe on here crincgan
 on wælstowe, wundum sweltan
 He læg ðegenlice ðeodne gehende.¹ (lines 285b–94)

[Then in the fray Offa struck the sea-wanderer so that he fell dead to the earth; and there Gad's kinsman, Offa, found his way to the ground: he was rapidly hacked down in the battle. Nonetheless he had accomplished what he had promised his lord, according as he had previously pledged to his ring-giving master that they should both ride home sound

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I Quotations from the poem (but with some changes to the punctuation) are taken from *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. D. G. Scragg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), except where otherwise noted. *Beowulf* quotations are from Klaeber 4, other Old English verse is from *ASPR*.

to the manor or else both perish in war, to die from wounds in the place of carnage. He lay like a thane close to his lord.]²

Unlike these others, Offa has been mentioned before.³ Indeed, if the number of textual references to a figure in the fragment is to be taken as an index of his social significance, then Offa is second only to Byrhtnoð in importance. He is a kinsman (line 5) of the unnamed *cniht* at the start who responds positively to the *eorl*'s orders to dismount and lets his valued hawk fly off to the wood. Their consanguinity perhaps disposes the poet to expect the best of this young man, or, at least, he tells us that the *cniht* will not weaken in the fray (lines 9–10). After the flight of the cowards, we are informed that Offa had seen through the empty vaunts of many of those boasting in the council (that Byrhtnoð has summoned before the battle) and had revealed as much to his lord, presumably in confidence (lines 198–201). And, in lines 231–43, Offa replies to the opening speech of the noble Ælfwine, affirming the appropriateness of his encouragement of the remaining men, before going on to curse the man first in flight whose actions have broken the Anglo-Saxons' shield-wall—Godric, the craven son of Odda. These previous allusions to Offa characterize him for us to some extent, and also in some measure justify the details of his death in the quoted passage: he was close to Byrhtnoð in life and is close, or closer, to him in death. These lines are, however, replete with problems.

Three problems, in particular, are manifest and will be shown to be explicable in but one way. Two have figured quite prominently in criticism of the poem. Concisely, they may be sketched as follows:

- (1) A problem of syntax: "It has not, I think, been observed by previous editors that something is missing before this line. The antecedent implied by *þone* in 286 does not appear."⁴
- (2) A problem of metrics: "[286a *Offa þone sælidan*], however, is quite inexcusable, since the verse has a half stress after the second stress, a structure which absolutely demands double alliteration."⁵
- (3) A problem of aesthetics: the extremely brief account in lines 285b–86 of Offa's killing of a single anonymous Viking in the horde hardly justifies the special approbation given to him in the following lines (lines 289–94). What is it about this deed that makes it appropriate vengeance for his lord?

² The translation is from S. A. J. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: An Anthology of Old English Poems in Prose Translation with Introduction and Headnotes* (London: Dent, 1982), 527. All subsequent translations of quotations from the poem are taken from this work unless otherwise indicated.

³ On the assumption that Edward the Tall is not Edward the Chamberlain of lines 117–21.

⁴ *Seven Old English Poems, Edited with Commentary and Glossary*, ed. John C. Pope (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), 78, note to line 284.

⁵ A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 102, §117. For a full index of technical terms used in this chapter and volume, readers should consult the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices.

Three possible explanations for these difficulties are perhaps implied, and will be touched upon at points in the following arguments:

- (a) the poem has been inaccurately transmitted to us by its scribe(s),
- (b) the poet did not properly understand his poetic inheritance,
- (c) the poem is not of high quality.

None will be accepted.

Each of the three problems merits more detailed consideration.

(1) *The syntactic problem.* Although Pope was the first editor explicitly to claim that some text before lines 285b–86 was missing, he was not the first to detect that something was unusual about the syntax here, the narrative seemingly lacking complete coherence. Ashdown renders the line “Then Offa smote a seaman in the fight, so that he fell to the ground ...”,⁶ but the demonstrative *þone* cannot, so far as we know, function as an indefinite in Old English.⁷ This translation, however, undoubtedly lends the line a more obvious sense. A quite different approach is taken by Wyatt, in his anthology of Old English texts, who comments in his note to line 286 “*þone sælidan*”: “it is tantalising that we know nothing about this famous pirate,” assuming, it seems, not just definiteness, but deictic force to the demonstrative, and that what is missing is the primary audience’s knowledge of the event and its main participants.⁸ This is an intriguing line of thought to which I shall return, but, for now, Pope’s view is my concern. He continues his argument for a textual lacuna as follows: “The antecedent implied by *þone* in 286 does not appear and if we look more narrowly at the passage with this hint to guide us we see that the account of Offa’s death is incomplete. There should have been mention of a viking’s assault upon Offa, for it is the *lærig* of Offa’s shield that bursts and his corselet that sings a terrible song. He has been fatally wounded, and though he manages to kill his assailant,

⁶ *English and Norse Documents Relating to the Reign of Ethelred the Unready*, ed. Margaret Ashdown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930; reissued New York: Russell & Russell, 1972), 35 (my italics). Other translators too have decided that a shift to the indefinite is merited here. Gavin Bone, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: An Essay with Specimen Translation in Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1943), 34, offers “Offa strikes a seaman till he sinks”; Kevin Crossley-Holland, *The Battle of Maldon and Other Old English Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 37, gives “Then in the turmoil Offa struck a seafarer”; Constance B. Hieatt, *Beowulf and Other Old English Poems* (Toronto: Odyssey Press, 1967), 115, renders it “In the fighting there, Offa cut down a viking attacker”; Burton Raffel and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, *Poems and Prose from the Old English* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) 51, translates “There Offa slew a Dane, who dropped to the earth.”

⁷ On *an* as the indefinite article in Old English, see Matti Rissanen, *The Uses of “One” in Old and Early Middle English*, *Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki* 31 (Helsinki: Société néophilologique, 1967), 261–303; Rissanen notes its rareness in the poetry, 295–97. In Modern English demonstratives can, at least in colloquial English, sometimes function in an indefinite fashion (e.g. “I went to this pub one time ...”); whether this was possible in OE is unknown.

⁸ *An Anglo-Saxon Reader, Edited with Notes and Glossary*, ed. Alfred J. Wyatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 282.

he falls in the very act of doing so and is cut to pieces at once by other vikings.”⁹ Fulk in his revised edition of Pope’s anthology agrees sufficiently strongly with him to represent lines 280–85a with an asterisked omission between lines 283 and 284:

Swā dyde Æðelric,	æðele gefēra,
fūs and forð-georn	feagt eornoste,
Sigebyrhtes brōðor	and swīðe maniġ ððer
clufon celled bord,	cēne hīe weredon.
* * * *	
Bærst bordes lærig,	and sēo byrne sang
gyre-lēoða sum. ¹⁰	

[So too did Ætheric, an aristocratic companion, brother of Sibyrht, willing and eager to advance he fought zealously and very many another—they split the curved shield; the fierce men defended themselves. Shield rim smashed and mail-coat sang a certain terrible song.]

In support of Pope, Shippey argued that “the sudden change from plurality in lines 282–83 (a ‘crowd scene’) to a sequence of singular nouns and unintroduced definite articles immediately following ... marks an omission of some length.”¹¹ Pope later added two points to his argument.¹² First, that the demonstrative *seo* in line 284b should not be interpreted, as it usually is, as a pronoun with generalized reference (as if it were a plural),¹³ because elsewhere in the poem demonstratives used with weapons are particular, and may be translated as possessives. So, for example, in line 136a “he sceaf þa mid ðam scylde,” the shield alluded to clearly belongs to the hero and the verse might satisfactorily be translated “he shoved then with his shield.” Or, again, in line 144a, when Byrhtnoð attacks a second Viking “þæt seo byrne tobærst” (with the result that his mail-coat burst), a possessive again suffices to indicate the sense.¹⁴ And, second, Pope argues that the song of terror, *gyre-leoð*, suggests, in its emotionality, that it is one of

⁹ Pope, *Seven Old English Poems*, 78. The demonstrative *þone* does not, in fact, necessarily imply a clarifying antecedent: note, for example, line 77a *ðone forman man*, where definiteness is offered by the following clause, but no such clarification follows here.

¹⁰ *Eight Old English Poems, Edited with Commentary and Glossary by John C. Pope*, ed. R. D. Fulk (New York: Norton, 2001), 24.

¹¹ See his “Boar and Badger: An Old English Heroic Antithesis,” in *Sources and Relations: Studies in Honour of J. E. Cross*, ed. Marie Collins, Jocelyn Price, and Andrew Hamer, *LSE* 16 (1985): 220–39 at 232.

¹² See John C. Pope, “Offa in *The Battle of Maldon*,” in *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger*, ed. Helen Damico and John Leyerle, *Studies in Medieval Culture* 32 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1993), 1–27.

¹³ See Bruce Mitchell, *Old English Syntax* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), vol. 1, §338 and Gordon’s translation, “the border of the shield broke and the corslet sang a terrible song” (R. K. Gordon, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London: Dent, 1934), 366).

¹⁴ The issue is discussed by Bruce Mitchell (1985), §§303–10. The grammatical form of the demonstrative, however, takes the gender of the following noun, in this instance, feminine.

the Anglo-Saxons who is struck and not a Viking: “the narrator is not given to worrying about the severity of blows inflicted on the enemy.”¹⁵

None of this is persuasive. Leaving on one side, for the moment, the issue of the apparently absent antecedent, the other points, in reality, add nothing to the hypothesis. “There should have been mention of a viking’s assault upon Offa”—but why need there have been any such thing when the text as it stands tells us that Offa attacks the seafarer and not the other way around? In Pope’s view, the answer to this is that “it is the *lærig* of Offa’s shield that bursts and his corselet that sings a terrible song”; but this is an argument resting wholly upon the assumption that there is missing text, for nothing in the surviving text supports this specifically. Shippey’s view that the shift from plurals to singulars demonstrates a textual omission “of some length” does nothing of the sort, for such shifts occur elsewhere where no text is felt to be missing:

Hi willað eow to gafole garas syllan
ættrynne ord and ealde swurd,
þa heregeatu þe eow æt hilde ne deah (lines 46–48)

[They will give you spears as tribute, the poison-tipped javelin and ancient swords, those warlike accoutrements which will profit you nothing in battle]

Hi leton þa of folman feolhearde speru,
gegrundene garas fleogan;
bogan wæron bysige, bord ord onfeng. (lines 108–10)

[Then from their fists they let fly spears as hard as a file, cruelly sharpened javelins. Bows were busy, shield caught point.]

Byrhtnoð does not mean that the Anglo-Saxons will oppose the Vikings with only one deadly spear; nor does the poet mean that, despite bows being busy, only one shield was hit. The singulars have general force, and this shifting from plural to singular is a particular stylistic characteristic of the way that the poet speaks of weapons—to such an extent that sometimes the grammar is not clear on the point. “Swurd” (sword) in line 47b might be singular or plural,¹⁶ and, indeed, in line 283a “cellod bord” (curved shield) is similarly ambiguous in number.¹⁷ Nor is Shippey’s “crowd scene” clearly introduced by a plural subject, “swiðe mænig oþer” being singular. Only if the clause begins with the

15 Pope, “Offa in *The Battle of Maldon*,” 7.

16 If singular, then the adjective is weak, poetic, and a rare form in late verse (i.e. without a preceding demonstrative or possessive); if plural, then the adjective shows extension of the -e inflection to the strong neuter (see A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), §641).

17 Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, 527, for example, gives “they split the curved shield”; Gordon, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, 366, instead offers “split the hollow shields.” In any case, grammatical plurals, in OE poetry, often have singular force: see Alarik Rynell, “Plural for Singular Forms in *Beowulf*,” in *Language and Style in English Literature: Essays in Honour of Michio Masui*, ed. Michio Kawai (Tokyo: Eihosha, 1991), 123–40, on weapons at 136–37.

brother of Sibyrht is the subject grammatically plural, but in that case the scene ceases to depict an anonymous crowd.

Pope's arguments that *seo* is particular in force and equivalent to a possessive, and that the emotionality of *gryreleoð* suggests the terrible fate of an Anglo-Saxon, undoubtedly have appeal, but, even if correct, the text still makes better sense as it is, without any missing lines: the brother of Sibyrht (whether or not he is *Æperic*) is the antecedent of the demonstrative (cf. 142a "*færsecaðan*" ... 144a "*seo byrne*") and the owner of the mail-coat which (by metonymy, or projection) screams in terror. Offa's assault upon the Viking is part of a narrative chain in which the Anglo-Saxons are presented as the protagonists actively attacking their enemies, and their deaths are only narrated, or implied, *subsequently* to these attacks. Allusion to an initial attack by a seafarer upon Offa before his assault would disrupt this narrative pattern which foregrounds the heroism of the Englishmen, and could only serve to diminish the contribution of Offa. The Anglo-Saxons are attackers first and then, briefly, victims second. So, the hostage helps and fires many darts at the Vikings (265–71), for as long as he is able (272); Edward the Tall disdains flight, breaks the shield-wall and fights the Vikings (273–79a) before he is slain (279b); *Æperic* fights earnestly (280–81), the brother of Sibyrht along with others cleaves shields (282–83) and is slain (284–85a), Offa slays the seafarer (285b–86) and then is cut to pieces (287–88). That this is, indeed, the correct way of reading the order of events in the passage, and of understanding its coherence, is confirmed by the syntax of 285b–86a "*þa æt guðe sloh Offa*": the word order adverbial *þa* + verb + subject in the poem marks new action, and not the continuation of existing action, which is, instead, indicated by the word order verb + adverbial *þa* + subject (although this order also is used to open new action). So, accompanied by rather literal translations, compare and contrast 25–26a (which displays the former order),

þa stod on stæðe stiðlice clypode
wicinga ar

[Then stood on the bank, calling out loudly, the Viking messenger]

and 164–66 (with the latter),

To raþe hine gelette lidmanna sum,
þa he þæs eorles earm amyrd.
Feoll þa to foldan fealohilte swurd

[Too quickly one of the seamen prevented him when he injured the noble man's arm. Fell then to the ground the golden-hilt sword]

The first shifts the perspective from Byrhtnoð arraying his men to the ominous arrival of the Viking messenger who just appears as if out of thin air. A new stage in the action opens. The second recounts the fall of the hero's sword consequent upon the Viking injuring the hero's arm; line 166 completes the action begun in 164–65. The first shows initial order (found also at lines 181, 205, 295), the second continuative order (also at lines 134, 147, 261). And so we should expect line 285b, opening with the adverb, to

mark a fresh action, and not the continuation of an assault upon Offa. Accordingly, the only evidence for missing text is the curious absence of an antecedent for 286a “þone”. No word is fragmentary in lines 283 or 284, no verse lacks its expected stresses or positions; no alliteration is disrupted (even though the poem is not conventional in this respect).

Another explanation for this apparent lack of coherence should be sought and that explanation must begin with a recognition that the syntax of 286a is not unique in the poem. To his translation of line 265, “Then, the hostage heartily help did render them,” Lesslie Hall added the following questioning footnote: “Who the hostage is we do not know; probably he was already mentioned in the lost part of the poem. —I am inclined to believe that *se* is used with the value of an indefinite article here, as it seems to be occasionally elsewhere.”¹⁸ The problem of line 286a which has wrongly persuaded some translators to substitute an indefinite article for the demonstrative pronoun is *not* confined to that verse in the poem. Missing antecedents are detectable at other important points in the narrative. Take lines 72–75, for example:

Se flod ut gewat; þa flotan stodon gearowe,
wicinga fela wiges georne.
Het þa hæleða hleo healdan þa bricge
wigan wigheardne, se wæs haten Wulfstan

[The flood tide went out. The seafarers were standing ready, many Vikings eager for war. Then the lord of the English heroes commanded a warrior hardy in war to hold the causeway—he was called Wulfstan]

“*þa* bricge”?—yet *no* bridge or causeway has been mentioned hitherto, even though it now moves centre stage, and plays a dramatic role in hindering battle and in provoking the infamous guile of the Vikings. Another instance illustrates the problem perhaps even more acutely:

þa gyt on orde stod Eadweard se langa,
gearo and geornful; gylpwordum spræc
þæt he nolde fleogan fotmæl landes,
ofer bæc bugan, þa his betera leg.
He bræc þone bordweall and wið þa beornas feaht (lines 273–77)

[Also in the spearhead stood Eadweard the tall, alert, and eager; he spoke words of declaration that he would not flee a foot's measurement of ground and fall back, since his superior lay dead. He broke through the shield-barrier and fought with the warriors]

¹⁸ J. Lesslie Hall, *Judith, Phoenix, and Other Anglo-Saxon Poems translated from the Grein-Wülker Text* (New York: Silver, Burdett, 1902), 53. An indefinite translation of a definite has been offered, for example, at line 168b *þæt* word: “even then, the grey-haired warrior delivered a harangue” (Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, 524). See, also, n6 above.

"*Pone bordweall*"? *What* shield-wall, we surely wonder? This cannot be the Anglo-Saxon "*wihaga*" (line 102a), for Offa has told everyone most clearly that that was broken by the men fleeing with Godric. And not just simply broken either: "*folc totwæmed, scyldburh tobrocen*" (241b–42a); the repeated verbal prefix *to-* emphasizes the totality of the fracture. That shield-wall was smashed to smithereens. But no Viking shield-wall has been mentioned. Perhaps, then, the causeway and the hostage and the Viking shield-wall, and so on, were all alluded to in the lost part of the poem? Or perhaps there is missing text before lines 74, 265, 277, as well as 284? I believe there is a simpler explanation.

A poet who knows that his audience also knows the story he is narrating will present it in a manner different from a poet who suspects that they do not. It would be unnecessary, for example, for him to introduce aspects he knew to be understood by them—important characters, motives, and incidents might be alluded to economically, or allusively, or perhaps, even, not at all in their own right. So these demonstratives did, in a way, have antecedents: another lost part of the poem is the poet's presumptions about the knowledge of the intended primary audience. What we have remaining to us is only, as it were, one side of a dialogue.¹⁹ This also goes some way to explaining the genealogical incoherencies in the narrative. Is *Æperic* the brother of *Sibyrht*, or not? *We* do not know, but the sense of lines 280–85a cannot properly be established without that information. Is Offa the kinsman of Gadd, or not? We cannot be sure, and some have wondered whether Gadd's kinsman might have been one of the Vikings or another Englishman.²⁰ Is Edward the Tall definitely not Edward the Chamberlain, for these two are not distinguished as clearly as the two Godrics? And so on. Either the poet loved obscurity, or he was composing for an audience that knew, or knew of, the participants to whom he refers in this indirect, or elliptical, or (to us) unclear style. The phrasing of "*pone sælidan*" may, therefore, be of a piece with "*se gysel*" (the hostage)—*they* knew who was meant, as Wyatt presumes. Accordingly, the key critical question facing us with lines 285b–86 is whether there is sufficient information in the surviving poem to allow us to reconstruct the apparently missing antecedent of "*pone sælidan*". I believe that there is.

2) *The problem of metrics.* Bliss's condemnation of the inexcusability of line 286a in fact occurs in a context in which he argues broadly to the contrary that the poem "emerges rather creditably from a fresh [metrical] examination." He notes that out of its eighty-one instances of Types 1A and 1A*, only six display single, instead of double, alliteration and that this is "a proportion which does not differ much from that of *Beowulf*."²¹ He goes on to argue that, of these six, one may be illusory ("*reaf and hringas*", line 161a), one is

¹⁹ Such narrative, of course, has *synecdoche* as its major structuring trope, but we now cannot grasp the overall coherence (see Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczeńska, "Synecdoche—An Underestimated Macrofigure?" *Language and Literature* 22 (2013): 233–47).

²⁰ See *The Battle of Maldon and Short Poems from the Saxon Chronicle*, ed. Walter John Sedgefield (Boston: Heath, 1904), 38, and Ashdown, *English and Norse Documents*, 89.

²¹ Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, 101, §117.

paralleled in *Beowulf* (“eard gesecan”, line 222a),²² one in his view is corrupt (“Ælfnōð and Wulfmær”, line 183a),²³ and two display an acceptable licence (“Offa gemælde”, line 230a; “Leofsunu gemælde”, line 244a). Only 286a is truly beyond the pale, because both the position of the caesura and the secondary stress in the compound require double alliteration. This is true, but in scanning the verse as Type A, his treatment of it is economic, ignoring the ambiguous metrical status of the compound’s second element. Bliss resolves it, in order to scan it as Type 1A, or, more precisely, as Type 1A*2b (cf. *Beo* 736a, “ðicgean ofer þa niht”), but, if this verse had really occurred in *Beowulf*, he would not have resolved that element, because, by Kaluza’s Law, the consonantal inflection of *-lidan* would have inhibited resolution, and *Beowulf* abides by this rule.²⁴ Bliss assumes that such inflections no longer have this effect by the date of *Maldon*’s composition (and in this he is surely correct),²⁵ but his mixed methodology—on the one hand purportedly scanning *Maldon* by *Beowulfian* metrical norms, but, then, on the other hand, silently accepting a changed metrics in this case—underestimates the extremeness of this verse’s departure from the earlier poem’s conservative metrics. If scanned without resolution, the verse would have to be categorized in Bliss’s system as an expanded Type 1D*3 (with the two additional unstressed syllables of the demonstrative after the caesura), a type unparalleled in *Beowulf*.²⁶ One other verse in the poem shows the same metrical pattern, “wyrcaþ þone wihagan” (line 102a), but, in this instance, with the required double alliteration.²⁷ So, verse 286a, alone in *Maldon*, displays four departures from the metrical rules of *Beowulf*:

- (i) the position of the caesura (in Bliss’s description of the caesura) requires double alliteration,
- (ii) the compound in second position requires double alliteration,
- (iii) the presence of the second dip requires double alliteration,
- (iv) Kaluza’s Law is either violated, or the verse has a metrical shape unparalleled in *Beowulf*.

²² Bliss compares *Beo* 682a, “rand geheawe” and 3078a, “wræc adreogan.”

²³ The line lacks alliteration. On this absence, see Mark Griffith, “Alliterative Licence and the Rhetorical Use of Proper Names in *The Battle of Maldon*,” in *Prosody and Poetics in the Early Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of C. B. Hieatt*, ed. M. J. Toswell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 60–79.

²⁴ See Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, chap. 4.

²⁵ It would, in any case, be eccentric to argue that the *Maldon*-poet showed, in the one verse, extreme conservatism on the one hand (in abiding by Kaluza’s Law), but licentious disregard for the basic rule of alliteration on the other.

²⁶ Nearest are *Beo* 473a and 1724b, but neither has a compound in second position, and in both substitution of the inflected infinitive regularizes the metre.

²⁷ See R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), chap. 6, 163, §176.

Because of this, Hutcheson, who first scans both of these verses as “hyper-expanded D-types,” finally makes them both depart less from the metrical tradition by asserting (without argument) that “the article may be omitted in the two *Mald* attestations”!²⁸

Should we then assume that the scribe(s) made mistakes and wrongly inserted demonstratives in these verses? Certainly, *Beo* 9b, “para ymbsittendra” has often been understood in this way: Fulk comments that the demonstrative there is “likely enough a scribal insertion, since it produces unusual meter ... and is stylistically less desirable, given that the context does not justify definite usage and the poet generally avoids unnecessary demonstratives.”²⁹ But where “para” stands out as unusual in *Beowulf*, *Mald* 286a, “pone” can hardly be so described. Although Old English verse shows generally far fewer demonstratives than the prose and a scribe facing the different system of verse might occasionally have slipped into prosaic use, *Maldon* is very different, showing eighty-three examples of the pronoun *se*, *seo*, *þæt* in 325 lines, beside, for example, only 7 in 73 lines in *Brunanburh*, a more traditional poem which is typical in this regard.³⁰ If the form is not original, then, either a scribe systematically added demonstratives to a text of the poem which was normal in this respect, and so behaved differently from other scribes of the poetry, or, alternatively, a scribe sometimes added them to a poem which already used them more than usual, and did so, at least here, at a point where it was “stylistically less desirable, given that the context does not justify definite usage.” Neither of these propositions is appealing. Many of the poem’s demonstratives must be original. Some are metrically necessary (verses 121a, 148a, and 151a, would otherwise be metrically short; 182a would have irregular anacrusis), some are syntactically required (77a and 151a would otherwise require strong forms of the adjective), some are deictically necessary (32a, 52b, 212a, 245b, 312–13a, 316a, 322b, 325a), two are embedded onomastically in epithets (155b, 273b), some appear to be part of idiomatic patterns unlikely to be added by a scribe (as nobleman or noble man, Byrhtnoð is referred to as *se eorl*—at 6a, 28a, 89a, 159b, 165a, or *se beorn*—at 131b, 154a, 160a, or *se goda*—187a), some are obviously deliberate (for example, the contrast of the Viking messenger’s euphemistic “the money” in verses 35a and 40a, and Byrhtnoð’s firm correction: “our money”). We might wonder too why a scribe in his copying would only, or mainly, introduce demonstratives at points which lacked justification for definite usage?

Perhaps, then, the compound should be emended to a form that does alliterate? The most minimal change would be to presume that the initial *s*- is scribal, leaving *æliða*, with <æ> for <ea>, and the compound meaning—possibly—“sea-farer” (cf. *And* 251b, “ēa-līðend,” sea-farer), with a scribe having added the *s*- to make sense of an unfamiliar term. But *ēa-līða* is not attested; DOE records only one spelling of <æ> for *ēa* “river, water” out

²⁸ B. R. Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), 149.

²⁹ Klaeber’s *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 112.

³⁰ See Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, §336. Different counts of the usage in *Maldon* follow from the ambiguity of *þa* as either pronoun or adverb at lines 96, 228, 261.

of some five hundred occurrences of the word;³¹ and <æ> is not elsewhere found in the transcript as a spelling for *ēa*.³² The sense “river,” found in the *hapax* compound *ēa-steð*, “river-bank” (line 63a), the bank of the Pante on which the messenger stands, would, also, hardly be appropriate for a roving piratical Viking who has crossed the North Sea. In his review of Bliss’s book, Stanley takes issue with his remarks about verse 286a and its supposed inexcusability, saying that “the categorist has turned law-giver, and judge and jury too ... If the sense and grammar of the transmitted text are all right it is best to leave it alone.”³³ The broad sense and the grammar of these lines indeed seem all right, and the most obvious improvements by emendation *metri causa*—removal of the demonstrative, or creation of vocalic alliteration in the compound—are not convincing. The metre, however, remains extraordinary.

3) *The aesthetic problem.* In the usual understanding of lines 285b–94, the mismatch between the apparent slightness of Offa’s achievement in his final action and the eloquence of the obituary given him in lines 289–94 has not been fully grasped. One strength of Pope’s position is that he senses this problem: in his reconstruction, Offa attacks his opponent *despite being mortally wounded* and yet manages to kill him, a considerably greater deed than the surviving text attests to. On the surface of things, Offa is greatly outmatched in his deeds by those of the others around him. Edward the Tall also perseveres at the front (“on orde,” line 273a) where Offa is presumably also fighting (although we are not told this in as many words), but this Edward crashes through the Viking shield-wall and fights with them directly (277), a deed requiring great strength and suicidal courage: worthy vengeance for his lord, as the poet confirms in lines 278–9. Offa does nothing of the sort. Wistan the son of Thurstan also fights against the men (the plural phrasing of 298b, “wið þas secgas feaht” closely echoing that of 277b, “wið þa beornas feaht,” “fought against the men”) and kills three in the throng (299). Offa kills but one,³⁴ and is not said to fight against Vikings *en masse*. Even the hostage, who must have been unarmed at the start of proceedings, manages to shoot arrows frequently, at times wounding men, for as long as he is able (265–72).³⁵ Nor does Offa’s vengeance seem to shine by comparison with other explicit acts of vengeance in the battle. Edward the Chamberlain’s requital for the slaying of Wulfmær, the sister-son of Byrhtnoð (113–15), appears to be instant (it is the next

31 See *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*, 6 vols., ed. John Mitchell Kemble (London: Sumptibus Societatis, 1839–1848), vol. 1, no. 16, Hlódhari of Kent, 21, in the name *uuestan ae*.

32 But note the late spelling <wærd> for <wearð> in line 116a.

33 *EPS* 8 (1963), 47–53 at 52.

34 It is true that Ælfwine is also stated to kill merely one Viking (lines 226–8a), but he continues to exhort the men and (unlike Edward, Offa and Wistan) his death is not recorded. See on this, further, below.

35 If there were an onus on a hostage to fight for his captor, as some have argued, then Æsferð would have been armed from the outset, but his late entry into the fighting would then be inexplicable. The timing suggests a change of heart on his part and a realization that the Vikings are his real enemy.

act narrated, in lines 116–19), accomplished with matching severity (“swiðe,” lines 115b, 118a), and in the sight of the uncle whose loss is grievous (120–121). Wulfmær the Young plucks the bloody spear from the badly injured Byrhtnoð (152–55) and hurls it back again, killing its sender (156–58). Godric, son of Æþelgar, encourages everyone on (320), throws spears at the Vikings “often” (321b), advances “foremost” (323b), and cuts down and kills Vikings, until he too is slain (324). There is a sense of immediacy and of hyperbole in these actions. All are highly poetic in nature. Edward the Chamberlain’s swordplay is introduced by the poet in his own person, uniquely in the poem (“gehyrde ic,” line 117a). The second Godric, fighting with spears and sword, is contrasted emphatically with the first Godric, who runs away. The wondrous accuracy of Wulfmær’s marksmanship and the near insanity of Edward the Tall’s berserk behaviour are self-evidently the stuff of heroic romance. No such features characterize the vengeance of Offa, despite his close relationship with his lord and despite his social importance in the military group. The great praise for him does not seem to arise from any great action by him. He is a conspicuous figure in the poem, but his end seems not to be so. Does this single, understated slaying, encompassed in merely three verses of seemingly plain statement (at least in translation), really merit his thanely placement beside his lord?

From this review we may conclude that:

- (1) the argument for missing text in this section of the poem is weak, and the pattern of demonstratives without antecedents suggests instead an audience familiar with the story.
- (2) Pope’s hypothesis that there is missing text does not address the metrical problem of line 286a. No persuasive case has been made for emendation of that verse *metri causa*; its metrical exceptionality remains unexplained.
- (3) the aesthetic problem of the context, virtually ignored in the criticism of the poem, has been shown to be acute, but also awaits explanation.

We have reached base camp.

Towards the Summit

So far, the problem of the absence of double alliteration from verse 286a has been considered only from the perspective of metre. Two other approaches further help characterize the omission:

1) *Register*: Old English poetry displays many poetic words for commonly occurring ideas, especially for “battle,” “warrior,” “lord,” and for types of weapons. As a poem about a battle, *Maldon* is rich in this lexis. Poetic words and poetic meanings (of otherwise non-poetic words)³⁶ are high in “rank,” that is, they alliterate in very high proportions,

³⁶ The definition of this is empirical: i.e. “poetic” means attested only, or with disproportionate frequency, in the surviving poetic records. For a list, see Mark Griffith, “Poetic Language and the

where non-poetic words and senses alliterate less frequently.³⁷ Poetic words in the second position of the line ought, therefore, to alliterate. The following words (which are either confined, or mainly confined, to poetry, or are poetic in a particular sense, or are *hapax legomena*) display alliteration (with line numbers in brackets):

Simplexes: *beorn* (101, 154, 182), *bord* (284), *cellod* (283), *ecg* ("sword," 60), *eorl* (28, 203), *feorh* (317), *flyht* (71), *folde* (54, 166), *folme* (21, 150), *frea* (16), *freod* (39), *gram* (100), *greot* (315), *gub* (13, 94, 187, 321), *hild* (55, 123, 223, 288), *hleō* (74), *iren* ("sword," 253), *metod* (175), *wicg* (240).

Affixed forms: *abeodan* (27), *afysan* (3), *gebræc* (of shields, 295), *getoht* (104).

Compounds: *beaduræs* (111), *brunecg* (163), *feorhhus* (297), *forðgeorn* (281), *fyrdrinc* (140), *garberend* (262), *guðplega* (61), *guðrinc* (138), *hilderinc* (169), *lagustream* (66), *sæman* (38), *wigheard* (75), *wihaga* (102).³⁸

Forty-seven poetic words in this position alliterate out of fifty-three attested, or 88.7 per cent, a quite remarkable proportion (especially given the uncertainty of our knowledge in this area). These forty-seven form one-third of the a-verses in the poem with double alliteration (141 in total), which is also very striking. *Maldon* obviously adheres to the traditional system with rigour and its poetic diction is productive and helpful to the poet.³⁹

The following do not alliterate:

26a	wicinga ar
42a	Byrhtnoð mæpelode
230a	Offa gemælde
244a	Leofsunu gemælde
286a	Offa þone sælidan
309a	Byrhtwold mæpelode

Four of these, 42a, 309a, 230a, and 244a contain in second position poetic finite verbs meaning "made a speech." Bliss's observation that 230a and 244a contain a useful

Paris Psalter: The Decay of the Old English Tradition," Appendix I, *ASE* 20 (1991): 167–86 at 183–85, and note DOE's indications *passim* of restricted poetic usage in the dictionary, A–I.

37 The study of "rank" began in Middle English poetics: see August Brink, *Stab und Wort im Gawain*, Studien zur Englischen Philologie (Halle: Niemeyer, 1920); Marie Borroff, *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight: A Stylistic and Metrical Study*, Yale Studies in English 152 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 52–90. For the main initial work in Old English, see Dennis Cronan, "Alliterative Rank in Old English Poetry," *SN* 58 (1986): 145–58.

38 *Hapax legomena* (at lines 102, 111, 281, 283, 297) are included; several of these include poetic simplexes. *Wihaga* (line 102) occurs elsewhere only in a scratched gloss to Sedulius, *Carmen Paschale* I, line 344 (but cf. *bord-*, *cumbol-*).

39 See Mark Griffith, "On the Lexical Property termed 'Rank' in Old English Poetry and its Later Development," *N&Q* 258 (2013): 1–14.

verb which “it would be unreasonable to restrict ... to proper nouns beginning with *M-*” applies also to 42a and 309a.⁴⁰ *Mabelian* is used frequently elsewhere in the corpus in the second position of the line with a preceding named subject which carries the alliteration: it is a licence accepted by at least some of the poets.⁴¹ Verse 26a, “Vikings’ messenger” is licentious in a fashion not entirely dissimilar—restricting the poetic noun *ar* to groups, or tribes, with names beginning with vowels would reduce its utility sharply and would require a more extensive vocabulary for the concept of “envoy” than the poetry possesses.⁴² Verse 286a again stands out as exceptional: a special word in the poet’s vocabulary does not receive the customary special treatment, and does not appear to be explicable as a pragmatic licence.⁴³ A study of the poem’s diction and use of rank does not support the idea, however, that the poet did not understand his poetic inheritance.

2) *Metrical-grammar*: The metrical-grammatical rules in *Beowulf* for the alliteration of a stressed element in the a-verse after an alliterating word are various,⁴⁴ and *Maldon* does not always follow them,⁴⁵ but the irregularity of 286a is the more sharply defined by contextualization in this system. These rules are as follows (moving from left to right in the verse):

- a. a verbal prefix occurs in anacrusis before the first main stress of a verse of Types A or D (e.g. *Beo* 1151a, “forhabban in hrepre”).
- Regular verses: 90a, 138a, 212a, 223a, 228a. Irregular verses: none.

40 Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, 102. *GenB* 790a, “Adam gemælde,” suggests that Bliss’s view is correct. The Old Saxon source gives only the extra-metrical *inquit* phrase *quad Adam* in the first verse, from which the OE versifier forges a new line; he seems unlikely to have done that in this way if he felt it broke the alliterative rules.

41 Twenty-six times in *Beowulf* with seven different subjects, none beginning with *m-*. In other heroic poetry, note also *Wald II* 11a, “Waldere mað[.]lode.” Elsewhere it occurs in a limited range of the poems only: *GenA* (twice), *GenB* (twice), *El* (nine times), *Rid* 38 (once). Either some poets eschewed the licence, or did not feel the connotations of the verb appropriate in Christian poetry. Curious is the fact that Cynewulf uses the verb freely in *Elene*, but not in his other signed poems.

42 Beside the simplex *ar*, the language offers only *boda*, *ferend*, *sand*. Such pragmatism generates licence elsewhere in the poem, for example in a-verse patronymics in which proper names opening with different sounds precede *bearn*, of which DOE I.B.1.a. notes “in genitival phrases identifying an individual, especially a hero, by naming his father (only in poetry).”

43 That is, unlike verses of the type *Byrhtnoð mabelode*, this verse does not belong to any recognizable type of formula where relaxation of the rules governing double alliteration greatly increases the utility of the formula to the poets.

44 See Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, chaps. 2, 5, 6, and Calvin B. Kendall, *The Metrical Grammar of Beowulf*, CSASE 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), chaps. 8, 9, 10.

45 In lines 80a and 183a, a stressed element in first position does not alliterate, and there is postponed alliteration (80a), or no alliteration (183a). These verses are undoubtedly irregular, but to such a degree that they cannot be appraised by the rules of *Beowulf*.

- b1. a displaced finite verb alliterates in first position (e.g. *Beo* 323a, “song in searwum”).
Regular verses: 154a, 283a. Irregular verses: none.
- b2. an undisplaced alliterating finite verb is the only sentence particle before the first stressed element of the verse clause (e.g. *Beo* 49a, “geafon on garsecg”).
Regular verses: 43a, 66a, 96a,⁴⁶ 127a, 194a, 212a, 252a, 254a, 284a. Irregular verses: none.
- b3. an alliterating infinitive is in first position (*Beo* 119a, “swefan æfter symble”).
Regular verses: 4a, 10a, 38a, 90a, 102a, 126a,⁴⁷ 150a, 236a, 247a, 248a. Irregular verses: none.
- c. a proclitic in the first dip precedes the second stressed element.
- c1. the proclitic is a prefix (*Beo* 29a, “swæse gesiþas”).
Regular verses: 3a, 12a, 31a, 104a, 131a, 153a, 229a, 242a,⁴⁸ 245a, 248a, 250a, 296a, 302a, 305a. Irregular verses: 222a, 230a, 244a.
- c2. the proclitic is a preposition (*Beo* 36a, “mærne be mæste”).
Regular verses: 4a, 8a, 10a, 12a, 13a, 21a, 28a, 31a, 39a, 55a, 76a, 94a, 99a, 101a, 103a, 104a, 118a, 123a, 126a, 131a, 150a, 153a, 154a, 187a, 214a, 223a, 227a, 228a, 232a, 233a, 235a, 245a, 248a, 259a, 288a,⁴⁹ 292a, 302a, 315a, 321a. Irregular verses: none.
- c3. the proclitic is a possessive or demonstrative pronoun (*Beo* 521a, “leof his leodum,” 110a “Metod for þy mane”).
Regular verses: 8a, 10a, 28a, 76a, 102a, 111a, 118a, 138a, 140a, 154a, 182a, 227a, 228a, 240a,⁵⁰ 305a, 312a, 313a. Irregular verses: 286a.
- c4. the proclitic is a copulative conjunction (*Beo* 97a, “leomum ond leafum”).
Regular verses: 15a, 44a, 54a, 161a,⁵¹ 163a, 192a, 229a, 236a, 237a, 253a, 274a, 281a, 304a. Irregular verses: none.

⁴⁶ Line 96a belongs here if *þa* is a demonstrative (but there is then triple alliteration); if it is an adverb, then there is a particle before the first stressed element.

⁴⁷ For the verb see *Beo* 2509b, and note *The Old English “Exodus”, Text, Translation, and Commentary* by J. R. R. Tolkien, ed. Joan Turville-Petre (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981), 51.

⁴⁸ Perhaps 242a should be excluded from the list on the ground that the second stressed element appears to alliterate with the second element of the compound in first position (*scyldburih*).

⁴⁹ With *hraðe* for <*raðe*>; cf. *Beo* 1914a.

⁵⁰ The metrical-grammar of 240a is, however, unusual in that the demonstrative is displaced from its normal position before the adjective. The preposition is in anacrusis.

⁵¹ 161a is regular if <*hringas*> shows *hr* > *r*.

d. there is a compound in second position (*Beo* 54a, “leof leodcyning”).⁵²

Regular verses: 38a, 61a, 66a, 75a, 102a, 111a, 138a, 140a, 163a, 169a, 262a, 281a, 297a. Irregular verses: 219a, 286a.

The results may be presented in summary fashion:

Type	Regular	Irregular
a	5	0
b1	2	0
b2	9	0
b3	10	0
c1	14	3
c2	39	0
c3	17	1
c4	13	0
d	13	2
Total	122	6
Percentage	95.3	4.7

The irregular verses are as follows:

c1	222a eard gesecan
	230a Offa gemælde
	244a Leofsunu gemælde
c3	286a Offa þone sælidan
d	219a wis ealdorman
	286a Offa þone sælidan

Breaches of metrical-grammatical norms and the irregular use of register are seen to go hand in hand: three of this list, 230a, 244a, and 286a, appeared also in the previous list. Nonetheless *Maldon* emerges from this fresh analysis as almost wholly conforming to the traditional rules, and completely so before the first dip. Of the six exceptions—which

⁵² The principle that compounds of their nature must alliterate is now sometimes referred to as Krackow’s Law: see Otto Krackow, *Die Nominalcomposita als Kunstmittel im altenglischen Epos* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1903), 42–45. Whether this is, in fact, a real phenomenon, or merely an epiphenomenon (as the cumulative effect of the alliterative rules of line-structure and metre), does not affect the empirical fact that almost all compounds in the poetry alliterate.

represent less than 5 percent of relevant instances⁵³—three, verses 222a, 230a, and 244a, have already appeared in Bliss’s list of exceptions to the metrical rules which are sanctioned by such licence being relatively frequent in *Beowulf*.⁵⁴ In 219a, the lack of double alliteration indicates that the compound was not fully semantic in character, but, rather, subject to lexicalization and loss of stress on the second element.⁵⁵ Evidence for this is its frequency of occurrence (DOE counts ca. 1150 occurrences) in prose,⁵⁶ the abundance of *-man* in composition in Old English,⁵⁷ and the tendency of this compound element to loss of stress in the history of English. The failure of *sællida* to alliterate cannot be so explained: it is rare, confined to poetry with only four occurrences,⁵⁸ and *-lida* forms the second element of only one other compound in the language (the hapax “*yðlida*” at *Beo* 198).⁵⁹ Only 286a violates two rules (c3 and d), and no other verse shows a pronoun in the dip without double alliteration. This verse is more irregular than any other a-verse in the poem capable of analysis by the metrical-grammatical rules of *Beowulf*.

But some few irregular verses with single for double alliteration in *Beowulf* do provide a possible context in which to understand this verse. In Type c4 *Beowulf* offers “geongum ond ealdum” (line 72a), “duguþe ond geogoþe” (line 621a), “nean ond feorran” (line 1174a), “dægēs ond nihtes” (line 2269a). The instances of c4 in *Maldon* all show double alliteration and semantic consonance across the verse (e.g. “ord and iren”), but the exceptions in *Beowulf* show that oppositional binaries could be conjoined

53 Note, of course, that, mainly because of the proliferation of demonstratives in *Maldon*, many of the relevant verses appear in more than one list. It must be presumed that plural reasons for double alliteration increased the demand for its occurrence.

54 Eight of the twelve instances of 1A1a with single alliteration in that poem show *ge-* in the first dip (at lines 682, 870, 1250, 1375, 1491, 1658, 1857, 1975), one has *a-* (3078); fourteen of twenty-four instances of 1A*1a have *ge-* in the dip (at lines 98, 603, 624, 777, 805, 871, 996, 1090, 1396, 1908, 2094, 2489, 2859, 2891), three have other prefixes (680, 1055, 2275).

55 On the occasional lexicalization of compounds in *Beowulf*, see Fulk et al., *Klaeber’s Beowulf* Appendix C, §39(a), 334, and 334n1.

56 In verse only at *And* 608, *Dan* 684 (with ten occurrences in *PPs*).

57 Bosworth-Toller Supplement lists 68 compounds with *-man* as the second element (T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921).

58 *And* 471, 500, *Mald* 45, 286.

59 In addition, the form in *And* 500, *-leodan* displays back mutation (see Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, §§212–13), which implies retention of stress. Fully semantic compounds which fail to alliterate in second position are exceptionally rare in the corpus; apart from *Mald* 286a, I can find only *GenA* 1609, “gast ellorfus”; 1827, 2731, “mæg ælfscieno”; 1968, “wera eðelland” (perhaps lexicalized by analogy with other compounds in *-land*); 2298, “godes ærendgast”; *ChristC* 1297, “earges flæschoman” (perhaps lexicalized by analogy with *lichoma*); *PPs* 103.14.3 “must and windrinc.” In others, the compound is very probably lexicalized (occurring frequently, and in prose). Why *GenA*, an early poem, should offer the most exceptions is unclear; curious too is the fact that in all five the compound opens with a vowel.

"Swa hi," "bearn," and "bylde," are repeated, but the order is inverted and the later line shows crossed alliteration.⁶² Both, however, show the exhortations of the men described in much the fashion that Byrhtnoð exhorted them: "hyssas bylde, bæd gangan forð" (169b–70a). The hero's injunction that the men should advance is itself a repetition of part of his first orders that the men should "forð gangan" (3b), which they enact repeatedly (225a "forð eode," 229b, 260a "forð eodon," 297b "forð ða eode"). The narrator is keen to demonstrate that the loyal men carried out their lord's bidding. His words are their law.

Two lines of the poem, 42 and 309, form near exact repetitions of one another:

Byrhtnoð maþelode, bord hafenode

[Out spoke Byrhtnoð; he lifted his shield]

Byrhtwold maþelode, bord hafenode

[Byrhtwold held forth, heaved up his shield]

Verbatim, or near verbatim, line repeats within OE poems are very rare, and were presumably prominent to an audience.⁶³ Adding to the strength of the echo is the fact that only these two speech introductions in the poem deploy the verbs *maþelian* and *hafenian* (with a chiming inflectional rhyme and a remarkable assonance);⁶⁴ only these two speakers raise their shields and brandish their spears ("wand wacne æsc," line 43a; "æsc acwehte," line 310b), and *æsc* is found in the poem only in these two verses.⁶⁵ What links the hero and the *geneat*? The similarity of name suggests kinship, but we have no strong evidence.⁶⁶ The two are also the only speakers characterized as teaching

Eugene R. Kintgen, "Echoic Repetition in Old English Poetry, Especially *The Dream of the Rood*," *NM* 75 (1974): 202–23; Barbara C. Raw, *The Art and Background of Old English Poetry* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), 123–26.

62 The difference may mean that greater significance was attached to the name of Æþelgar than to that of Ælfric. On the treason of Ælfric, *ealdorman* of Mercia from 983, banished in 985 or 986, see M. A. L. Locherbie-Cameron, "Ælfwine's Kinsmen and *The Battle of Maldon*," *N&Q* 25 (1978): 486–87.

63 Compare *Beo* 197, 790, 806, "in that age of this life": the remoteness of the past is insistently recognized by the poet.

64 There is exact repetition of short vowels, *a-e-o-e*, in open syllables, with different consonants before the final inflectional rhyme. *Hafenian* occurs elsewhere in the poetic corpus only at *Beo* 1573b, "wæpen hafenade." On rhyme in the poetry, see Friedrich Kluge, "Zur Geschichte des Reimes im Altgermanischen," *BGdSL* 9 (1884): 422–50. On word-internal vocalic repetitions across the line in alliterative poetry, see Winfred P. Lehmann, *The Alliteration of Old Saxon Poetry*, *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap Suppl. Bind III* (Oslo: Aschehoug (Nygaard), 1953), 26–30.

65 For further discussion of the case for accepting "the implications of meaning generated by the formulaic echo in these two passages," see Stanley B. Greenfield, *The Interpretation of Old English Poems* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 55–58.

66 Byrhtelm, Byrhtnoð's father, shares the same first name-element (line 92a), and other kin with common name elements occur (Wulfmær and his father Wulfstan (line 155), and the sons of Odda (lines 187–92)). Note also that the repetition in the OHG *Hildebrandslied* of *Hiltibrant gimahalta*

the men ("rincum tæhte," line 18b; "beornas lærde," line 311b), and both too are old ("har hilderinc," line 169a; "eald geneat," line 310a). "Both transcend their age in virility and *virtus*," exemplifying the type known as the *senex fortis*.⁶⁷ So, this shared role and characterization perhaps generated the common opening to their speeches.⁶⁸ In any case, the introduction to the hero's great speech to the Viking messenger is re-cycled almost verbatim and so, when Byrhtwold speaks, we sense the ghost of Byrhtnoð behind him: both speakers share a proud belief that some things are worth more than life itself.

This speech to the messenger controls the action that follows—the hero has promised battle and so battle must take place—but its governing power goes well beyond this. Particulars of its language thread through the remainder of the fragment: it is the pivot around which the poem turns, dictating the words and actions of the hero and his men alike. No such use, by contrast, is made of Byrhtnoð's final speech to God.⁶⁹ In a short, but important, article which deserves greater recognition, Christopher Ball draws attention to an important scheme of repetitions across the first half of the poem which are wholly generated by the reply to the Viking messenger. Byrhtnoð promises that his men will give battle, not tribute:

Hi willað eow to gafole garas syllan,
ættrynne ord and ealde swurd,
þa heregeatu þe eow æt hilde ne deah. (lines 46–48)

[They will give you spears as tribute, the poison-tipped javelin and ancient swords, those warlike accoutrements which will profit you nothing in battle.]

I quote Ball's evidence and argument: "When in due course Byrhtnoth enters the battle he does indeed offer *gar(as)*, *ættrynne ord* and *eald(e)* *swurd* ... Byrhtnoth fights three Vikings before he dies: in each combat he is shown using the weapons he had promised

(lines 7, 45) and *Hadubrant gimahalta* (lines 14, 36) together with the repeated patronymic in the second case of *Hiltibrantes sunu* appears designed to remind us of their kinship (see Hatsuko Matsuda, *Direct Speech in Beowulf: Its Formal Presentation and Functions* (unpublished PhD diss., Bristol University, 2018), 47–49). Hildebrandslied quotations are taken from Klaeber 4.

67 J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 131.

68 For the types of speeches introduced by the poetic verb *maþelian* and the severe constraints on its use, see Roderick W. McConchie, "The Use of the Verb *Maþelian* in *Beowulf*," *NM* 101 (2000): 59–68.

69 Except that the indirect speech of 147b–48 anticipates its first theme of gratitude. The majority of the stressed words of the speech, however, occur nowhere else in the poem: 173, "geþancian," "waldend"; 174, "wynn," "woruld," "gebidan"; 175, "milde"; 176, "gast" (god, n.), "ge-unnan"; 177, "sawul"; 178, "geweald," "engel"; 179, "ferian," "frymði"; 180, "helsceaða." This may be characterized as a contrast of public speech (to the messenger) and private (to God), and/or one of genre (of *beot* and prayer), or simply one of poetic utility: the first speech is central to the poet's grand design, the death speech is not. In any case, in a poem which makes use of variation and repetition, the local absence of such devices is also noteworthy.

in his first speech. The exact words recur, and in the same order.” The lines Ball addresses are as follows:⁷⁰

Gegremod wearð se guðrinc: he mid gare stang
wlančne wicing þe him þa wunde forgeaf (lines 138–39)

[The warrior was enraged; with a spear he struck the presumptuous viking who had given him the wound]

Ða he oþerne ofstlice sceat
þæt seo byrne tobærst: he waes on breostum wund
þurh ða hringlocan; him æt heortan stod
ætterne ord (lines 143–46)

[Then he rapidly hurled a second, so that the mail-coat burst; he was wounded in the breast through the linked rings—at his heart stood the poisonous point]

þa Byrhtnoð bræd bill of sceðe
brad and brunecg, and on þa byrnan sloh.
To raþe hine gelette lidmanna sum,
þa he þæs eorles earm amyrde.
Feoll þa to foldan fealohilte swurd (lines 162–66)

[Then Byrhtnoth drew sword from sheath, broad and bright of blade, and struck against the corslet. All too quickly one of the shipmen hindered him, since he crippled the earl’s arm. The golden hilted sword then fell to the earth]

The central ethic of the poem dictates that deeds must match the words which promise those deeds. Ball shows that, by a strategy of intratextual repetition, the poet demonstrates with economical precision the hero’s discharging of his verbal commitments to the Viking.⁷¹ What might have seemed at first glance a catalogue of weapons appropriate only to the emotion of the moment or even mere padding, proves to be one that guides the hero’s behaviour, and our perception of that, from that moment onwards.

In similar vein, Byrhtnoð stirringly vows to defend his lord’s people and country and to kill the heathen invaders:

þæt her stynt unforcuð eorl mid his werode
þe wile gealgean eþel þysne,
Æþelredes eard, ealdres mines
folc and foldan. Feallan sceolon
hæpene æt hilde. (lines 51–55a)

[that here stands a worthy earl with his troop of men who is willing to defend this his ancestral home, the country of Æthelræd, my lord’s nation and land. The heathens shall perish in battle.]

70 Christopher J. E. Ball, “Byrhtnoth’s Weapons and *The Battle of Maldon*,” *N&Q* 36 (1989): 8–9.

71 For analysis of further examples, see Griffith, “Alliterative Licence,” 66–67, 69–70.

Two of the stressed elements of line 50 are repeated and varied no less than three times in the later parts of the poem, also with shared consonance:

Feoll þa to foldan *fealohilte swurd* (line 166)

þa wearð afeallen *þæs folces ealdor,*
Æþelredes eorl (lines 202–3a)

flotan on þam folce, *þæt se on foldan læg* (line 227)

All three possible combinations of two of the three alliterands are collocated. Although the hero promises death to the Vikings, in the end, it is he who falls to the ground (166). The narrator's words poignantly pick up on the hero's promise: it was not meant to happen like this. The promise is recalled again in 202–3a, together with Æþelred's name from 53a, "ealdor" from 53b and "eorl" from 51b (with enjambed alliteration reprising the continued alliteration of 51–53 which also binds these three words together). In narratological terms this statement is wholly otiose, for we already know that the hero is dead, hewn down in line 181, but the poetically motivated recapitulation of a whole network of words from lines 51–54 marks the initiation of the vengeance of his *heorðgeneatas*. They will turn his bold words into deeds, or die in the attempt. Pleonasm turns out to be purposeful. The vengeance of Ælfwine in line 277 echoes the same promise for one last time: *folc* and *foldan* recurs from line 54a. Ælfwine may be seen to kill only a single Viking, but that is narrated in the most appropriate manner, deploying Byrhtnoð's own collocation. Given that Byrhtnoð's speech is merely seventeen lines long and that its phrasing responds in some detail to the *preceding* speech of the Viking messenger,⁷² that it looks forwards as much as backwards, that its terms are reiterated and, in so far as this was possible, vindicated in the later parts of the poem is a most considerable poetic achievement.

One final later echo of that momentous speech remains to be discussed,⁷³ which the poet creates partly by lexical repetition, partly by shared position in the line, and partly by breaking the normal rules almost to pieces:

Gehyrest þu sælida, *hwæt þis folc segeð?* (line 45)

Offa þone sælidan, *þæt he on eorðan feoll* (line 286)

In both cases the rare poetic compound *sælida*, closing the a-verse in each line, ought to alliterate normally, but in neither does it do so—not at all in 286, and in 45, the only two stressed elements, the nouns *sælida* and *folc*, which ought to alliterate together by rule, fail to do so. By contrast, every other word in the poem denoting "seafarer" or

⁷² In brief, line 45 responds to 29–30a; 46, "to gafole garas" plays with 32, "garræs mid gafole"; 48, "heregeatu" punningly offers "gafol" in weapons; 50b and 60–61 answer 31–33; 56a corrects 40a; 59 parallels 33.

⁷³ Although other meaningful reiterative patterns are in evidence. The narrator, for example, later touches twice on Byrhtnoð's punning use of "heregeatu" (line 48, "war-gear", but also "heriot/tax"). Eadweard's violent slaughter of a Viking with his sword is termed "compensation" (116, "wipþearn"). The Vikings perceive that they have encountered "bricgweardas bitere" (85) and

"Viking"—an extensive vocabulary—alliterates normally.⁷⁴ This lexical repetition and shared departure from the alliterative rules irresistibly draws these lines together.⁷⁵ In line 286a, the poet has created a verse which cries out against the normal rules in almost every possible respect, without quite lying outside them altogether—a verse which is almost inexcusable (to paraphrase Bliss), and which was presumably nearly excruciating to a conservative audience. We are meant to notice this, we are intended to hear this echo—indeed, it is vital that we do so. Now we are in a position to understand the function of the strange demonstrative "þone" in line 286a: as with "þis" in line 45b ("what *these* people are saying"), it functions with deictic force (*pace* Wyatt, above) to remind us, laconically in this case, of the previous occurrence of the compound.⁷⁶ Offa kills *that* sea-wanderer, the one who induced his lord into making an ill-advised promise of battle. Now, too, we can see that the lines following the compound present *no* aesthetic problem. Byrhtnoð's right-hand man cuts down the frontman of the Vikings and avenges Byrhtnoð's death. And when he himself is cut down straight afterwards, then rightly he lies beside his lord *ðegenlice*. And how appropriate this is both within the terms of the poem and within the broader heroic frame of the poetry. The messenger is a man of cunning words, deployed to exact tribute, or to ask for it in such a way that it provokes the proud hero into a fatal promise of battle. Offa, on the other hand, is a man alert to falseness of language: he is the one who sees through the bombast in the *mepelstede* where many spoke boldly whom he knew would afterwards crumble in the crisis. Truth slays deception. Who better for Offa to kill? What greater satisfaction could there be? A productive parallel is offered by *Beowulf*: Hygelac by his rashness lies dead on the Frisian shore, and Beowulf, his closest comrade, avenges him by killing the frontman of the Franks—the only one of them singled out in that episode, and the only human adversary slain by the hero—the standard-bearer Dæghrefn.⁷⁷ My feeling is that, at this one moment in the poem's original performance, the audience cheered.

rightly so, for these "bridge-keepers" have exacted a grim toll from the first to cross (see 77–78, but implied also in 82–83). Or, further, Byrhtnoð's oxymoronic representation of battle as a sort of game (61, "guðplega") is repeated by the narrator (268, "wigplegan"), and by Byrhtwold (316, "wigplegan"). Both are rare poetic compounds ("guðplega" occurs also at *And* 1369, *Fates* 22, *ChristB* 573; "wigplega" only at *Fort* 69) and so are not obviously dead metaphors.

74 Compare "brimliþend" (27), "brimman" (49 and 295), "Dene" (129), "drenge" (149), "flota" (72 and 227), "lidman" (99 and 164), "særinc" (134), "sæman" (29, 38, and 278), "wicing" (26, 73, 97, 116, 139, and 322). Nine items occurring nineteen times in all.

75 Perhaps, too, the sensitive might hear another example of the insistent connection of *folc* (line 45) and *feallan* (286), with *eorðan* substituting for the third member of the triad, *foldan*.

76 "These people" in line 45b are contrasted with the Vikings who have been speaking to their messenger (see lines 29–30a). And in both these verses deixis may be implicated in the shared absence of alliteration from the following noun.

77 *Beo* 2490–508a. No relationship was more important to Beowulf than that with Hygelac, just as no relationship is more important to Offa than that with Byrhtnoð. *Beowulf* does not state that Dæghrefn killed Hygelac, but he is a prominent opponent. Beowulf's prime duty was to avenge his lord in the battle and this is why Dæghrefn is the only human said to be killed by him.

Chapter 5

RHYME AND REASON IN *THE BATTLE OF MALDON*

Mark Atherton*

Introduction

A defining moment in the history of English poetry is John Milton's Preface to his epic *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667, where the poet justifies his choice of blank verse as a medium for long narrative poems, essentially, of course, because blank verse eschews rhyme, "the jingling sound of like endings."¹ For Milton, rhyme is "but the Invention of a barbarous Age to set off wretched matter and lame Meter"; it is "trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt Numbers, fit quantity of Syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one Verse into another" (lines 3–4, 10–11). Milton's strictures emphasize that there was a long pedigree for unrhymed verse, especially in the Classical tradition, and Milton presented his own poetry here as a return to this old tradition, a case of "ancient liberty recover'd to heroic Poem from the troublesom and modern bondage of Rimeing" (15–16). In this chapter, we also return to a time of "ancient liberty," when English verse did not rhyme, when it was bound instead by other rules, namely those of metrical alliteration (rules which have been extrapolated by modern scholars from such poems as *Beowulf*, as the work of Alan Bliss, to whose memory this volume is dedicated, testifies).² For the Old English poets, rhyme—though known in Anglo-Latin hymnody and perhaps familiar, to some writers with international connections, in the poetry of Old High German or Old French—was merely an optional embellishment. In this discussion, at least initially, we will take rhyme to be "the articulatory-acoustic relation between stressed syllables that begin differently and end alike."³ However, it will be seen that this definition will necessarily have to be adjusted as we come to examine the rhyming practices in *The Battle of Maldon*.

Perhaps the first experiment in rhymed verse in English occurs in the (undated) oeuvre of the poet Cynewulf, in two passages in his *Elene* (1236–50) and *Christ II*

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1 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Barbara Lewalski (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 10, line 12.

2 On the metricality of alliteration in English alliterative verse, see, for example, Edwin Duncan, "Weak Stress and Poetic Constraints in Old English Verse," *JEGP* 92.4 (1993): 495–508; Rafael J. Pascual, "Oral Tradition and the History of English Alliterative Verse," *SN* 89.2 (2017): 250–260; Mark Griffith, "Extra Alliteration on Stressed Syllables in Old English Poetry: Types, Uses and Evolution," *ASE* 47 (2018): 69–176.

3 This definition of rhyme is from William Harmon, "Rhyme in English Verse: History, Structures, Functions," *Studies in Philology* 84 (1987): 365–93 at 365.

(591–96).⁴ And the first consistent use of continual end-rhyme is *The Rhyming Poem*, an elegy found in the Exeter Book Anthology (compiled ca. 975), in which the two halves of the line are connected both by metrical alliteration (here in bold) on the major lifts and also by this new device of rhyme (underlined) on the end-word of the on-verse and the off-verse:

Me lifes on**l**ah se þis leoht onw**ra**h
[He who revealed this light gave me life]⁵

In the eleventh century some occasional poems in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle abandon alliteration and adopt this new form of English verse: notably *The Death of the Ætheling Alfred* (ca. 1035) and *The Rime of King William* (ca. 1087). It would be interesting to pursue such new developments further, but this chapter does not seek to investigate the origins or the history of rhyme in Old English verse.⁶ Instead it will focus on the pattern of rhymes in one slightly earlier occasional piece, *The Battle of Maldon*, a poem which commemorates the historic fight with the Vikings in August of the year 991 at Maldon in Essex. The text itself was probably composed soon after the event, probably in the late tenth century (though some argue for early eleventh-century composition).⁷ But as a poem in late Old English, *Maldon* mostly still conforms to the rules of traditional alliterative verse, on the model of *Beowulf* and, say, the Chronicle poem *The Battle of Brunanburh* (ca. 937).⁸ Nevertheless, there are departures and anomalies, including assonance and other sound-effects, discussed recently by Richard Dance.⁹ The investigation can go further, however, for another notable feature is the occurrence of end-rhyme, often in the form of morphological rhymes and partial rhymes; as will be seen, these occur far more frequently in *Maldon* than they do in poems such as *The Wanderer*, which only makes sporadic use of such devices. It must be admitted that morphological rhymes

⁴ Harriet Soper, "The Light in the Old English Rhyming Poem, lines 1–2," *N&Q*, 66.1 (2019): 20–24.

⁵ *Old English Shorter Poems, Volume II: Wisdom and Lyric*, ed. Robert E. Bjork (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 90–91, line 1. *Maldon* translations here and below are the author's.

⁶ See the investigations of Michael McKie, "The Origins and Early Development of Rhyme in English Verse," *The Modern Language Review* 92.4 (October, 1997): 817–31; Mikhail L. Gasparov, *A History of European Versification*, trans. G. S. Smith, Leofranc Holford-Strevens, and M. Tarlinskaja (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁷ For a recent study, see Mark Atherton, *The Battle of Maldon: War and Peace in Tenth-Century England* (London: Bloomsbury 2020).

⁸ Thus, *Maldon* complies with the four-position rule, which is the most fundamental principle of classical Old English verse construction. See, for example, R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), §208; Rafael J. Pascual, "Three-position Verses and the Metrical Practice of the *Beowulf* Poet," *Selima: Journal of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature* 20 (2013–2014): 49–79.

⁹ For this recent and very useful look at effects of assonance and internal rhyme and other sound effects in the poem, see Richard Dance, "þær wearð hream ahafen': A Note on Old English Spelling and the Sound of *The Battle of Maldon*," in Hugh Magennis and Jonathan Wilcox, ed., *The Power of Words: Anglo-Saxon Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg on his Seventieth Birthday* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 278–317.

can occur “by chance” when a poet uses, say, a sequence of three infinitives in *-an* in his or her sentence structure. But if there is also a cluster of other endings in *-an* (e.g. on adjectives) in the same sequence of lines, occurring at metrically weighty places within the line, then the device begins to look “deliberate.” In the following discussion, I will present some close readings of key passages in *Maldon* in which the phenomenon of rhyme plays a prominent role, thematically and/or metrically.¹⁰

Types of Rhyme in *Maldon*

It will be appropriate first to begin with definitions and classifications before we interpret the details of actual use.¹¹ Two basic distinctions can be made between (1) the quality of the rhyme (is it full or partial?) and (2) the position of the rhyme within the poetic line (i.e. is it end-rhyme or internal rhyme?). Our first example comes from *Maldon*, and describes what happens at the start of the battle when the “bows become busy” (line 110a).¹² Here we find a rare full rhyme, sometimes called “perfect rhyme” (the critical terminology is variable); it occurs internally, that is to say, within the confines of the verse or half-line (*Maldon*, 110b):

(1) bord ord onfeng
[board received point]

The effect achieved here is of a full “masculine” rhyme falling on two stressed syllables, and its meaning is iconic: the *bord*, the four-letter word for a “shield,” literally contains, encompasses, and receives the shorter three-letter *ord*, the word for a “point,” that is, in this context, the “arrowhead” (in other passages it often means “spear”).¹³ The effect is to highlight and emphasize the action of the warrior in defending himself, and the poet was perhaps influenced by occasional use of this technique in *Beowulf*, for example line 2609b, “hond rond gefeng” (hand grasped shield).¹⁴ A similar example may be “ord in

10 I would like to thank Rafael Pascual for his invaluable assistance with references and for his useful comments and suggestions in the writing of this chapter.

11 More generally, for a detailed discussion of taxonomy and terminology, see the article “Rhyme” in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017) [accessed September 16, 2020].

12 Quotations from the poem are based on *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. D. G. Scragg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981). Other standard editions are: *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. E. V. Gordon (London: Methuen, 1937); *The Battle of Maldon: Text and Translation*, ed. Bill Griffiths (Pinner: Anglo-Saxon, 1993); *Eight Old English Poems*, John C. Pope, 3rd ed., rev. by R. D. Fulk (New York: Norton, 2001). We are reliably informed that Dr Mark Griffith is working on a new critical edition.

13 There is an interesting parallel in Jakobson’s discussion of the rhyme “I like Ike,” the slogan used during the presidential election campaign of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1951. See Roman Jakobson, *Language in Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 70.

14 For discussion of this verse, and for the possible influence of *Beowulf* on *Maldon*, see Atherton, *Battle of Maldon*, 128–34. *Beowulf* quotation here adapted from Klaeber 4.

gewod" (*Maldon*, 157a), where the *ord* and *-wod* are connected by half-rhyme; again this is an example of internal rhyme, used in conjunction with the alliterative metre to add further embellishment and rhetorical effect. A possible development of this kind of internal rhyme is the rhyme of *gehealdan* (167a) and *wealdon* (168a) which links two separate lines together, rather like the device of extending the alliterating sound over two or more lines in order to create an effect of connection and continuity.

A further example of rhyme in *Maldon* serves a rather different function; this is the pairing of *stunde* and *wunde*—so-called feminine rhymes—as a full rhyme marking the end of each verse;¹⁵ this is the scene describing the actions of the Northumbrian hostage, who as it happens is also a bowman (line 271):

(2) æfre embe stunde he sealde sume wunde

[repeatedly he dealt out wounds]

Here, the metre momentarily shifts from the rule-bound alliterative metre into a trochaic rhyming couplet in which the tonic syllable in each verse falls on the verse-final stressed word.¹⁶ Eleven lines later, the poet uses the same device again; the two verses of the line are connected not by alliterating lifts but by end-rhyme (line 282):

(3) Sibyrhtes broðor and swiðe mænig oþer

[Sibyrht's brother and many another]

Here rhyme has a metrical function and is a foretaste of what is to come: this is the metre of the later poems *The Death of the Ætheling Alfred* (*DAIf*) and *The Rime of King William*, in which alliterative metre is mostly abandoned and replaced by end-rhyme.

As a basis for comparison, it is worth considering the rhymes in a long passage from *The Death of Alfred* (*DAIf*), here given in the version of the text from manuscript C of

15 In a line of verse, a masculine ending means that the line ends in a stressed syllable, whereas a feminine ending refers to a final unstressed syllable; when masculine endings have the same vowel-consonant sound these are known as masculine rhymes for example, *break/take*, while feminine rhymes will chime on both the stressed penultimate syllable and the final unstressed syllable, for example, *spoken/broken* or *pleasure/treasure*.

16 This line is very similar to Lawman's *Brut*, 250a. See for example Bredehoft, *Early English Metre* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 113. This verse thus seems to anticipate Early Middle English metre of the *Brut* type. On the connection of Lawman to the alliterative tradition, see, for example, Pascual, "Oral Tradition." The following is a definition of tonic syllable from the glossary of a standard textbook: "A tonic syllable is one which carries a tone, i.e. has a noticeable degree of prominence. In theories of intonation where only one tone may occur in a tone-unit, the tonic syllable therefore is the point of strongest stress" (Peter Roach, *Glossary—A Little Encyclopaedia of Phonetics* (2011); "experiments have shown that prominence is associated with greater length, greater loudness, pitch prominence (i.e. having a pitch level or movement that makes a syllable stand out from its context) and with 'full' vowels and diphthongs (whereas the vowels ə 'schwa', i, u and syllabic consonants are only found in unstressed syllables)" (Peter Roach, *A Little Encyclopedia of Phonetics* (2002), 63).

the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 1036.¹⁷ The first half of the poem blames Earl Godwine for Alfred's arrest and death in custody, and catalogues the terrible treatment meted out to Alfred's men (I have added modern punctuation; rhyming words are underlined):

Ac Godwine hine þa gelette 7 hine on hæft sette,
 7 his geferan he todræf 7 sume mislice ofslōh:
 sume hi man wið feo sealde, sume hreowlice acwealde,
 sume hi man bende, sume hi man blende,
 sume hamelode, sume hættode. 5
 Ne wearð dreorlicre dæd gedon on þison earde
 syþþan Dene comon 7 her frið namon.
 Nu is to gelyfenne to ðan leofan Gode
 þæt he blission bliðe mid Criste
 be wæron butan scylde swa earmlice acwealde. 10

[But Godwine hindered him and put him in captivity, / his companions he drove out and
some he killed in various ways. / Some he sold for money and some cruelly murdered,
/ some of them were put in bonds and some blinded, / some were lamed and some
mistreated. / Never was a more despicable action carried out in this country / since the
time when the Danes came and made a truce here. / Now we must trust in the dear God
/ that they are happy and joyful in Christ / who without any guilt were so grievously
murdered.]

Here various observations may be made that are relevant to our study of *Maldon*. The full rhymes in *DAIf* are (with one exception in the second half of the poem, not quoted above) all *feminine* rhymes on the pattern *stunde/wunde*, as found in examples (2) and (3) from *Maldon*. In the ten lines from *DAIf* cited here, the opening sentence has three perfect rhymes of this type, as in *gelette/sette*, *sealde/acwealde*, *bende/blende*, and this sets the pattern early on, from which the poet then feels free to depart. Such poetic licence involves replacing what should be a full rhyme with some kind of alternative parallelism. One solution is line 2, where two prefixed verbs in the preterite tense, *todraf* and *ofsloh*, form a kind of “morphological rhyme” on the same structural pattern. Another variant is to use what for us (who are used to rhymed poetry) is a half-rhyme or partial rhyme, as in *namon/comon* (line 7), or *scylde/acwealde* (line 10), where the medial vowel of the stressed syllable differs, or even the rhythmically similar, apparently trisyllabic *ham(e) lode/hættode* (line 5). However, some of the partial rhymes used in the poem are so weak or “imperfect” that they are hardly recognizable to us as rhymes. Lines 6, 8, and 9 are interesting in this respect: the poet resorts to traditional alliterative metre here,

¹⁷ The standard edition is *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition, Volume 5, Manuscript C*, ed. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001). I also consulted the manuscript, London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. I, available online at www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_tiberius_b_i_f156r [accessed September 19, 2020].

presumably because his rhymes at the end of each verse are weak, but nevertheless there is reason to believe that they are still regarded as rhymes of a kind. A modern reader of Old English may miss the rhyme in line 6, *dæd/earde*, but it is well to recall the consensus in Old English phonology that the diphthong *ea* in *eard* (and similar words) was pronounced with a vowel rather similar to an /æ/ phoneme followed by a schwa.¹⁸ And does *gelyfenne* actually rhyme with the final word of the following verse? It might be argued that there are phonetic similarities between *gelyfenne* and *leofan Gode* and also even between *blission* and *Criste*.

The radical nature of the switch to end-rhyme that finds expression in the Cynewulf passages, *The Rhyming Poem* and *The Death of the Ætheling Alfred*, is highlighted if we now glance at instances of rhyme in a poem much more firmly located within the traditional Old English poetic canon, namely *The Wanderer*. If we turn to this text and begin reading, we will be hard pressed at first sight to find any examples of conscious and deliberate rhyme—of any type, be they full or partial, end-rhyme or internal rhyme. As we read, it becomes clear that this poet is only sporadically interested in the extra embellishment that we call rhyme. The first 14 lines contain no obvious examples, which contrasts strikingly with the first 14 lines of *Maldon*, as we shall see. In *The Wanderer*, the first likely example we discover is at 15b, with the infinitive clause “wyrde wiðstondan,” which forms a half-rhyme with the ensuing 16b “helpe gefremman.”¹⁹ In and of itself *wiðstondan* and *gefremman* would be a poor example of a rhyme, but the added parallelism of *wyrde* and *helpe*, two nouns of feminine gender in the oblique case in *-e*, points to a deliberate use of rhythm and sound. A similar case of parallelism—in this instance on the pattern dative noun + past participle—may be found later in *The Wanderer* at 77a with “*hrime behrorene*” (covered with ice). Two lines further on, a chiming and rhyming effect is achieved at verse 79a with “*dreame bedrorene*” (deprived of joy); this is highlighted by the full compound rhyme *bedrorene/behrorene*. The two rhymes create a miniature envelope pattern, within which there is an image of ruin and loss appropriate to this context of a devastated city. Here clearly the poet of *The Wanderer* used a polysyllabic rhyme for a pointed rhetorical effect. But there are very few other instances of obvious rhyme in this poem of 115 lines; I would note the following four possible examples: the parallelism of the partially rhymed *geondhweorfeð* and *geondsceawað* (51b and 52b); an internal morphological rhyme on the endings of *dreoseð* and *fealleð* (63b); a sequence of four lines each ending—yet again—with a third-person present tense inflection in *-eð* (101–4); and similarly, a “rhyming couplet,” *seceð* (114b) and *stondeð* (115b), which brings the poem to a close. As we will see shortly, the examples in *Maldon* are far more varied, and far more numerous.

¹⁸ On the pronunciation of <ea> see for instance Randolph Quirk and C. L. Wrenn, *An Old English Grammar* (London: Methuen, 1957), 14, 149.

¹⁹ See *The Exeter Book*, ed. George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936).

Finding a rhyme was apparently a difficult task in Old English, and the poets often employed alternatives in their actual poetic practice. Examples (1)–(3) are in fact quite rare occurrences in *The Battle of Maldon*, for there is only a limited number of perfect rhymes in the poem. Most of the other rhymes are decidedly not of this kind. In terms of position what we find is end-rhyme: we see a series of verses each ending with the same grammatical inflection, as we have just noted in *The Wanderer*; but in terms of quality what we usually observe is a partial rhyme or half-rhyme similar to the “alternative devices” noted earlier in *DAlf*. Moreover, as critics have pointed out, there are many instances of assonance (repeated vowels) and consonance (repeated consonants) and other effects of sound and repetition within the texture of the poem. The *Maldon* poet seems to be predisposed to use such poetic devices.

Metrically, it is in word-final position at the end of a verse that rhyme (whether full or partial) becomes significant, because the rhyme then serves as a metrical structuring device, as in rhyming couplets. And notably, it is the partial, “half-” “weak,” or “imperfect” form of end-rhyme that the poet of *Maldon* tends to favour. In these relatively numerous instances the main metrical principle of the passage is still alliterative poetry, but the final word of each verse—or in some instances the final word of each line—ends in the same unstressed syllable. This kind of effect requires long passages to illustrate effectively (and this is what we will aim to show in the next section of this chapter). But for convenience now, and in order to illustrate the point, here are two examples. About half way through the poem, Ælfwine, the young Mercian nobleman and kinsman of Byrhtnoth, ends his long speech of encouragement and hastens forward in order to pursue the feud and avenge his lord and friend (lines 225–30); the main rhyming effects are marked with underlining (for simplicity’s sake, some other devices such as assonance or consonance are not systematically highlighted):

- (4) þa he forð eode, fæhðe gemunde 225
 þæt he mid orde anne geræhte
 flotan on þam folce, þæt se on foldan læg
 forwegen mid his wæpne. Ongan þa winas manian,
 frynd and geferan, þæt hi forð eodon.

[Then he went forward—directing his mind to the feud,
so that with his spear he wounded
a seaman in the crowd, who lay there on the earth,
killed by his weapon. He urged his fellows,
friends and companions that they move forward.]²⁰

Essentially this type of rhyme is a form of *homeoteleuton*, which the OED defines as “a rhetorical figure consisting in the use of a series of words with the same or similar

20 Translation from Atherton, *Battle of Maldon*, 185.

endings.”²¹ In another example from the beginning of the text, we may observe a conscious employment of this partial rhyme on the unstressed infinitive ending *-an* in three successive verses (lines 2–3):

(5) Het þa hyssa hwæne hors forlætan,
feor afysan, and forð gangan

[Then he commanded each of his men to release their horses,
drive them far away, and go forth]²²

An even weaker variant of this partial type is scarcely a rhyme, more a repeated chiming on the final unstressed syllable at the end of the line, as in lines 14–16, where we hear three past tense endings, each consisting of the dental consonant + final *-e* (*-te* or *-de*) at the end of three consecutive lines:

(6) þa hwile þe he mid handum healdan mihte
bord and bradswurd; beot he gelæste
þa he ætforan his frean feohtan sceolde

[for as long as he could hold in his hands
shield and broad sword; he fulfilled his vow
that he would fight in the forefront, in the presence of his lord and leader]²³

In short then, as well as infinitives or other words with inflectional endings in *-an*, and/or datives in *-um*, or occasional comparatives in *-re*, it is weak preterite tenses (singulars in *-de*, *-te*; plurals in *-don*) and similar-sounding “half-rhymes” that attract the Maldon poet, and he places them in consecutive chains of verses each ending with a word with the same inflectional ending. As will be seen below, as I present and examine a few select longer passages from the poem, these sequences of weak or “imperfect” end-rhyme or, to put it differently, these chains of homeoteleuton, are very common in *Maldon*, and they contrast strikingly with the situation in *The Wanderer*, or indeed in *Beowulf*. I will argue that they serve first the *structural* purpose of highlighting significant passages or verse paragraphs, and secondly also the *metrical* function of marking the end of a verse or the end of a poetic line.

Select Passages from the Poem with Commentary, Illustrating the Poet’s Use of Rhyme and Half-rhyme

The text here is edited from Casley’s transcript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford (the nearest we can come to the original medieval manuscript), in consultation also with the main critical editions. The division into sections follows the pattern in Casley’s transcript

²¹ Sense I of “homoeoteleuton,” *The Oxford English Dictionary Online* [accessed September 16, 2020].

²² Translation from Atherton, *Battle of Maldon*, 174.

²³ Translation from Atherton, *Battle of Maldon*, 174.

of large upper case initials which appear to signal the start of new “verse-paragraphs.”²⁴ For a translation, not printed here for want of space, the most appropriate to consult would be a literal rendering in prose that stays close to the lineation of the original.²⁵

Arriving at the Battlefield (*Maldon*, 2–16)

Het þa hyssa hwæne	hors forlætan,	
feor afysan,	and forð gangan,	
hicgan to handum	and to hige godum.	
þa þæt Offan mæg	ærest onfunde	5
þæt se eorl nolde	yrhðo gepolian,	
he let him þa of handon	leofne fleogan	
hafoc wið þæs holtes,	and to þære hilde stop;	
be þam man mihte oncnawan	þæt se cniht nolde	
wacian æt þam wige,	þa he to wæpnum feng.	10
Eac him wolde Eadric	his ealdre gelæstan,	
frecan to gefeohte,	ongan þa forð beran	
gar to gupe.	He hæfde god gepanc	
þa hwile þe he mid handum	healdan mihte	
bord and bradswurd;	beot he gelæste	15
þa he ætforan his frean	feohtan sceolde.	

The above passage may be compared profitably with the first sixteen lines of *The Wanderer* (discussed above), in which only the two final words of lines 15 and 16 might be construed as being linked by half-rhyme on the *-an* suffix. In the passage from *Maldon*, by contrast, eight verses end in this suffix, mostly grouped together at lines 2–3, 6–7, and 11–12. The difference, I think, is significant, for—as demonstrated above—the poet of *The Wanderer* makes only sporadic use of rhyme. This figure may be increased to twelve examples if we also group with them the similar-sounding (vowel + nasal) suffixes *-um* and *-on* that also occur in verse-final position, as in lines 3 and 7:

hicgan to handum and to hige godum (line 3)
 he let him þa of handon leofne fleogan (line 7)

It will be noticed in the above two lines that the dative plural of *hand* is spelled differently in each instance, and at line 14a we find again the *-um* ending in “mid handum”; this variation also affects the dative plural of the poetic noun for “hand,” as in “mid folman” (21a) and “of folman” (108a), as also that of the noun *word* in “wordum mælde” (26b), “hyra winemagas wordon bædon” (306). Historical phonology offers a reason for these

²⁴ For the text divided into sections according to the upper-case letters of the Casley transcript, see the edition by Bill Griffiths, and the text and translation in Appendix I of Atherton, *Battle of Maldon*, 173–90.

²⁵ See my own literal, line-by-line translation in Atherton, *Battle of Maldon*, 173–78. There are other suitable literal translations in Griffiths’s edition and S. A. J. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London: Dent, 1982).

kinds of spelling variation: late Old English vowels in unstressed endings *-an*, *-en*, *-on*, *-um* were becoming reduced in pronunciation to schwa + *-n*.²⁶ Since Old English orthography had undergone standardization by the late tenth century, the evidence for this weakening of unstressed vowels in late Old English spelling is occasional or sporadic, although it starts to become more common in early Middle English. The following is an example from an eleventh-century “Sunday Letter” homily, where the older and newer spellings of the dative plural are seen side-by-side in the spellings *fotum* and *handon* (emphases added):²⁷

And þa cildra þe beoð begiten on sunnan niht and on þam halgan freolsnihtum hi sceolan beon geborene butan eagon and butan fotum and butan handon and eacswilce dumbe, for þam þe ge ne heoldon mid clænnesse þa halgan niht and ne wiðtugan mid eowre tungan to cursiende.

[And those children who are begotten in the night between Saturday and Sunday and in the nights before holy feast-days will be born without eyes and without feet and without hands and likewise dumb, because you did not observe these holy nights with purity and you did not refrain from cursing with your tongues.]

If, as seems therefore likely, *handon* and *handum* sounded like **handan* (“hand’n”) then it makes sense to list words ending in vowel + nasal, that is to say, *-on* or *-um*, as part of the same series of “half-rhymes” or homeoteleuton in our opening passage from *Maldon*. To put it differently, I would count three rhymes in line 3:

hicgan to handum and to hige godum

where in earlier Old English there were probably just two.

Another series in the same passage consists of words ending in the dental + *-e*, essentially the preterite ending, also occurring in verse-final position, and once again in clusters (at lines 5b, 6a, 9b, 14b, 15b, and 16b). All this suggests that our poet liked to have his verses chiming on their final syllables as a way of underlining the verses, the metrical units of his poem. Then, in addition, the poet adds a few further half-rhymes *within* the verse or *within* the long line. Here the pattern seems to place the device on the lifts, especially on the first lift of the line. There is an example at line 10 in our passage; here I give the whole sentence (lines 9–10) to see how the “-an” half-rhyme functions in context:

be þam man mihte oncnawan þæt se cniht nolde
wacian æt þam wige, þa he to wæpnum feng

The three “half-rhymes” in the above two lines occur on words that are significant lifts in the alliterative metrical structure. As in line 10, so line 12 also begins with a rhyming lift:

frean to gefeohte, ongan þa forð beran

²⁶ Donka Minkova, *A Historical Phonology of English* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 180–83.

²⁷ For the text see Robert Priebsch, “The Chief Sources of Some Anglo-Saxon Homilies,” *Otia Merseiana* 1 (1899): 129–47.

In this case the rhyme on *frea*n, the first lift of 12a, links back to the previous word, the fourth lift of the previous line, i.e. *gelæsta*n, but also anticipates the fourth and final lift of its own line, *bera*n, with which it rhymes quite closely, particularly if the metathesis of the “r” is considered to be part of the overall sound (in addition, *bera*n, the first word of 12a, also chimes with the unstressed verb *onga*n, the initial word of 12b). Finally the rhymes form thick clusters in the final sentence of this section (lines 13b–16):

	He hæfde god geþanc	
þa hwile þe he mid	<u>handum healdan</u> mihte	
<u>bord</u> and brad <u>swurd</u> ;	beot he gelæste	15
þa he ætforan his frea	n feohtan sceolde.	

Where the homeoteleuton of the preterite endings of the weak verbs *mihte*, *gelæste*, and *sceolde* serve the metrical function of marking aurally the ends of the lines, the other rhymes are stronger, almost “perfect” rhymes and occur in adjacent lifts or adjacent words. The sound of *handum* and *healdan* (14)—given what we have noted about the weakening of *-um* in unstressed syllables—practically constitutes a full rhyme,²⁸ as does the phrase “bord and bradswurd” (15a). Strikingly, all four lifts in line 16 that end this paragraph are further marked by homeoteleuton.

Byrhtnoth Makes His Preparations (*Maldon*, 17–24)

Ða þær Byrhtnoð ongan	beornas trymjan,	
rad and rædde,	ringum tæhte	
hu hi sceoldon standan	and þone stede healdan,	
and bæd þæt hyra randan	rihte heoldon	20
fæste mid folman,	and ne forhtedon na.	
þa he hæfde þæt folc	fægere getrymmed,	
he lihte þa mid leodon	þær him leofost wæs,	
þær he his heorðwerod	holdost wiste.	

The homeoteleuton of the ending *-an* dominates, occurring eleven times over six of the eight lines of this passage. The *standan/healdan/randan* sequence is particularly strong, although there is a problem with the form *randan* (though it has the authority of Casley’s manuscript) in that the usual plural of the strong noun *rand* would be *randas*. But the pattern of end-rhyme on the inflection *-an* is undeniable. If the Old English conjunction *and* contained a reduced vowel as it does when unstressed in Present-day English in such phrases as *fish and chips* (“fish’n chips”) or *cheese and wine* (“cheese’n wine”), then line 18 probably sounded as follows:

Rad’n rædde, ring’n tæhte

²⁸ It is probably fair to say that the pronunciation of *handum* and *healdan* with final-syllable schwa would make the rhyme more noticeable, since the older pronunciation with a fuller vowel would serve to differentiate the endings *-um* and *-an*.

which would render the assonance and half-rhymes clearer and more prominent. It might be thought that the last sentence of this verse paragraph allows the homeoteleuton to fall away, if it were not for the two superlatives in penultimate position in each line, both followed by similar-sounding preterite verbs linked by “w” and “s” consonance. In brief, the texture of this paragraph is densely patterned with these features of half-rhyme and homeoteleuton.

The Viking Messenger (*Maldon*, 25–41)

þa stod on stæðe,	stiðlice clypode	25
wicinga ar,	wordum mælde,	
se on beot ahead	brimliþendra	
æraende to þam eorle,	þær he on ofre stod:	
“Me <u>sendon</u> to þe	<u>sæmen</u> snelle,	
heton ðe <u>secgan</u>	þæt þu most <u>sendan</u> raðe	30
beagas wið gebeorge;	and eow betere is	
þæt ge þisne garræs	mid gafole forgyldon,	
þon we swa hearde	hilde dælon.	
Ne þurfe we us spillan,	gif ge spedap to þam;	
we willað wið þam golde	grið fæstnian.	35
Gyf þu þat gerædest,	þe her ricost eart,	
þæt þu þine leoda	lysan wille,	
syllan sæmannum	on hyra sylfra dom	
feoh wið freode,	and niman frið æt us,	
we willap mid þam sceattum	us to scype gangan,	40
on flot feran,	and eow fripes healdan.”	

This verse paragraph of 17 lines has fewer examples than the previous one of the chains of half-rhyme that I am arguing are typical of this poet. It is an unusual moment in the poem, the only time when we hear the voice of one of the Viking raiders, and Fred Robinson has argued in a famous article that it is the first attempt in English literature to render a foreign accent through the medium of English.²⁹ Arguably in terms of our topic—the poet’s use of half-rhyme and homeoteleuton—this passage proceeds in waves: it begins with a passage of narrative introducing the speaker in which three verses are linked by half-rhyme on the preterite ending of the final syllable; as the Viking messenger begins speaking there appear a number of emphatic internal rhymes; the *-an* endings begin to gather towards the end of his speech, which then closes on four instances of end-rhyme in *-an*.

This closing pattern in *-an* raises issues about the metrical analysis of line 40, which in Pope’s edition *Eight Old English Poems* is given as follows:

we willap mid þam sceattum us to scype gangan,

²⁹ Fred C. Robinson, “Some Aspects of the *Maldon* Poet’s Artistry,” *JEGP* 75 (1976): 25–40.

with the caesura appearing after the personal pronoun *us*, whereas Scragg's edition opts for:

we willap mid þam sceattum us to scype gangan.

On purely semantic grounds, and for the subjective reasons of *Sprachgefühl*, I personally prefer Scragg's text on this point. But Pope's solution follows the rule (or perhaps better the observation) known as Kuhn's First Law, which Mary Eva Blockley sums up as follows:

His First Law, the Law of Sentence Particles, observes that proclitics do not need to count for metrical stress if they appear later in the clause than after the first alliterating word, but that any particles in a clause must count for metrical stress, unless they appear in a group either before or after the first alliterating word.³⁰

This rule justifies Pope's placing of the *us* as a particle in the on-verse of the line, because if it were in the off-verse it would become the alliterating lift rather than "*scype*", which is in fact the predominant third lift of the line. Interestingly, the authors of the recent edition of *Klaeber's Beowulf* make the following remark:

Very likely the positional regulation, at least, pertains to the requirements of alliteration, and grouping such particles at the start of the clause reduces the risk of being required to lend alliterative precedence to such words later in the clause, where they ought to be subordinated to the full stressed words like nouns and adjectives that are found there.³¹

In line 40 of *Maldon*, according to Scragg's editing of the line, we have a particle *us* in the off-verse where it should by the rule attract "alliterative precedence." But the point is that in normal prose (as opposed to poetry), and presumably also in everyday speech, the *us* pronoun is an ethical dative that would normally remain unstressed. In Modern English, for example, there is a popular song from the 1960s called "I'm gonna buy me a dog," in which the *me* remains unstressed. In modern German, to take a cognate language, it is possible to say:

Wir werden uns am Samstag mit Bahn und Bus durchschlagen

[We will struggle through and get there on Saturday by train and bus]

and again the personal pronoun *uns* will remain unstressed. By analogy it would seem likely that the *us* of "we willap mid þam sceattum us to scype gangan" should be unstressed. My argument about rhyme adds further support to these arguments by analogy. Given the metrical use of rhyme as a way of marking the verses, of setting up patterns of parallel half-rhymes, often very similar to rhyming couplets, it looks like

³⁰ Mary Eva Blockley, *Aspects of Old English Poetic Syntax* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 88. For more on Kuhn's First Law, see Jun Terasawa, *Old English Metre: An Introduction* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2011), 92–102, and the references there.

³¹ *Klaeber's Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), cxviii4.

sceattum and *gangan* must necessarily be located in verse-final-position in order to preserve the pattern, hence the line should read:

we willaþ mid þam *sceattum* us to scype *gangan*.

This gives line 40 a similar structure to line 56 in Byrhtnoth's angry reply, when he throws back the messenger's words as it were into his face, rejecting his offer of peace at a price.

Byrhtnoth's Reply to the Messenger (*Maldon*, 41–61)

Byrhtnoð mapelode, bord hafenode,
wand wacne æsc, wordum mælde,
yrre and anræd ageaf him andsware:
"Gehyrst þu, sælida, hwæt þis folc segeð? 45
Hi willað eow to gafole garas syllan,
ættrynne ord and ealde swurd,
þa heregeatu þe eow æt hilde ne deah.
Brimmanna boda, abeod eft ongean,
sege þinum leodum miccle laþre spell, 50
þæt her stynt unforcuð eorl mid his werode,
þe wile gealgean eþel þysne,
Æþelredes eard, ealdres mines,
folc and foldan. Feallan sceolon
hæþene æt hilde. To heanlic me þinceð 55
þæt ge mid urum sceattum to scype gangan
unbeoftene, nu ge þus feor hider
on urne eard in becomon.
Ne sceole ge swa softe sinc gegangan:
us sceal ord and ecg ær geseman, 60
grim guðplega, ær we gofol syllon."

Byrhtnoth's reply begins with a heavy use of rhyme in the introductory transition to his speech but then the rhyming words fade away. Mid-speech, some occasional rhymes give heavy rhetorical emphasis to significant points in his message, line 47 ("ættrynne *ord*/and ealde *swurd*") being the classic example, echoing a rhyme earlier in the poem of *bord* and *swurd* (15a) and anticipating a frequent rhyming collocation in this poem, heard in "bord ord gefeng" (110b), "stod/ætterne ord" (145–46), "ord in gewod" (157a) and "on orde stod" (273a). The rhymes return in the final part of the speech, located mostly at the end of the line. In short, this verse paragraph uses homeoteleuton mostly at line-end position, and there are considerably fewer instances of it than in previous verse paragraphs.

The Tide Comes In (*Maldon*, 62–67)

Het þa bord beran, beornas gangan,
þæt hi on þam easteðe ealle stodon.
Ne mihte þær for wætere werod þam oðrum;

þær com flowende flod æfter ebban, 65
lucon lagustreamas. To lang hit him þuhte,
hwænne hi togædere garas beron.

The pattern set up at the end of Byrhtnoth's speech, of *-an* half-rhymes in line-end position, now continues in this passage of narrative. Patterns of assonance on the sound of the vowel "o" are worthy of note in lines 63–65, though any discussion of them would fall out of the remit of this essay.

The Armies Line Up On the Opposing Banks of the River Channel (Maldon, 68-71)

Hi þær Pantan stream mid prasse bestodon,
 Eastseaxena ord and se æschere.
 Ne mihte hyra ænig oþrum derian, 70
 buton hwa þurh flanes flyht fyl gename.

The Tide Goes Out (Maldon, 72–73)

Se flod ut gewat; þa flotan stodon gearowe,
wicinga fela, wiges georne.

These two very short verse paragraphs do not evince much evidence of metrical use of rhyme or half-rhyme, but the “o” assonance continues from before, and there is further repetition of the stem *stod* meaning “stood”. The passage ends on a faint half-rhyme pattern on *gearowe* and *georne*.

Wulfstan Holds the Bridge (*Maldon*, 74–88)

He	þa	hæleða	hleo	healdan	þa	bricege	
wigan	wigheardne,	se	wæs	haten	Wulfstan,		75
cafe	mid his cynne,	þæt	wæs	Ceolan	sunu,		
þe	ðone	forman	man	mid his	francan	ofsceat	
þe	þær	baldlicost	on	þa	bricege	stop.	
þær	stodon	mid	Wulfstane	wigan	unforhte,		
Ælfere	and Maccus,	modige	twegen,				80
þa	noldon	æt þam	forda	fleam	gewyrcan,		
ac	hi	fæstlice	wið ða	fynd	weredon,		
þa	hwile	þe	hi	wæpna	wealdan	moston.	
Pa	hi	þæt	ongeaton	and	georne	gesawon	
þæt	hi	þær	bricgweardas	bitere	fundon,		85
ongunnon	lytegian	þa	laðe	gystas,			
bædon	þæt	hi	upgang	agan	moston,		
ofer	bone	ford	faran,	feban	lædan.		

Wulfstan's bravery is narrated here with various examples of internal rhyme or half-rhyme falling on the ends of the heavier words. As Ælfere and Maccus join the fray

the style switches mostly to end-rhyme, supported also by internal rhyme, so that the repeated *-an* endings occur two or three times per line in the second half of this passage, and the final three words of the passage hammer this point home, to good effect.

Byrhtnoth in His Pride Allows the Vikings to Cross the Bridge (*Maldon*, 89–95)

Da se eorl ongan	for his ofermode	
alyfan landes to fela	lapere ðeode.	90
Ongan ceallian þa	ofer cald wæter	
Byrhtelmes bearn,	beornas gehlyston:	
'Nu eow is gerymed,	gað ricene to us,	
guman to guþe;	God ana wat	
hwa þære wælstowe	wealdan mote.'	95

A Comment on *Ofermod*, and Some Conclusions

It seems appropriate to end this chapter with a brief consideration of the famous *ofermod* passage that has become so crucial to interpretations of the poem. There are not in fact many metrical uses of half-rhyme in this short verse paragraph other than perhaps “ongan” (89a), echoed internally in “landes” (90a) and “ongan ceallian” (91a). Line 91 is of interest otherwise for the assonance of *a* and *æ* vowels, which seems to be reiterated by the poet in line 95. But let us turn to the crux, to *ofermod*. In a study of rhyme, it makes sense to consider the word *ofermode* (the dative form of the word as it appears in the poem) from the point of view of its sound and texture. In fact the full verse “for his ofermode” (89b), meaning “because of his pride”, forms a half-rhyme with the phrase “lapere ðeode” (to the hostile nation, 90b). This half-rhyme effect perhaps suggests ever so faintly—since rhyming words can imply semantic connections and contrasts—a counter message to the apparent criticism of the East Saxon ealdorman for his excess of hubris which many critics see in this section of the poem, for just as, earlier in the poem, it was appropriate for Byrhtnoth to counter the Viking messenger’s “boastful offer” with an “angry and resolute” response, so now it is appropriate to treat this hostile ðeode with an excess of mode.

Finally, this verse paragraph is enlightening for the *absence* as well as the *presence* of rhyme and homeoteleuton. Byrhtnoth’s short speech here (93–96) is notably lacking in rhyme. We have already noted that Byrhtnoth’s reply to the messenger was relatively free of this patterning of inflectional endings that is so common in *The Battle of Maldon* and so lacking in *The Wanderer*. Byrhtnoth’s prayer (173–80) also lacks rhyme, apart from the final line (180). Other speeches seem to follow suit, and there is scope here for follow-up work. For example, Ælfwine’s speech of encouragement lacks rhyme (lines 112–24) though the device returns immediately as soon as the character stops speaking and the narrative action resumes (225–29). Offa’s response to Ælfwine is similarly lacking in rhyming effects, apart from one case of the formulaic phrase “habban and

healdan" (236a). Does the poet wish to convey a significant distinction here between speech in poetry and narration in poetry?

Such, then, are the basic rhyming practices of our poet. Unlike Milton at the end of a tradition, repelled by "the jingling sound of like endings," this poet at the start of a new tradition was attracted to the new aesthetic. Adapting the earlier definition, we may say that the attraction was "the articulatory-acoustic relation between ... syllables that begin differently and end alike." The rhymes so produced are not unique to *The Battle of Maldon*, for other poets in the older corpus employ similar effects, but often they are simply sporadic uses of the device, and often the question becomes the fundamental (and for literary critics, unpopular) issue of intention: did the poet mean to create repetitive rhyming effects here? To answer this question requires some close literary-critical reading, supported by metrical and phonetic awareness. The use of internal rhyme at crucial moments in the action is one piece of evidence that our poet was consciously rhyming his words. Another is the clustering of these rhymed endings in narrative transitions, or at the end of sections, or to suggest narration rather than dialogue. The answer to my own question is in the affirmative: these rhymes are consistently patterned and deliberate poetic effects.

Chapter 6

HYPERMETRIC NARRATIVE IN THE OLD ENGLISH *DANIEL*

Megan E. Hartman*

THOUGH NOT ONE of the most-studied poems in the Old English corpus, *Daniel* is an interesting one metrically because of the poet's stylistic shift and use of hypermetric metre in the middle of the text. Among longer Old English narrative poems, *Daniel* stands out because of its use of hypermetric verse.¹ It is not the only poem of the group to use hypermetric verse, but it does have one of the highest proportions of them, along with *Judith*. The hypermetric lines occur in a single section of *Daniel*—the middle section in which the three Israelite youths, Azarias, Annanias, and Misael, refuse to worship the idol of King Nebuchadnezzar, are thrown into a furnace, and are saved by God—which I argue provides a narrative core that is vital to understanding the poem as a whole. By using syntactic and stylistic contrast, the poet creates a passage that stands out metrically, narratively, and thematically; with this style, he is able to illustrate the scene in detail and highlight this moment of individual faith and humility as the key to interpreting the rest of the events in the poem.

Scholarship about *Daniel* is relatively sparse, and little has been written recently, but it has revolved largely around two main controversies. The first is whether the poem is a single unified work or includes an interpolation in the middle. In the past, a number of scholars suggested that the section known as the “Song of Azarias” (lines 279–361) forms a separate *Daniel* “B” to go along with a *Daniel* “A” formed by the rest of the poem. George Phillip Krapp agrees and adds that the following “Song of the Three Children” (lines 409–39) should also be considered an “interruption,” even if not an interpolation, making the entire divergent section lines 279–439.² Although this argument has largely

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1 On hypermetric verse, and other on other key technical terms used in this chapter and volume, see the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices.

2 W. J. Craigie, “Interpolations and Omissions in the Anglo-Saxon Poetical Texts,” *Philologia* 2 (1923): 5–19 at 13; Sir Israel Gollancz, *The Caedmon Manuscript of Anglo-Saxon Biblical Poetry, Junius XI in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), lxxxv–xcvii; George Philip Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, 1 (New York: Columbia University, 1931), xxxii; Kemp Malone, “The Middle Ages: The Old English Period, to 1100,” in *A Literary History of England, Vol. 1: The Middle Ages*, ed. Albert C. Baugh and Kemp Malone (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), 66–67.

been disproved by scholars such as R. T. Farrell and Earl R. Anderson,³ the second controversy, the disagreement on what the poem is actually about, remains. Krapp states that “[t]he central figure of this poem is Daniel, as it is of the Old Testament book upon which the poem is based,”⁴ an assertion that accords with the title that modern scholars assigned it. However, Antonina Harbus points out that Daniel and his Prophecies were a common topic of many medieval biblical writers; she suggests that the poem was given this name because Daniel has elsewhere been the focus when Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams have been involved but that his role appears to be downplayed here.⁵ Many scholars, such as Harbus, Graham D. Caie, Taro Ishiguro, Manish Sharma, and Daniel Anlezark have turned their attention to Nebuchadnezzar himself, arguing that he is the central figure of the poem and it is about his pride, humbling, and perhaps ultimate redemption.⁶ Robert E. Bjork prefers to focus on all three entities that fall—the Israelites, Nebuchadnezzar, and Belshazzar—and argues that their lack of adherence to the law is the theme that runs throughout.⁷ Earl R. Anderson likewise focuses on the various falls but uses them to argue that the poem is an illustration of the concept of *translatio imperii*.⁸ I argue that the questions about the middle section and the ultimate focus of the poem are subtly linked and that a fuller exploration of one can lead to answers about the other.

In arguing against the interpolation analysis of the poem, Farrell and Anderson focus on countering three main claims: that there is unnecessary repetition in these sections, suggesting a break in continuity; that the poem matches and is therefore possibly a copy of sections of *Azarias*; and that the style of this section is different, with the “A” section characterized by a run-on style while the “B” section is more end-stopped.⁹ Farrell points out that the repetition in the section may have been inspired by the Vulgate source,¹⁰ to which Anderson adds that it could be a stylistic feature, an envelope pattern to mark off a set piece.¹¹ As far as the parallels with *Azarias* are concerned,

3 R. T. Farrell, “The Unity of Old English Daniel,” *RES* 18 (1967): 117–35; Earl R. Anderson, “Style and Theme in the Old English *Daniel*,” *ES* 68 (1987): 1–23 at 1–4.

4 Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript*, xxxi.

5 Antonina Harbus, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Dreams in the Old English *Daniel*,” *ES* 75 (1994): 489–508 at 489–90.

6 Harbus, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream”; Graham D. Caie, “The Old English *Daniel*: A Warning against Pride,” *ES* 59 (1978): 1–9; Taro Ishiguro, “*Daniel*: The Old English Poem of Nebuchadnezzar against God,” *The Geibun Kenkyu: Journal of Arts and Letters* 73 (1997): 462–78; Manish Sharma, “Nebuchadnezzar and the Defiance of Measure in the Old English *Daniel*,” *ES* 86 (2005): 103–26; Daniel Anlezark, “Introduction,” *Old Testament Narratives*, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 7 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), vii–xxi at xviii.

7 Robert E. Bjork, “Oppressed Hebrews and the Song of Azarias in the Old English *Daniel*,” *Studies in Philology* 77 (1980): 213–26.

8 Anderson, “Style and Theme,” 16–23.

9 Farrell, “The Unity,” 117–21.

10 Farrell, “The Unity,” 125–27.

11 Anderson, “Style and Theme,” 2–3.

Farrell asserts that there are enough differences between the two to suggest that they are “orally transmitted variants of what must have been an original single version”;¹² Anderson agrees for lines 279–370 and adds that the similarities can elsewhere be explained by the *Azarias*-poet copying *Daniel*.¹³ While these two interpretations do not entirely agree, they show that there are multiple possible explanations for the parallels between the two poems that do not require scholars to purport that the overlapping section is an interpolation in *Daniel*.

For my argument, though, the most important refutation is the final one, the idea that a shift in style does not necessitate a shift in poet or poem. Farrell argues that the difference can be explained by the source material: “the style of what [Malone] described as *Daniel* ‘B’ is almost entirely controlled by the order, content, and style of the Latin psalm on which it is based, while the remainder of the poem (that is, his *Daniel* ‘A’) is a narrative very freely developed from the first chapters of the Old Testament *Daniel*.”¹⁴ To this reasonable explanation, Farrell adds the claim that “it seems clear that the Old English poet saw the salvation of the youths in the fire as the most significant sort of material, for he expended a great deal of energy and no little skill in decorating this passage in the poem with almost all of the means which would have been available to one of his artistic tradition” and it “serve[s] to emphasize what must be seen as the central action of the poem, the preservation of those faithful to God, and the destruction of His enemies.”¹⁵

I argue that Farrell’s claim about *Daniel* B as the center of the poem can be expanded out beyond the speeches to encompass the entire story of the miracle in the fire, which includes not only the stylistically unusual normal verse but also almost all of the hypermetric verse in the poem. If the audience takes the whole episode as a single unit, the entire poem can be seen to form an envelope pattern, with the downfall of the Israelites and Belshazzar bookending the poem, two episodes of Nebuchadnezzar straying and seeking help within those, and the triumph of the three youths due to their faith in God standing in the centre.¹⁶ This central episode begins at line 188, when the poet turns to Nebuchadnezzar’s demand that everyone worship the golden idol.

¹² Farrell, “The Unity,” 121.

¹³ Anderson, “Style and Theme,” 4.

¹⁴ Farrell, “The Unity,” 122.

¹⁵ Farrell, “The Unity,” 134–35.

¹⁶ Although the poem is probably fragmentary, making it impossible to say whether this envelope pattern is present in the original composition, it is likely that any missing material is very small and therefore would not change the structure as we have it. One manuscript page could be missing between lines 177 and 178 as well as a leaf at the end of the poem (Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript*, 221 and 230; Anlezark, *Old Testament Narratives*, 330). Farrell argues that there might have been no missing pages at all (Robert T. Farrell, “The Structure of Old English *Daniel*,” *NM* 69 (1968): 533–59 at 539), and both Farrell and Anlezark agree that if anything is missing, it is very short (Farrell, “The Structure,” 541; Anlezark, *Old Testaments Narratives*, 330).

This section is about three hundred lines long and switches back and forth between hypermetric and normal verse quite a bit—with a total of eighty-two hypermetric verses in the section. There are five hypermetric passages that range from seven to twenty-six hypermetric verses in length, although many of these have intruding normal verses. The hypermetric and normal verses can be split up as follows:

Table 4 The metre of the central episode of *Daniel*

Lines	Metre	Length in verses	Intruding verses	Summary ¹⁷
188–202	Norm	30	0	There are three wise Israelite youths who make it known that they will not worship Nebuchadnezzar's idol.
203–7	Hyp	10	2 (1 line)	The pagans cannot guide the youths to prayer, and they inform Nebuchadnezzar.
208–23	Norm	32	0	Nebuchadnezzar grows angry and promises to punish the youths, but they keep their faith.
224–27	Hyp	8	1 (1 verse)	Nebuchadnezzar grows angrier and orders a furnace to be built to execute the youths. The fire is heated.
228–31	Norm	8	0	Nebuchadnezzar orders the youths brought there, bound, and shoved into the fire.
232–44	Hyp	26	7 (5 places)	An angel is ready to rescue them; he protects them from the fire and Nebuchadnezzar becomes still more angry and orders the fire stoked.
245–60	Norm	32	0	The flame turns back on the men while the youths are safe and worship God.

¹⁷ Note that the changes in metre tend not to correspond with clause breaks, so the divisions between the events are approximate.

Lines	Metre	Length in verses	Intruding verses	Summary
261–73 ¹⁸	Hyp	26	5 (4 places)	The flame has no effect on the youths but burns the torturers terribly; Nebuchadnezzar sees and realizes it is a miracle.
274–433	Norm	160	0	Azarias praises God for the miracle; the other two youths join him. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the miracle and frees the youths.
434–57	Hyp	48	22 (5 places)	The previous events are summarized: the youths were not harmed, the angel saved them, the youths praised God. Nebuchadnezzar further forbids anyone from denying God, returns the relics to the Israelites, and honors the three youths.
458–94	Norm	74	0	The poet summarizes events again, Nebuchadnezzar praises God, but he ultimately falls prey to his arrogance.

While some argue that the seemingly haphazard metrical shifts in one section of the poem illustrate stylistic inferiority,¹⁹ I maintain that the localized use of hypermetric metre instead shows a poet who is in control of the metrical style and shifting in a way that emphasizes different aspects of his narrative. Hypermetric lines in general can serve this purpose: often times a high density of hypermetric verse can create a formal tone that highlights certain sections of a poem because hypermetric verse can, as many

¹⁸ Line 273 is not hypermetric according to the lineation in the *ASPR*. However, according to John C. Pope, 271–73 are “two hypermetric lines, when properly arranged” (Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), 103). A. J. Bliss likewise scans them as two hypermetric lines, leaving out line 272 in order to maintain the lineation for the rest of the poem (A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 167), as does Farrell in his edition (Farrell, *Daniel and Azarias*, 63).

¹⁹ Neil D. Isaacs, for example, claims that “the *Daniel*-poet is apparently not at all concerned with demonstrating his technical virtuosity” (Neil D. Isaacs, *Structural Principles in Old English Poetry* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1968), 145), while Anderson argues that the poem is composed in a “ragged style,” which he does not criticize but does argue leads to hypermetric lines that “appear sporadically and with no particular purpose” in various parts of the poem (Anderson, “Style and Theme,” 4).

scholars have shown, add solemnity or emphasis to important moments.²⁰ However, the formality created by verse length is just one effect that hypermetric sections have, for, as I have argued elsewhere, hypermetric metre affects more than just poetic rhythms: it can also influence the syntactic patterning of the hypermetric section, often by allowing for a straightforward narrative style.²¹

In the central passage of *Daniel*, the clear narrative of the hypermetric lines works in conjunction with the normal lines, which become increasingly ornate as the events progress, to illustrate the main idea of the poem. By themselves, the hypermetric lines, which are basically limited to this section, draw the audience's attention to these events. What is more, their narrative style provides contrast to moments elsewhere in the poem because the poet uses the hypermetric structure to present the events in a more detailed fashion. These more narrative hypermetric moments are then augmented by a highly stylized version of normal verse that interprets the significance of the events that took place, mainly with the use of formalized speeches and prayers. In what follows, I look at how the metrical styles of the poem allow for shifts in narrative style and what the alternate narrative styles in this central moment allow the poet to do. This close reading of the poem's core shows that the poet centres his text on the power of God to shape the events of the world, making the focus of the poem as a whole the idea of humility in the face of God's power.

To understand how the hypermetric sections of the poem create a shift in the narrative style, it is important to understand how hypermetric composition can affect syntax. In particular, hypermetric composition provides the poet with a number of important syntactic possibilities that allow for increased clarity and narrative progress. These possibilities arise from the structure of the hypermetric onset. Hypermetric composition can perhaps best be analysed as a normal line preceded by a two-position onset, as can be illustrated in the following passage:²²

20 Eduard Sievers has claimed that hypermetric verse could either create more solemn or excited speech (Eduard Sievers, "Der angelsächsische schwelvers," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 12 (1887): 454–82 at 456) or else solemn and emphatic moods (Eduard Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik* (Halle: Max Neimeyer 1893), 216). B. J. Timmer has expanded upon this characterization to argue that hypermetric metre can also serve a number of transitional purposes, but agrees that it can create solemnity, slow the pacing, or create a didactic character (B. J. Timmer, "Expanded Lines in Old English Poetry," *Neophilologus* 25 (1951): 226–30 at 229).

21 Megan E. Hartman, "The Syntax of Old English Hypermetrics," *ES* 91 (2010): 477–91; Megan E. Hartman, *Poetic Style and Innovation in Old English, Old Norse, and Old Saxon* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2020), 27–37.

22 For justification for this particular analysis, see Megan E. Hartman, "A New Justification for an Old Analysis of the Hypermetric Onset," *N&Q* 62 (2015): 513–16.

Gearo wæs sē him gēoce gefremede; þeah þe hīe swā grome nýdde
(HA1: ˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ) (C2: xˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ)

in fæðm fyres lige, hwæðere heora feorh generede
(HA1: xˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ) (hA1: xˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ)

mihhtig metodes weard. Swā þæt mænige gefrūnon,
(D*4: ˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ) (hA1: xˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ)

halige him þær help getēode, sende him of hēan rodore
(HA1: ˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ) (hA1: xˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ)

god, gumena weard, gāst þone hālgan.
(D4: ˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ) (A1: ˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ)

Engel in þone ofn innan becwōm þær hīe þæt āglāc drugon,
(HE: ˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ) (hA2k: xˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ)

frēobearn fæðmum beþeahte under þām fyrenan hrōfe. (*Daniel* lines 232–38).
(HA1: ˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ) (hA1: xˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ)

[Ready was he who prepared help for them, although he forced them thus cruelly into the grasp of the flame's fire, nevertheless, the mighty guardian of the creator protected their life. Thus many learned by asking that he prepared holy help for them there, god, guardian of men, sent them that holy spirit from high heaven. The angel entered into the oven on the inside where they endured that suffering, protected the children of gentle birth with his embrace under the fiery roof.]²³

As this hypermetric passage shows, the onset can either be a heavy onset (H), formed by a stressed followed by an unstressed position, as in 232a, or a light onset (h), formed by an extended unstressed position, as in 233b. The drop in the heavy onset is mostly relatively short—generally one to three syllables long, though it can be longer—but the position is more likely to contain a separate unstressed word than a medial drop in a normal verse. The light onset can grow particularly long and typically has multiple syllables and words: it can have up to eight syllables, though the preferred range is two to five, and it frequently has multiple particles, including, potentially, finite verbs. These drops, as well as the extended structure of hypermetric lines as a whole, are important because they create more ways for the poet to combine the metrical requirements of the line with the grammatical requirements of the sentence: the longer drops can accommodate more function words while the third stressed position in the on-verse gives an additional stressed position per line that does not alliterate.

23 The text of the poem comes from Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript*, though I have added notations for the long vowels as they are important to metrical analysis; all translations are my own.

The result of these structural features is a compositional style that requires less circumlocution and variation than normal verse. The above passage from *Daniel* illustrates a number of the syntactic features of hypermetric metre. The long unstressed positions—particularly the light onset but to a lesser degree the drop in the heavy onset—can contain many of the words necessary for a complete clause and so make it much easier to have numerous clause breaks in hypermetric sections. In this passage, there is a clause break at every caesura except for the ones in lines 236 and 238,²⁴ as well as additional clause breaks at the end of lines 234, 236, 237, and 238; that is nine clauses in seven lines. The non-alliterating lifts also help to fit the components of a clause easily into a short space, particularly the finite verb. Verbs can sometimes occur in an onset, as in verses 232a and 235b, but they often occur in the final lift of their respective verses. These lifts are another part of what distinguishes hypermetric structure from normal verse. Already in normal verse, the final lift of the line, which never alliterates, receives less stress and often contains a finite verb.²⁵ Because the third lift in the on-verse is likewise non-alliterative, it can also contain a finite verb with some frequency. Furthermore, because additional particles that might otherwise occur in these less-stressed positions can be fit easily into the drops in the onsets, often many together, all of the elements of the sentence can more easily occur in one verse or pair of verses. In terms of clarity, the drops facilitate an increased use of connective words, particularly subordinating conjunctions. The above passage includes “þēah þe” (232b), “hwæðere” (233b), “swā” (234b), and “þær” (237b). These conjunctions create a clear relationship between the different clauses that contrast sharply with the more typical paratactic style of Old English poetry, adding clarity to the narration. Thus, hypermetric metre allows the poet to shift more readily to a syntactic style that contains a high number of consecutive clauses, with little variation and with clear connections, making it ideal for narrative progress.

Given the seeming ease with which a poet can compose in hypermetric lines, it might seem surprising that poets do not use the metre more often, yet there are numerous reasons for that. For example, memorization would be much more difficult without the tighter poetic structure. Moreover, poets might not have felt it appropriate for poetry at all times, since a long hypermetric section can sometimes have a prose-like feel. Instead, therefore, hypermetric composition becomes a contrasting tool that joins the metrical properties of an extended line with these syntactic features, alternately creating elevated moments or moments of increased narrative progress at key points in the poem.

24 Note that in Modern English, the two verses in line 235 would be considered a single clause with a compound verb because both verbs have the same subject. That could be the same here, but since Old English is a largely synthetic language and it is not necessary to state the subject when it is clear from the verb ending, it is also possible to interpret 235b as a separate clause with an implied subject.

25 In his explanation of metrical compounding, Geoffrey Russom shows that certain positions in the line are more metrically subordinated than others and that this metrical subordination controls the potential alliterative patterns in the line (Geoffrey Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 71–76).

Significantly, then, this combination of extended length and syntactic simplicity makes hypermetric composition quite malleable, so poets employ the metre for a variety of reasons, focusing on its different aspects to create different effects. In spite of the syntactic simplicity, the length and repetitive structure of the line make it appropriate for rhetorically heightened moments: as the characteristic metre of gnomic poetry, it in many ways indexes formalized, traditional diction, particularly in the non-narrative moments of the poems where the lists of gnomic statements highlight that diction further.²⁶ Even within primarily narrative poems, hypermetric metre is often used to draw attention to a moment by giving it a formal tone, as is the case for most hypermetric passages in the Old English *Judith*.²⁷ Alternatively, other poets rely more on features such as the expanded drop, sometimes using the light onset in both verses of a line, to create a natural diction that replicates direct speech. Perhaps the best example of that can be found in *Guthlac A*, where Guthlac frequently switches to hypermetric verse to deliver his most personal, convincing speeches to the devils who accost him.²⁸ In many ways, hypermetric metre is best defined as a metre that is not nearly as confined or confining as the overall Old English tradition, and poets who use it do so for their own, individual purposes. When the *Daniel*-poet takes advantage of hypermetric metre in the middle section of the poem, he is taking advantage of not only the narrative style but also the adaptability of the metre. The frequent use of hypermetric metre here, then, as well as the intervening and contrasting normal lines, shows the poet's facility with metrical patterning; the use of narrative description was a deliberate choice and understanding the reasons behind the combination of extended moments of narrative and formal prayers in this central episode is key to understanding the poem as a whole.

The *Daniel*-poet's shift to hypermetric metre is particularly effective because it contrasts so sharply with the initial sections of the poem. Although hypermetric verse is clearly a logical tool to compose narrative, and the *Daniel*-poet is not at all averse to using it, he does not use hypermetric metre for the opening section that depicts the downfall of the Israelites after their sins lead to their defeat at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. It might seem as though this opening scene would be a logical place for hypermetric metre—there is a huge battle between the Israelite and Babylonian armies, which could be ideal for hypermetric narration since battles are exciting and require much narrative progress—but the poet does not choose to use hypermetrics at this point. In fact, there is very little description of the battle itself, which is narrated mostly as follows:

²⁶ Megan E. Hartman, "Hypermetric Form in Old English Gnomic Poetry," *Studia Metrica et Poetica* 1 (2014): 68–99.

²⁷ Hartman, *Poetic Style*, 174–91.

²⁸ Hartman, *Poetic Style*, 45–46.

þā ic ēðan gefrægn ealdfēonda cyn
 (B2: x x x x x x) (E: x x x x)
 wīnburh wera. þā wigan ne gelyfdon,
 (A2k: x x x x) (aA1: x x x x x x)
 berēafodon þā receda wuldor²⁹ rēadan golde,
 (aD*4: x x x x x x x x) (A1: x x x x)
 since and seolfre, Salomones templ.
 (A1: x x x x) (E: x x x x)
 Gestrūdan gestrēona under stānhliðum,
 (aA1: x x x x x x) (C3: x x x x)
 swilc eall swa þa eorlas āgan sceoldon,
 (A3: x x x x x x) (A1: x x x x)
 oðþæt hie burga gehwone ābrocen hæfdon,
 (B2: x x x x x x x x) (C2: x x x x x x)
 þāra þe þām folce tō friðe stōdon. (*Daniel* lines 57–64)
 (A3: x x x x x x) (C2: x x x x x x)

[Then I learned by asking that the race of the old foes devastated the men's festive city. The warriors did not believe, they despoiled that marvel of buildings, Solomon's temple, of red gold, treasure and silver. They plundered property under the stone cliffs, just as much as the noblemen should possess, until they had broken each fortification, those which stood as refuge for the people.]

Rather than narrating the battle, the poet focuses on the aftermath: the city is destroyed, the fortifications broken, and the property stolen. Even this material is not narrated as a modern audience might expect of a battle, with a description of the events as they unfold. Instead, the poet relies on features such as variation and enumeration to communicate the extent of the devastation.³⁰ Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur argues that variation has multiple rhetorical purposes in Old English poetry: it “restrains the pace

²⁹ I have scanned this as a D*4 since, according to Farrell's edition, *wuldor* should be read as monosyllabic (R. T. Farrell, *Daniel and Azarias* (London: Methuen, 1974), 21). However, an expanded D verse without a true compound is highly irregular. Bliss argues that *wuldor* should be disyllabic and the verse should be a lone hypermetric verse of type HA1 (Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, 167) while Pope argues the line is corrupt (Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, 103).

³⁰ Variation can be defined, in the words of Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, as “a double or multiple statement of the same concept or idea in different words, with a more or less perceptible shift in stress,” which he distinguishes from enumeration by saying that “[u]nless each member of the sequence has the same referent, we have not a variation, but an enumeration—or, in certain cases, a progression” (Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 40–41).

of Old English poetic narrative, gives to dialogue or monologue its leisurely or stately character, raises into high relief those concepts which the poet wishes to emphasize, and permits him to exhibit the object of his thought in all its aspects.”³¹ Those last two purposes are particularly important here. Both variation and enumeration can be found in the second sentence about the looting of the temple, and they serve to illustrate the scope of the devastation that the Babylonians wrought. The sentence starts by naming the temple the “receda wuldor,” and then the poet defines it further through variation at the end of the sentence with “Salomones templ.” The doubling of the name by itself draws attention to the temple. Furthermore, both of these terms emphasize its importance, since one specifically calls it a marvel and the other invokes the name of Solomon. Thus, the loss of the temple is felt profoundly, since the poet names multiple ways it should be admired. Between the references to the temple is a case of enumeration that functions similarly: the poet starts by explaining that the Babylonians stole “rēadan golde” and then adds “since and seolfre.” The second verse is not in variation with the preceding verse, since it names different items, but “golde” and “seolfre” both fall under the umbrella term of “since,” so the addition of the second half-line mostly bolsters the idea that important wealth was stolen.

Interestingly, although features such as variation and enumeration are frequently employed to help the poet adhere to the structural principles of the alliterative long line, here that is not the case. Because the poet doubled the repetitious verses, it is not strictly speaking necessary for the poetic line. When using variation or enumeration as a metrical tool, poets will often put an alliterative phrase that is in variation with a previous term in the on-verse in order to introduce the alliterative stave for the next clause that he wants to begin, which then starts in the off-verse. In these examples from *Daniel*, the instance of enumeration in the on-verse provides the alliterative stave <s>, but the poet then completes the line with an instance of variation for an earlier term; grammatically, it would have been possible to leave both of these verses out and turn to the next idea. The style, though, is typical of normal verse, which might be part of why the poet includes it here: he is adding flourishes that characterize Old English compositional style. Furthermore, these features can also serve to provide emphasis on key ideas: poets do not tend to choose unimportant concepts for variation and will often provide very expansive versions of the important ideas they wish to draw attention to.³² Here, the poet seems to be doing just that in a style that characterizes normal verse, even if it is not strictly speaking necessary: the variation and enumeration highlight the extent of the loss this conquest created by examining it from multiple angles.

31 Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf*, 39.

32 Peter Ramey, for example, argues that variation “is uniquely suited to treat those subjects for which the early English poets felt a sense of awe, those concepts of limitless value and fascination to the Anglo-Saxon imagination—God, rulers, heroes, weapons, the sea, and so forth—all those items typically varied in the poetry” (Peter Ramey, “Variation and the Poetics of Oral Performance in *Cædmon’s Hymn*,” *Neophilologus* 96 (2012): 441–56 at 453).

The nature of the narrative changes once the poem turns to Nebuchadnezzar's court and his demand that everyone worship the golden idol, and the poet wishes to put more emphasis on the specific actions. Here begins the section that includes the hypermetric verse, and the poet shifts to a style that is more typical of hypermetric narrative, a style that he exploits more and more as the tension of the scene mounts and the miracle itself takes place:

[The angel entered into the oven on the inside where they endured that suffering, protected the children of gentle birth with his embrace under the fiery roof. The swelling of the wavering fire could still not injure their beauty at all, when the lord protected them. The heathen lord was savage, commanded to burn them quickly. The fire was

exceedingly great. Then the oven was heated, the iron all heated through. There, many servants threw wood inside it, as was commanded to them in words.]

As in the hypermetric passage above, of which this is a continuation, this passage contains a large number of clause breaks: twelve complete clauses in eight lines. There is some repetition here—the two clauses “þa wæs se ofen onhæted” and “isen eall ðurhgleded” say virtually the same thing—but it is minimized. Variation is completely absent. Unlike the scene depicting the conquest of the Israelites, then, this scene provides a distinctive sequence of events, each one clearly explained. The sequence creates a contrasting image of the children and everything that goes on around them. We start by seeing them under a fiery roof, and the fire increases throughout the scene as Nebuchadnezzar grows angrier and the fire burns hotter. In spite of that increasing fury, though, the children remain in a gentle embrace where they are uninjured. This narrative is supported by the metre, since the light onsets of the off-verses provide ample space for the pronouns and connective words that clarify events, with the verbs split mostly between the verse-final lifts and the two onsets. The audience is therefore not asked to ruminate over the importance of specific objects or ideas but instead watches in the mind’s eye what occurs.

As the miracle develops more fully, the trend of careful narration continues:

Næs him sē swēg to sorge	ðon mā þe sunnan scīma,
(hA1: xxx ₁ x ₂ x ₃)	(hA1: xxx ₁ x ₂ x ₃)
ne sē bryne bēot mæcgum	þe in þām bēote wæron,
(hD1: xx ₁ x ₂ x ₃ x ₄)	(hA1: xxx ₁ x ₂ x ₃)
ac þæt fȳr fȳr scyde	tō ðām þe ðā scylde worhton,
(hD2: xx ₁ x ₂ x ₃)	(hA1: xxx ₁ xx ₂ x ₃)
hwearf on þā hāðenan hæftas	fram þām hālgan cnihton,
(HA1: ₁ xx ₂ x ₃ x ₄)	(hA1: xx ₁ x ₂ x ₃)
wērigra wlite minsode,	þā ðe ðȳ worce gefægon.
(HD2: ₁ xx ₂ x ₃ x ₄ x ₅)	(hA1: xxx ₁ x ₂ x ₃ x ₄)
Geseah ðā swiðmōd cyning,	ðā hē his sefan ontrēowde,
(aHA2k: x ₁ x ₂ x ₃ x ₄ x ₅)	(hA1: xxx ₁ x ₂ x ₃ x ₄)
wundor on wīte āgangen;	him þæt wræclīc þūhte. (<i>Daniel</i> lines 263–69)
(HA1: ₁ xx ₂ x ₃ x ₄ x ₅)	(hA1: xx ₁ x ₂ x ₃)

[The tumult was not a sorrow to them more than the sun’s light, nor the burning a threat to the men who were in that danger, but that fire incited fire to those who worked the crime, turned on the heathen servants from the holy youths, diminished the miserable appearance of those who rejoiced in the work. Then the arrogant king saw, when he trusted his mind, a miracle befallen in the torture; that seemed extraordinary to him.]

Once again, the passage walks through a sequence of events: how the flames affect the youths, the way the fire turns back on the servants, and Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction to

how the scene plays out. In this passage, the light onsets frequently have the particles necessary to open a relative clause. The poet even increases the ease of composition by including three light hypermetric verses, which are easier to integrate grammatically because they have a more flexible drop and one fewer stressed position, in the on-verses. In this way, the poet is able to increase the description of the passage while keeping the focus on actions.

This passage includes more repetition than the first, but the hypermetric syntactic features distinguish this repetition from the variation that is more common in normal passages. The first two lines essentially say that the youths are safe. There are two main clauses, plus a subordinate clause that further defines the youths, and each illustrates one way in which the fire does not harm the youths. Technically, the two concepts are different, since the first clause shows that they are safe from the sound of the fire and the second specifies the actual burning, but the message is similar. More repetition can be found in the next three lines. Here there are three main clauses, along with two more relative clauses. The first main clause describes the central action, that the fire turns back on those who set it. The next two main clauses both expand upon that, with one essentially repeating the idea that the fire turns on its builders and the second showing the result of their being burned.

In a way, these expansive descriptions of the events are similar to enumeration: the poet has one idea and explains it in multiple ways that are not quite variation because they touch on different concepts, but they still communicate the same thing. The difference is that the poet here crafts that enumeration largely through clauses. Doing so is not unheard of: variation can occur at all levels—words, phrases, and clauses. Yet where clauses are normally the exception, here they become the norm. Thus, the poet appears to be building up his description, going from very little repetition at the beginning of the scene to more at this climactic moment that sees the youths safely through their ordeal. Doing so enables him to showcase the heart of the miracle: the way that the youths remain perfectly safe while the fire turns against those who built it. In addition to providing what must seem like a just turn of events, the poet also foregrounds the way that this miracle creates a type of reversal, with the fire literally reversing its destructive force when it turns back on the Babylonians. The poet simultaneously accentuates Nebuchadnezzar's reversal, since after showing the king so angry, the poet now twice states that he admires the miracle. By emphasizing the common Old English theme of reversal, the poet places the scene in a familiar context so that the audience can appreciate just how forceful the miracle is. The use of repetition with complete clauses allows greater emphasis to be put on the events even as the poet narrates the actions clearly.

Similar repetition occurs on a larger scale throughout the course of the entire passage: as the table above shows, there is quite a bit of repetition in terms of what each episode covers, particularly with such concepts as Nebuchadnezzar's rage and the safety provided by God. It might, therefore, seem as though the hypermetric passages are slowing down the progress of the narrative rather than speeding it up: it takes longer to narrate this one moment than it does the entire subjugation of the Israelites

at the start of the poem. The difference is in how the events are depicted. The initial war is reduced to broad brushstrokes so that the audience gets the big picture in one overarching description of the key events. In contrast, the scene in the furnace is given more of a play-by-play narration, a detailed sequence of events that is simultaneously straightforward, with clear syntax and less variation, and visual. The alternate mode of narration allows listeners to get a vivid picture in their mind of the entire event, rather than a broader concept of its significance. In this way, the audience witnesses god's protection, with the destruction the flames cause clearly juxtaposed against the feel of summer breeze that the children feel, making the event all the more impressive.

Once the miracle is complete, the poet switches back to normal verse for a longer section for the prayers that react to the event. These prayers shift away from a narrative focus, and so switch from hypermetric metre, but they simultaneously become more formal through use of formalized language. Azarias begins his lengthy prayer as follows:

Metod alwihta, hwæt!	þu eart mihtum swið
(D1: $\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}[x]$)	(B1: $x\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}$)
niððas ƿ nergenƿe.	Is þin nama mære,
(A1: $\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}$)	(C2: $x\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}$)
wlitig and wuldorƿæst	ofer werðeode.
(A1: $\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}$)	(C1: $x\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}$)
Siendon þine dōmas	in daga gehwām
(A3: $x\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}$)	(B1: $x\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}$)
sōðe and geswiðde	and gesigefæste,
(A1: $\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}$)	(C2: $x\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}$)
swā þu ēac sylfa eart.	(<i>Daniel</i> lines 283–88a)
(B2: $x\acute{x}\acute{x}\acute{x}$)	

[Creator of all things, listen! You are great in might to save men. Your name is great, beautiful and glorious over the people. Your judgments are on each day true and made mighty and triumphant, as you also are yourself.]

This moment has a particularly formal tone for several reasons. First is the language use: there are a number of poetic words (such as “metod” and “niððas”) and compounds (specifically “wuldorƿæst” and “gesigefæste”). The use of the poetic *koine* places the passage firmly in the poetic tradition and contrasts strongly with the more prosaic features of the hypermetric passage. Second, the stylized phrases further increase the formal feeling as each augments the last, especially when they appear in alliterative pairs. Finally, the metre reinforces the formality through the verse distribution: there are a number of verses with secondary and clashing stress, to the point that they come close to matching the more typical Type A and B verses. Although hypermetric verse is often considered the most formal option for verse patterns, because the poet used it in a more prosaic form in *Daniel*, he needed to create a different way to summarize the

miracle and showcase its importance. By switching to a completely new style, one that contrasts with the normal verse elsewhere and relies on particularly formal features, the poet is able to shift away from the hypermetric narrative and into an elevated prayer that begins the summation of the central events.

As the prayer builds, the other two youths join in and the poem shifts from what has been called “The Song of Azarias” to “The Song of the Three Children,” becoming more formal still.

	We þec blētsiað,	
	(C3: x x _ _ x)	
frēa folca gehwæs,	fæder ælmihtig,	
(D4: _ _ x x _)	(D1: _ x _ _ x)	
sōð sunu metodes,	sāwla nergend,	
(D1: _ _ x x x x)	(A1: _ x _ x)	
hæleða helpend,	and þec, hālig gāst,	
(A1: _ x x x _ x)	(B1: x x _ x _)	
wurðiað in wuldre,	witig drihten!	
(A1: _ x x x _ x)	(A1: _ x _ x)	
We ðec herigað,	hālig drihten,	
(A3: x x _ x x)	(A1: _ x _ x)	
and gebedum brēmað!	Þu gebletsad eart,	
(C2: x x _ x _ x)	(B1: x x _ x _)	
gewurðad wideferhð	ofer worulde hrōf,	
(aD*4: x _ x _ x _)	(B1: x x _ x x _)	
hēahcýning heofones,	hālgum mihtum,	
(A21: _ _ x _ x x)	(A1: _ x _ x)	
lifes lēohtfruma,	ofer landa gehwilc! (<i>Daniel</i> lines 399b–408)	
(D*2: _ x _ x)	(B2: x x _ x x _)	

[We bless you, lord of each people, father almighty, true son of the creator, souls’ saviour, heroes’ helper, and you, holy spirit, we honor in glory, wise lord! We praise you, holy lord, and honor you with prayers! You are blessed, honored always above the world’s roof, high-king of heaven, with holy might, light-source of life, over each land.]

This final section continues to use a large number of verses with falling or clashing stress, often formed through the use of true compounds, to maintain the slow pace. In addition, the ending is rife with variation, so much so that the youths do little more in the first four lines than repeatedly and variously name God, even weaving in references to the three aspects of the trinity. Such diction is reminiscent of *Cædmon’s Hymn*, which manages to include eight references to God in nine lines. Brodeur argues that when a poet uses variation in this way, “each appellation express[es] one aspect of the referent, so that the

sum of the members of the variation presents a total description of characterization.”³³ In this case, the poem shows God as creator, powerful lord, and protector all at the same time—a strong but also intimate image with heroic and Christian undertones. Arguing specifically about variation in *Cædmon’s Hymn*, Ramey suggests that it is not the difference but the equivalence that is important with such instances of variation: “their more narrow denotation is supervened by the appositive structure, and the nonspecific metonymic meaning they acquire overrides this literal sense. Thus *each* of these eight terms in *Cædmon’s Hymn* signifies, within the appositive relation, not an aspect of God but a much larger traditional conception of ‘God.’”³⁴ While I do not agree that the individual choice of each epithet is irrelevant, Ramey’s point that the use of so many traditional phrases in *Cædmon’s Hymn* calls up the overall poetic tradition, bringing to mind other common epithets for God, makes sense: it allows this mode of variation to maximize the praise for God and the awe attributed to him. By using the same technique here, the *Daniel*-poet evokes God in all of his aspects, asking the audience to fully appreciate the miracle and the divinity that could create it. As the poet continues, he expands the topic, but only slightly, by mixing verbs of prayer and praise with the nouns naming God. The repetition builds the prayer to a climax, creating a strong ending that semantically and structurally reinforces the ultimate purpose for the prayer, to connect the miracle that the poet so meticulously described to the implications about the overall power of God.

This middle section works so effectively as a core of the poem, then, in part because of the way that the poet crafts the metre. For about one hundred lines, the poet switches back and forth between normal and hypermetric metre in a relatively short section, using hypermetric syntax to narrate the key moments throughout the scene. Then, once the miracle has been seen through and Nebuchadnezzar realizes his error, the poet switches to longer sections to conclude the episode: he starts with a prayer, turns back to hypermetric verse to reiterate the events of the miracle itself, and ends in normal verse with Nebuchadnezzar’s final reaction and change of heart. The contrast between the narrative hypermetric passages near the beginning and the particularly heightened normal section near the end allows both of these moments to stand out from the style in the rest of the poem, but in different ways and for different purposes: the hypermetric narrative illustrates the complete reversal that God was able to enact for his faithful, while the prayers in normal verse interpret it for the audience.

Understanding the potential reasons behind the poet’s choice for the different metres can help to illustrate what exactly the central scene offers to this retelling of the biblical story. The narrative details that the *Daniel*-poet uses allow him to shift the focus away from the big picture and important concepts that are emphasized elsewhere in the poem and turn to the individual actions of the event. By doing so, the poet is able to tacitly illustrate just how powerful he believes God is by showing the lengths Nebuchadnezzar goes to to burn the youths as well as his ultimate reversal, alongside

33 Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf*, 41.

34 Ramey, “Variation,” 447–49.

the complete lack of efficacy the fire has against the angel's might and the youths' calm faith in the face of adversity. It is this choice of narrative styles that illustrates not just that the central section of the poem makes up its core but also how that core can be interpreted. Because the poet focuses so much on God's power, and the degree to which God can act to save the faithful, I agree with scholars such as Caie, Sharma, and Harbus that the theme of pride versus humility is the most important to the poem. While the law might be an important aspect of following God for the characters in the poem, it is not the degree to which characters follow that law that is emphasized. Instead, it is the degree to which God has power over the earthly realm and acts upon it. The characters who humbly acknowledge that power through their prayers are able to see it enacted to save them, while those who turn away from such acknowledgement in their pride, fall.

In light of this central message, the entire structure of the poem might seem rather odd: where poems such as *The Wanderer* or *Judith* end with a summative explanation of the events of the poem, also including hypermetric metre to emphasize its importance, *Daniel* has the equivalent moment in the middle. What is more, the envelope pattern is completed by ending the poem with the fall of Belshazzar and his Babylonians due to their arrogance, which seems like an anti-climactic ending. I would like to argue that the poet does so to suggest another point: the personal nature of faith and the way that humility must be embraced by the individual, even as it is lost to the nation. For this reason, I would further argue, *contra* Harbus and Ishiguro, that while Daniel is not the poem's main focus, neither is Nebuchadnezzar. His two pieces of the envelope pattern revolve around this same theme—he falls to pride in his role as a king leading a nation but is able to find humility as an individual in the wilderness—but he does not ultimately inhabit the centre. The youths take that position, and their story stands in contrast to the two nations that frame the poem, both of which ultimately show a negative example as the nations' excesses are not able to match the individuals' humility.

Chapter 7

ELENE 582–89: HYPERMETRICS, REVELATION, AND JUDGMENT

Matthew D. Coker*

AT A DRAMATIC crux in Cynewulf's Old English poem *Elene*, when the protagonists St. Helena and St. Judas Cyriacus are about to meet for the first time, the poet switches from ordinary verses into hypermetrics for eight consecutive lines (lines 582–89, according to the *ASPR* lineation of the passage).¹ At this point in the narrative, Helena has called an assembly of Jewish wise men to her “palace” or “court” (“salore,” 552a; “hofe,” 557b), as though before her judgment seat, to inform her about the location of the True Cross. They refuse to answer her truthfully, and Helena responds with a vicious death-threat. Her words swell into hypermetrics at the speech's end, and the hypermetrics continue for several lines beyond her speech, narrating the wise men's fearful reaction and concluding as the men give Judas over to Helena and begin to speak (573–97):²

	Elene maþelade	ond him yrre oncwæð:
	“Ic eow to soðe	secan wille,
575	ond þæs in life	lige ne wyrðeð,
	gif ge þissum lease	leng gefylgað
	mid fæcne gefice,	þe me fore standað,
	þæt eow in beorge	bæl fornimeð,

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I On hypermetric verse, and for a full index of key technical terms used in this chapter and volume, readers should consult the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices. All citations of Old English poetry are taken from *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, ed. George Philip Krapp and Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie, 6 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931–1953), but citations of *Elene* have been compared with *Cynewulfs Elene: mit einem Glossar*, ed. Julius Zupitza, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1888); *Cynewulfs Elene: mit Einleitung, Glossar, Anmerkungen, und der lateinischen Quelle*, ed. Ferdinand Holthausen, Alt- und Mittelenglische Texte, 4, 2nd ed. (New York: Stechert, 1910); *The Old English Elene, Phœnix, and Physiologus*, ed. Albert S. Cook (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919); *Cynewulf's Elene*, ed. Pamela O. E. Gradon (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966); and Robert E. Bjork, *The Old English Poems of Cynewulf*, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 23 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). Citations of *Guthlac A* have been compared with Jane Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979) and Bernard J. Muir, *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry: An Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501*, 2 vols. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994). Any differences from the *ASPR* text, aside from punctuation, are discussed *ad hoc*. All translations are my own.

2 Throughout this chapter, hypermetrics are indicated by an expanded left margin in Old English text and by italics in translation.

- hattost heaðo-welma, ond eower hra bryttað,
 580 lacende lig, þæt eow sceal þæt leas
 apundrad weorðan to woruld-gedale.
 Ne magon ge ða word geseðan þe ge hwile nu on unriht
 wrigon under womma sceatum; ne magon ge þa wyrð
 bemiðan
 bedyrnan þa deopan mihte.”
 Ða wurdon hie deaðes on wenan,
 585 ades ond ende-lifes; ond þær þa ænne betæhton
 giddum gearu-snottorne, (þam wæs ludas nama
 cenned for cneo-magum), þone hie þære cwene agefon,
 sægdon hine sundor-wisne: “He þe mæg soð gecyðan,
 onwreon wyrda geryno, swa ðu hine wordum frignest,
 590 æ-riht from orde oð ende forð.
 He is for eorðan æðeles cynnes,
 word-cræftes wis ond witgan sunu,
 bald on meðle; him gebyrde is
 þæt he gen-cwidas gleawe hæbbe,
 595 cræft in breostum. He gecyðeð þe
 for wera mengo wisdomes gife
 þurh þa myclan miht, swa þin mod lufaþ.”

[Elene spoke in the assembly and answered [the Jewish wise men] wrathfully:

“I will tell you truly—and no lie will come of it in life, if you who stand before me pursue this falsehood longer in deceitful fraud—that on a hill a pyre will take you away, the hottest of battle-surgings, and break up your body, the leaping flame; that that falsehood will be reckoned against you as a cause for world-separation [that is, ‘death’]. *You cannot prove true the words that you unjustly concealed for a while now under the folds of impurities; you cannot conceal that fate, hide the deep power.*”

Then they were expectant of death, of the pyre and ending life; and they offered one up there, readily wise in sententious sayings—his name was declared to be Judas among kinsmen—whom they gave to that woman, said he was especially wise: “He can make the truth known to you, uncover the mysteries of fates as you ask him with words, law-justice from the beginning on to the end. He is of noble kind in the earth, wise in word-craft and a prophet’s son, bold in the assembly; it is his nature that he has wise answers, skill in heart. He will make known to you in the multitude of men the gift of wisdom through that great power, as your spirit desires.”]

This hypermetric set constitutes a crucial interpretive moment in the poem, and in the ensuing discussion I indicate why the poet has chosen to make this metrical shift.

Before approaching an interpretation of these lines, their problematic structure and grouping must be addressed. Lines 581a, 582a, and 582b present awkward structural alliteration. The first lift of line 581a should alliterate with *woruld*, the line’s “head-stave” (that is, the first lift of the b-verse), yet the manuscript gives us the non-alliterating first lift “apundrad.” The second lift of line 582a is “geseðan,” which alliterates neither with “word” in the a-verse nor “hwile” in the b-verse. This is not strictly a fault, but the second lift of light

hypermetric a-verses alliterates more than half the time in Old English poems.³ Lastly, the head-stave of line 582b is “**hw**ile,” which does not alliterate with “word”: “hw” exclusively alliterates with “h” elsewhere in *Elene*.

In response to these difficulties, editors have taken a variety of approaches to the passage. Ferdinand Holthausen and Pamela O. E. Gradon lineate as follows, leaving line 582b as an isolated half-line:⁴

580 lacende lig, þæt eow sceal þæt leas apundrad
 weorðan to woruld-gedale. Ne magon ge ða word geseðan
 [...] þe ge hwile nu on unriht

Technically, only Holthausen lineates 582b as a b-verse missing a companion a-verse; Gradon lineates it as an isolated half-line without suggesting that anything is missing. Yet the structure of the half-line (a light hypermetric with single, faulty alliteration) seems to suggest Holthausen is correct, and his lineation is evidently accepted by A. J. Bliss.⁵ Although Holthausen’s lineation is still problematic because it lacks an a-verse in 582, it is metrically satisfying and requires no alteration of the manuscript’s words. A missing verse would not be out of character for the text as we have it: incomplete verses can be found at lines 439 and 1044, indicating that the received text is not wholly reliable. And while isolated verses can certainly be authorial, Bliss considers them to be more likely authorial if they have double alliteration or continue alliteration from the preceding line (such as 451, 518, 1276–78).⁶ To be compared with 580b, which in Holthausen’s lineation heavily outweighs its a-verse, there are three other isolated hypermetric b-verses in *Elene* (1102, 1157, and 1159).⁷

ASPR and Robert Bjork follow the lineation of Julius Zupitza and Albert Cook, but without emending the manuscript’s words. According to this scheme, 580b and 581a are the main metrical offenders. Cook emends (emendations underlined):⁸

³ On alliteration in hypermetrics, see A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), 92–93.

⁴ Holthausen, *Cynewulfs Elene*, 22, 90; Gradon, *Cynewulf’s Elene*, 48.

⁵ On the structure of Old English hypermetric lines, see, for example, Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, 88–97, and “The Origin and Structure of the Old English Hypermetric Line,” in *N&Q* 17 (1972): 242–48; Megan E. Hartman, “The Hypermetric Line in Germanic Alliterative Verse” (unpublished doctoral thesis, Indiana University, 2011), especially 24–60. On Bliss’s lineation of this passage, see *Metre of Beowulf*, 160.

⁶ See further Bliss, “Single Half-Lines in Old English Poetry,” *N&Q* 18 (1971): 442–49 at 449. Kazutomo Karasawa develops upon and diverges from Bliss’s approach to single half-lines in his chapter of this volume.

⁷ Hartman, “Hypermetric Line,” 28–31, suggests that unpaired hypermetric verses which do not occur near a hypermetric set (such as 1102, 1157, and 1159) are “improbable.” Still, this has no bearing on 580b, which initiates a set.

⁸ Zupitza, *Cynewulfs Elene*, 26; Cook, *Elene, Phœnix, and Physiologus*, 22; Bjork, *Poems of Cynewulf*, 182.

similar to *wynn* (*p*) in written form.¹⁰ A scribe may have seen fit to alter the original text accordingly, but such can only be speculation. The most convincing presentations of these lines are Zupitza's and Holthausen's, but Holthausen's lineation is to be preferred. It is metrically satisfying, requires no emendation of the manuscript's words (despite positing a missing a-verse), and rightly considers 582b an off-verse. A missing half-line could ameliorate the slightly awkward sense of 582a–3a (emphases added): "You cannot *prove true* [*geseðan*] the words that you unjustly *concealed* [*wrigon*]." In this reading, does Helena mean the wise men assert words or conceal them? Perhaps we are to understand that a false assertion entails partial concealment. Whatever the case, it at least seems that lineation and emendation do not *greatly* affect the meaning of this passage, and while it is necessary to consider the problematic structure of these lines, the most important thing is not how the lines are printed, but what the hypermetric set is doing here in the first place, the matter to which I now turn.

This hypermetric set of 8–9.5 lines (depending on lineation and whether a half-line is judged to be missing) is by far the longest of Cynewulf's oeuvre. His next largest "sets" come in at a maximum of two lines. *Guthlac B*, which could also be one of Cynewulf's compositions, contains an insubstantially larger three-line set.¹¹ Moreover, in the 2,601 lines of Old English verse which include Cynewulf's runic signatures (namely *Elene*, *Juliana*, *Fates of the Apostles*, and *Christ B*), the poet uses only 40 hypermetric verses, equivalent to 20 lines (a 0.67 percent rate of occurrence).¹² If *Guthlac B* is also Cynewulf's, the number would still only be 0.92 percent (29 of 3162 lines).¹³ The

10 Griffith, "Extra Alliteration," 75, notes that *p* alliterates in only 16 lines of all Old English poems greater than 300 lines for a frequency of 0.1 percent. Compare n9. On *apundrian* and the similar *apyndrian* (which also occurs only once, in a gloss of Aldhelm's prose work *De laude virginitatis*), see *The Dictionary of Old English: A to I online*, ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey et al. (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2018).

11 On the close relationship between *Guthlac B* and the Cynewulf canon, see Bjork, *Poems of Cynewulf*, xi, and Andy Orchard, "Both Style and Substance: The Case for Cynewulf," in *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov and George Hardin Brown, SUNY Series in Medieval Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 271–305 at 294–97.

12 A catalogue of hypermetric verses complete with scansion is given by Bliss, *Metre of Beowulf*, 158–64 (see also Hartman, "Hypermetric Line," who makes corrections to Bliss's catalogue). Cynewulf's corpus comes to 2,597.5 full lines if one reckons the 7 incomplete lines found in his works as equivalent to 7 verses, or 3.5 lines: in addition to the two defective lines and four unpaired half-lines in *Elene* (all mentioned above, except line 22), *Juliana* 559 is a defective line of only three syllables. But because both figures (20/2,601 and 20/2,597.5) give a quotient of 0.77 percent (0.769 percent and 0.77 percent respectively, an insignificant difference), I do not factor incomplete lines into my percentage figures (given below) for any poems in the corpus. On Cynewulf's runic signatures, see for example Dolores Warwick Frese, "The Art of Cynewulf's Runic Signatures," in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation: for John C. McGalliard*, ed. Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 312–34; Tom Birkett, "Runes and *Revelatio*: Cynewulf's Signatures Reconsidered," *RES*, n.s. 65, no. 272 (November 2014): 771–89.

13 For this figure I have added *Guthlac B* 1225a (*leofum æfter longre hwile*) to Bliss's catalogue.

percentages of hypermetrics in some other prominent Old English poems are worth noting: 41.56 percent for part one of *The Dream of the Rood* (that is, the first 77 lines, 32 of which are hypermetric), 33.33 percent for *Maxims I* (68 of 204 lines), 19.54 percent for *Judith* (68/348), 5.5 percent for *Daniel* (42/764), 4.22 percent for *Guthlac A* (34.5/818), 3.26 percent for *Christ C* (26/798), 1.36 percent for *Genesis A* (31.5/2,320), 0.52 percent for *Andreas* (9/1722), and 0.36 percent for *Beowulf* (11.5/3,182).¹⁴ The point here is not necessarily that Cynewulf uses hypermetrics infrequently. Some poets do not use hypermetrics at all, and there is evidence to suggest that hypermetrics are a very old, traditional verse form which was decreasingly understood with the passage of time.¹⁵ Rather, the key point to note is that two-thirds of *Elene's* 12 hypermetric lines—and nearly half of Cynewulf's 20 total hypermetric lines—all occur in one place. This passage was clearly exceptional for the poet, crafted with care and purpose; and upon further examination it becomes apparent that this long hypermetric set is central to the poet's purposes in the poem.

The function of the hypermetric set becomes apparent when it is viewed within its narrative context, which I now outline in brief. *Elene* is Cynewulf's longest poem, consisting of 1,321 lines. Found on folios 121r–132r of the Vercelli Book, it is the codex's sixth and last poem, following *Homily XXII* (a soul-and-body meditation on death) and followed by the inappropriately named *Homily XXIII*, the codex's last work (a life of St. Guthlac). The poem itself is a relatively close rendering of a Latin version of the fecund and variable "Finding of the True Cross" tradition, although the precise Latin variant is unknown.¹⁶ The narrative begins with Constantine, who, on the eve of a seemingly hopeless battle, is visited by a resplendent messenger and a vision of the Cross of Christ.¹⁷ Instructed by the vision, Constantine has a cross borne before his army into battle, and his forces overcome their opponents (lines 1–147). Constantine subsequently converts to Christianity and sends his mother, St. Helena, to seek out the True Cross of Christ from Palestine (148–224). There Helena assembles the wisest of the Jews and orders them to reveal the location of the Cross (225–416). The wise men consult privately and Judas, exceptionally learned and son of a prophet, counsels them to withhold the Cross's location (417–546). When the assembly is called back to Helena, they are unwilling to say anything about the Cross, so Helena threatens to burn them to death, upon which

¹⁴ On the composite nature of *The Dream of the Rood*, see especially Leonard Neidorf, "The Composite Authorship of *The Dream of the Rood*," in ASE 45 (2016): 51–70.

¹⁵ Hartman, "Hypermetric Line," 406–7.

¹⁶ See, for example, Gradon, *Cynewulf's Elene*, 15–22. *The Old English Finding of the True Cross*, ed. and trans. Mary-Catherine Bodden (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987), 36–47, gives a convenient comparison of Latin and Old English versions of the *Inventio*-narrative. See also Cook, *Elene, Phœnix, and Physiologus*, xiv–xxiv, and Alfred Holder, *Inventio Sanctae Crucis: Actorum Cyriaci pars i. latine et graece; Ymnus antiquus de Sancta Cruce; Testimonia Inventae Sanctae Crucis* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1889), 44–56, on the earliest accounts of the *Inventio*.

¹⁷ On the dream, see further Antonina Harbus, "Text as Revelation: Constantine's Dream in *Elene*," *Neophilologus* 78 (1994): 645–53.

the wise men give Judas over to Helena (547–603). As we have seen, the hypermetric set overlaps with the end of Helena's threat and the beginning of the wise men's response to her.

Judas then claims not to know the location of the Cross, so Helena has him thrown into a pit for seven days, after which he agrees to comply with her wishes (604–715). He prays to God that, if God has indeed anointed Jesus, he would reveal the location of the Cross with smoke, which God does (716–827). Unsure of which of three discovered crosses is Christ's, Judas places each on a dead boy, and the last cross resurrects him, proving it is Christ's (828–94). A demon then laments and threatens the Jews, but Judas rebukes him (895–967). Subsequently, Helena has a church built on Calvary and sets the Cross in a rich casing, and Judas receives baptism (968–1043). Judas is consecrated bishop of Jerusalem and renamed Cyriacus. Then Helena asks Judas to pray that the nails which pierced Christ might be found. After his prayer, the nails begin to shine and are found (1044–1147). In the end, Helena sends the nails to Constantine, Judas performs many miracles, and Helena leaves for Rome, charging all to remember the day the Cross was found. The narrative proper ends with a blessing on all who observe this holy day (1148–1236). An epilogue follows the narrative, which includes Cynewulf's account of having been divinely inspired, his runic signature, and a description of the purgative fires of Judgment Day (1237–1321).

It can be observed from this summary that the eight-line hypermetric set sits right around the middle of the narrative's 1,236 lines, just before Helena and Judas meet for the first time. The set is enveloped by repeated diction, which gives us a clue as to its significance: Helena's words "word" (582a), "wrigon" (583a), and "wyrd" (583b) in the set's first lines are recast in the set's last line, spoken collectively by the wise men as "onwreon wyrda geryno" (589a) and "wordum" (589b). What stands out in this repeated diction, then, is (1) words ("word"), (2) (dis)covering ("[on]wreon"), and (3) fate ("wyrd"). The above summary shows that *Elene* is especially preoccupied with spiritual revelations, including miracles (Constantine's vision, the smoke revealing the Cross's resting place, the shining of the nails), rediscovered artifacts (the Cross, the nails), and the salvific story of Christ. Thus the diction enveloping this hypermetric set bespeaks the poem's central themes, and the hypermetric set itself embodies, even *performs* the poem's thematic movement from concealment to revelation.¹⁸ Even Judas, though he does not yet believe, is himself revealed here like a spiritual mystery as we catch a glimpse of his destiny as a revealer of truth.

It is important, then, to note how this shift from concealment to revelation occurs in the hypermetric set. At the end of her threat, Helena declares that the "apocalypse" (that is, *uncovering*) of truth is inevitable. Moved by their fear of her "judgment," the men betray Judas to her as the one who can reveal the truth. Now, hypermetrics are a

¹⁸ On the thematic centrality of revelation in *Elene*, see Daniel G. Calder, "Strife, Revelation, and Conversion: The Thematic Structure of *Elene*," in *ES* 53 (1972): 201–10; Jackson J. Campbell, "Cynewulf's Multiple Revelations," in *Cynewulf: Basic Readings*, ed. Robert E. Bjork, Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England, 4 (New York: Garland, 1996), 229–50; and Bjork, *Poems of Cynewulf*, xvii.

sonically exceptional poetic form frequently found in wisdom poetry and supernatural discourse.¹⁹ Cynewulf seems to be using this exceptional form to express this scene's importance as an exemplum within the poem. The sonic difference of hypermetrics stands out to the audience, almost as though in direct address, to impart the poem's moral message: the truth cannot and will not be forever hidden, and if we wish to avoid a wrathful judgment for neglecting and concealing it, we must do our part to seek it out and reveal it. Just as Helena's threat and gnomic declaration have the force to move their intradiegetic audience (the wise men), so they ought to move the extradiegetic audience of Cynewulf's poem—and this force is performed in hypermetrics. The poem's epilogue reiterates the moral: in his runic signatures' signature penitential tone, Cynewulf describes (1) his misery before God revealed the truth about the Cross to him (1236a–56a); (2) the transitory nature of the world and its goods (1256b–76a); (3) the final judgment of humans, when each "reord-berend" (speech-bearer) must hear God's verdict and give an account for his deeds (1277a–86a); and (4) the subsequent fiery ordeals for those deemed righteous, sinful, and cursed, respectively (1286b–1321b).²⁰

It is not likely that this admonitory theme is unrelated to the poem as a whole. Dolores Warwick Frese has demonstrated that Cynewulfian codas are integrally linked with their foregoing narratives: in the case of *Elene*, Frese notes that the poet's inspiration by divine revelation is directly tied to the revelations and subsequent conversions of Constantine and Judas.²¹ Various other scholars have noted Cynewulf's self-identification with Judas.²² The latter, who had knowledge of the Cross, is confined to a grave-like pit before he seeks the revelation of the Cross and is saved. The former, who also had knowledge of the Cross, labours heavily in the dark confinement of "narrow night" ("nihtes nearwe", 1239a) before God "revealed a roomier plan" ("rumran gepeaht ... onwreah," 1240b, 1242a) in him through the meaning of the Cross (1242b–50a, 1251b–56a). In light of these mutual identifications, Helena's Neronian threat to burn the wisest Jews is likely to be understood as having figural significance. The fiery death she promises to those who conceal the truth stands parallel to the fiery death awaiting wicked "speech-bearers," which Cynewulf describes in the epilogue. For Cynewulf, *Elene* is not simply a narrative, but a potent reminder that God is revealing himself to people

¹⁹ On some common uses of Old English hypermetrics, see Matthew D. Coker, "The Dream of the Rood and the Function of Hypermetric Lines," *N&Q* 66 (2019): 8–19.

²⁰ On the mood of Cynewulf's epilogues, see Robert C. Rice, "The Penitential Motif in Cynewulf's *Fates of the Apostles* and in his Epilogues," *ASE* 6 (1977): 105–19.

²¹ Warwick Frese, "Runic Signatures," 323–27. Compare Campbell, "Cynewulf's Multiple Revelations," 247–48.

²² See, for example, Peter Clemoes, "King Alfred's Debt to Vernacular Poetry: The Evidence of *Ellen and Cræft*," in *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michael Korhammer (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), 213–38 at 236–37; Varda Fish, "Theme and Pattern in Cynewulf's *Elene*," *NM* 76.1 (1975):

in wondrous ways, and that he will hold those with knowledge of him accountable for what they do with that knowledge.

Of course, in *Elene* Cynewulf is versifying an existing legend and cannot receive credit for all the interpretive possibilities of this diversely developed narrative tradition. Yet in the poem it is everywhere apparent that he is, in fact, especially concerned with revelation. Words such as “deop” (deep, in the sense of “spiritual”), “run” (private speech), “geryne” (mystery), “onwreon” (reveal), and “cuðan” (make known) recur frequently and consistently throughout the text.²³ Moreover, Cynewulf’s epilogue, which is clearly not based on his source, can be expected to intimate some of his primary concerns. Most notably, it can be demonstrated that the words of Helena’s threat are one of the poet’s inventions; therefore, they are clearly something he wished to emphasize. The closest approximation to Cynewulf’s Latin source for *Elene* 573–97 reads:²⁴

Tunc beata Aelena iussit omnes in igne mitti Qui cum timuissent tradiderunt ei ludam dicentes. Hic uir iusti et prophetae filius est et legem melius nouit cum acriuilia [var. acribia, actibus] Hic domina omnia quae desiderat cor tuum ostendet tibi diligenter.

Then blessed Helena commanded all of them to be sent into fire. They, because they had feared, gave Judas over to her, saying, “This man is the son of a righteous prophet, and he knows the law better with [?]. This man, lady, will diligently show you all that your heart desires.”

Helena’s very brief command in the Latin text is in *Elene* a long threat in direct speech, and her declaration that the truth cannot be concealed has no source in the Latin. After Helena’s speech, Cynewulf’s verses correspond relatively closely to the Latin text, in accordance with his usual practice. The poet’s independence from his source here in Helena’s speech and in the poem’s epilogue clearly indicate his aims and demonstrate that this hypermetric set was of considerable thematic value to him.

1–25; and Robert DiNapoli, “Poesis and Authority: Traces of an Anglo-Saxon *Agon* in Cynewulf’s *Elene*,” *Neophilologus* 82 (1998): 619–30.

23 Compare Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: Grammatica and Literary Theory, 350–1100*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 19 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 440–446.

24 Latin text cited in Holder, *Inuentio Sanctae Crucis*, 1–29 (6.185–7.191). This edition uses, among others, one of the variants closest to Cynewulf’s narrative (the St. Gall manuscript) and is very close to the *Acta Sanctorum* variant. See further Gradon, *Cynewulf’s Elene*, 18–20, for a discussion of the variants, and compare, for example, Holthausen’s composite text (cited in *Cynewulfs Elene*, 22):

Tunc beata Helena [irata]: [“soðlice ic secge, þæt ic eow ealle on fyre hate forbærnan”]. Qui cum timuissent [ignem], tradiderunt ei [unum nomine] ludam, dicentes: “Hic viri iusti et prophetae filius est et legem novit cum actibus suis: hic, domina, omnia, quae desiderat cor tuum, ostendet tibi diligenter.”

[Then blessed Helena [wrathful] said: [“Truly I say that I command you all to burn up in fire”]. Those, because they had feared [the flame], gave over to her [a man named] Judas, saying: “This man is the son of a righteous prophet, and he knows the law with its statutes. This man, lady, will diligently show you everything your heart desires.”]

While Cynewulf does not appear to model Helena's speech on his Latin source, he does have an Old English poetic precedent in mind. The poet appears to draw a significant portion of his diction from the various rhetorical battles of *Guthlac A*.²⁵

1. *Elene* 574 **Ic eow to soðe secgan wille**
Guthlac A 493b–4b **Ne** beoð þa **dyrne** (cp. *Elene* 584a) swa þeah.
 Ic eow soð siþþon **secgan wille** (Speaker: Guthlac)
2. *Elene* 575–76 ond þæs in life lige ne wyrðeð,
 gif ge þissum lease leng gefylgað
 Guthlac A [no approximations]
3. *Elene* 577 mid fæcne gefice, þe me fore standþ
Guthlac A 246 Ne eam ic swa fea-log, swa ic eow fore stonde (Guthlac)
4. *Elene* 578–81 **þæt eow in beorge** bæl fornimeð,
 hattost heaðo-**welma**, ond eower hra bryttað,
 lacende **lig**, þæt eow sceal þæt leas
 apundrad weorðan to woruld-gedale
 Guthlac A 190b–93b þonne hy him **yrre** (cp. *Elene* 573b) hweopan
 frecne **fyres wylme**. Stodan him on feðe-hwearfum,
 cwædon **þæt he on þam beorge** byrnan sceolde (Narrator)
 ond his lic-homan **lig** forswelgan
 Guthlac A 283 hondum hrinan, ne þin hra feallan (Demons)
 Guthlac A 374–75 Deah ge minne flæsc-homan **fyres wylme**
 forgripen grom-hydge gifran **lege** (Guthlac)
5. *Elene* 582–84 **Ne magon ge ða word geseðan** **þe ge hwile** nu on unriht
 wrigon under womma sceatum; **ne magon ge þa** wyrd bemiðan
 bedyrnan þa deopan mihte."
 Guthlac A 702 He sceal þy wonge wealdan, **ne magon ge** him **þa wic** forstondan.
 (St. Bartholomew)
- Guthlac A* 376a–78a næfre ge mec of þissum **wordum** onwendað bendan mec min gewit
 agelæsteð.
 Peah þe ge hine sarum forsæcen, **ne motan ge** mine sawle
 gretan,
 ac ge on betran gebringað. (Guthlac)
- Guthlac A* 465–66 Fela **ge** fore monnum **miþað** þæs **þe ge** in mode gehycgað;
 ne beoð eowre dæda **dyrne**, þeah **þe ge** hy in dygle gefremme.
 (Demons)

Andy Orchard has demonstrated the same type of compositional dependence in *Judith*, where the *Judith*-poet departs from the poem's biblical source to create a dramatic battle

²⁵ Overlapping diction is indicated in bold; similar diction is underlined.

Admittedly, these are impressionistic and thematic resemblances rather than close borrowings, but the remaining hypermetrics in *Elene's* eight-line set, which follow the Latin source more closely, display far more independence from the words of *Guthlac A* (I can find no close parallels from the latter poem):²⁸

- The reminiscences of *Guthlac A* in Helena's speech seem to be the product of remembrance rather than direct borrowing by consulting a text. This possibility is even more likely given Cynewulf's remembrance of two other passages from *Guthlac A*:

28 Parallels with other Cynewulfian and non-Cynewulfian poems are given in Orchard, "Both Style and Substance," 274–87.

1. *Guthlac A* 24–25: lærað **ond** læstað, **ond his lof** rærað,
 oferwinnað þa awyrgðan gæstas, bigytað him wuldres ræste.
 Juliana 48: lufast **ond** gelyfest, **ond his lof** rærast
2. *Guthlac A* 79–80: lufiað **mid lacum** þa þe læs agun,
 dæg hwam dryhtne þeowiap. He hyra dæde sceawað.
 Juliana 111 lufige **mid lacum** þone þe leoht gesceop

In the lines from *Guthlac A*, two rhyming standard verses precede two rhyming hypermetric verses, resulting in a particularly striking and memorable sonic effect. This sequence of a single rhyming couplet followed by a single rhyming hypermetric couplet is not found in any surviving Old English poem besides *Guthlac A*.²⁹ Cynewulf's lines here do not rhyme, but the similarity in structure between the lines in *Guthlac A* and *Juliana* is too strong for the passages not to be related. It is likely that Cynewulf was impressed by the poetic effect of these lines and that he remembered them, incorporating parts of their form into his own composition.

Returning to Helena's threat, the closest correspondences between her speech and *Guthlac A* seem to occur especially within *Guthlac A*'s hypermetric sets (190–193, 376–79, 465–69, 701–2), especially those hypermetric sets which are part of the rhetorical battles between Guthlac and the demons he has supplanted. While space forbids further exposition of *Guthlac A* here, a few remarks are necessary. In *Guthlac A*, demons repeatedly threaten Guthlac with empty death-threats, and Guthlac responds by declaring either his confidence that he will be saved or the demons' destined doom. These word-battles often have a highly juridical flavour, especially because Guthlac and the demons are locked in a territorial dispute, and the poem's hypermetrics are primarily used for important spiritual revelations, counsels, and assertions of authority.³⁰ Helena's hypermetric speech in *Elene* approaches a similar usage, both in its threat towards the Jews (just as demons threaten Guthlac) and in her declaration of fate (a rhetorical weapon which is used by both Guthlac and the demons). In the declaration of fate (that is, that the truth cannot be concealed), she uses a bipartite hypermetrical structure ("Ne magon ge ...," 582a–83a; "Ne magon ge ...," 583b–84a) which is paralleled in *Guthlac A*, *Genesis A*, *Christ C*, and *The Dream of the Rood*.³¹

²⁹ For a fuller discussion of this effect in *Guthlac A*, see Matthew D. Coker, "Voicing the Supernatural in Anglo-Saxon England" (unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford University, 2019), chap. 4.

³⁰ For further discussion, see Coker, "Voicing the Supernatural," chaps. 4 (on *Guthlac A*) and 5 (on *Genesis A*, where hypermetrics are also used in "legal" contexts).

³¹ See Coker, "Function of Hypermetric Lines," 14–18, and n26, where I discuss *The Dream of the Rood*, *Genesis A*, and *Christ C*. In *Guthlac A*, some evidence of this dual structure can be observed above in 376a–78a ("næfre ge mec; ne motan ge") and 465–66 ("Fela ge; ne beoð eowre") and below in 287–91 ("gif þu ure; gif ðu þines").

The only other two hypermetric sets in *Elene* also seem to indicate borrowing from *Guthlac A*:

1. *Elene* 609–10 **Iudas hire ongen þingode** (**ne** meahte **he** þa gehðu bebugan,
oncyrran rex geniðlan; he wæs on þære cwene gewældum)
- Elene* 667–68 **Iudas hire ongen þingode,** **cwæð þæt he** þæt on gehðu gespræce
ond on tweon swiðost, wende him trage hnagre
- Guthlac A* 239 **Guðlac him ongean þingode,** **cwæð þæt hy** gielpa **ne** þorfstan

These are the only verses in Old English poetry which collocate *ongean* and *þingian*. The only other similar locutions are “gean þingade” in *Genesis A* 1009b (where God is the speaker); “wið þingode” in Cynewulf’s *Elene* 77b (where an angel is the speaker) and *Juliana* 261b and 429b (where a demon is the speaker); and “wiðþingode” in *Andreas* 263b, 306b, and 632b (where Jesus is the speaker). The verses from *Elene* are clearly related to *Guthlac A* 239. Given the foregoing evidence, it must be that the sonic effect of *Guthlac A*’s hypermetrics, paired with their rhetorical effect, had a lasting influence on Cynewulf’s verse. It is also important to note that here in both 609–10 and 667–68, Judas is compelled to speak to Helena and his anxiety (*gehðu*) is highlighted, generally fitting the fearsome judgment-context of the eight-line hypermetric set.

Helena’s threat shares certain structural affinities with one of the demons’ threats in *Guthlac A* 280–291:³²

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 280 | We þe beoð holde gif ðu us hyran wilt,
oþþe þec ungearo eft gesecað
maran mægne, þæt þe mon ne þearf
hondum hrianan, ne þin hra feallan
wæpna wundum. We þas wic magun |
| 285 | fotum afyllan; folc in ðriceað
meara þreatum ond mon-farum.
Beoð þa gebolgne, þa þec breodwiað,
tredað þec ond tergað, ond hyra torn wrecað,
toberað þec blodgum lastum; gif þu ure bidan þencest, |
| 290 | we þec niþa genægað. Ongin þe generes wilnian,
far þær ðu freonda wene, gif ðu þines feores recce. |

[We will be gracious to you if you will heed us, or a greater strength will seek you out again when you are unready, so that none will need to touch you with hands, nor fell your body with the wounds of weapons. We can raze this settlement with our feet; a people will force their way in with bands of horses and human-entourages. They will be

32 Repeated third-person plural verb endings are indicated in bold. “Rhyming” endings are in italics. For fuller discussion of this passage in its rhetorical context, see again Coker, “Voicing the Supernatural,” chap. 4.

swollen with anger, those who strike you down, tread you and tear you and avenge their grief, *bear you away, leaving bloody tracks; if you think to endure us, we will assault you with hostilities. Start asking for refuge for yourself, and go where you expect to find friends, if you care for your life.*]

By comparison, both threats begin with lines of very similar structure. The a-verse has a structure of first-person pronoun + second-person pronoun + *o*-internal feminine rhyme; the b-verse has an infinitive (of hearing, speaking) + finite form of *willan* (“We þe beoð holde | gif ðu us hyran wilt,” *Guthlac A* 280; “Ic eow to soðe | secgan wille,” *Elene* 574). Helena’s speech, like the demons’, also repeatedly uses finite third-person verbs before leading up to the hypermetric set (“wyrðeð,” 575b; “gefylgað,” 576b; “standaþ,” 577b; “fornimeð,” 578b; “bryttað,” 578b), setting them in an especially noticeable verse-final position for five consecutive lines. While the demons do not threaten Guthlac with fire in this passage, they do in at least two others (189b–99b, 579–89; Guthlac’s comment at 374–75 seems to suggest that the demons also threatened him with fire in a portion of the poem which is now lost). If these passages are related, it is noteworthy that the demons’ threat at *Guthlac A* 280–291 also has an instance of *tricolon abundans* (a form of clausal parallelism in which the third clause is longest) preceding hypermetrics (“tredað þec ond tergað, ond hyra torn wrecað,” 287a–89a), just like *Guthlac A* 24–25, which Cynewulf also seems to have remembered. While lines 287a–89a are perhaps not as impressive sonically as 24–25, line 288 does have three third-person plural verbs with internal rhyme (*tredað*, *tergað*, *torn wrecað*) and an alternating alliterative pattern (*tr-*, *t-r*; *t-r*, *wr-*), lending it a certain mnemonic quality.

Cynewulf, who may have composed *Guthlac B*, likely read or heard *Guthlac A* and remembered its most salient poetic effects (rhyming verses, *tricolon abundans*, and hypermetrics), especially where these are used in tandem. Even if the reader will not agree on the date of *Guthlac A* based on linguistic and metrical grounds, they will perhaps remember both that Cynewulf is known to be a highly formulaic poet (more than 40 percent of his verses are “formulaic”) and that the stylistic features he mimics here are characteristic of *Guthlac A*.³³ It is likely that Cynewulf, who generally uses *tricolon abundans* and hypermetrics only occasionally, was influenced by *Guthlac A*. If Cynewulf remembered *Guthlac A*’s salient sonic effects, it stands to reason that he also remembered their agonistic context. Such remembrance is reflected in *Elene*’s eight-line hypermetric set: it shares with *Guthlac A*’s hypermetrics rhetorical conflict whose resolution hinges on a coming judgment and revelation of truth.

Francis Leneghan has persuasively argued that the Vercelli Book was assembled to “teach the teachers”—that is, to train educators in their dual roles as interpreters and communicators of spiritual signs.³⁴ A similar rationale seems to lie at the heart of

³³ Orchard, “Both Style and Substance,” especially 278.

³⁴ Francis Leneghan, “Teaching the Teachers: The Vercelli Book and the Mixed Life,” in *ES* 94 (2013): 627–58.

Elene, and this text about revelation and proclamation makes a perfect final poem for the codex. In *Elene*, the eight-line hypermetric set stands apart from ordinary lines through its lengthened verses and heightened patterning, and both Helena's message and the wise men's response to it (distinguished as these are by hypermetrics) stand out from the rest of the narrative to communicate the gravity of the coming Judgment and the proper response to it: seeking out and revealing truth. The thematic correlation between the hypermetric set and epilogue confirms this impression. Moreover, the connection between hypermetrics in *Guthlac A* and *Elene* illuminates the connotations Cynewulf probably had in mind when constructing *Elene's* expanded verses. These are further indications of the fundamental importance that the study of metre and compositional style hold for our interpretation of Old English poems. A. J. Bliss was a forerunner in demonstrating this importance, and the ongoing work of the ground-breaking Consolidated Library of Anglo-Saxon Poetry will doubtless continue to demonstrate this value in exciting new ways and change the way we read (and remember) these poems.³⁵

35 I am grateful to Professor Francis Leneghan for reading a draft of this chapter and for his insightful suggestions.

Chapter 8

SINGLE HALF-LINES AND HEAVY HYPERMETRIC VERSES IN *MAXIMS I* RECONSIDERED

Kazutomo Karasawa*

HYPERMETRIC VERSES ABOUND abnormally in *Maxims I*, which is already puzzling,¹ but scholars have long been puzzled, even more, by the use of heavy hypermetric verses and single half-lines. In fact, no two editors of the work have ever agreed completely on how they should edit them, and as a result, the total number of lines is very often different in different editions.² In his articles, A. J. Bliss tackles this issue squarely based on a comparative study of relevant Old Norse and Old English metres, and comes up with a penetrating hypothesis about the developments of *ljóðaháttir*-like constructions and the hypermetric verse in Old English from a prehistoric Germanic metre, whose on-verse can be seen as an archetypal heavy hypermetric verse.³ These articles of Bliss, though dealing with much wider range of texts, throw considerable light upon peculiar metrical features in *Maxims I* which greatly contribute to further metrical study of the work. In this chapter, I shall reexamine the use of single half-lines and heavy hypermetric verses in *Maxims I*, chiefly basing myself on evidence found in the work itself, and I shall argue, in vindication of the basic idea underlying Bliss's hypothesis, that the poem may preserve vestiges from various stages of the development of a prehistoric metre like the one Bliss reconstructs.

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1 On hypermetric verse, and for a full index of key technical terms used in this chapter and volume, readers should consult the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices. According to J. M. Kirk, the percentage of hypermetric verse in *Maxims I* is about 33.33 percent, and this is very high in comparison with other major works containing hypermetric verses such as *Beowulf* (0.3 percent), *Genesis A* (1.3 percent), *Guthlac A, B* (3 percent), *Daniel* (5.6 percent), *Solomon and Saturn* (slightly less than 7 percent), *The Dream of the Rood* (13 percent), *Maxims II* (13.9 percent). See John Marshall Kirk, "A Critical Edition of the Old English Gnostic Poems in the Exeter Book and MS Cotton Tiberius B. 1." (PhD diss., Brown University, 1970; privately published 1978), 40. In addition, though Kirk does not mention it, the percentage in *Judith* is approximately 12 percent.

2 Unless otherwise stated, all the quotations from *Maxims I* and line numbers thereof in this chapter are based on *The Exeter Book*, ed. George Philip Krapp and Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), 156–63.

3 A. J. Bliss, "Single Half-Lines in Old English Poetry," *N&Q* 216 (1971): 442–49; and "The Origin and Structure of the Old English Hypermetric Line," *N&Q* 217 (1972): 242–48.

Unambiguous Single Half-Lines in *Maxims I*

A single half-line, or a so-called “orphan verse,” is a half-line occurring on its own not paired with another half-line. Bliss is highly tolerant to the use of various kinds of single half-lines in Old English poems, but on this I disagree with him. Since I will suggest some small modifications to Bliss’s hypothesis below, and since this may well be the ultimate source of disagreement between Bliss and myself, I shall first deal with this issue.

Relying on the examples he finds in *Maxims I* and in the poems in the Junius Manuscript, Bliss argues that there are no strict restrictions in the use of single half-lines; according to Bliss, each may be a hypermetric or normal verse with or without double alliteration, and with or without continued alliteration, or may even be without any kind of alliteration.⁴ Bliss does not recognize any major stylistic or rhetorical function behind their use, and so he is willing to recognize a single half-line even in the middle of nowhere, as in the following lines based on his rearrangement of the text of *Genesis A* 2647–48:⁵

modgeþance, and hi miltse to þe
seceð? Me sægde ær

Here a sentence ends and a new sentence begins in the middle of a single half-line, which seems unusual. As typically reflected in this rearrangement, Bliss supposes that any kind of single half-line can occur almost anywhere, which implies that they are just a much freer alternative for a normal long line, usable even without any alliteration or without almost any syntactic or structural restriction. Re-editing or rearranging texts based on this approach would make Old English poems look much less systematic than they have traditionally been presented, and it is highly debatable whether single half-lines could be used as flexibly as Bliss argues. However, as it is beyond the scope of this article to examine how single half-lines work in Old English poems in general, my argument hereafter is based chiefly on internal evidence found in *Maxims I* itself.

In *Maxims I*, single half-lines are sporadically used. As Bliss points out, the use of a long line followed by a single half-line resembles the Old Norse *ljóðaháttir* metre,⁶ a metre for gnomic poems,⁷ whereas in many cases, one or more extra single half-lines resembling those used in the Old Norse *galdralag* metre are added to the first single

⁴ Bliss, “Single Half-Lines,” 444–49. “Continued alliteration” in this chapter refers to alliteration on the same alliterative sound as that of the previous line.

⁵ Bliss, “Single Half-Lines,” 446. It is usually considered that this part of the text is defective. See *Genesis A: A New Edition, Revised*, A. N. Doane (Tempe: ACMRS, 2013), 387.

⁶ The line following the long line in the Old Norse *ljóðaháttir* metre is usually called “full-line,” but in this article, I shall use the term “single half-line” instead.

⁷ The *ljóðaháttir* metre is used, for instance, in *Hávamál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál*, *Skírnismál*, *Lokasenna*, *Alvísmál*, *Sigrdrífomál*, *Grógald*, *Fiðlvinnsmál*, *Helgakvða Híorvarzsonar*, *Reginismál*, *Fáfnismál*, etc. See Eduard Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1893), 80. For a detailed study of the *ljóðaháttir* metre, see Andreas Heusler, *Der Ljóðaháttir: Eine metrische Untersuchung* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1889). See also Megan E. Hartman, *Poetic Style and Innovation in Old English, Old Norse, and Old Saxon* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020), 89–124.

half-line. As Bliss's article shows, it can be ambiguous whether a certain line is a single half-line as, for instance, in the following example:

Læran sceal mon geongne monnan,
trymman ond tyhtan þæt he teala cunne, oppæt hine mon
 atemedne hæbbe

(*Maxims I* lines 45b–46)

[A young person must be taught to know things well until you have tamed him]⁸

Krapp and Dobbie and many other editors print these lines as they are in this quotation, but Bliss suggests that line 46a should be divided into two half-lines of Types A and C, while line 46b should be regarded as a single half-line. The following is a rearranged text in accordance with Bliss's suggestion:⁹

Læran sceal mon geongne monnan,
trymman ond tyhtan þæt he teala cunne,
oppæt hine mon atemedne hæbbe,

Thus it can be unclear whether a certain line is a (heavy) hypermetric on-verse accompanied by a corresponding off-verse, or two normal half-lines followed by a single half-line. Yet there are several unambiguous examples of single half-lines in *Maxims I*, and I shall first examine them so as to elucidate some aspects of their role in this work.

The following are all the unambiguous examples of single half-lines in *Maxims I* (I have underlined the lines in question):¹⁰

Treo sceolon brædan ond treow weaxan,
sio geond bilwitra breost ariseð.

⁸ All the translations of *Maxims I* are taken from *Old English Shorter Poems*, ed. and trans. Robert E. Bjork, vol. 2: Wisdom and Lyric (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 64–81.

⁹ See Bliss, "Single Half-Lines," 443. T. A. Shippey follows this reading in his *Poems of Wisdom and Learning in Old English* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1976), 66.

10 Apart from these examples, lines 54–55 and 172 have often been regarded as single half-lines, yet it is much more likely that they are normal long lines. Although the original text has *wind* in line 55 and it makes good sense in the context, some editors emend to *sund*, since the introduction of two single half-lines here scarcely makes sense, whereas with the emendation, the rearranged lines 54 and 55 (which correspond to Krapp and Dobbie's lines 54–56) would have a parallel structure, which is appropriate since they are correlative lines comparing a harmonious relationship among men with the calm ocean. Fred C. Robinson argues for the emendation in his "Notes and Emendations to Old English Poetic Texts," *NM* 67 (1966): 356–64 at 359–60. Line 172, which Krapp and Dobbie print as a hypermetric single half-line, can be divided into two normal half-lines of types E and A, and there is no reason to combine them. In *Beowulf*, there are two examples of half-lines structurally very similar to the first half of line 172: "Wa bið þæm ðe sceal" (183b); and "Wel bið þæm ðe mot" (186b) (Klaeber 4). See also the *Phoenix* 516b, the *Wife's Lament* 52b, and the *Lord's Prayer II* 17a. For the scansion of those half-lines in *Beowulf*, see Rafael J. Pascual, "Three-Position Verses and the Metrical Practice of the *Beowulf* Poet," *SELIM* 20 (2013–2014): 49–79 at 52–62.

Wærleas mon ond wonhydig,
 ætrenmod ond ungetreow,
þæs ne gymeð God.¹¹ (lines 159–63)

[Trees must broaden and faith be fruitful, it rises in the hearts of the innocent. Of the faithless and careless one, venomous and untrue, God will not take heed.]

Swa monige beoþ men ofer eorþan, swa beoþ modgeþoncas;
ælc him hafað sundorsefan. (lines 167–68)

[There are as many people on earth as there are thoughts; each person has a separate understanding.]

A scyle þa rincas gerædan lædan
 ond him ætsomne swefan;
næfre hy mon tomælde,
ær hy deað todæle. (lines 177–80)

[Warriors must always have weapons with them and sleep side by side; let no one ever hinder them with words before death separates them.]

Lot sceal mid lyswe, list mid gedefum;
þy weorpeð se stan forstolen.
Oft hy wordum toweorpað,
ær hy bacum tobreden;
geara is hwær aræd. (lines 187–91)

[Guile must accompany the evil man, skill the virtuous one; in that way, the stone gets stolen. Often they cast words before they turn their backs; the ready man is prepared everywhere.]

In addition to these, the following passage may well include another set of examples of single half-lines, though as far as I am aware, nobody has ever pointed this out:

Wif sceal wiþ wer wære gehealdan, oft hi mon wommum belihð;
fela bið fæsthydigra, fela bið fyrwetgeornra,
 freoð hy fremde monnan, þonne se oþer feor gewiteþ. (lines 100–102)

[A woman must be true to her man, often she is blamed for wrongs; many are constant, many are curious, they love strangers when the other one goes far away.]

Line 101b in this quotation carries double alliteration, thereby violating the very basic alliterative rule generally observed in Old English poetry. Since the poet of *Maxims I* otherwise strictly follows the rule of avoiding double alliteration in the off-verse,

¹¹ For details about lines 161–62, see below.

it seems plausible that lines 101a and 101b in the quotation are intended as single half-lines rather than two halves of a long line, in which case, lines 100–101 (or lines 100–102, if the text is rearranged) form a *galdralag*-like construction. In the Old Norse *galdralag* metre,¹² single half-lines often exhibit syntactic and/or structural parallelism as in the following example:

Gáttir allar áðr gangi fram,
um skoðaz skyli,
um skygnaz skyli,
þvíat óvíst er at vita hvar óvinir
sitia á fleti fyrir.¹³ (*Hávamál* 1)

[All doorways before entering should be spied out, should be scrutinized, for it is not known for certain where enemies sit in wait in the hall ahead.]

Similar syntactic parallelism is occasionally found also in the unambiguous examples of single half-lines in *Maxims I*, as in lines 161–62 (see below), 179–80 and 189–90, but those half-lines printed as line 101 in Krapp and Dobbie's edition provide us with the best example of this kind of parallelism. Thus I shall regard these lines as another set of examples of unambiguous single half-lines in *Maxims I*, and include them in my discussion below (though I shall keep referring to them as lines 101a and 101b, in accordance with Krapp and Dobbie's edition for the sake of consistency).

The unambiguous single half-lines in *Maxims I* can be either normal half-lines (as in lines 163, 168, and 178–79) or hypermetric ones (as in lines 101a, 101b, 180, and 188–91). Double alliteration is compulsory especially in the single half-line immediately following a long line and it is also nearly always compulsory in the extra single half-line(s) following the first singleton verse. The situation is very similar in the Old Norse *ljóðaháttir/galdralag*, where the single half-line “generally has double alliteration.”¹⁴ The only exception in this respect is line 191, which is devoid of any kind of alliteration; but this line is “metrically abnormal and obscure in meaning”¹⁵ and may well be defective.

12 For the Old Norse *galdralag*, see, for instance, *Hávamál*, ed. David A. H. Evans (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1986), 5; Douglas Peter Allen Simms, “Reconstructing an Oral Tradition: Problems in the Comparative Metrical Analysis of Old English, Old Saxon and Old Norse Alliterative Verse” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2003), 235; and Eirik Westcoat, “The Goals of *Galdralag*: Identifying the Historical Instances and Uses of the Metre,” *Saga-Book* 40 (2016): 69–90.

13 This quotation and its translation are based on *The Poetic Edda*, ed. Ursula Dronke, vol. 3: Mythological Poems II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3. I have added underlining and rearranged the text in accordance with the convention of printing Old English poems, placing on- and off-verses side by side.

14 Bliss, “The Origin and Structure,” 244. See also Evans, *Hávamál*, 5.

15 Bliss, “Single Half-Lines,” 445.

Line 179 may be regarded as another example without double alliteration, since the pronoun *mon* is generally unstressed in this work; if this is the case, line 179 is a verse of Type A3, which occurs only in the on-verse without double alliteration.¹⁶ Continued alliteration is never used in the single half-line immediately following a long line, and again the situation is similar in the Old Norse *ljóðaháttir/galdralag*, where continued alliteration occurs only sporadically and is far from compulsory.¹⁷ Almost always compulsory double alliteration, the lack of continued alliteration, which is compulsory in the normal off-verse, and also the possible use of a Type A3 verse are all features that point to the nature of single half-lines as similar to a normal on-verse, or as dissimilar to a normal off-verse.

Apart from the use of hypermetric verses, basically the same can be said about the following four examples in the two passages which are regarded by Sievers and Bliss as presenting perfect examples of the use of the *ljóðaháttir* metre in Old English:¹⁸

Gehyrest þu, Eadwacer? Unerne earne hwelp
bireð wulf to wuda.
þæt mon eaþe tosliteð þætte næfre gesomnad wæs,
uncer giedd geador.¹⁹ (*Wulf and Eadwacer* lines 16–19)

[Do you hear, Eadwacer, vigilant one? Wolf will bear our wretched whelp off to the forest. One may easily tear apart what was never joined, our song together.]²⁰

læt me mid englum up siðian,
sittan on swegle,
herian heofonas god haligum reorde
a butan ende.²¹ (*A Prayer* 76–79)

[allow me to journey upward with the angels, to take my seat in heaven, to praise forever the God of heaven with a sanctified voice.]²²

¹⁶ However, the indefinite pronoun *man* is occasionally stressed in *Beowulf*, as in lines 25, 1048, 1172, 1534, etc., and other works, and so it could be stressed in *Maxims I* 179.

¹⁷ Bliss, "The Origin and Structure," 244. In *Hávamál*, there are, according to my count, only four examples of continued alliteration in single half-lines occurring in the *ljóðaháttir/galdralag*, in 117/7, 118/3, 139/6, and 150/3, of which the second and fourth also carry double alliteration.

¹⁸ Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik*, 145; and Bliss, "Single Half-Lines," 445.

¹⁹ All the quotations from *Wulf and Eadwacer* are based on Krapp and Dobbie, *The Exeter Book*.

²⁰ All the translations of *Wulf and Eadwacer* are taken from Bjork, *Old English Shorter Poems*, 103.

²¹ This quotation is based on *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).

²² This translation is taken from *Old English Shorter Poems*, ed. and trans. Christopher A. Jones, vol. 1: Religious and Didactic (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 109.

In both passages, single half-lines always carry double alliteration but never continued alliteration.²³ It is noteworthy that in these two examples, the *ljóðahátttr*-like construction is used to conclude these works. In *Wulf and Eadwacer*, two more unambiguous single half-lines are used in refrains:

Leodum is minum swylce him mon lac gife;
willað hy hine aþecgan, gif he on þreat cymeð.
Ungelic is us. (*Wulf and Eadwacer*, 1–3)

[For my people, it is as if someone gave them a gift of sacrifice; they want to kill him if he comes into their company. It's different for us.]

Fæst is þæt eglond, fenne biworpen.
Sindon wæltreowe weras þær on ige;
willað hy hine aþecgan, gif he on þreat cymeð.
Ungelice is us. (*Wulf and Eadwacer*, 5–8)

[Secure is that land, surrounded by a fen. Cruel men are there on that island; they want to kill him if he comes into their company. It's different for us.]

Here again the single half-lines carry double alliteration while lacking continued alliteration. Exactly the same *ljóðahátttr*-like construction is repeated twice in refrains, seemingly marking the ends of stanzas.

Similarly, those unambiguous single half-lines in *Maxims I* are generally used to conclude a remark, often giving some final or additional comment to the preceding main statement, and so the end of (a group of) single half-line(s) coincides with the end of a maxim, statement, or passage. Line 163, for instance, brings an end to a passage on the faith growing in the hearts of innocent people and on faithless people ignored by God. Line 168 concludes the statement that there are as many people as there are thoughts. Lines 178–80 are placed at the end of a maxim on warriors who are supposed to be together always until they are separated by death, while lines 188–91 conclude a passage seemingly about two persons (gamblers?) starting to oppose each other. Line 101 could be seen as a bit exceptional, since another line thematically related to it follows; but concluding the *galdralag*-like construction which works on its own, it still could be seen as occurring at the end of a remark. In this context, line 102 seems to work as a bridge between the preceding and succeeding passages, connecting a maxim on flirtatious women in line 101b and maxims on a long-absent seafarer and his wife/partner waiting for his return. Thus, line 101 concludes a passage on women, while it is connected with the next, thematically related passage by line 102 functioning as a connecting link.

Unambiguous examples of single half-lines in *Maxims I* have several things in common in the way they are used, and they may well reflect a certain format of single half-lines followed by the poet of *Maxims I*. Unambiguous single half-lines in *Maxims*

23 *Síðian* in *A Prayer* 76b quoted above alliterates with *sittan* and *swegle* in the next line, but line 76 alliterates on vowels, not on the *s*-sound; this type of alliteration is regarded as something different.

I generally behave like an on-verse and unlike an off-verse; more especially, those immediately following a long line always carry double alliteration but never carry continued alliteration. Those coming after the first single half-line also usually carry double alliteration, while two consecutive single half-lines occasionally exhibit syntactic and/or structural parallelism. Single half-lines are used at the end of a maxim, statement, or passage, marking a certain break in the text. As far as these unambiguous examples in *Maxims I* are concerned, single-half-lines are not used as flexibly as Bliss suggests, and there seem to be certain rules behind their use.²⁴

The unambiguous single half-lines in *Maxims I* are remarkably different from those resulting from Bliss's rearrangements of heavy hypermetric verses (i.e. lines 4b, 36b, 46b, 58b, 64b, 66b, 100b, 164b, and 185b). The lines resulting from rearrangements all display characteristics of an off-verse (actually presented as such in many editions), always carrying continued alliteration but never double alliteration. Those produced by rearrangements also differ from unambiguous ones in that they do not occur as a group, with only one possible exception in lines 100b–101. Moreover, they do not always conclude a maxim, statement, or passage, but some occur in the middle of a statement as in lines 46b, and others even begin a new passage not directly related to the previous part as in lines 4b and 58b.

Those who would follow Bliss's suggestion about dividing heavy hypermetric verses into two half-lines may argue that many single half-lines having off-verse-like characteristics have been regarded (wrongly) as off-verses. Yet it could also be argued that the reason why double alliteration is compulsory while continued alliteration is avoided in unambiguous single half-lines may well be because otherwise their status as single half-lines could be blurred. As discussed below, there are some normal hypermetric verses that can be divided into two half-lines; in those cases, if there was continued alliteration without double alliteration, it would be impossible to tell whether it was an off-verse following a hypermetric on-verse, or whether it was a single half-line coming after a long line. Similarly, in the case of single half-lines occurring consecutively as a group, continued alliteration without double alliteration would make it impossible to distinguish whether they were single half-lines or half-lines constituting a long line (cf. the case of line 101 discussed above). Thus double alliteration without continued alliteration is most effective to mark a single half-line, while double alliteration with continued alliteration also works, but continued alliteration without double alliteration is least effective, making the difference between a single half-line and an off-verse ambiguous.

24 The *ljóðaháttir*-like construction with an unambiguous single half-line is sporadically attested also in Old High German poems, as in the *Hildebrandslied* 37–38 and the “Wessobrunner Gebet” 1–5. The former constitutes a maxim, as briefly discussed in Paul Cavill, *Maxims in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), 35. For its use in the latter, see Leslie Seiffert, “The Metrical Form and Composition of the ‘Wessobrunner Gebet,’” *MÆ* 31.1 (1963): 1–13. Moreover, Sievers recognizes some *ljóðaháttir*-like constructions with an unambiguous single half-line in the Old Saxon *Heliand*, in lines 1553–54, 1602–3, and 1605–6. See *Heliand*, ed. Eduard Sievers (Halle: Verlag, 1878), 110–11, and 114–15.

Considering all the differences between the unambiguous examples and those resulting from Bliss's rearrangements, it seems highly debatable whether we should follow Bliss and recognize off-verse-like, "ambiguous" single half-lines in *Maxims I*.

Heavy Hypermetric Verses in *Maxims I*

Whereas a "strong" type of hypermetric verse contains three stress words, a heavy hypermetric verse contains four, and it may look like a combination of two normal half-lines as in "æt fotum sæt frean Scyldinga" (*Beowulf* 1166a), which can be interpreted as a combination of verses of Types B and D.²⁵ In fact, nearly the same words, "þe æt fotum sæt / frean Scyldinga," occur earlier in line 500, where they form two normal half-lines rather than a heavy hypermetric half-line.²⁶

As seen in the previous section, Bliss recommends dividing heavy hypermetric verses in *Maxims I* into two normal half-lines and regarding the corresponding off-verses as single half-lines. On the other hand, in *Maxims I* there are also some normal hypermetric verses that could be divided into two normal half-lines, such as:

oft mon fereð feor hi tune (145a);

Swa monige beoþ men ofer eorþan (167a);

Hy twegen sceolon tæfle ymbsittan (181a).

The first example can be divided into half-lines of Types A3 and A, while the other two can be divided into half-lines of Types B and A.²⁷ However, Bliss is unwilling to divide them into two, since "these are not four-stress half-lines, and there is no reason to disturb them."²⁸ Judging from these words, Bliss's argument about dividing heavy hypermetric verses into two half-lines seems to be based fundamentally on his disbelief in the use of heavy hypermetric verses in Old English poems. Yet since they are also attested in

²⁵ It is true that the half-line is not always regarded as a heavy hypermetric verse; some regard *sæt* as unaccented, and scan the half-line as a normal hypermetric verse. Based on "a remarkable ... phenomenon among several Indo-European languages ... that finite verbs of independent clauses are unaccented, whereas those of dependent clauses are permitted to receive accent," Simms argues that *sæt* in *Beowulf* 1166a should be unaccented, but finite verbs of independent clauses are very often accented in *Beowulf* (see, for instance, lines 2b, 5b, 6a, 7b, 8a, 8b, etc.) as well as in other Old English poems, and the phenomenon would hardly justify his claim. Moreover, if the verb is unaccented here, it violates Kuhn's Law; but Kuhn's Law is more relevant to Old English poetry than the phenomenon Simms mentions. At any rate, whether or not the half-line in question is a heavy hypermetric verse does not affect my discussion below. For Simms's argument, see his "Reconstructing an Oral Tradition," 69–71 at 71.

²⁶ A similar case is found in the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* in lines 7 and 14; in line 14, two phrases, "Hadubrant gimahalta, / Hiltibrantes sunu," form a long line, whereas in line 7, very similar phrases, "Hiltibrant gimahalta, Heribrantes sunu," form a heavy hypermetric on-verse followed by an off-verse, "her uwas heroro man." *Beowulf* and *Hildebrandslied* text in this paragraph and note is taken from Klaeber 4.

²⁷ See John C. Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf: An Interpretation of the Normal and Hypermetric Verse-Forms in Old English Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), 151.

²⁸ Bliss, "Single Half-Lines," 444.

Old Saxon and Old High German poems,²⁹ and may be a vestige of a prehistoric Old Germanic metre,³⁰ there seems to be no obvious reason initially to deny their existence in Old English,³¹ especially when there are several possible examples not only in *Maxims I* but also in some other works,³² and when dividing them into two often causes metrical problems (see below). From this perspective, I shall reexamine in this section the use of heavy hypermetric verses in *Maxims I*.

The following is a list of all the possible heavy hypermetric verses in *Maxims I*, all of which Bliss would divide into two half-lines at the slashes I have inserted, regarding the corresponding off-verses as single half-lines (except for lines 161, 162, 166, and 183a, which are not paired with an off-verse).³³

Gleawe men / sceolon gieddum wrixlan (4a);

Snotre men / sawlum beorgað (36a);

trymman ond tyhtan / þæt he teala cunne (46a);

cene men / gecynde rice (58a);

widgongel wif / word gespringeð (64a);

Sceomiande man / sceal in sceade hweorfan (66a);

Wif sceal wiþ wer / wære gehealdan (100a);

Wærleas mon / ond wonhydig (161);

ætrenmod / ond ungetreow (162);

Fela sceop meotod / þæs þe fyrn gewearð (164a);

29 For the use of heavy hypermetric verses in Old English, Old Saxon, and Old High German poems, see Simms, "Reconstructing an Oral Tradition," 59–122.

30 Bliss, "The Origin and Structure," 246. For more details, see below.

31 For the use of heavy hypermetric verses in Old English poems, see Simms, "Reconstructing an Oral Tradition," 59–87, and Megan E. Hartman, "Form and Style of Gnostic Hypermetrics," *Studia Metrica et Poetica* 1.1 (2014): 68–99 at 80–83.

32 See *Beowulf* 1166a, *Genesis A* 1601a, *Daniel* 207a and 237a, *Maxims II* 42a, and *The Wanderer* 65a. For *Daniel* 207a, see Simms, "Reconstructing an Oral Tradition," 74–77. Not all these lines are widely accepted as heavy hypermetric verses, but this list shows that there are not a few possible examples even outside *Maxims I*. There are two more examples in *Genesis B*, in lines 356 and 403a, of which the first is not regarded as a heavy hypermetric verse in many editions, but see Simms, "Reconstructing an Oral Tradition," 88–91. *Genesis B* is not a genuinely Old English poem, but the use of heavy hypermetric verses by the Anglo-Saxon translator/poet may well reflect that they were not totally alien to the Old English poetic tradition.

33 Apart from these lines, Bliss also includes line 185a, but the text is unnecessarily emended, and so I exclude it from my discussion here. For further details about the unnecessary emendation, see *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry: An Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501*, ed. Bernard J. Muir, rev. 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 563.

gleomen gied / ond guman snyttro (166);³⁴

idle hond / æmetlan geneah (183a).³⁵

It is noteworthy that many of these lines have metrically the same onset; they hardly seem to be random combinations of two half-lines but most of them seem to follow a certain format. The first half of lines 4a, 36a, 58a, 161, 162, 166, and 183a consists of a three-syllable phrase or compound that could be scanned as / x / (or / x \ in the case of a compound), while that of line 100a, beginning with metrically the same three-position element scanned as / xx /, may well be classified in the same group. If *meotod* is regarded as resolved, the first half of line 164a also belongs to the same group. The first half of lines 64a and 66a, on the other hand, consists of a phrase that could be interpreted as a normal Type E verse. Line 46a is the only one that belongs to neither of these groups.

Of these examples, lines 161, 162, 166 and 183 are not followed by what could be a corresponding off-verse, and this may well be interpreted as revealing that they are long lines themselves. However, it seems equally possible that they are single half-lines. In fact, lines 161–62 are followed by a single half-line and so lines 161–63 may well be a group of single half-lines, as several editors of the work suppose.³⁶ This is plausible since they all follow the general principles behind the use of unambiguous single half-lines discussed above: they carry double alliteration, but are devoid of continued alliteration; they display structural parallelism—especially lines 161–62; and these lines conclude the passage on the faith growing in the minds of virtuous people by adding a comment on what happens to faithless people. Line 166, which has the same metrical pattern as line 161, also generally follows these principles, carrying treble (rather than double)³⁷

34 This line is regarded as a long line consisting of a three-position verse and a type C verse in Krapp and Dobbie's edition, and Bliss follows their reading.

35 Line 183a in Krapp and Dobbie's edition reads, "idle hond æmetlan geneah tæfles monnes," but it is too heavy and long for a half-line. Bliss suggests that "idle hond / æmetlan geneah" is a long line, while "tæfles monnes" is the on-verse of the next long line, coupled with "þonne teoselum weorpeð" (183b). The manuscript text here reads "idle hond æmet / lange neah tæfles monnes," lines changing at the slash I have inserted. The word "æmetlan" is attested nowhere else, whereas the scribal confusion may be reflected in "lange" if "lan" belongs to the previous word and "ge" belongs to the next. Thus this part of the text may be somehow corrupt. Hartman also suspects some error here in her "Form and Style," 90.

36 Krapp and Dobbie and some others print them as single half-lines in their editions, probably following Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik*, 145.

37 Bliss may regard treble alliteration as problematic (see his "Single Half-Lines," 446), but there are several other examples as in lines 46a, 64a, 100a (though Bliss, taking them as long lines, would not recognize treble alliteration here) as well as in *Maxims II* 3a, *Daniel* 204a, 237a, and 270a, *Christ C* 1162a, *Seafarer* 106a, *Judith* 2a, *Rune Poem* 28a, etc., most of which are hypermetric verses; if a normal hypermetric verse may carry treble alliteration, a heavy hypermetric verse may well also carry it. Moreover, treble alliteration in a heavy hypermetric verse is attested in Old Saxon poems as in *Heliand* 1144a, 3062a, and 5916a, and in the Vatican *Genesis* 228a and 235a (see Simms,

alliteration without continued alliteration and concluding a remark begun in the previous line.³⁸ If it is a single half-line, moreover, it forms a *ljóðahátttr*-like construction with line 165, whereas another couple of lines in a *ljóðahátttr*-like construction immediately follow in lines 166–67, as if forming a stanza consisting of two *ljóðahátttr* couplets just as in Old Norse gnomic poems. This is appropriate from the viewpoint of their content, since these two “couplets” seem to be related to each other, both dealing with the variety of human talents and thoughts. As we have seen, unambiguous examples of single half-lines in *Maxims I* generally have characteristics similar to an on-verse and dissimilar to an off-verse, and in this respect too, heavy hypermetric verses might be used as single half-lines, since they occur only in the on-verse with double (or treble) alliteration.

If divided into two halves in accordance with Bliss’s suggestion, at least eight of those twelve examples, that is, lines 4a, 36a, 58a, 100a, 161, 162, 166, and 183a, would have a three-position verse in their first halves. Yet three-position verses are generally regarded as unmetrical in Old English poetry, and it is debatable whether they would occur so frequently in this short work, while they are “vanishingly rare,”³⁹ if present at all, in other works.⁴⁰ Bliss justifies the use of three-position verses in this work, writing that “there are a number of instances” of them in *Maxims I*, listing line 166a in Krapp and Dobbie’s edition, “gleomen gied,” and the following two verses as evidence of authentic three-position verses in this work:⁴¹

Til sceal mid tilum (23a);
gold mon sceal gifan (155a).

Yet these two half-lines can be regarded as verses of Type A with an unresolved lift in the coda,⁴² and therefore, they do not necessarily demonstrate the authenticity of three-position verses in this work.⁴³ The problem with the other example Bliss mentions is that, as we have just seen, line 166 as a whole, “gleomen gied ond guman snyttro,”

“Reconstructing an Oral Tradition,” 92–115], whereas a single half-line occasionally carries treble alliteration in the Old Norse *ljóðahátttr*/*galdralag* metre (e.g. *Hávamál* 36/3, 37/3, 42/3, 43/6, 46/6, 69/3, 158/6, 160/3, etc.). Thus treble alliteration does not provide good reason to divide a line into two. For treble alliteration in Old English poems, see also Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, 154.

38 However, this line is generally regarded as a long line rather than a single half-line as in Krapp and Dobbie’s and some other editions.

39 Seiichi Suzuki, “Three-Position Verses in *Beowulf* and *Genesis A*: Syntagmatically-Induced Exceptions to the Four-Position Principle,” *JGL* 29.1 (2017): 50–84 at 61–62.

40 For the non-existence of three-syllabic verses in the Old English poetic corpus, see Pascual, “Three-Position Verses”.

41 Bliss, “Single Half-Lines,” 444.

42 See R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 185–88; and Pascual, “Three-Position Verses,” 56–58.

43 The following four variants of this type of verse, scanned as / \ / x, also occur in *Maxims I*: “eglonð monig” (15a); “weder eft cuman” (75b); “garniþ werum” (126b); “Til mon tiles” (141a).

together with line 161 of the same rhythm, may be regarded as a single half-line scanned as / x / x // x, which could be interpreted as a Type C verse prefixed by / x /. Thus, to base oneself, in the discussion regarding the authenticity of three-position verses, on the example of line 166a in Krapp and Dobbie's edition of this work necessarily leads to a circular argument, where three-position verses are regarded as authentic from the beginning. Moreover, in line 145a, "Wineleas, wonsælig mon," the poet may have avoided a three-position verse by inserting an adjective, "wonsælig" (unhappy), which is not fully necessary in the context. Thus it is far from clear that exceptionally in this work three-position verses are to be regarded as tolerable.

Bliss hypothesizes that the Old Norse *ljóðahátt* metre and its alleged Old English equivalent, as well as hypermetric verses in general, may well have been derived from a common prehistoric Germanic metre, whose possible typical pattern he reconstructs as follows: / (x) / | (x) x / x / x || (x) x / x / x.⁴⁴ This hypothetical metre, which Bliss reconstructs as a result of a comparative study of relevant Old Norse and Old English metres, contains a three-position element at the beginning and has four stress words in the on-verse, just as in many of those heavy hypermetric verses in *Maxims I*. If we follow this hypothesis, those heavy hypermetric verses beginning with a three-position onset could be regarded as preserving this sort of prehistoric metre, which could explain why many of the heavy hypermetric verses in *Maxims I* have metrically the same onset. Bliss's hypothetical metre has a tripartite structure, in which the on-verse has two sections. Bliss argues that the bipartite structure of the on-verse of this reconstructed long line may well be fossilized in a stronger break often found in the hypermetric on-verse.⁴⁵ Bliss considers that at some point in prehistoric time, "the difference of weight between the first and second sections was reduced, so that the shorter varieties of the first section, and the weightier varieties of the second section, became rarer" and as a result, "the first two sections would come to be felt as the two halves of a full line, so that the third section was held over as an independent short line," in the process of which independent double alliteration began to be preferred to emphasize the independent status of the third section.⁴⁶ This is, according to Bliss, how the Old Norse *ljóðahátt* metre as well as its Old English counterpart developed. On the other hand, Bliss explains the development of the Old English hypermetric verse from the same archetypal metre as follows: "the difference of weight between the first and second sections was increased by the simplification of the pattern of the first section," in which unstressed syllables were dropped, and as a result of this reduction, "the weight of the first two sections combined was reduced to something comparable with that of the third section."⁴⁷ In this

⁴⁴ Bliss, "The Origin and Structure," 246.

⁴⁵ For the list of hypermetric verses with such a structure, see Bliss, "The Origin and Structure," 244.

⁴⁶ Bliss, "The Origin and Structure," 246.

⁴⁷ Bliss, "The Origin and Structure," 247.

case, the original Germanic long line remained as a long line and therefore, the second half of the line carried continued alliteration.

This insightful hypothesis, if it is slightly modified, would explain the use of heavy hypermetric verses and single half-lines in *Maxims I* in a more straightforward way than it does in its original state. The on-verse of Bliss's hypothetical metre has four stress words and so it could be regarded as an archetypal heavy hypermetric verse; and the alleged heavy hypermetric verses with the onset scanned as / x / in *Maxims I* may well be vestiges of this type of archaic metre discussed by Bliss.⁴⁸ Unambiguous single half-lines in *Maxims I* and in some other works discussed above may well have developed, through the process Bliss discusses, from such an archetypal long line with an on-verse containing four stress words. In the process of development of the Old Norse *ljóðaháttir* metre, Bliss argues, double alliteration began to be preferred while continued alliteration began to be avoided in single half-lines in order to clarify their independent status. If we follow the same reasoning, the half-lines immediately following those heavy hypermetric verses are more likely to be off-verses rather than single half-lines, as they all carry continued alliteration without double alliteration, which may well show that they are not fully established as single half-lines, but are still grouped with the first half of the same line. Thus Bliss's theory, especially the part regarding the developments in Old English, could be modified as follows: the archetypal Old Germanic metre was occasionally preserved as long lines whose on-verse is a heavy hypermetric verse; from the same archetypal metre, the *ljóðaháttir*-like construction developed, with the first two sections promoted to a long line (with the first section often somewhat lengthened if it consisted of only two or three metrical positions as Bliss reconstructs), while the third section developed into a single half-line. In this process, double alliteration began to be preferred in single half-lines, while continued alliteration began to be avoided, so as to clarify their status as a single half-line by clearly separating them from the previous long line; three-position onsets, as well as two-position ones, in the archetypal metre failed to develop into normal half-lines themselves, but were occasionally preserved as onsets of (heavy) hypermetric verses.

If we follow this modified version of the hypothesis, heavy hypermetric verses, which look like a combination of two normal half-lines (such as lines 46a and 64a in *Maxims I*), may well be viewed as fossilizing an intermediate stage through which the on-verse of the archetypal metre developed into a long line followed by a single half-line. On the other hand, line 66a, "Sceomiande man sceal in sceade hweorfan," which also looks like a combination of two normal half-lines of Types E and C, may well reflect another step of the development. Though Bliss would scan it as / \ x / xx // x, as he suggests dividing it into two half-lines, his scansion violates Kuhn's Law; the sentence particle "sceal" is displaced from the first drop of the verse clause, and therefore it would be stressed,

⁴⁸ Bliss, "The Origin and Structure," 245, regards *Maxims I* as a text "of an archaic type," and Leonard Neidorf convincingly argues that it is "an archaic, Anglian composition, contemporary with *Beowulf* and *Genesis A*" in his "On the Dating and Authorship of *Maxims I*," *NM* 117 (2016): 137–53 at 150.

which would make the line unmetrical. In order not to violate Kuhn's Law and keep the line metrical, *man* should be regarded as unstressed here. The noun *man* is normally a stress-word, but in *Maxims I* it is occasionally regarded as unstressed, perhaps in analogy with the indefinite pronoun *man* (one),⁴⁹ which is generally unstressed in this work (with a possible exception in line 179). Thus line 66a should be scanned as / \ xxxx // x, which is a hypermetric verse consisting of Type C element prefixed by / \ xx and which cannot be divided into two half-lines; it includes a lighter variant of a Type E onset of heavy hypermetric verse found in line 64a.

Basically the same thing can be said about line 4a in comparison with lines 36a, 58a, and so on. By recommending that it should be divided into two half-lines of a three-position verse and a Type A verse, Bliss would scan line 4a, "Gleawe men sceolon gieddum wrixlan," as / x / x / x / x. Yet this scansion violates Kuhn's Law; the noun "men" here should be regarded as unstressed again, since otherwise the sentence particle "sceolon," displaced from the first drop of the verse clause, would be stressed, making the line unmetrical. Thus line 4a should be scanned as / xxxx / x / x, which is a hypermetric verse interpreted as consisting of a Type A verse prefixed by / xxxx, and cannot be divided into two half-lines. In lines 36a, "Snotre men sawlum beorgað," and 58a, "cene men gecynde rice," on the other hand, "men" must be regarded as a stress-word, as is normal for a noun. Especially in the case of line 58a, "men," even if it were to behave like a sentence particle, needs to be stressed in order to conform to Kuhn's Law, since it is displaced from the first drop of the verse clause, which begins in the previous half-line. Thus through a special treatment of the noun *man/men*, a variant scanned as / xx seems to have developed for metrical purposes from a three-position element scanned as / x /. From this perspective, line 4a and lines 36a and 58a, all consisting of a three-syllable element ending with the noun *man/men* followed by a Type A element, may well be regarded as variants of each other; the former (i.e. line 4a) being a lighter version developed from the latter, standard variation (i.e. lines 36a and 58a). As the lighter variant is a hypermetric half-line, the underlying standard variation must also be a half-line.

Bliss, in explaining the development of hypermetric verses from the hypothetical Germanic metre, argues that at some point in prehistoric times, unstressed syllables in the first section of the archetypal metre dropped, producing a first section scanned as //, which was later reduced to / \ or / x, resulting in hypermetric onsets such as "Lef mon" (45a).⁵⁰ This is a hypothetical development in the shortened first section of the archetypal metre, while the cases in lines 4a and 66a may well reflect that a somewhat similar reduction of weight could well have happened also in non-shortened or lengthened varieties of the on-verse.

One problem with this hypothesis is that there are at least two cases where a single half-line follows a long line with a (heavy) hypermetric on-verse (i.e. lines 100–101 and

49 Hartman, "Form and Style," 81.

50 Bliss, "The Origin and Structure," 246–47.

167–68). This type of *ljóðahátt*-like construction cannot have developed through the process discussed above. There are also two or three cases where a heavy hypermetric verse is used as a single half-line (i.e. lines 161–62, 166, and possibly line 183). I cannot go into detail about these problems here, but perhaps they represent a further stage of the development, which may well have much to do with the development of the *galdralag*-like construction. At some point after the *ljóðahátt*-like construction was established, one or more extra single half-lines sometimes began to be added to it, forming a *galdralag*-like construction. By this time, the status of a single half-line independent of the preceding long line must have been fully established (as they could be added independently as extra lines), and this may well have made it possible to use as a single half-line any kind of on-verse-like half-line with double (or occasionally treble) alliteration. In the same way, the long line preceding a single half-line may well have been conceived of as an independent normal long line, where any sort of half-lines could be used, and this may well have made it possible for a (heavy) hypermetric verse to occur in a long line preceding a single half-line.

Conclusion

Bliss's hypothesis about the development of the *ljóðahátt*-like construction from a prehistoric metre having four stress words in its on-verse, if slightly modified in its details, would help explain various aspects of the use of heavy hypermetric verses and single half-lines in *Maxims I*, while at the same time, the examples in *Maxims I* could support the general idea of the hypothesis. The modifications I have suggested here are small, but they would make a substantial difference to Bliss's idea of the metrical features in *Maxims I*: single half-lines are not used as flexibly as he argues but seem instead to be used following quite strict rules; heavy hypermetric verses are real; and three-position verses are generally avoided.

ANAPHORA AND STYLISTIC FLEXIBILITY IN THE METRICAL CHARMS

Caroline R. Batten*

THE TWELVE OLD English “metrical charms,” a set of verse spells copied down in tenth- and eleventh-century medical and religious manuscripts, are unusual even within the heterogenous corpus of early medieval English remedies, personal prayers, and incantations.¹ They are referred to as “metrical” precisely because—unlike hundreds of other Old English prayers and spoken remedies—portions of these texts can be scanned according to the rules of Old English verse, as put forward by Eduard Sievers and elaborated by Alan Bliss.² Many of the charms use formulae, collocations, and compounds found in other Old English poetry, as well as techniques like variation. They also contain significant ornamental features lauded as aesthetic achievements in other Old English texts: extra alliteration, rhyme, assonance, homeoteleuton and polyptoton, paronomasia, and a profusion of half-lines of Sievers Types C, D, and E.³ We

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1 This title was bestowed by Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie in *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942). The numbering of the charms (1–12) was also assigned by Dobbie, grouping them by the manuscripts in which they appear.

2 For a full index of key technical terms used in this chapter and volume, readers should consult the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices. Eduard Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1893); A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967). On the validity of Sievers-Bliss scansion, see R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 54.

3 On these features, see for example Donald G. Scragg, “The Nature of Old English Verse,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 55–70; Andy Orchard, “Artful Alliteration in Anglo-Saxon Song and Story,” *Anglia* 113 (1995): 429–63; Adeline Courtney Bartlett, *The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, Columbia University Studies in English and Comparative Literature 122 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935); Randolph Quirk, “Poetic Language and Old English Metre,” in *Early English and Norse Studies Presented to Hugh Smith in Honour of his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Arthur Brown and Peter Foote (London: Methuen, 1963), 150–71; Richard A. Lewis, “Old English Poetry: Alliteration and Structural Interlace,” *Language and Style* 6 (1973): 196–205; R. A. Lewis, “Plurilinear Alliteration in Old English Poetry,” *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 16 (1975): 598–602; Roberta Frank, “Some Uses of Paronomasia in Old English Scriptural Verse,” *Speculum* 47 (1972): 207–26; Janie Steen, *Versé and Virtuosity: The Adaptation of Latin Rhetoric in Old English Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Mark Griffith, “Extra Alliteration on Stressed Syllables in Old English Poetry: Types, Uses, and Evolution,” *ASE* 47 (2018): 69–176.

might look, for example, to Charm 2, a medical remedy usually referred to as the Nine Herbs Charm:

Ðās VIII ongan wið nygon āttrum.
 Wyrn cōm snīcan, tōslāt hē nān,
 ðā genam Wōden VIII wuldortānas,
 slōh ðā þā næddran þ(æt) hēo on VIII tōflēah. (lines 30–33)⁴

[These nine shoots against nine poisons.

A worm came crawling, it killed no one,

then Woden took up nine glory-twigs,

then struck the snake so that it flew apart into nine.]

In a section replete with structural and ornamental alliteration on *n* and *w*, with notable repeating *s*-clusters (“*snīcan*,” “*tōslāt*,” “*slōh*”), two long lines with cross-alliteration (“*nygon ongan ... nygon attrum*; *genam Woden nygon wuldortanas*”) serve as the rhetorical highlights of this short narrative. Charm 2 operates against nine flying poisons (lines 5, 12, and 19, “*onflyge*”), described later as “*wuldorgeflogenum*” (line 45b, glory-fleeing ones), suggesting in turn that the nine pieces of snake that “flew apart” when struck by “glory-twigs” are these same poisons.⁵ The charm presents an imaginative (if enigmatic) origin story for the precise categories of human suffering it combats, and the alliterative emphasis on the repeated number nine, Woden’s “taking up” of the twigs, and the snake itself serve to highlight these connections aurally.

Similar instances of extra alliteration, repetition, and echoing occur throughout the charms. We might consider, for example, a line like Charm 3’s dramatic hypermetric “*Hæfde him his haman on handa, cwæð þæt þū his hæncgest wære*” (It had its bridle in its hand, said that you were its steed, line 2), describing the attack of a supernatural creature. Notable *h*-alliteration, as well as assonance on *a/æ*, provides a concise summary of the line’s action—“*hæfde*,” “*haman*,” “*handa*,” “*hæncgest*”—and emphasizes the inexorable, animalistic violence it depicts. Alliteration is similarly emphatic in Charm 6, wherein a woman staves off labour complications by asking that she be pregnant “*mid cwican cilde, nālæs mid cwellendum, / mid fulborenum, nālæs mid fægan*” (with a living child, not a killing one, / with a full-term one, not with a doomed one, lines 5–6). The alliteration of desired possibilities (“*cwican*,” “*fulboren*”) with undesirable possibilities (“*cwellendum*,” “*fægan*”) and the repetition of the contrasting “*mid ... nālæs*” highlight these antithetical pairs, creating alternating verbal shifts towards and away from the speaker’s various potential postpartum outcomes.

⁴ The texts of Charms 2–6 are taken from *Anglo-Saxon Remedies, Charms, and Prayers from British Library MS Harley 585: The Lacnunga*, ed. and trans. Edward Pettit, 2 vols. (Lampeter: Mellen, 2001). Citations of all other charms are taken from Dobbie, *Poems*. All translations and scansions are my own.

⁵ This suggestion was first proposed by A. R. Skemp, “The Old English Charms,” *Modern Language Review* 6 (1911): 289–301; see also Pettit, *Lacnunga*, II: 140–41.

Perhaps more interesting, however, are instances like lines 21–22 of Charm 11, an incantation designed to protect its user on an undertaking by invoking the pantheon of Christian saints:

Hi mē ferion and friþion and mīne fōre nerion,
eal mē gehealdon, mē gewældon.

[They guide and protect me, and save my life,
entirely guard me, command me.]

These lines make obvious use of rhyme, assonance, and repetition to enhance the rhetorical power of the charmer's declaration of his own salvation and safety. The insistent echoing of chiming verb endings lends structure to a declarative sequence of actions. Yet line 22 has no cross-caesura alliteration. Rhyme serves as a substitute, linking the two half-lines with repeated sound at the ends of words rather than the beginnings.⁶ The line is technically irregular, but not lacking in verbal ornament or structural and semantic connection between verses.

Indeed, the verse of the metrical charms is rife with such apparent irregularities. The charms contain lines with patterns unattested in any system of metrical scansion, particularly hypermetric verses with extended drops and long anacrusis and hypometric verses with fewer than four positions. They include lines without regular cross-caesura alliteration, lines that alliterate on the second stressed syllable of the b-verse, and lines that do not adhere to Kuhn's laws. As a result, most studies that comment on their metre treat the charms as poor verse, badly composed and incorrectly transmitted.⁷ Judith Vaughan-Sterling, the first scholar to lay out an argument for the charms' aesthetic merit, considers the charms to be only "related" to verse.⁸ Those studies that do examine

⁶ For similar examples of rhyme in lines without cross-caesura alliteration, many of which use chiming verb endings, see for example Charm 2 line 10; Charm 4 line 14; *Metres of Boethius* 20, line 195; *The Battle of Maldon* line 271; *Judgment Day II* lines 3–4. All citations of Old English poetry are taken from *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, ed. George P. Krapp and Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie, 6 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931–1953).

⁷ For example, Marie Nelson, *Structures of Opposition in Old English Poems* (Amsterdam, 1989), 49; Thomas D. Hill, "The Rod of Protection and the Witches' Ride: Christian and Germanic Syncretism in Two Old English Metrical Charms," *JEGP* 111 (2012): 145–68 at 155; Godfrid Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1948), *passim*; Stephen Pollington, *Leechcraft: Early English Charms, Plant Lore, and Healing* (Ely: Anglo-Saxon Books, 2008), 221; Tiffany Beechy, *The Poetics of Old English* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 113; James Paz, "Magic That Works: Performing Scientia in the Old English Metrical Charms and Poetic Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 45 (2015): 219–43 at 226; Griffith, "Alliteration," 149–50; Kemp Malone, "The Old English Period (to 1100)," in *A Literary History of England*, ed. Albert C. Baugh, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 1948), I: 1–105 at 39.

⁸ Judith A. Vaughan-Sterling, "The Anglo-Saxon 'Metrical Charms': Poetry as Ritual," *JEGP* 82 (1983): 186–200.

the charms' stylistic features tend to conclude that their ornamentation is primarily hypnotic in function, creating a web of arbitrary sound to lull a patient into submission and enact the placebo effect.⁹ A desire to increase performative power may well have influenced the charms' style, but, as this chapter will argue, their ornamental features are aesthetic as well as functional. As noted above, these poetic techniques consistently serve to emphasize the importance of, and connections between, the charms' central agents, actions, and concepts, and to draw an audience's attention to particular ideas and narrative details.

In his recent study of the *Beowulf* manuscript, which contains many lines that require editorial emendation to make sense, Leonard Neidorf has argued that no Old English poet ever deliberately composed an irregular line.¹⁰ Unlike the difficult verses in *Beowulf*, however, irregularities in the charms almost always occur without any accompanying deficiencies in sense, grammar, or syntax. The charms are enigmatic, but their metrically unattested lines almost always make sense syntactically and semantically. We therefore do not have evidence to suggest that the charms' inventive metre is necessarily a sign of textual corruption, and so cannot reasonably dismiss or emend their metrical features.¹¹ Moreover, the charms' irregular lines also almost always contain a significant number of ornamental features, including extra alliteration, assonance, and rhyme. The high level of stylistic complexity apparent in these texts argues against the view that they are unsophisticated or corrupt.

In a previous article, I have suggested that many of the metrical charms' irregularities are predictable and explicable.¹² I sought to demonstrate that the charms' unusual features occur within poetic structures (including anaphora, parallelism, antithesis, and others) and often appear when a given charm employs traditional magical formulae, found in analogous Indo-European charm texts, that do not fit neatly within the bounds of the Old English metrical line. These correlations suggest that the charms' utilitarian function takes precedence over strict metrical regularity. The charms seem to be composed in a more flexible prosimetric mode than the "classical" verse of a text like *Beowulf*; they are not deficient, but rather respond to a different set of literary demands. Yet more investigation of these unusual texts is required in order to expand upon this hypothesis. In particular, no study has yet examined the strong correlation in the charms

9 Marie Nelson, "Wordsige and Worcsige: Speech Acts in Three Old English Charms," *Language and Style* 17 (1984): 57–66 at 63; Victoria Symons, "Doing Things with Words: Language and Perception in Old English Riddles and Charms," in *Sensory Perception in the Medieval West*, ed. Simon Thomson and Michael D. J. Bintley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 123–40; Howell D. Chickering, "The Literary Magic of *Wið Færstice*," *Viator* 2 (1971): 83–104; Northrop Frye, *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 124–26; Beechy, *Poetics*, 86.

10 Leonard Neidorf, *The Transmission of Beowulf* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 19–20.

11 For this editorial stance, see John D. Niles, "Editing *Beowulf*: What Can Study of the Ballads Tell Us?" *Oral Tradition* 9 (1994): 440–67.

12 Caroline R. Batten, "The Style of the Old English Metrical Charms," *RES* 72 (2021): 1–20.

between metrical irregularity and the use of anaphora, plurilinear sections in which the same words or phrases are employed at the beginning of successive clauses. In this chapter, I will closely examine multiple anaphoric structures in the metrical charms to argue that the charms' metre becomes elastic and irregular precisely to accommodate anaphoric repetition. I will suggest that this kind of metrical flexibility is itself a stylistic feature of the charms, disrupting the audience's expectations and drawing attention to the texts' magical language, which is both far more ornamented than prose and unconstrained by the usual limits of normal verse.

Repetition and Irregularity in the Metrical Charms

All of the metrical charms employ anaphora, most often in plurilinear clusters; many of the charms have multiple such clusters, each demonstrating anaphora on a different word or phrase.¹³ Anaphoric catalogues like these appear throughout Old English poetry, though only rarely at such a high density. These catalogues may be partially inspired by repetitive structures in Latin verse known to Old English composers, but the use of anaphora in Old English poetry is notably more frequent, and often more extensive or involved, than in its Latin inspirations.¹⁴ In all cases, anaphora serves to heighten a given text's rhetorical power, and to drive home essential concepts with a relentless rhythmic beat. Anaphoric clusters are used to create a tone of sermonic instruction in *The Wanderer*, for example, or to convey the ineffable nature of Paradise in *The Phoenix* and *Guthlac B*.¹⁵ The use of multiple anaphoric clusters within a short span of lines, however, is also a particularly common feature of medieval European charms and curses, including those in Old High German, Old Saxon, Old Norse, and Middle English, suggesting that this kind of intense repetition may be a genre feature.¹⁶ A majority of these structures in the

13 See Charm 1 lines 2–3, 16–21; Charm 2 lines 4–6, 46–57; Charm 3 lines 7–9; Charm 4 lines 18–24; Charms 5 and 10, prose; Charm 6 lines 1–3; Charm 7 lines 2–6; Charm 8 lines 2–4; Charm 9 lines 2–7; Charm 11, lines 2–5, 8–9; Charm 12 lines 8–10.

14 For *ne* catalogues, see *The Wanderer* lines 66–69; *The Seafarer* lines 44–46, 95–96; *The Phoenix* lines 14–18, 21–25, 51–61, 134–38, 612–14; *Guthlac B* lines 579–80, 698–99, 828–30; Riddle 35 lines 5–8. For *sum* catalogues, see *The Wanderer* lines 80–83; *The Gifts of Men* and *Fortunes of Men* throughout; *Juliana* lines 473–90; *Elene* lines 131–36; *Christ II* lines 668–80. For *opþe* catalogues, see *Judgment Day II* lines 132–34, 138–39; *Beowulf* lines 1764–66. On anaphora in Old English poetry as compared to its Latin sources, see Steen, 45.

15 See line numbers above.

16 See, for example, Merseburg Charms 1 and 2 (texts in Wilhelm Braune, ed., *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch*, 10th ed. (Halle: Niemeyer, 1942)); *Contra malum malannum* (text in *The Old High German and Old Saxon Charms: Text, Commentary, and Critical Bibliography*, ed. and trans. Carol Lynn Miller (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1982)); *Buslubæn*, in *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, in *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, ed. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, 4 vols. (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Forni, 1943–1944). For Middle English charms, see Jonathan Roper, "Towards a Poetics, Rhetorics, and Proxemics of Verbal Charms," *Folklore* 24 (2003): 7–49.

metrical charms contain a mix of regular and irregular lines, and indeed a significant proportion of the irregular lines found in the metrical charms appear within plurilinear anaphoric structures. The obvious rhetorical requirements of these clusters make them ideal case studies for examining irregularities in the metrical charms, because their stylistic exigencies, and the way in which unusual verses participate in meeting those aesthetic demands, can be easily parsed.

Charms 4 and 6 provide a clear example. Both medical remedies—the former for a stabbing internal pain, anthropomorphized as a troop of spear-wielding female riders, and the latter for a variety of childbirth and postpartum complications—make use of a similar, repeated formula:

Charm 4:

x x x / x / x x **ⓧ** x x x / x / x x **ⓧ**
 þis ðē tō bōte ēsa gescotes, ðis ðē tō bōte ylfa gescotes, ?|?¹⁷

x x x / x / x x x **ⓧ** x x x x / x
 ðis ðē tō bōte hægtessan gescotes; ic ðīn wille helpān. ?|a (ll. 23–4)

[This to you as a cure for gods' shot, this to you as a cure for elves' shot,
 this to you as a cure for witches' shot; I will help you.]

Charm 6:

x x x / x x x / x / \ x
 þis mē tō bōte þære lāþan lætbyrde **a|D**

x x x / x x x / x / \ x
 þis mē tō bōte þære swæran swærtbyrde **a|D**

x x x / x x x / x / \ x
 þis mē tō bōte þære lāðan lambyrde. **a|D** (lines 1–3)

[This to me as a cure for the loathsome late birth,
 this to me as a cure for the grievous dark-coloured birth,
 this to me as a cure for the loathsome disabled birth.]

In both cases, these lines are metrically unusual. In Charm 4, the verse patterns of lines 23a to 24a are unattested in any system of metrical scansion—including Nicolay Yakovlev's hyper-flexible system for scanning hypermetrics.¹⁸ In Charm 6, the lines lack structural alliteration, with the only cross-caesura echo falling on a secondary

¹⁷ For all scanned half-lines in this chapter, I have listed the Sievers-Bliss types in bold next to the full poetic line. A question mark indicates that a half-line contains a stress pattern not attested in Sievers-Bliss or Bliss' full scansion of *Beowulf*.

¹⁸ Nicolay Yakovlev, "The Development of Alliterative Metre from Old to Middle English" (unpublished DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 2008), 84–86.

compound element (“byrde”), which should not normally bear full stress. Both sets of lines are rife with ornamental effects: cross-alliteration in Charm 4 (“esa ... scot ... ylfa ... scot”), as well as the only known English occurrence of the Old Norse poetic collocation *æsir/álfar*; double alliteration in the off-verse in Charm 6, with two lines of *l*-alliteration forming an envelope pattern around the echoing *s* alliteration of *swæran swært*.¹⁹ The phrase “þis ... to bote,” in both cases, seems to be essential to the function of the charm: it is the verbal declaration, and thus the actual magical enactment, of the patient’s healing. The appearance of this phrase in both Old English texts and in several medieval German charms (“daz dir ze byoze”) suggests it was a known magical formula in the early medieval European charm tradition.²⁰ Charm scholars often note that spoken charms must use “correct,” prescribed magical language to be perceived as effective; they must use traditional or formulaic incantations.²¹ Using such a formula in a plurilinear anaphoric structure adds rhetorical emphasis, a hammering declaration of the charm’s purpose and the charmer’s desires. The use and anaphoric repetition of an incantatory formula, in these texts, seems to take precedence over Sieversian metrical norms. Metre bends to accommodate function, but these lines still exhibit ornamentation typical of verse: extra and patterned alliteration, assonance, echoing. They are not necessarily poorly composed. Rather, they are composed with a different set of stylistic priorities than those that informed *Beowulf* or *Genesis A*.

Indeed, unusual lines in anaphoric clusters across the charms behave in this way: accommodating traditional magical formulae or essential word choice, and maintaining the incantatory, exhortatory aural effects of the anaphora itself. Charm 7, for example, is the earliest known English version of the *Neque Doluit Neque Tumuit* charm type, which appears in Middle English, Middle High German, medieval Irish, medieval Latin, and early modern Eastern European and Baltic incantations.²² These incantations are intended to heal wounds or skin lesions, and they are defined by anaphoric sequences on “neither / nor”:

¹⁹ For the Norse collocation, see *Lokasenna* st. 2, 13, 30; *Grímnismál* st. 4; *Hávamál* st. 159–60; *Brymskviða* st. 7; *Völuspá* st. 49; *Fáfnismál* st. 13; *Skírnismál* st. 7, 17–18. All citations from *Eddukvæði*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 2014).

²⁰ Examples in Pettit, *Lacnunga*, II: 254. See also the twelfth-century charm *Contra rehin* in Miller, *Charms*.

²¹ See, for example, Roper, “Poetics,” 17–18; John Miles Foley, “Epic and Charm in Old English and Serbo-Croatian Oral Tradition,” *Comparative Criticism* 2 (1980): 71–92.

²² Jonathan Roper, *English Verbal Charms* (Helsinki, 2005), 66, 114; Lea Olsan, “The Three Good Brothers Charms: Some Historical Points,” *Incantatio* 1 (2011): 48–78.

x / x x / x x / x
 swā benne ne burnon, ne burston A|?

x / x x x  x
 ne fundian, ne feologan d|?

x / x x x / / x x
 ne hoppettan, ne wund waxsian d|D

x / / x x x x x / x / x / x
 ne dolh dīopian, ac him self healde hāle wæge. D|? (lines 2–5)

[so the wounds do not burn, nor burst,
 nor grow evilly inward, nor putrefy,
 nor throb/rankle, nor the wounds grow,
 nor sores deepen, but may (I) myself preserve him by means of healthful water.]

In every extant version of this charm type, in every language in which it appears, the choice of verbs is limited. The anaphora always begins with “neither ache nor swell,” then offers a list of prohibited actions that only ever include festering, putrefying, rankling, growing, spreading, and bleeding. Charm 7’s unattested verse patterns (lines 2b, 3b, and 5b), long lines lacking in cross-caesura alliteration (lines 4–5), and unusual anacrusis (lines 4b and 5a) therefore accommodate prescribed language within a required rhetorical structure.²³ Moreover, in spite of their irregularity, these lines display a wide variety of poetic ornamentation: rhyming verb endings, double alliteration, doublets of alliterating verbs, numerous D Types, end-rhyme, and close assonance on “burnon ... burston,” and a patterning effect similar to cross-alliteration (“**ne burnon, ne burston, ne fundian, ne feologan**”). This repeated, multifaceted command is exhortative and incantatory, and the consistent alliteration of wound terms with prohibited verbs increases the charmer’s verbal power over those same wounds. Pointing added after each verb in this sequence by the scribe suggests an awareness of this repetition as a deliberate rhetorical effect.²⁴ These lines are thus unlikely to be the result of error, corruption, or lack of poetic skill or interest. Rather, their unusual features again indicate that anaphora, the use of traditional formulae, and the presence of aurally striking techniques like assonance and rhyme were prioritized over regular metre in the charms. Although a line like “ne fundian, ne feologan” in *Beowulf* might suggest a lacuna or scribal alteration, in a metrical charm it performs a function both practical and poetic.

Similar three-position half-lines appear in an anaphoric structure in Charm 9, a ritual to recover stolen cattle:

²³ On *feologan* and *hoppettan*, see *Dictionary of Old English A to I Online*, ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey et al. (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2018) s. v. “Feologan,” “Hoppettan”.

²⁴ London, British Library, Royal MS 12 D.xvii, fol. 125r–125v.

x x x x x x / x x x x x / x
 þæt hē nǣfre nǣbbe landes þæt hē hit oðlǣde, a|a

x / x x x x x x
 ne foldan, þæt hit oðferie, ?|a

x / x x x x x / x
 ne hūsa, þæt hē hit oðhealde. ?|a (lines 5–7)

[May he never have any land, because he leads it away,
 nor an extent of territory, because he carries it off,
 nor shelter, because he withholds it.]

Once again, the repetitive structure and maintenance of alliteration and grammar suggests that nothing is missing from these short lines. The anaphoric formula tightens as it progresses, to maintain emphasis and patterning. The things barred to the thief—land, fields, and buildings (or, metaphorically, shelter)—alliterate with the incorrect actions he has performed. The prohibition of “landes ... foldan ... husa” also echoes late Old English religious excommunication formulae, which condemn the sinner to be cursed at all times, while doing all actions, and in all locations.²⁵ One formula curses the victim “on huse 7 on æcere ... on wætere 7 on lande 7 on eallen steden” (in a building and in the field ... on water and on land and in all places).²⁶ A similar anaphoric structure also appears in a legal code declaring that the speaker will not be deprived of any part of his inherited property: “ne plot ne ploh, ne turf ne toft, ne furh ne fotmæl, ne land ne læse, ne fersc ne mersc, ne ruh ne rum, wudes ne feldes, landes ne strandes, wealtes ne wæteres” (neither plot nor plough-land, neither turf nor enclosed field, neither furrow nor footprint, neither land nor pasture, neither fresh water nor marsh, neither rough land nor open land, woods or open fields, lands or shores, wolds or waters).²⁷ The use of an alliterating *ne* structure and shared terms of domestic geography (“land,” “feld”) in both charm and legal code, two verbal rituals used to prevent another person from taking ownership of the user’s property, suggests that these texts perhaps draw on shared exhaustive, prohibitive language that is authoritative enough to be legal and incantatory enough to be a performative speech act. A verse like *ne foldan* or *ne husa* is not regular, but nor is it necessarily corrupt or aesthetically disappointing.

²⁵ For examples, see John D. Niles, “The Problem of the Ending of *The Wife’s Lament*,” *Speculum* 78 (2003): 1107–50.

²⁶ E. M. Treharne, “A Unique Old English Formula for Excommunication from Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 303,” *ASE* 24 (1995): 185–211.

²⁷ Text from Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 1:400, 3:236; see also Stephanie Hollis, “Old English Cattle-Theft Charms: Manuscript Contexts and Social Uses,” *Anglia* 115 (1997): 139–64.

Another representative example occurs in Charm 2's invocation of the herb greater plantain:

x x / \ x / x / x
Ond þū, Wegbrāde, wyrta mōdor, d|A

/ x ∪ x / x / x x
ēastan opene, innan mihtigu; A|D

x x x ∪ x / x x x x / x / x
ofer ðý cræte curran, ofer ðý cwēne rēodan, C|hypermetric A

x x x / x ∪ x x x x / x / x
ofer ðý brýde bryodedon, ofer þý fearras fnærdon; hypermetric A Types

x x x x x / x x x ∪ x
eallum þū þon wiðstōde 7 wiðstunest. a|a (lines 7–11)

[And you, Waybroad, mother of plants,
open from the east, mighty within;
over you carts creaked, over you queens rode,
over you brides cried out, over you bulls snorted;
you withstood and dashed against all then.]

Numerous metrical features define these lines as a poetic unit and draw attention to the anaphoric structure, describing *wegbrade's* encounters with various antagonists. These lines make use of the same metrical pattern for several verses in a row: lines 7b and 8a are Bliss Type 2A1a(i), and lines 9b–10b and 12a are Bliss Type a1c(2A1a). Alliteration on *w*—structural in line 7, ornamental in line 11—frames the narrative in an envelope pattern. Three of the four half-lines documenting *wegbrade's* encounters with violent antagonists feature double alliteration on paired nouns and verbs. Line 10, however, lacks cross-caesura alliteration, and instead displays end-rhyme, as well as disallowed double alliteration in an off-verse. We might compare similar lines in Charms 6 and 11, cited above, as well as lines like Charm 4 line 14 (“*Syx smiðas sætan, wælspera worhtan*,” Six smiths sat, worked slaughter-spears). Line 10 is necessarily metrically irregular, but the use of double alliteration and rhyme maintains the two half-lines as a balanced, contrasting pair within the anaphoric structure. Again, prioritization of incantatory repetition and parallelism may allow for abnormal poetic syntax. The “*bryde*” (brides) and “*fearras*” (bulls) are symbols related to female and male sexuality, respectively. They are stylistically opposed, without cross-caesura alliteration to connect them, but also perfectly balanced across their metrically and syntactically identical half-lines. Again, there is nothing about these lines that suggests corruption has occurred, or the composer(s) were unaware of Old English metrical rules—rather, their heavy aural ornamentation and the contrasting pairing in line 10 suggests an interest in the style and performative effect of the recited verse. Metrical deviation in service of emphatic, incantatory plurilinear repetition was apparently permissible in the metrical charms in a way not found in other extant Old English verse.

Anaphora and Single Half-Lines in the Charms

In the standard edition of Charm 7, found in the sixth volume of *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, Elliot van Kirk Dobbie prints “ne dolh diopian, ac him self healde hale wæge” as a single long line, lacking cross-caesura alliteration and with an unattested hypermetric b-verse, as I have presented it above. However, I would suggest that both the absence of structural alliteration and the irregular off-verse can be remedied without emendation, simply by re-lineating the text. The phrase “ac him self healde hale wæge” in fact scans as a regular long line, suggesting the following lineation is to be preferred:

x / / x x
ne dolh diopian, D

x x x / x / x / x
ac him self healde hāle wæge a|A

As the *ne* catalogue concludes, the text pivots on the new conjunction *ac*, indicating a turn towards the creation and affirmation of health after the negation of disease is complete. The conclusion of a *ne* sequence with a pivotal *ac* is a flourish found in both Old English and Old Saxon verse, used to emphasize fundamental contrasts.²⁸ Line 5 now consists of a single half-line, but there is nothing inherently undesirable about such a scansion. As Alan Bliss has demonstrated, single half-lines do occur in Old English poetry, particularly the wisdom poems, and may be employed for aesthetic effect.²⁹ Here, line 5 punctuates and concludes the seven-part anaphoric structure. Indeed, two other metrical charms contain anaphoric structures with an odd total number of elements that conclude with a single half-line. Charm 9 offers the following five-part sequence:

/ x / x $\acute{x}$ x /
find þæt feoh and fere þæt feoh B|B

x $\acute{x}$ x / x / x /
and hafa þæt feoh and heald þæt feoh, B|B

x x x / x /
and fere hām þæt feoh. B³⁰ (lines 2–4)

28 R. D. Fulk, “Rhetoric, Form, And Linguistic Structure in Early Germanic Verse: Toward a Synthesis,” *Interdisciplinary Journal for German Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis* 1 (1996): 63–88 at 70. *Ac* is most often found in a b-verse-initial position after a *ne* sequence, but does sometimes appear in an a-verse-initial position, as proposed here for Charm 7. See *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, ed. Antonette diPaolo Healey, John Price Wilkin, and Xin Xiang (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2009), Boolean Search, “Ne [...] Ac.”

29 A. J. Bliss, “Single Half-Lines in Old English Poetry,” *N&Q* 216 (1971): 442–49.

30 Without cross-caesura alliteration, scansion here is conjectural. Note that to scan the line in Sievers-Bliss, the undisplaced finite verb *fere* must here be unstressed, though it bears alliteration two lines earlier. If we scan *fere* as stressed, with *hām* and *feoh* also fully stressed (as we cannot determine whether either should be secondarily stressed) the line is an unattested hypermetric. Such a scansion would also provide an aurally striking conclusion to the anaphoric cluster.

[find those cattle and lead those cattle,
and take possession of those cattle and guard those cattle,
and bring home those cattle.]

These lines are ornamentally bound together: line 2 has double *f*-alliteration, line 3 has cross-alliteration on *f* and *h*, and then both *h* and *f* sounds appear in line 4. The single half-line thus provides a suitable aural climax for the section and a punctuating conclusion for the repetitive sequence. Charm 11 includes a similar three-part sequence:

x x x / x *ú*x x x x / x *ú*x
wið þane sára stice, wið þane sára slege, **B|B**

x x x / x *ú*x
wið þane grymma gryre, **B**

x x x *ú*x x / x x x / x /
wið ðane micela egða þe bið ēghwām lāð, **hypermetric A|B**

x x / x / x x x / / x
and wið eal þæt lāð þe in tō land fære. **B|C** (lines 2–5)

[against the grievous stabbing pain, against the grievous blow,
against the savage horror,
against the great terror that is loathsome to everyone,
and against all that loathsomeness that travels into the land.]

Line 3 upholds the rhetorical structure and provides contrasting double alliteration on *g* to punctuate two verses with echoing on *s*-clusters, before the charm concludes the overall anaphoric construction on *wið* with a bipartite sub-structure linked by repetition of the word “lāð”. The first, tripartite structure also recalls lines 18–19 of Charm 4:

x x x x x / *ú* x x x x x x / *ú* x
Gif ðū wære on fell scoten, oððe wære on flæsc scoten, **C|C**

x x x x x / *ú* x
oððe wære on blōd scoten, **C**

x x x x x / *ú* x x x x x x / x / x
oððe wære on lið scoten, næfre ne sý ðīn līf ātæsed. **C|hypermetric A**

[If you were shot in the skin, or were shot in the flesh,
or were shot in the blood,
or were shot in the limb, never may your life be harmed.]

The exhaustive protection of a patient’s bodily substance (usually some combination of skin, flesh, blood, bone, limbs, joints, and hair) is a traditional anaphoric formula found in numerous Indo-European texts of varying dates and in varying languages,

from the Sanskrit *Atharva Veda* to medieval German worm charms.³¹ Several editors add a b-verse to Charm 4 line 19 (“oððe wære on ban scoten”) to remedy a perceived lacuna and supply the second member of the common collocation “blod ... ban,” a poetically congruent addition but one that is not necessary for the sense of the charm.³² “Fell,” “flæsc,” and “blod” might well be a tripartite unit, with the fourth element (“lið”) following in the subsequent long line so as to alliterate with, and punningly echo, “lif.”

Indeed, the Old High German Merseburg Charm 2 draws on the same traditional magical formula as Charm 4—the enumeration of bodily substances like flesh and blood—and similarly invokes only three such body parts, resulting in an unattached half-line:

sose benrenki, sose bluotrenki,
sose lidirenki,
ben zi bena, bluot zi bluoda,
lid zi geliden, sose gelimida sin.³³ (lines 6–9)

[be it bone-sprain, be it blood-sprain,
be it limb-sprain,
bone to bone, blood to blood,
limb to limb, so may they be stuck together.]

The use of anaphoric structures with an odd total number of elements, resulting in a single half-line, thus seems to be a generic feature of the Old English charms rather than a flaw. It may well have been permissible in other Germanic verse charms, though we lack sufficient evidence aside from the second Merseburg Charm to draw such a conclusion. Ivar Lindquist, however, proposed in 1923 that any instance of tripartite anaphora, consisting of a long line and a single half-line and alliterating a-a-b(b), is an example of a putative pan-Germanic metre he refers to as “galderform.”³⁴ This “charm

31 *Atharva-Veda-Samhita: Text with English Translation, Mantra Index and Names of Rsis and Devtas*, ed. Nag Sharan Singh, trans. William D. Whitney, 2 vols. (Delhi: Nag, 1987), Book 4, Hymn 12; *Pro Nessia and Contra vermes* in Braune, *Lesebuch*. For other analogues, see *Monumenta Serbocroatia: A Bilingual Anthology of Serbian and Croatian Texts and Translations from the 12th to the 19th Centuries*, ed. and trans. Thomas Butler (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic, 1980), 465; Reimund Kvideland and Henning K. Sehmsdorf, *Scandinavian Folk Belief and Legend* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1991), 164–68.

32 Storms, *Magic*, 142; J. H. G. Grattan and Charles Singer, *Anglo-Saxon Magic and Medicine: Illustrated Specifically from the Semi-Pagan Text “Lacnunga”* (London: Cumberlege, 1952), 174), and Pettit, *Lacnunga*, I: 92, suggest the emendation. For the collocation, see *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, Boolean Search, “Blod [...] Ban.”

33 Text in Braune, *Lesebuch*.

34 Ivar Lindquist, *Galdrar de gamla germanska trollsångernas stil, undersökt i samband med en svensk runinskrift från folkvandringstiden* (Gothenburg: Elanders, 1923). Lindquist’s claims are refuted by F. Ohrt (“Om Merseburgformlerne some Galder,” *Danske Studier* 38 (1938): 125–37).

metre" is supposedly an ancestor of Old Norse *ljóðahátt* and *galdralag*, and also marks the metrical charms. Yet the anaphora found in Charms 7 and 9 are not tripartite structures, but more properly seven- and five-part structures. A-a-b(b) alliteration patterns are not consistently found in the pairings of long and short lines cited above. The use of tripartite anaphora, moreover, is not limited to charms, and is common in folk verse from many periods and in multiple languages.³⁵ As Bliss has noted, such pairings of long and short lines, some exhibiting a-a-b(b) alliteration, also appear in Old English gnomic poetry, and numerous single half-lines in broadly tripartite structures can be found in the poems of the Junius Manuscript.³⁶ Bliss observes that the use of Old English short lines is sporadic while their use in *ljóðahátt* is systematic, and that short lines continue the alliteration of the preceding line (i.e. an a-a-a pattern) more frequently than in Old Norse, but concludes that the two forms were historically related in some way.³⁷ However, although it is entirely possible that the short lines in the charms reflect a form related to Old Norse metre or derived from a common ancestor, the instances cited above share no formal characteristics with *ljóðahátt* aside from the short lines themselves. *Ljóðahátt* does allow for verses of two or three metrical positions in the on-verse of the long line (compare half-lines in *Hávamál* like "ösviðr maðr" and "deyr fé" with Charm 9's "ne husa") but such verses in the charms do not generally occur in conjunction with single half-lines.³⁸

Anaphora and the Style of the Charms

Rather than attribute the use of single half-lines in the charms to the hypothetical persistence of pan-Germanic forms or Norse influence, we should consider instead Bliss's identification of numerous grammatically sound, aesthetically permissible single half-lines in a significant number of Old English poems. The likeliest conclusion to be drawn is simply that such verses were an acceptable tool of the Old English poet, a plausible stylistic choice rather than evidence of error or loss.

The single half-line punctuates a rhetorical unit within a text—a "local climax," as Jonathan Roper puts it.³⁹ More specifically, in the metrical charms cited here, I suggest

35 Jonathan Roper, "The Metre of the Old English Metrical Charms," in *Oral Charms in Structural and Comparative Light: Proceedings of the Conference of the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers, and Charming 27–29 October 2011, Moscow*, ed. Tatyana Mikhailova, Jonathan Roper, Andrey Toporkov, and Dmitry S. Nikolayev (Moscow: Probel-2000, 2011), 116–21.

36 Bliss, "Half-Lines," 442–49.

37 Bliss, "Half-Lines," 448.

38 *Hávamál* stt. 22, 76–77. R. D. Fulk, "An Introduction to Eddic Metres," in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 252–70.

39 Roper, "Metre," 120.

that single half-lines in anaphoric structures conclude a given internal section of the incantation and allow the charm to pivot to a new structure or theme. Charm 7's single half-line "ne dolh diopian" facilitates the charm's transition from *ne* to *ac*, and from the prevention of harm (limiting the actions of wounds) to the creation of health (the "holy" or "health-giving" water bestowed on the patient). Charm 9's single half-line "and fere ham þæt feoh" concludes the portion of the charm that asks for the return of stolen cattle, and highlights the subsequent shift to an anaphoric sequence prohibiting shelter to the thief. As noted above, Charm 11's "grymma gryre" creates two rhetorical sub-units, each linked by syntax and repetition, within a greater plurilinear structure. This consistency suggests, again, that short lines in the charms require no emendation and are in fact aesthetic features of these performative texts, even a particular feature of their genre. Though only certain subsets of the twelve metrical charms can be considered to be textually related to one another, they do form a loose corpus, bound by their similar semiotic functions, their mix of traditional and literate material, and the simple fact that they all contain alliterating verse where hundreds of other Old English remedies do not.

The other, more unusual irregularities found in the anaphora of the charms—three-position verses, unattested metrical patterns, lines lacking regular cross-caesura alliteration—have received little critical attention, but they also represent a stylistic choice on the part of a putative composer or composers. The examples cited above demonstrate that, within the metrical charms, rhetorical structures are preserved over adherence to strict metre of the type that characterizes *Beowulf*. These texts adhere to a slightly different set of aesthetic standards from those found in other Old English verse, one in which four-position scansion with restricted drop expansion and specific alliterative patterns is a flexible rather than absolute requirement.

The use of unusual lines generates its own kind of stylistic power, which may well have been noticeable to the charms' audiences, including the practitioners who recited them and the patients, clients, and collaborators who witnessed them performed. Metre, as well as other aural ornamental features like extra alliteration, rhyme, and assonance, was almost certainly audible to audiences in the early medieval English period: Rafael J. Pascual has recently demonstrated that Old English metre was designed to enable audiences to follow alliterative patterns across the long line, while Daniel Donoghue has explored the myriad ways in which early medieval English audiences with differing levels of poetic competence could have internalized the conventions of metre and aural ornament.⁴⁰ Metre and ornament were designed to be noticed. It follows, too, that

40 Rafael J. Pascual, "Oral Tradition and the History of English Alliterative Verse," *SN* 89 (2017): 250–260; Daniel Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read Their Poems* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 5.

lines which do not adhere to the general rules of Old English verse would have been noticeable to a medieval audience because they violate expectation. This kind of poetic disruption can be, and arguably was, used in Old English poetry for aesthetic effect.⁴¹ The contrast between a rigorously maintained rhetorical structure and its increasingly flexible and unusual metre would have drawn an audience's attention. We can plausibly speculate about the effect of such a device: it may have enhanced the verbal power of the anaphoric structure itself. The insistent repetition is magical language and therefore, perhaps, is allowed to be exceptional or non-normative. Unusual metre separates these incantations from both ordinary speech and ordinary verse; the magical speech act is not beholden to the limits of the poetic line.

Such speculation is bolstered by the fact that these plurilinear clusters seem to be essential to the function of the metrical charms. As noted above, all of the charms contain anaphoric structures, most of which constitute the defining "speech act" of the text in which they are found—that is, the lines in question explicitly demand the change in reality the practitioner seeks to effect with his performance of the text. Anaphoric structures enact the actual healing of the patient and the cessation of pain in Charms 4 and 7, and return stolen property and prevent the escape of the thief in Charm 9. The concluding lines of Charm 3 (lines 7–9) demand permanent protection for both patient and charmer with a syntactically repetitive anaphoric structure on "oððe," using a series of parallel auxiliaries ("moste ... mihte ... cuþe"). Charm 2 (lines 46–52) exorcises nine coloured poisons from the patient in an exhortatory series of ten half-lines adhering to the formula "wið ðy ... attre." Charm 12 shrinks a swelling or tumour away to nothingness in a series of syntactically identical commands ("cling þu alswa col on heorþe, / scring þu alswa scerne awage / and weorne alswa weter on anbren," may you shrink up just like coal on the hearth, may you dry up just like dung on a wall, and fade away just like water in a vessel, lines 8–10). Though not a sign of "galderform," these clusters enhance the verbal power of performative texts by prioritizing repetition and echoing, features that are also demonstrably important to "normative" or "classical" Old English poetic style. Within the extant corpus, metrically unusual anaphora is a defining feature of the Old English verse charm genre, and the particularities of this genre demand greater scholarly and editorial respect than they have yet received.

It is often tempting to treat systems of Old English metrical scansion as sets of immutable laws, to which a given poem does or does not adhere. Texts that do not "follow the rules" are described with the language of "deficiency," "violation," and "failure." Yet such language does the metrical charms a disservice. The charms prioritize aural ornament, repetition, and patterning over Sieversian metrics, yet still

⁴¹ Quirk, "Language," 155–56; Griffith, "Alliteration," 137; Niles, "Editing," 450–52. Examples of unusual lines arguably used for poetic effect include *Wulf and Eadwacer* lines 3, 8, 17, 19; *The Riming Poem* line 77; *Christ and Satan* lines 145, 204.

adhere to regular metre and exhibit “classical” poetic features in many instances. The irregularities they contain are remarkably and consistently explicable in context, and should be treated as examples of meaningful difference—which is, of course, the substance of any literary style. Our systems of scansion are not prescriptive but descriptive, seeking to offer explanations for a specific set of poetic data. The data provided by the charms suggests that our current systems of metrical scansion may in fact describe only one verse style among several available to Old English poets, or one end of a stylistic spectrum; depending on the genre and purpose of a given text, poets could choose to adhere rigorously to metrical rules or treat them with a kind of flexible impressionism. Old English verse was, in the words of Eric Stanley, an “unfettered” and “living art form,” and regularities observed by modern scholars do not necessarily constitute a unilateral or unconditional standard of Old English style and skill.⁴² The charms offer a glimpse of a more expansive, varied poetic landscape in pre-Conquest England—one in which disruptive, inventive metre provided poets, physicians, priests, and patients with the ability to command the world around them, defending human bodies and communities from chaos, suffering, and destruction.

⁴² E. G. Stanley, “*The Wonder of Creation: A New Edition and Translation, with Discussion of Problems*,” *Anglia* 131 (2013): 475–508.

STRUGGLING TO FIND THE POINT: THE SCRATCHED METRICAL POINTING OF *GUTHLAGA* IN THE EXETER BOOK

S. C. Thomson*

IT HAS LONG been recognized that most scribes of Old English were not especially interested in visually encoding the metre of the poetry they have recorded for us. Despite Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe's argument that there was an evolution over time towards a "better" method (read, more like our method) of punctuating poetry, Junius 11's consistent use of metrical pointing is as exceptional as is its use of illustration in presenting Old English verse.¹ So, while it is clear that many scribes were aware of the metrical forms they recorded for us to enjoy (and argue over), it is equally clear—as demonstrated recently by Daniel Donoghue—that such visual encoding was not normal, and that its absence was not seen as a fault.² Scribes of Old English poems were not, of

* S. C. Thomson is Senior Lecturer in Medieval English Language and Literature at Heinrich-Heine-Universität, Düsseldorf. I am very grateful to the editors for their patience, close readings, and advice; and to all of the participants in the "Anglo-Saxon Metre and Literary Studies" workshop, which was an immensely enriching event. As ever, my writing has also benefitted considerably from an anonymous reviewer's thoughtful comments. The study here would not exist without the generosity of Peter Thomas at Exeter Cathedral, who permitted me to spend odd hours working with the Exeter Book around an education workshop in the city that I was delivering with Lorna Hosler and Maggie Tildesley in 2014. I am grateful to all of them for their flexibility and kindness, and to Jane Roberts for her invaluable, inexhaustible, advice. This chapter also benefitted from the responses of participants in HHU's Anglistik I Research Colloquium and from the close readings of Jannis Jakobs and Anne-Katrin Röseler. It expands on some brief notes in my doctoral thesis: S. C. Thomson, "Towards a Reception History of Beowulf in the Context of the Nowell Codex, British Library Cotton MS Vitellius A.xv" (PhD diss., University College London, 2016), 245–58.

1 Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; 2006 paperback reprint), especially 172; 192–93. Some recent discussions of scribal interest in Old English metrical shapes, each with a wide range of references, include Rachel A. Burns, "The Visual Craft of Old English Verse: Mise-en-page in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts" (PhD diss., University College London, 2018); Abdullah Alger, "The Verbal and Visual Rhetoric of Old English Poetry: An Analysis of the Punctuation and Formulaic Patterns in the *Exeter Book* (Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501)" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2010); S. C. Thomson, "'Whistle While You Work': Scribal Engagement with Old English Poetic Text," in *Sensory Perception in the Medieval West*, ed. S. C. Thomson and Michael Bintley (Utrecht: Brepols, 2016), 99–122; Daniel Donoghue, "A Point Well Taken: Manuscript Punctuation and Old English Poems," in *Inside Old English: Essays in Honour of Bruce Mitchell*, ed. John Walmsley (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 38–58.

2 Daniel Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read Their Poems* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

course, stumbling in the darkness, lacking only the enlightenment of the technology of caesura and line breaks. They were using all of the tools and technologies they needed in order to achieve their goals.³

In this chapter, I want to point to how at least one user of one manuscript did not find this sufficient, and sought to visually mark the metrical structures with which this volume is concerned. The fact that this reader felt the need to do so is, I think, interesting in itself: it is evidence of both interest in metre and of finding a scribe's presentation of it insufficient. I have argued elsewhere that it is errors and corrections that help us to understand the conscious thoughts of scribes and readers, and this study is no exception:⁴ particularly interesting here are, I think, the sites at which this reader "struggled to find the point"; places where they sought to comprehend the metre and could not. That our reader was interested in metre and competent at identifying it, and yet struggled in some places, suggests the possibility that some elements of Old English metrical structures were opaque to them, perhaps because the system was in continual flux.⁵ This chapter is, then, a close study of one reader's scratchy interactions with the metre of one manuscript's presentation of one poem: the Exeter Book's *Guthlac A*, with the intention of using it to think about apprehension of metre more broadly.

The marks that interest me here were first discussed by Don McGovern in his appropriately titled "Unnoticed Punctuation in the Exeter Book."⁶ The reason they were unnoticed for so long, and perhaps the reason they are still rarely discussed in studies of the manuscript and its poems, is that they are scratched in dry-point and are remarkably difficult to see. Dry-pointing—simply scratching the surface of a manuscript with any implement and without ink—was very common wherever and whenever manuscripts were made and read. It could have been done with relatively specialized tools, such as the knives universally shown in contemporary images of scribes, or styluses, designed for drafting text on wax tablets, or indeed any solid object at all. Dry-point markings were essential in the course of producing a manuscript: line rulings are the most obvious form, but they can also be seen, as

³ On some gaps between modern and scribal punctuation, see for example, Eric Weiskott, "Making *Beowulf* Scream: Exclamation and the Punctuation of Old English Poetry," *JEGP* 111 (2012): 25–41.

⁴ S. C. Thomson, *Communal Creativity in the Making of the "Beowulf" Manuscript: Towards a History of Reception for the Nowell Codex* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), for example, at 149.

⁵ On the evolution and conservatism of poetic metre, along with chapters in this volume by R. D. Fulk, Mark Atherton, and Megan E. Hartman, see, for example, Eric Weiskott, *English Alliterative Verse: Poetic Tradition and Literary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Ian Cornelius, *Reconstructing Alliterative Verse: The Pursuit of a Medieval Meter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Nicolay Yakovlev, "The Development of Alliterative Metre from Old to Middle English" (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 2008).

⁶ D. S. McGovern, "Unnoticed Punctuation in the Exeter Book," *MÆ* 52 (1983): 90–99. I am following his findings closely throughout.

in the Exeter Book and the Winchester Bible, assisting in the drafting of some of the more spectacular letterforms and indeed as a draft stage in producing images in the Old English Hexateuch.⁷ The ubiquity of tools for dry-pointing and the frequency of scratched doodles—some more, some less sophisticated—in manuscripts of all sorts suggests that some form of tool was held by anyone who held a manuscript, actively engaged or not with the text itself. These can be very close to the sort of casual graffiti familiar in classrooms and lecture theatres the world over: in their discussion of Lichfield MS 1, Gifford Charles-Edwards and Helen McKee identify up to five hands using dry-point to write about ten names, presumably often the dry-pointers' own.⁸ But they can also be seen productively engaging with the contents of manuscripts. Dieter Studer-Joho's 2017 *Catalogue* builds on earlier work in this regard, and individual studies of manuscripts relatively often throw up such results.⁹ Dry-point glossing may, indeed, have been more common than glossing in ink. But it remains unclear why glosses—texts designed to support comprehension of the main text—were scratched rather than inked in. My personal view, as it almost always is, is that the answer lies in individual circumstances rather than general rules—but we can surely assume that the difficulty in seeing such glosses must have been part of their appeal, whether to preserve the appearance of a manuscript or to conceal the glosses from groups of readers, such as students.

In keeping with this wider picture, dry-point can be seen all over the Exeter Book. There are multiple doodles, from stark triangles in the right-hand margin of folio 59v to heads and figures drawn in the margins of for example folios 78r and 87v. Indeed, almost

⁷ In the Exeter Book, dry-point may underlie a spectacular wynn on fol. 84v; on the other MSS here, see Claire Donovan, *The Winchester Bible* (London: British Library, 1993), for example 27–28; Benjamin C. Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton MS Claudius B.IV: The Frontier of Seeing and Reading in Anglo-Saxon England* (London: British Library, 2007), 26–27.

⁸ Gifford Charles-Edwards and Helen McKee, "Lost Voices from Anglo-Saxon Lichfield," *ASE* 37 (2008): 79–89.

⁹ Dieter Studer-Joho, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts Known to Contain Old English Dry-Point Glosses* (Tübingen: Narr Francke, 2017). A large number of other studies discuss some aspects of dry-point glossing; see, for example, Christine Wallis, "Unpublished Dry-Point Annotations in a Manuscript of the Old English 'Bede': Oxford, Corpus Christi College 279B," *MÆ* 85 (2016): 15–32; Scott Gwara, "Further Old English Scratched Glosses and Merographs from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS 326 (Aldhelm's *Prosa de Virginitate*)," *ES* 78 (1997): 201–36; Scott Gwara, "Dry-Point Glossing in a Tenth-Century Manuscript of Aldhelm's Prose Treatise on Virginity," *Traditio* 51 (1996): 99–145; Philip G. Rusche, "Dry-Point Glosses to Aldhelm's *De laudibus virginittatis* in Beinecke 301," *ASE* 23 (1994): 195–213; W. Schipper, "Dry-Point Compilation Notes in the Benedictional of St Æthelwold," *British Library Journal* 20 (1994): 17–34; R. I. Page, "New Work on Old English Scratched Glosses," in *Studies in English Language and Early Literature in Honour of Paul Christophersen*, ed. P. M. Tilling (Coleraine: New University of Ulster, 1981), 105–15; Herbert Dean Meritt, *Old English Glosses: A Collection* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1945).

every reader who has worked with the Exeter Book has found more scratches, including drawings (e.g. Bernard Muir's identification on 24v), decorative letters (Patrick Conner on e.g. 80r), and an alphabet (Abdullah Alger on 49v).¹⁰ Alger also notes a range of accent marks scratched above some letters which have not, to my knowledge, been published.¹¹ I think I am the first to note—though I cannot have been the first to see—dry-point lines being used for word separation in *Juliana* at 87b on fol. 67r.7, where the scribe wrote “gifþege-dafen þincem” and vertical lines, also called pipes, have been inserted in dry-point to clarify the distinctions between “gif|þe|ge.” Similarly, on 33v.4–5 the scribe has written line 70a of *Guthlac A* as “wilniað bige-wyrhtum” and a dry-point pipe has been added to separate “bi” and “ge.” There has been some disagreement—most notably between Max Förster and Conner, with some contributions from Muir—as to whether the various doodled images, shapes, and letters were made before or after the writing of the texts;¹² those with which I am concerned today were, like these marks of word separation, certainly all made after the scribe did their work.

The number of students of the Exeter Book who have found different dry-point interactions with the manuscript points us to the same significant challenge noted above: dry-point can be fiendishly difficult to identify. Even when—guided by McGovern's notes—I knew what I was looking for, I have found them much easier to identify on flesh than hair sides, and it took me about an hour to “get my eye in” on the second day with the manuscript before I started to see them again. Capturing them on camera was a process of trial and error with torches, angles, and flash photography; [Figure 1](#) below shows some of the marks that I was able to capture. “Struggling to find the point” is, then, not just a comment on my medieval reader's skills; it is also an acknowledgement that I will have missed many instances, and no doubt misinterpreted a number of those I have seen. Much more needs to be done to understand the use of dry-point in the Exeter Book alone—the mind boggles at the potential vastness of the world of manuscript dry-pointing. Looking at dry-point is also a useful reminder that, for all the wonder of digitization, there is sometimes no substitute for looking at

10 Max Förster's comments are in his “General Description of the Manuscript,” in R. W. Chambers, Max Förster, and Robin Flower, ed., *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry* (London: Humphries, 1933), 55–67 at 60; *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry: An Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501*, ed. Bernard Muir (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 15; Patrick W. Conner, “The Structure of the Exeter Book Codex (Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS. 3501),” *Scriptorium* 40 (1986): 233–42 at 237, with a useful table of this and other drawings, and discussion; Abdullah Alger, “Two Drypoint Etchings in the *Exeter Book*,” *N&Q* 53 (2006): 153–54 at 153.

11 Alger, “Verbal and Visual Rhetoric,” 58n258.

12 Förster, “General Description,” 60; Patrick W. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1993), 123–24; Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, 15. It seems fairly clear to me that some were made before and some after.

manuscripts in the flesh.¹³ Some marks, particularly heavy or somehow caught by the light, can be seen on surrogates, but the vast majority cannot. In some places where I could not even see a mark in the flesh, playing with a torch and with moving the book closer to and further away from windows suddenly brought them into focus. As it calls so much more attention to shadows, I think it possible that candlelight or firelight might render them more visible, but this is not an experiment many librarians would be content to permit.¹⁴

Before diving into the detail, it is worth noting that there is no method of which I am aware that can securely date these marks. They show clear understanding of Old English—and of Old English metre—and on those grounds McGovern reasonably suggests that they are most likely to have been made before about 1200. The occasional use of what appears to be lead on, for instance, 35v would date at least some marks to after about 1100. Though it is possible that marks were made at different times, based on the pattern of use within *Guthlac A*, I incline towards placing them together, which would make them a product of a late, perhaps twelfth-century or later reader of Old English.¹⁵ Separately, Scott Gwara has suggested that dry-point glossing may have been a particular feature of Canterbury scriptoria in the later tenth century;¹⁶ if so, this might lead to a suggestion that some at least of the dry-point activity in the Exeter Book may have taken place when and where it was first produced, some time before Leofric donated it to the Exeter community.¹⁷ But these marks are not glosses (at least in the technical sense), and use of dry-point was widespread in space and time: such a suggestion would be very far from secure.

13 See the discussion in Jonathan Wilcox, “The Sensory Cost of Remediation, or, Sniffing in the Gutter of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts,” in *Sensory Perception*, ed. Thomson and Bintley (2016), 27–52; contrast, though, Stewart Brookes’s demonstration that digitized images can help to reveal details, including scratched glosses, invisible to the naked eye, in his online conference paper, “The Book, The Whole Book, and Nothing But the ... Digital Surrogate” as part of *Medium Ævum*’s conference, “Dark Archives 20/20: A Voyage into the Medieval Read and Unread,” September 8–10, 2020, online at www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=nKQebeZ3PeU&feature=emb_logo [accessed September 15, 2020].

14 Wallis notes that UV and daylight lamps made some marks visible to her, “Unpublished Annotations,” 29n5.

15 McGovern suggests three different types of mark in the manuscript as a whole and seems to incline towards several different readers; I am not disagreeing with his findings or suggestion here, but the scratched metrical markings in *Guthlac A* seem to me likely to be the product of a single reader.

16 Gwara, “Further Scratched Glosses,” 202 and 206; Studer-Joho, *Catalogue*, concurs; though Wallis makes the important point that scratches are found where they are looked for (“Unpublished Annotations,” 16); the association with Canterbury may stem purely from Gwara’s interest in Canterbury manuscripts and subsequent shaping of the sub-field of investigation into dry-point marks.

17 The most recent full study of the Exeter Book’s origins and donation, with full references, is in Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, 1–3; see also “*John the Baptist’s Prayer*” or “*The Descent into Hell*” from the *Exeter Book: Text, Translation and Critical Study*, ed. Mary R. Rambaran-Olm (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), 11–27.

Finally, to the meat of the matter—or indeed, to the point: as first noticed and described by McGovern, a number of texts of the Exeter Book have more or less consistent dry-point pointing, which is purely metrical in intent. For the passages in which they occur, they mark (with some exceptions) every poetic half-line, and I have detected no difference between the punctuation of on- and off-verses.¹⁸

As the examples in Figures 1a and 1b, from folios 43v and 44v, show, the marks can be at different angles, vary somewhat in size from about 5mm as on 44v.4 after “bealonip” (marking the end of poetic line 809a) up to about 14mm on 43v.9 following “gemunde” (at the end of 750b). They can be scored in as rough tears, as on 43v.10 after “wundra” (the last word of 752a); be sharp and precise marks as on 39v.17 after “monna” (490a); or more like light indentations, as on 44v.4 after “bealonip” (809a). They also vary in

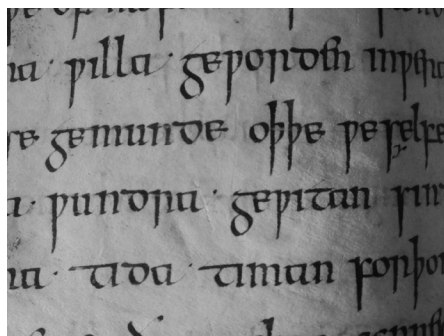


Figure 1a. From folio 43v of the Exeter Book. Photograph author's own; reproduced by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral. Reuse not permitted.

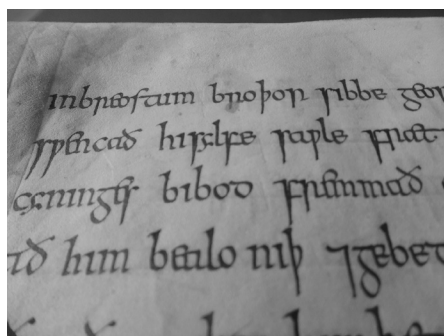


Figure 1b. From folio 44v of the Exeter Book. Photograph author's own; reproduced by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral. Reuse not permitted.

18 For a full index of key technical terms used in this chapter and volume, readers should consult the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices.

placement: they can be very low, starting more or less from the baseline, as on 44v.2 at the end of “sylfa” (806a); run across a point or part of a letter as on 39v.19 after “dædum” (493a); or be placed up to 5 mm after a letter. As we will see below, they are also occasionally doubled, as on 39v.20 after “sippon” (494a), sometimes even crossing one another. As far as I can tell, there is no clustering of these variant forms. Most marks are, however, about 10 mm long and are placed in the middle of a space, 2–3 mm from the letters on either side. Most are reverse *solidi*, like backslashes, though the angle is never especially consistent.

It is worth noting that the manuscript’s sectional breaks for *Guthlac A*—which Roberts numbers as fitt divisions—may mark shifts in the manner of dry-pointing activity, with, for instance, generally lower and smaller marks in Roberts’s fitt 9, poetic lines 722–818. Perhaps the dry-pointer worked in bursts of activity, marking sections up day by day or week by week. However, precisely what was being looked for, still more what was being done with marked-up text (beyond an interest in their metre implying an interest in performing the lines) is impossible to know without more data.

Whatever our dry-pointer was doing with these metrically punctuated fitts, there is a quite different pattern of activity in several other texts of the manuscript, including all three *Christ* poems, *Juliana*, and *The Phoenix*. In texts other than *Guthlac A*, as far as I could tell—and bearing in mind how difficult I found it to see the marks—dry-pointing is never consistent across more than a side, and is usually more closely focused than that.¹⁹ On folio 56v, containing 39–73a (“halge”) of *The Phoenix*, for instance, lines 61b–65a are marked up:²⁰

ne þær wæter fealleþ,
lyfte gebysgad, | ac þær lagustreamas, |
wundrum wrætlice, \ wyllan onspringað \
fægum flodwylmum. \ Foldan leccaþ \
wæter wynsumu

[nor does water fall there, | disturbed by wind, | but there streams of water | wonderfully worked, \ spring out from wells \ in lovely flood-surges. \ The ground is moistened \ by delightful water]

The mark over the final *s* of “lagustreamas” is, incidentally, deep in the gutter, suggesting that it was made when the book was disbound, or at least bound rather more loosely than it is now. There are (as far as I can tell) no other dry-point markings on this side, so why mark up these lines? They contain beautiful poetry—but then, so does much of *The*

¹⁹ This is broadly in line with McGovern’s findings; he suggests that there may have been specific interest in the theme of ascension, “Unnoticed Punctuation,” 94–95, and discusses the pattern of activity outside *Guthlac A* in more detail than I do here, 90–93.

²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, I quote normalized Old English text from the relevant modern edition, including punctuation, but insert pipes and solidi (| \ /) to make some indication of the form of scratched mark. Translations from Old English are my own and usually attempt to follow verse-by-verse phrasing for ease of comparison between versions. Quotation from *The Phoenix* is from *The Phoenix*, ed. N. Blake (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1964; 1990 rev. ed.).

Phoenix—and this isn't even a sentence. Maybe the marker was looking for a quotation about water—linked to a baptism?—or maybe they just liked this sequence.

The marking up of the opening to *Juliana* suggests similarly intermittent interest, starting after line 5b and marking the end of each b-verse down to line 13, nipping back in to mark the ends of lines 18–25 and returning intermittently thereafter: a mistaken mark in 28b (of which more below); one at the end of line 45; another mistaken mark in 59b; at the end of line 61; and then marking the ends of 64a, 64b, and 65a. This pattern—if it can be seen as such—continues for the rest of *Juliana*, with marks always used to indicate metrical boundaries, but never consistently for more than a few verses. As far as I can tell, the dry-pointer does not exclusively focus on the ends of b-verses outside of *Juliana*'s opening lines, and their interest does not seem to be sustained for more than five poetic lines.

Taken together, the dry-point evidence from *The Phoenix* and *Juliana* suggests an extract-based approach to reading poetry: the identification of a few lines which were, for reasons now irrecoverable, of particular interest, perhaps for a moment or perhaps for some wider purpose. Such an interest in very small sections of poems could in turn be connected with what is apparently a slightly garbled single-line quotation of *Beowulf* 869 written into the lower margin of a collection of Alcuin's letters, probably in York.²¹ It could even be associated with the evidence of borrowing and allusion across a wide range of Old English poems, as is currently being investigated by the CLASP project. Indeed, it is of a piece with the culture of extracting, splicing, and slyly referring to texts evident in the composite *Genesis* of Junius 11; in the relationship between *Daniel* and *The Song of the Three Youths*; in the interdependence of *Andreas* and *Beowulf*; and indeed of *Guthlac A* and *Andreas*; and in the apparently widespread use of moments from *The Dream of the Rood* which Jane Roberts discusses in this volume. Early medieval poetic culture looks increasingly fluid and interactive.²²

However, as noted above, the dry-pointing in *Guthlac A* is much more regular: nearly comprehensive. On folio 41r, for example, which contains text from the middle of poetic line 567a to the middle of poetic line 603a, there are 72 verse boundaries. Of these, fifteen (that is, 20 percent) are not marked by a scratch. This is broadly in keeping with the proportion throughout the second half of the poem, with, by my counts, 584 of 736 verse boundaries marked, meaning a rate of 79 percent. I have chosen 41r as the example here because almost all of the omissions can be explained—some more certainly than

²¹ The manuscript is now London, British Library, Harley MS 208, with the note on fol. 88r. For a recent reading, with references and discussion of earlier interpretations, see Thomson, *Communal Creativity*, 256–59.

²² Rachel A. Burns discusses a different kind of physical mark—the inter-word space—as a site of scribal interactivity in her essay of this volume.

others—by the scribe's own processes of encoding.²³ That is, where there is no dry-point mark, there appears to be some form of scribal indication of a verse boundary.

First, and most frequently, if there is a scribal point, whether or not it is followed by a small capital, then our dry-pointer does not usually make a mark. This explains eight of the omissions on 41r: those at the ends of poetic lines 573b, 580b, 589b, 586b, 589b, 591b, 595b, and 598b. Second, if a verse end coincides with the end of a manuscript line, there is usually no mark. This is the case for only one verse ending on 41r, that of 573b, but it is almost always the case that the dry-pointer does not mark verses that coincide with manuscript line endings. And it follows that if these two incidences co-occur, there is no mark, as at the ends of 568b and 576b.

Two more unmarked metrical breaks, those following 575a and 600a, can be explained more speculatively. Both 575b and 600b start with an enlarged lower-case *l*, which are preceded by a slightly enlarged space. The first of these is not usually read as a sentence break by modern editors; the second is.²⁴ It is plausible, then, that these relatively slight scribal indications of a break of some kind were enough to satisfy the dry-pointer. On the other hand, it is worth noting that shortly after poetic line 600, a large space is left between 602a and 602b, which nonetheless receives a dry-point stroke; in line with O'Brien O'Keeffe's findings, it seems likely that it is the combination of space or point with small capital, rather than any of these occurring on their own, that could be read as punctuation of a break.²⁵

This leaves three unmarked verse boundaries on this side that I do not read as marked as such by the scribe: those after 577a, 591a, and 602b. That is, there are just 3 out of 72 verse boundaries (4 percent of the total on this side) that are (as far as I have been able to identify) not made legible by the combination of scribe and dry-pointer. These explanations for unmarked verse breaks, and the rough proportion of unmarked verse breaks that are not indicated in some other way by scribal activity, broadly hold true across the portion of the poem that I have examined. That is, with a few exceptions, what the dry-pointer produced, working highly sympathetically with possible scribal indications of metrical breaks, is a fully metrically legible text of *Guthlac A*.

The degree of variation (explicable and inexplicable omissions) in a passage—on a side—of otherwise flawlessly accurate, absolutely consistent marking of metrical boundaries is interesting. It implies that some of the suggestions that have been made for scribal indications of metrical boundaries were at the very least seen as such by one reader armed with a stylus.²⁶ It also implies a fairly high degree of consciousness in the

²³ It is also possible to see the majority of the marks on this side on Muir's digital image, in *The Exeter DVD: The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, ed. Bernard Muir, with Nick Kennedy, programming (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2006).

²⁴ On the interest and challenge of small capitals, especially *l*, see O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, 156–57n5; cf. Thomson, *Communal Creativity*, 180–181.

²⁵ O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, for example, 162.

²⁶ See especially Burns, "Visual Craft" throughout; Thomson, *Communal Creativity*, 201–7.

The caesura no longer coincides with the sentence break and there is no possible alliteration (unless perhaps “gæste” could be read as *ġæste*; compare lines 316 and 531 where Iuliana alliterates with *ġ*), with no gain aside from relegating *hio* to a subordinate position.

Line 59 also has its challenges: the conventional reading scans 59a as Type E with resolution and 59b Type B with a long initial dip:

S(x) s x S x x x x x S x S
firen-dædum fah, gehyrde þære fæmnan word

Neither verse is straightforward, and the dry-pointer seems to have sacrificed the caesura in order to read 59a as Type A and 59b as a more conventional Type B:

S x x x S x x x x x S x S
firen-dædum fah, gehyrde þære fæmnan word

This gives us a reader who, while perfectly capable, struggles with (mildly) unusual patterns.

Given the regularity with which most of it is marked up, there are two relatively lengthy passages of *Guthlac A* which have very light dry-point punctuation: lines 376–79 on 38r have three marks; 465–69 on 39r–39v have just two. This must be because of the challenges in the metre here, because both are usually read as hypermetric sections:

næfre ge mec of þissum | wordum / onwendað þendan mec min gewit gelæsteð.
þeah þe ge hine sarum forsæcen: ne motan ge mine sawle gretan,
ac ge on betran gebringað. Forðan ic gebidan wille \
þæs þe me min dryhten demeð: nis me þæs deapes sorg.²⁸ (lines 376–79)

[you will never turn me aside from these | words, / while my intellect serves me. Even if you attack it so painfully, you will not be permitted to harm my soul, but instead you will make it better. Therefore I will await \ whatever my Lord determines for me. I have no anxiety about death.]

(... Fela ge fore monnum miþað þæs þe ge in mode / gehycgað,
ne beoð eowre dæda dyrne, þeah þe ge hy in dygle gefremme.)
“We þec in lyft gelæddun, oftugon þe londes wynna,
woldun þu þe sylfa gesawe þæt we þec soð onstældun;
ealles þu þæs wite awunne forþon þu hit onwendan ne meahtes.” \ (lines 465–69)

[(... You conceal from people much of what you in your hearts / are thinking; your deeds are not hidden, even if you do them in secret.) “We brought you up into the air, deprived you of the pleasures of the land, wanted you to see for yourself that what we accuse you of is true. You have endured torment for all this, because you were not able to change it.” \]

²⁸ Quotations from *Guthlac A* are from *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book*, ed. Jane Roberts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). Quotations above (p. 194) are from the MS, using Roberts’ line numbers.

As is evident, of the five marks used in a possible eighteen positions, three do not accord with our scansion of the lines. It seems probable that the dry-pointer recognized the difficulties that they had run into at line 376: “*næfre ge mec of þissum*” looks like a possible on-verse, but that does not work if the off-verse begins “*wordum*.” So the on-verse must end with the noun and begin “*onwendað*.” But, reading on, it immediately becomes evident that this doesn’t work either. Deciding not to puzzle it out, the dry-pointer read on until it made sense again, triumphantly marking at the end of 379 and then resuming as before. Perhaps mindful of this headache, they were wary by line 465, leaving the whole section virtually untouched before again recording the end of the nightmare and resuming normal business.²⁹ That single erroneous mark in 465 is puzzling. The scribe points after “*gehycgað*” and uses a minor capital for “*Ne*,” so the end of the poetic line is quite clearly indicated; marking a metrical break after “*mode*” seems almost wilfully perverse and, if nothing else, demonstrates the dry-pointer’s total bafflement. It also suggests that the dry-pointer was willing to ignore the rule of the non-alliterating final position when necessary, with “*mode*” here made to fill the final two positions of the long line despite alliterating with the on-verse stresses.

The same approach can be seen on folio 40r, where the single hypermetric line 510 has an erroneous mark in the b-verse:

Oft ge in gestalum stondað; / þæs cymeð steor / of heofonum (line 510)

[You keep on making accusations; punishment will come from heaven for them.]

There is, of course, nothing wrong with “*þæs cymeð steor*” as a verse in its own right, but in classical metre it cannot follow “*Oft ge in gestalum stondað*.” As Mark Atherton demonstrates in this volume, late Old English metre did accept alliteration on the final lift. But such difficulties occur again and again with hypermetric lines, usually apparently based on not reading far enough ahead and simply marking a metrical break after a possible on-verse. In lines 636, fols. 41v–42r, and 701, fol. 42v, for instance, valid on-verses (“*wop to widan*”; “*ac ge hine gesundne*”) are produced at the cost of separating caesura from syntactical break:

636: wop to widan / ealdre—*næfre ge þæs wyrpe gebidað*—\

701: ac ge hine gesundne \ asettaþ \ þær ge hine sylfne genoman: \

The correct site is marked in 701, presumably as a correction, but not in 636. Perhaps the turn of the manuscript page after “*ealdre*” allowed the dry-pointer to ignore the excessively long b-verse thereby created, or perhaps the long line was just too much. Indeed, as edited

²⁹ It is possible that the apparent decision not to scan some hypermetric sections was motivated by reading them as closer to prose.

by Jane Roberts, there are ten hypermetric lines in the second half of *Guthlac A* (465–69; 510; 636; 701–2; 741). Of these, only two (702 and 741) are correctly marked up (that is, marked up in accordance with our current understanding of hypermetric verses).³⁰ This seems to contradict McGovern's suggestion that the general focus of the scratches on hypermetric sections was intended to support less confident readers:³¹ it seems more likely that the hand making the marks is itself uncertain about scansion.

The impression given in these sections is, then, that the dry-pointer worked word-by-word and verse-by-verse, without reading ahead, and was somewhat uninterested in puzzling out difficulties.³² Hardly an ideal student. It is worth noting, though, that some identifiable errors are followed by double lines. At line 571 on fol. 41r, for instance, the dry-pointer mistakenly marked too early in the a-verse, and then set two lines after the correct boundary:

571: þæt he in þone grimman \ gryre |\ gongan sceolde,

This is readily explicable: "þæt he in þone grimman" is a valid on-verse, which could have been followed by an off-verse starting with "gryre"; indeed, "gryre gongan sceolde" is just about a plausible verse, though an unusual one, with either double alliteration in the b-verse (but we have seen that the dry-pointer is less concerned about final-lift alliteration than are most of our poets), or an unstressed infinitive followed by an inflected verb carrying a lift. We cannot know whether it was these metrical considerations, or the syntactical structure, or a combination of factors, that convinced our reader to change the reading, but they do seem to have done so. Most likely, we see them here, as with line 376, reading only a word or so at a time and marking the metre in along the way, and then swiftly realizing and seeking to correct the error. This is an easier mistake to correct than the hypermetric stretches, so the correction is effected with a double stroke, and then the reader moves on. Similar uses of a double line in the correct position when a mistake has been made can be seen at 515, 647, and 649. This does not, it should be noted, explain anything like all of the double lines: I see nineteen instances in the second half of *Guthlac A* which cannot be explained in this way, one of which—at line 500, fol. 40r—is itself a mistake.

In the second half of *Guthlac A*, from line 450 onwards, I see uncorrected errors being made in sixteen verses, with clusters of two mistakes in lines 500–501, 645–46

³⁰ On some of the complexities of reading hypermetric verses, see, for example, Roberts's discussion in this volume.

³¹ McGovern, "Unnoticed Punctuation," 92.

³² It is worth comparing Leonard Neidorf's very similar reading of scribal errors in the copying of *Beowulf*, "Scribal Errors of Proper Names in the *Beowulf* Manuscript," *ASE* 42 (2013): 249–69.

and 689–99a. As only 2.2 percent of the 736 verses of these lines, this degree of error is probably enough to pass peer review; it is, I think, important to note that the dry-pointer was not remotely incompetent. As far as I could tell—and I have been conservative in these counts—152 verses are not marked at all; of the 584 marked, the proportion of errors is still only 2.7 percent.

Aside from the hypermetrical lines, is there any way of explaining the errors made here? I have to admit that I am not sure; it is not always clear precisely what the error was. But here are some guesses.

Poetic lines 645–46 seem to have presented a particular challenge:

Forðon ic getrywe \ in þone \ torhtestan \
þrynesse \ þrym se geþeahtingum \

[Therefore I trust \ in that \ most radiant \ glory \ of the Trinity, which by its counsels \]

Perhaps this came about because of the light on-verse, which can be legitimately read instead as “Forðon ic getrywe in þone,” necessitating an off-verse of “torhtestan þrynesse”. This, too, scans, so the dry-pointer’s scansion only falls apart with the *646b it produces: “þrym, se geþeahtingum.” As with lines 571 and 701, the dry-pointer seems at this point to have gone back and worked out that the correct breaks came after “getrywe” and “torhtestan,” though it should be noted that my hypothetical double mark of correction is not used, resulting in a sequence of marks that would be confusing to anyone not familiar with the process gone through. This does not account for the lack of a new mark after *þrym*, but as it is at the end of a manuscript line, the dry-pointer probably reckoned it to be unnecessary.

Line-initial dips—which Roberts observes occur more frequently and at greater length in *Guthlac A* than in *B*—may, then (as here and, above, in 571), have provided a challenge.³³ But there is an interesting contrast with hypermetric verse: while the dry-pointer did not expect them, they were able in both sites to go back and correct readings. Lengthy line-initial dips, then, were challenging but comprehensible to our reader.

Not including hypermetric lines, there are two sites where the b-verse is artificially shortened by the dry-pointer, who misses out the final non-alliterating lift on a monosyllable:

684: duguð ond drohtað.” Ða cwom dryhtnes \ ar, \

792: rodera rice, \ | þa þe ræfnað \ her \

These examples once again give the impression that the dry-pointer was ready to accept alliteration on the final lift: it is plausible that, as with the artificially shortened on-verses discussed above, “Ða cwom dryhtnes” was read as a Type C and “þa þe ræfnað” as

³³ *Guthlac Poems*, 61–62; for a fuller study of the poem’s metre, see Jane Roberts, “A Metrical Examination of the Poems *Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B*,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 71 (1971): 91–137.

Type A. In both instances, after reading one short word, the error was recognized and corrected.

The largest single group of errors are, in fact, mis-readings of the b-verse, perhaps functioning in this same way, where the on-verse is scanned first and independently, with whatever words come next being forced into a shape that could form an off-verse. The first of these is, though, not explained by this hypothesis. Line 499b acquires an additional word, becoming “þæt se gæst lufað onsyn” (presumably to be read as Type B). Two intersecting lines are marked after “onsyn” and one after “lufað,” indicating that the dry-pointer recognized and corrected the error. While 499 is metrically uncomplicated (and the dry-pointer’s *499b difficult to scan), it is perhaps plausible that the dry-pointer was confused by syntax, with the object of the soul’s love starting a new line. This construction (line-final finite verb with object in the succeeding on-verse) does, though, occur in the preceding 496b–97a, which is marked at the foot of 39v with no apparent difficulties. Perhaps the scribe’s enlarged spaces either side of “onsyn” caused confusion.

Line 547b is also expanded by a single word to become “þegnas grimme ealle.” This is an interesting error because it may mark an awareness of rhyme: “þrea wæron þearle: þegnas grimme ealle” is a pleasing phrase and makes sense, having “ealle” inflect “þegnas” rather than “hy,” and resulting in an acceptable line *548, though one requiring stress on a pronoun: “hy þam feore fyl gehehton.” This may be why it has not been corrected; I would tentatively suggest this as not an error at all, but an alternative (possibly even preferable?) reading.

Line 648b also acquires a word, becoming “næfre motan torn.” A mark is correctly inserted after “motan,” but this time the double line comes at the caesura of 649 rather than correcting the mistake. So the lines (as edited by Roberts but as pointed by our reader) are:

þæt ge mec mid niþum \ næfre motan \
torn\mode teon | \ in tintergu

Lines *648b–*649a use alliterating chiasmus (m ... n | n ... m); we will see below an instance in 501 of possible concern around this sort of decoration. It again produces a pleasing pattern: “motan torn | mode teon.” And both “næfre motan torn” and “mode teon” are plausible verses. The different scansion, then, is comprehensible. But it results in an incomprehensible idea: *torn-mode* must be a compound here, otherwise *mode* is left floating on its own. It could perhaps be read as syntactically parallel to “mec”: “that you, grievous, will not be able to drag me, [my] mind, with evil acts into torments”; or to “niþum”: “that you, grievous, will not be able to drag me with evil acts, pride, into torments.” But neither is satisfactory, and the other markings suggest that the dry-pointer, having read the first word of the *649 they had created, recognized the issue. Confusingly, here the double mark appears to indicate a site of correct pointing, rather than to indicate an error.

The 689b produced by the dry-pointer is also in some ways preferable to the poet's. Again, a single word is added, producing "þæt se leofesta gæst." The scansion requires superlative and noun to be separated: "þæt se leofesta | gæst gegearwad in Godes wære | on gefean ferde" (689b–691a: "that the most beloved | spirit, prepared, into God's keeping, | into bliss, could travel"). There is no corrective mark, and the end of 690b is correctly marked; the problematic *690 ("gegearwad in | Godes wære") thereby produced is not noted; perhaps *690a was read as Type A3 and *690b as A (x S x x | S x S x). The following sentence sees a similar choice of syntactical clarity over metrical regularity. The poet's "ða wearð feonda þreat | acol for ðam egšan" (Then was the band of fiends | terrified by that fear, 691b–692) receives instead a metrical break after "acol," with "for ðam egšan" standing alone. This, too, is uncorrected, and would again have to be read as A3, although we have seen above that light verses were often problematic for our reader. Most likely, as is clear with hypermetrical verses, the dry-pointer was not overly concerned with sites where the metre could not be readily comprehended and simply focused on producing verses that worked syntactically and metrically rather than seeking to solve all of the metrical challenges of the text.

Finally, 707b also gains a word, becoming "fore eowere mengu." This is entirely comprehensible: "fore eowere," with alliteration on the vowel, is not easy to scan, and it is another grammatical phrase disrupted by a metrical break. Double alliteration on *m* in 708 must have made the scansion quite clear, and marks are correctly made but with no double mark.

This leaves three errors where I struggle to see precisely what went wrong. A mark in the middle of 501b "mid | dangeard" I find inexplicable. Is it possible that the alliterating syllable is being highlighted? This is an elegant long line, playing with *g*- and *m*-: "ðe gemete monige geond middangeard." The mark dividing "mid/dan" could perhaps ensure that it is read with stress on *m*- rather than being deceived by the prevalence of initial *g*-. Or it could be syllabic separation, but I have not identified any other instances of this phenomenon.

Likewise, I do not clearly understand what the errors were, or indeed the challenges, in 515–16 or in 657–58, where the marks are:

synnum asundrad; sceolde he \ sares þa gen \
 dæl adreoga ðeah þe dryhten his \
 fæger ond gefealic \ in fæder | wuldre,
 ðær eow næfre fore nergende \

Possibly the dry-pointer read 515a as ending after "he"—which would be unusual but not unmetrical, but makes little sense given the apparent sensitivity to syntax in other lines. And what could be the motivation for marking after "fæder"? In both instances, there is no mark after the subsequent a-verse. This may suggest confusion, as where hypermetrical lines are simply not marked until they start to make sense again, but I think more likely—especially at 657, where the end of the b-verse is not correctly marked—the dry-pointer thought there was a pattern. I, though, cannot see how to scan what has been produced here.

What have we learned from this dive into some scratches in the Exeter Book? As ever, when working closely with medieval manuscripts, we have found much that we cannot explain. But I think we have also seen with some certainty that an early medieval informed and interested reader of *Guthlac A* found its metrical breaks important, and, despite being able to recognize them as such, mostly found the scribal indications of metrical breaks insufficient. We have seen focused engagement with poetry as poetry by a probably quite late reader of Old English, with clear knowledge of metrical rules, an interest in engaging with them, and sensitivity to the aesthetics of the poetry, but with some specific areas of ignorance and a propensity to pass on by when a particular passage became too challenging to scan. We have also seen that the reader seems likely to have been making marks for themselves alone, as—quite apart from the difficulty of seeing scratches in the first place—the pattern of marks to indicate corrections is simply too inconsistent to support an uninitiated reader's use of them. Some aspects of the pattern of marking and sites of confusion seem to support propositions made elsewhere, including in this volume, for the changes in poetic metre and for scribal indications of metrical patterns. Finally, as this volume as a whole demonstrates so clearly, we have seen that the often-divided worlds of manuscript, literary, and linguistic study of Old English poetry are intertwined and interdependent.

MIND THE GAP: INTER-WORD SPACING AND METRICAL ORGANIZATION IN OLD ENGLISH VERSE

Rachel A. Burns*

IT HAS OFTEN been noted, but never sufficiently explained, that the space between words in manuscript copies of Old English verse reflects aspects of metrical form, with larger spaces falling at the end of verses.¹ Readers are more likely to be familiar with the conventional view that in early medieval English manuscripts, vernacular verse is “written continuously, like prose,” with use of metrical pointing varying from text to text.² A variety of more nuanced metrical cues, namely lineation, caesura-spacing, and line-end punctuation, are typically introduced by editors in modern print editions.³ While these presentational emendations make the texts vastly more approachable for the reader, they obscure both the ambiguities and the range of cues that exist *in situ*. Simon Thomson’s chapter on dry-point markings in this volume demonstrates how a critical return to neglected aspects of textual materiality may reveal previously unknown readerly habits. If inter-word spacing indeed correlates with the basic verse-contours of Old English poetry, then a study of spacing may act both as a new source of data related to metrics, and also as a window onto contemporary practices of reading and writing.

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1 See Norman E. Eliason, Review of “Robert D. Stevick, *Suprasegmentals, Meter, and the Manuscript of Beowulf*,” *Speculum* 45 (1970): 175–78 at 175. For an attempt at explanation of this phenomenon, see A. N. Doane, “The Ethnography of Scribal Writing and Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Scribe as Performer,” *Oral Tradition* (1994): 420–439 at 420 <http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/9ii/doane> [accessed August 22, 2017].

2 Quotation from Peter S. Baker, *Introduction to Old English*, 3rd ed. (2012), 124. For an overview of spacing practices in the major poetic codices of Old English verse, see Abdullah Alger, *The Verbal and Visual Rhetoric of Old English Poetry: An Analysis of the Punctuation and Formulaic Patterns in the Exeter Book (Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501)* (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2010). Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe discusses pointing practice as an aspect of “the development of graphic conventions” in manuscript copies of OE verse (*Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), *passim*, quotation at 128).

3 For a full index of key technical terms used in this chapter and volume, readers should consult the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices. Even *Beowulf Repunctuated*, a purposefully low-intervention edition, introduces lineation with only the briefest acknowledgement (*Beowulf Repunctuated*, ed. Bruce Mitchell and Susan Irvine, *OEN Subsidia*, 29 (2000), 6). See also R. D. Fulk and Christopher M. Cain, *A History of Old English Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chichester: Wiley, 2013), 65.

In this chapter, I will examine inter-word spacing across several folios from the text of *Beowulf* in British Library, Cotton Vitellius A XV, offering a model for the statistical analysis of inter-word spacing in Old English verse.⁴ Previous studies in this area have largely centred on word division (i.e. the absolute presence or absence of space between words and morphemes) rather than differences in the size of those divisions.⁵ The only extensive work carried out on varying degrees of inter-word spacing to date is that of Robert Stevick, whose several publications on “graphotactics” argue that inter-word spacing acts as “a system of notation” for metrical and suprasegmental features of Old English verse.⁶ The methodology and approach of this present study will differ from Stevick’s in two main ways. First, where Stevick assigned value on a scale of 1 to 7 to each space by looking at them rather than by measuring, I will take measurements in pixels from high-resolution images, producing more detailed, accurate and transparent data.⁷ Second, where Stevick strives to account for spacing as an “intentional” and systematic indicator of linguistic and prosodic features, I am interested in what the data shows about scribal interaction with spacing and prosody, whether or not it constitutes a deliberately applied system.⁸

4 This builds upon work from my PhD thesis, with the present chapter producing and examining a new dataset (Burns, *Visual Craft*).

5 E. G. Stanley suggests that scribes are uninterested in word-spacing in “Review of ‘O’Keeffe, K. O’B., *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse*,” *N&Q* 38 (1991): 199–200, 199. Fulk and Cain suggest that spacing of syllables tends to be determined by stress in *A History of Old English Literature* 65. On aspects of the relationship between word-division and metrical form, see Thomas A. Bredehoft, “Secondary Stress in Compound Germanic Names in Old English Verse,” *JEL* 31 (2003): 199–220; Megan E. Hartman, “Stressed and Spaced Out: Manuscript-Evidence for Beowulfian Prosody,” *Anglo-Saxon* 1 (2007): 201–20.

6 Stevick defines “graphotactics” as “the incidence and measure of spacings between strings of written symbols of a text, where both the graphic symbols and the spacings carry linguistic information” (Stevick, *Old English Graphotactics* <http://faculty.washington.edu/stevickr/graphotactics/> [accessed August 22, 2018]). Robert D. Stevick, “Scribal Notation of Prosodic Features in *The Parker Chronicle*, Anno 894 [893],” *JEL* 1 (1967): 57–66; Robert D. Stevick, *Suprasegmentals, Meter, and the Manuscript of Beowulf* (1968); Robert D. Stevick, *Beowulf: An Edition with Manuscript Spacing Notation and Graphotactic Analyses* (1975); Robert D. Stevick, “Graphotactics of the Old English ‘Alexander’s Letter to Aristotle,’” *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia: International Review of English Studies* 40 (2004): 3–13. Stevick’s online work has been extensively cited, but during the publication of this volume I discovered that his website has become at least temporarily non-operational. Stevick’s work on *Beowulf* was well received by a number of reviewers: Eliason, Review, 176–77; Thomas Cable, “Review of ‘Beowulf: An Edition with Manuscript Spacing Notation and Graphotactic Analyses, Robert D. Stevick, Ed.,’” *Computers and the Humanities* 11 (1977): 49. But see also scepticism in Christopher J. E. Ball, “Review of ‘Suprasegmentals, Meter, and the Manuscript of Beowulf. By Robert D. Stevick,” *RES* 21 (1970): 476–78.

7 My methodology will be described in greater detail below. Further on Stevick’s methodology, see Robert D. Stevick, “The Measure of Spacing,” *Old English Graphotactics* (1999), xxi–ii http://faculty.washington.edu/stevickr/graphotactics/PDF_files/Measure.pdf [accessed December 1, 2017].

8 On Stevick’s approach, see Stevick, *Beowulf: An Edition*, x; Stevick, *Suprasegmentals*, 7, 14–15, 18; Stevick, “Scribal Notation,” 57. On spacing accuracy and anomaly in conventions, see Stevick,

The correlation between lexical spacing and metrical structure in manuscript witnesses of Old English verse is readily visible *in situ*, and is well illustrated by a short sample of text from *The Wanderer*. This elegiac poem opens on folio 76v of the Exeter Book, and the first three manuscript lines of text include nine half-line breaks. Of these, at least six are visibly larger than the surrounding inter-word spaces which do not fall at half-line breaks.⁹ Only at the half-line breaks following “miltse” (line 2a) and “sae” (line 4b) is this pattern not apparent, and it is likely that the spacing of “miltse” has been compromised due to its position close to the right-hand margin.¹⁰ This brief sample exemplifies a broader principle which will emerge from the data gathered and presented in this chapter: the horizontal width of the space following the concluding word of any given on- or off-verse tends to be greater than the horizontal width of the spacing following words which do not fall at the end of a verse. However, this pattern is not entirely consistent, as suggested by this example from *The Wanderer*. I will suggest that such patterns point towards scribes’ mental engagement with rhythm and other features of verse texts during the copying process, and that the results garnered from textual samples in this chapter forcefully make the case for a full-length, computer-aided study of word spacing across the corpus of Old English verse.¹¹

Methods and Parameters

Six folios of *Beowulf* have been used as the basis for the dataset analysed in this chapter (132r–137v). Measurements at the end of words were captured in a spreadsheet, summaries of which are presented and discussed below. The primary challenge in obtaining this data was one of definition: neither “space” nor “words” nor even “the page” manifest as straightforward or static objects for measurement, and different

Suprasegmentals, 72–73. Stevick’s theory of the meaningfulness of spacing pushed him towards an assessment of suprasegmental criteria, such as pitch, an approach which drew particular criticism from Ball (“Review,” 477–78). Note also that Stevick’s work relied upon an isochronous reading of Old English metre, following the work of John C. Pope (Stevick, *Suprasegmentals*, 64–65, 67–68, and see also 18–19). Pope’s views on OE verse isochrony have not generally been accepted, on which see Haruko Momma’s chapter in the present volume, especially 229.

9 These are the spacings following “anhaga” (line 1a); “gebedeð” (line 1b), “mod cearig” (line 2b), “lagu lade” (line 3a), “hondum” (line 4a), and “wræc lastas” (line 5a). It is possible that the spacing after “sceolde” (line 3a) fits this pattern too. Quotations from *The Wanderer* in this paragraph are taken from the manuscript source, with original manuscript spacing replicated, with reference to Christopher A. Jones, *Old English Shorter Poems*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 129. Images of the Exeter Book manuscript can be accessed at *The Exeter Book*, Exeter Cathedral Library and Archives & University of Exeter Digital Humanities Lab, <https://theexeterbook.exeter.ac.uk/single.html>.

10 I am grateful to Winfried Rudolf for noting to me in conversation the tendency for scribes to compress their handwriting towards the right-hand margin.

11 Here, my findings chime with Daniel Donoghue’s discussion of scribal “inner speech,” and his examination of verse syntax (Daniel Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read Their Poems* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018) for example, 8–9).

researchers may establish different parameters to define these objects. In the first place, determining what constitutes the beginning and end of a word is beset by mechanical and categorical questions. It is frequently a challenge to distinguish between the main concluding (or opening) stroke of a character, and an ornamental stroke or a smudge, particularly when both ink and parchment are shades of brown. In this study, any part of a stroke clearly intended to be part of the letter by the scribe, whether ornamental or not, has been included for measurement, including graphic marks above or below the x-height and baseline respectively, and long tongues and tails (characteristically found on concluding letters **e** and **a**).

A second definitional issue arises from the occasions upon which space is not only used between words, but within them. In the “aerated script” used by scribes of Old English verse texts, space may be used not only to separate words, but also to separate elements or morphemes within words; furthermore, discrete words are sometimes written with little or no space between them.¹² For example, in the extract from *The Wanderer* discussed above, the compounds *wræclastas* and *lagulade* are each encoded on the page as two letter-strings, “wræc lastas” and “lagu lade”, respectively, while another common habit of the Exeter Book scribe is use of space to separate prefixes (such as *ge-*) from the root syllable of a word. In *Beowulf*, “in” and the first element of “geardagum” (line 1a) are written continuously, while the compound elements “gear-” and “-dagum” are separated into two letter-strings by spacing. Furthermore, it is not always clear if a lexical unit has been visually divided. See, for example, *Beo* 17, “forgeaf” on fol. 132r, which has been treated as a single unit in this chapter, but might alternatively be read as featuring additional inter-syllabic space between *for-* and *-geaf*.¹³ While intra-word spacing has the potential to tell us a great deal about word stress and scribal conceptions of lexemic units, it falls beyond the scope of the current chapter. Therefore, where single words are encoded as two or more letter-strings, only the space at the end of the full word has been measured, and I have taken measurements between all discrete words, even where there is little or no space between them.

Finally, the page itself is subject to changes of both environment and media: manuscripts will expand and contract according to conditions of humidity and temperature, and the processes of digital capture and storage may involve (at greater or

¹² In his account of the development of word-separation in the medieval west, Paul Saenger notes that early medieval English manuscript texts are not encoded with the “canonical separation” (application of space after each discrete lexical unit) with which a modern reader of English is familiar, but adhered to an earlier phase of development which he calls “aerated script,” in which space is commonly used to delineate morphemic blocks rather than single words (including, for example, prefixes separated from root syllables, or space between the elements of compound words), in *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 32–44. On these aspects of “orthographic practice” in the context of early medieval reading, see Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read*, 134–37.

¹³ *Beowulf* quotations throughout are from the MS source, with reference to Klaeber 4 and *ASPR*.

lesser levels) loss of information and fidelity.¹⁴ These problems raise the question of what, precisely, is being measured in any given set of data, and ties any such measurements to a particular rendering of the manuscript object. For this chapter I used high-resolution digital images hosted on the British Library's website; these quality facsimiles are freely accessible to other scholars.¹⁵ I have excluded text that is too damaged to reasonably be measured.

Collectively, these issues are a reminder that there is no single way to numerically represent the page. However, a transparent account of methods easily replicable by other scholars allows us to make a meaningful impression of its textual dimensions, and of the patterns that inform its layout.

Data Analysis

The individual measurements between words across the three folios were collected into three groups, according to their placements relative to metrical verses:

Table 5 Definitions of the three categories of inter-word spacing

Group #	Description
0	Spaces which do not coincide with a metrical break
1	Space falling after the final word of the on-verse
2	Space falling after the final word of the off-verse

Visualizing these groups in a written line draws attention to the significantly larger quantity of Group 0 values in any given text (Group numbers formatted in bold):

<i>Beo</i> 1646	hæle (0) hildedeor (1) hroðgar (0) gretan (2)
-----------------	---

For each page, and within each of these groups, mean values were produced, showing the average width of a single space for each Group on a given page. The highest and lowest values for each Group were also produced, to show the range of values around the mean

¹⁴ I am grateful to Peter Stokes for making some of these observations in a personal communication, and for stressing the problems and difficulties in taking measurements from the page.

¹⁵ Cotton MS Vitellius A.xv, British Library online, Digitized Manuscripts www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_vitellius_a_xv. Staff at the British Library have confirmed in private communication that their images are taken at a resolution of 300 dpi.

Table 6 Average spacing units by metrical group across six folios of *Beowulf*

Folio	Average size of a space (pixels)			
	0	1	2	Average across groups
132r	51.3	75.9	119.5	67.7
132v	39.6	76.2	94.3	57.3
133r	46.7	88.1	81.6	59.8
133v	48.9	96.6	91.5	65.5
134r	52.8	84.5	80.1	63.8
134v	53.0	75.6	96.7	65.4
135r	47.7	57.4	74.1	54.0
135v	57.3	68.8	74.0	64.9
136r	44.2	80.9	81.6	57.4
136v	52.1	76.4	93.5	63.5
137r	41.9	62.9	79.1	54.5
137v	43.4	79.8	86.8	59.0
Average across folios	47.4	77.1	88.9	60.6

Table 7 Proportional difference between average spacing units by metrical group across six folios of *Beowulf*

Folios	Average size of spacing by group, as a multiple of the average size of spacing in Group 0		
	0	1	2
132r	1	1.5	2.3
132v	1	1.9	2.4
133r	1	1.9	1.7
133v	1	2.0	1.9
134r	1	1.6	1.5
134v	1	1.4	1.8
135r	1	1.2	1.6
135v	1	1.2	1.3
136r	1	1.8	1.8
136v	1	1.5	1.8
137r	1	1.5	1.9
137v	1	1.8	2.0
Average across folios	1	1.6	1.9

average. After unmeasurable spaces were excluded, 802 data points remained.¹⁶ Tables 6 and 7 present these data.

Table 6 shows that on average, the size of spaces in Groups 1 and 2 are larger than the size of spaces in Group 0. However, because scribal handwriting size may vary from page to page, pixel-measurements on different folios may not be directly comparable with one another.¹⁷ Table 8 makes the data comparable across folios by representing average spacing for each group as a proportion of the size of Group 0. For example, on folio 136v, spaces in Group 1 are on average 1.5 times the size of spaces in Group 0, while spaces in Group 2 are on average 1.8 times the size of Group 0. This can be compared to very similar results on the next page, fol. 137r, where spaces in Group 1 are on average 1.5 times the size of spaces in Group 0, while spaces in Group 2 are on average 1.9 times the size of Group 0. On average across the full set of folios (see the final row of Table 7), spaces in Group 1 are 1.6 times the size of spaces in Group 0, while spaces in Group 2 are 1.9 times the size of spaces in Group 0. This means that space following a word concluding an on-verse is, on average, going to be around one-and-a-half times larger than the space following a word which does not conclude a verse, whereas space following a word that concludes the off-verse is on average going to be almost twice the size of spaces following words which do not conclude a verse.¹⁸ This table makes clearer and more nuanced the pattern which we have already observed: spacing distinguishes not only verse-final spacing (Groups 1 and 2) from non-verse-final spacing (Group 0), but furthermore it distinguishes spacing which follows the on-verse from spacing which follows the off-verse. This creates a visual hierarchy analogous with modern editorial layout conventions, where the least spacing is applied after words which do not conclude a verse (a single space), more space is applied after words which conclude the on-verse (a caesura), and the most space is applied after words which conclude the off-verse (a line-break). In both modern and manuscript texts, spacing patterns reflect the subordination of half-lines within the structure of the full line.

There is, however, significant variance from folio to folio. While Table 8 shows that across the set of folios, spacing in Group 2 is, on average, around twice as large as spacing in Group 0, this ranges from 1.3 to 2.4 times, while the average spacing in Group 1 ranges from 1.2 to 2.0 times the average size of spacing in Group 0. On folio 134r, spacing in

¹⁶ The full dataset can be accessed by writing to the author directly.

¹⁷ For example, if Scribe A were to turn a page and begin writing in a slightly larger hand, we would expect inter-word spacing to be larger, accordingly. This would be a result of increased handwriting size and not of a change in approach to spacing, and so the two pages would not be directly comparable. Stevick discusses this issue in "The Measure of Spacing," *Old English Graphotactics* (1999), xxi–ii faculty.washington.edu/stevickr/graphotactics/PDF_files/Measure.pdf [accessed December 1, 2017]. Saenger adopts a different and equally viable method of handling this problem in *Space Between Words*, 27.

¹⁸ These results correspond extremely closely with the results of a similar study which I produced in 2018, using largely different folios from *Beowulf*, as well as some text from *The Wanderer* in the Exeter Book. The methodology for this study was predominantly the same, though with some

Table 8 Range of spacing values by group across six folios of *Beowulf*

Folio	Range of spacing values (pixels)		
	0	1	2
132r	117	110	173
132v	98	101	121
133r	133	69	50
133v	94	93	80
134r	100	114	47
134v	105	100	180
135r	229	68	151
135v	78	37	73
136r	166	96	58
136v	128	48	45
137r	125	112	129
137v	159	92	82

Group 2 is barely distinguished from spacing in Group 1, and on folio 133r, spacing in Group 1 is in fact on average slightly larger than spacing in Group 2. Furthermore, the range of spacing values for each group on each folio is generally broad. Table 9, below, shows the range between the smallest number of pixels belonging to a particular group on a particular folio, and the largest such measurement.

Within each Group there is a significant spread of occurrences across these ranges, particularly at Position 0. For example, on folio 132r, spaces in Group 0 are on average 51.3 pixels each. However, Group 0 on that page carries values ranging from -12 pixels to 118 pixels, with only 38 percent of values falling between 40 and 64 pixels, around the average.¹⁹ On the same page, Group 1 spacings range from 19 pixels to 148 pixels, with over half of these falling between 60 and 90 pixels, around the 75.9 pixel average. Group 2 values range between 57 pixels and 230 pixels, with only 31 percent of values falling between 100 and 140 pixels, around the average 119.5 pixel average. If scribes were striving to use word spacing as a system of notation, as argued by Stevick, it is likely that measurements would fall within a fairly narrow range, with occasional anomalous outliers and the vast majority of measurements falling at or very close to

experimentation rotating images, and some difference in making the measurements comparable between folios (Burns, *Visual Craft*, chap. 3, especially 187n89).

19 In the measurements, a negative value indicates that not only is there no space between the final letter of one word and the first letter of the next, but there is in fact identifiable overlap between the letters, usually due to an overhanging ascender or underhanging descender.

an average value. However, the large ranges within each Group are not being caused by occasional anomalies, but by a generally broad distribution of spacing values. Overall, the data from the sample sets suggests two things: first, that inter-word spacing displays an identifiable pattern, with the ends of the on- and off-verse generally marked by larger inter-word spaces; second, that this regularity is not consistent enough to reflect a systematic programme by scribes.

Conclusions: Some Hypotheses and Suggestions

This chapter has shown that in a sample of folios from *Beowulf* the scribe on average utilizes a greater degree of inter-word spacing after on-verses than between words which do not fall at the end of a verse, and a greater degree of inter-word spacing after off-verses than after on-verses. This corresponds with our modern understanding of the structure of Old English metrical lines. However, it has also shown that this pattern is not consistent enough to suggest scribes were systematically deploying spacing in this way. In his book on early medieval English reading practice, Daniel Donoghue addresses the “not-systematic-yet-not-random pattern of punctuation” in much of the Old English verse manuscript record by turning to the physiological experiences of scribes.²⁰ In a similar vein, the non-systematic spacing patterns demonstrated by the data above may reflect the scribe’s physiological response to the process of reading and copying texts, and specifically their response to metrical rhythm. The individual and non-systematic nature of such a response accounts for the inconsistent application of spacing patterns, while broad patterns identifiable between folios (and scribes) indicate familiarity with Old English metrical structure.

A scribe’s processes of reading are affected by the mental demands of copying, but are also embodied in the physical actions of copying. Unlike a non-copyist reader, the scribe must—however briefly—hold a portion of the text mentally intact, suspended between the exemplar and the new page. The parallelisms and rhythms found in the metrical line or verse may aid the speed, fluidity, and accuracy of this process of reading, memorization, and writing. The scribe who looks at an exemplar seeking to commit a certain portion of it to short-term memory might choose a metrical unit like a verse; after recording this memorized unit, the scribe raises the pen and looks back up at the exemplar to memorize the next line. The scribe then lowers the pen back to the vellum, leaving a larger space between verses than between the continuously copied words within a verse. Numerous scenarios might affect or alter such a process: the presence of sense-units and rhetorical structure offering an alternative or complementary framework for memorization; the need to compress writing to fit in a particular space; or an interruption causing the scribe to put down the pen.

Spacing, then, may be a graphic side-effect of mnemonics, influenced by the scribe’s individual engagement with and reliance on rhythmic form. Such a theory complements the work of several scholars on the role of aural engagement in scribal activity. Malcolm

²⁰ Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read*, 128.

Parkes speaks of an “aural response ... in the mind’s ear,” while Thomson imagines “a scriptorium where scribes ... could hear and, to some degree, represent metrical rhythms in their writing.”²¹ Approaching an examination of sound in silent reading both through modern literary representations of “inner speech,” and also through cognitive psychological data, Donoghue suggests that because “the inner voice never grows quiet ... the only kind of reading is oral.”²² For the scribe listening to that “inner voice,” the only kind of copying is aural.

A second response to the existence of non-systematic patterns at the level of the folio is to see whether those patterns become more systematic at a more granular level of capture, such as the verse line. The following lines from *Beowulf* on folio 132r of the Nowell Codex (lines 3–5, 10–13) are demonstrative of the trends shown by the data more broadly:²³

hu ⁻³ ða ⁷¹ æþelingas ⁸¹ ellen ^{EL} fremedon. ¹⁹²
 Oft ⁵⁶ scýld ⁸⁸ scefing ⁹⁷ sceapen[... ^{EL} þreatum ¹¹⁰
 monegum ¹⁰³ mægþum ¹⁰² meodo ⁸¹ setla ^{EL} of ⁴⁷ teah ¹⁰⁷
 ...
 ofer ²⁸ hron ¹³⁰ rade ⁸⁰ hýran ⁷⁰ scolde ⁷¹
 gomban ^{EL} gýldan ⁶⁴ þæt ⁷ wæs ³⁶ god ⁷⁴ cýning. ¹⁵⁴
 ðæm ⁶⁸ eafera ³⁸ wæs ^{EL} æfter ⁵⁴ cenned ⁷⁹
 geong ⁶³ in ²⁴ geardum ⁷¹ þone ⁴⁵ god ^{EL} sende ⁵⁷

Within each verse of this extract, the largest space tends to fall at the end of the off-verse (Group 2), or else at the end of the on-verse (Group 1), with lines 3a and 10a as exceptions. The large space between “hron” and “rade” in line 10a is caused by the erasure of a character between the two elements of the compound.²⁴ The spacing after the off-verse features some of the largest values in the set (e.g. 192 pixels at line 3b and 154 at line 11b), but also one of the lowest (57 pixels at line 13b). Three values in lines 4a, 5a and 5b fall within the higher spacing values for the folio as a whole, and yet do not fall at metrical breaks. In line 13, the breaks after the on-verse and the off-verse are the largest within the line, but they are certainly not among the highest values for folio 132r as a whole.

21 M. B. Parkes, *Their Hands Before Our Eyes: A Closer Look at Scribes: The Lyell Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford, 1999* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 66; Thomson, “Whistle While You Work”: Scribal engagement with Old English poetic texts,” in *Sensory Perception in the Medieval West*, ed. Simon Thomson and M. Bintley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 100. See also Doane, “Scribe as Performer,” 420, 431–32.

22 Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read*, 7 and also 36–42.

23 Spacing values between words and morphemes are in pixels. This style of layout is adapted from that used by Stevick. EL indicates end of the MS line.

24 As two elements of a compound word, the space between “hron” and “rade” was not included in the statistics for the analyses and tables above; however, I have provided it here to illustrate the paleographic features, including erasure, which can affect word-spacing. A second inter-word space provided in this extract falls in “ofteah” (line 5b). Capturing this kind of additional data could shed light on the scribal treatment of word-elements as a further area of spacing study.

This raises the possibility that a pattern of metrical spacing may be more localized than general. Across the data from all of the sample folios, in 75 percent of verses with at least one measurable space in Group 0, and at least one measurable space in Group 1 or Group 2, the space at the end of the on- or off-verse was larger than any other measured space in the verse.²⁵ This means that in three-quarters of measurable cases, larger spacing within the line delineated metrical structure locally. It should also be noted that the two largest spaces in the extracts, at the ends of lines 3 and 11, fall not only at the end of metrical lines, but at the end of semantic units (represented by the use of a full stop in the edited text). Further analysis of data at a highly granular level might, therefore, be able to demonstrate a more systematic relationship between verse boundaries and inter-word spacing.

The absence of an intentional system of inter-word spacing does not mean that Scribe A was necessarily unaware of these patterns on the folio, or that lexical spacing might not sometimes be deployed intentionally for effect in Old English texts.²⁶ Other scholars have been inclined to see similarly inconsistent patterns as reflective of deliberate scribal strategies and priorities.²⁷

The patterns and hypotheses presented here are an invitation to further study of inter-word spacing in Old English verse. A full-scale study would require the gathering of further data on two axes: first, obtaining information from a significant number of lines, such as the full text of *Beowulf*; second, identifying other aspects of those lines which might affect inter-word spacing, such as verse grammar, rhetorical units, and manuscript punctuation. The first of these tasks would ideally be carried out via computer software, using OCR technology.²⁸ The weight of the second task will be considerably lessened by the data to be made available through the CLASP project. From such an exercise, we stand to gain greater insight into the specific reading practices of the medieval copyist, and into individual scribes' experiences of the rhythms of their texts. If marks of punctuation are indeed "mute witnesses" to the "inner speech" of the scribe,²⁹ then inter-word spaces may be their "invisible" counterparts.

25 A similar value was found in Burns, *Visual Craft*, Chapter Three, using 3 sample folios of Scribe A in the *Beowulf* manuscript (fols. 132r, 156v, and 173r), where in 76 percent of the half-lines for Scribe A, across all three sample folios, the spacing at the end of the any given verse was greater than any of the other spaces within the same verse, even where the spacing at the end of that verse was not amongst the higher values within its respective folio as a whole.

26 For some examples of deliberate and aesthetic uses of space and spacing in Old English verse texts, see Burns, *Visual Craft*, 137–39; 153–54; 261–75.

27 See Thomson, on the degree to which scribes end folios with complete half-lines, in "Whistle While You Work," 99–122, especially 118–19. Thomson concludes (p. 121): "it is clear that scribes sometimes organized their copying around the contents of the texts and that they seem to find it easier to do so when those texts were structured metrically, and, further, that they sometimes ... organised their copying on purely metrical criteria." Donoghue questions whether scribes may have anticipated the eye-movement of readers in their use of punctuation, Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read*, for example, 129, 138.

28 I am grateful to Nick White for his conversations with me on this subject.

29 Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read*, 154.

METRE VS RHYTHM: JOHN C. POPE READS SIEVERS

Haruko Momma*

Introduction

Today, John C. Pope is remembered mainly for his magisterial EETS edition *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, but in his own day he was also famous for his monograph *The Rhythm of Beowulf*.¹ And yet compared to Eduard Sievers's metrical theory, which has attracted—and continues to attract—much critical attention, Pope's work on Old English versification has in recent decades been explored by fewer scholars. In this chapter I will consider how Pope's scholarship may bring a new insight to the current dialogue on Old English prosody and Old English poetry in general. In order to contextualize his work on the subject, I will introduce new materials from the John Collins Pope Papers, an archival collection housed in the Manuscripts and Archives division of the Yale University Library. According to the library's online catalogue, these archival papers come in twenty-nine boxes, adding up to "29 linear feet" of materials. Of these, Boxes 1 through 8 contain Pope's correspondence; thereafter, one box is usually assigned to one topic: for example, Box 10, Writings—*The Oxford History of English Literature*; Box 11, "Sievers, Eduard"; Box 19, "Memorabilia"; and Box 20, "Menner, R. J."—a Yale professor who directed Pope's doctoral thesis. Boxes 21 to 28 are labeled as "Subject Files" consisting of "mixed materials."²

In the first main section of this chapter, I will provide a general introduction to the Pope Papers in order to show how the study of Old English poetry was his life-long commitment. Some attention will be paid to Box 11 of the Pope Papers, which contains research he conducted for his posthumous publication on the life and work of Eduard Sievers. In the section after that, I will consider Pope's interpretation of Eduard Sievers's metrical theory to argue that Pope's own theory of Old English versification was intended not to replace Sievers's metrical theory but instead to complement it for the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the poetry. In the subsequent section, I will further discuss the relationship between Sievers's metrical theory and Pope's work on the rhythm of Old English poetry by using as a point of departure his note

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¹ John C. Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, 2 vols., Early English Text Society, 259–60 (London: Oxford University Press, 1967–1968). John C. Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942); 2nd rev. ed. (1966).

² John Collins Pope Papers, MS 1724, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, <https://archives.yale.edu/repositories/12/resources/3500>.

on a lecture on the subject preserved in his archive. In the final section, I will turn to some additional materials from the Pope Papers to consider briefly his larger theoretical framework, which encompasses English-language poetry at large.

John Collins Pope Papers

Before accessing the Pope Papers housed at Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library, I somehow imagined that I would find in this collection Pope's analyses of Ælfric's alliterative prose according to his own prosodical theory. To my surprise, however, what I found instead was folders and envelopes packed with papers showing the uncompromising research he had done for his EETS edition of the supplementary *Homilies of Ælfric*. As far as the archives can tell us, Pope kept his work on Ælfric separate from his work on the rhythm of Old English verse.³ In contrast, I saw file after file, notebook after notebook, of his analyses of *Beowulf* and other Old English poems, together with many other papers, note cards, and charts concerning poetic texts. The collection even contains Pope's well-used copy of Klaeber's edition of *Beowulf*, with its brown hard covers mended with layers of duct tape (Box 12, Pope Papers). In another box I saw a draft of a letter, dated to November 1, 1943, and addressed to Elliot V. K. Dobbie, concerning a short Old English poem known today as *Instructions for Christians*: "When your edition of the ANGLO-SAXON MINOR POEMS appeared recently," he wrote, "I half expected" to see this poem included "in the neighborhood of the 'Exhortation to Christian Living' on p. 67; but of course I understand why you left them out. They would certainly have added no luster to your volume." He also informed Dobbie that he had made a transcript of the poem from "my photostats, with the vague idea of arousing the interest of some graduate student or of tackling it myself."⁴

Pope's archive also shows that he was creative and at times playful. On a single sheet of typewritten paper from "circa 1928," Pope—then still a graduate student—provides a "transcript" of a poem titled "The Lay of Humptig, Son of Dumpt" (Box 23, Pope Papers).

³ In his EETS edition, however, Pope divides the alliterative portions of Ælfric's homilies into separate lines as it were in poetry. His edition has a substantial section on Ælfric's rhythmical prose (1: 105–36).

⁴ Box 24, Pope Papers. The draft of Pope's letter to Dobbie concludes with comments on this most recent volume for the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records (*The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, vol. 6 [New York: Columbia University Press, 1942]): "I haven't had time yet to make a thorough study of your edition of the MINOR POEMS, but it seems to me the most interesting and most carefully edited volume in the series. I think everyone will be grateful to have such a wide variety of poems brought together, and so many scattered commentaries on them digested." The Pope Papers also contains Pope's transcript of the poem with some added notes (Box 24). Pope apparently did not work on the poem further, because he believed that Dobbie had "found someone who is willing to edit it." The poem, however, was not published until 1964: James L. Rosier, "Instructions for Christians," *Anglia* 82 (1964): 4–22, with "Addenda" published in 1966 ("Addenda to 'Instructions for Christians,'" *Anglia* 84 (1966): 74). In his 1964 publication, Rosier briefly mentions Dobbie and his student who edited the poem as a Master's Thesis at Columbia University in 1945 (4n1).

The document begins with a description of “the manuscript,” stating that “the unique copy of this truly epic version of our Humpty Legend was brought to light by Sir Walter Scott, during his search for border ballads. It had been used in the binding of a MS. of Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*, in the venerable library of Melrose Abbey.” The following is the opening passage of the poem as it is shown in the neatly typed-out “second edition, revised, 1969”:⁵

Hwæt, wē Dumptiges dolgilp micelne,
 Humptiges hlēoðorcwide hlynnan gefrūnon,
 hū hē stāncleofo stigan cūðe.
 Hēah on wealle hildlata gesæt,
 sorglēas sang þā, sægde þæt hē wolde
 wunian mid wolcnum; ac hine wyrd fornam.

[Listen, we have heard proclaimed the loud and foolish boasting of Humpty, son of Dumpt, how he could climb stone-cliffs. High on the wall sat the coward, then sang without sorrow, said that he wished to dwell among the clouds; but fate destroyed him.]⁶

In the untitled “original edition” from “*circa* 1928,” there is a footnote attached to *dolgilp* on 1b: “The derogatory tone used in speaking of our hero has suggested that the poem has some political significance, but all efforts to identify the Dumptings and their prince have failed. See U. O. Ummlaut, *Politische-historische Beziehungen des Angel-sächsischen Humptslied*.”

Pope also rendered the Old High German heroic poem *Hildebrandslied* to Old English verse. The first six lines of his “Hildebrandeslēoð” read as follows:

Ic gehierde þæt secgan
 þæt ðrettan āna mēttan,
 Hildebrand and Heaðubrand under hergum twām;
 sunu and fæder hira searu rihton,
 gearwedon hira gūþ-haman, gyrdon him hira sweordum,
 hæleþ, ofer hringas, þā hīe tō þære hilde ridon.⁷

[I have heard tell that warriors met in single combat, Hildebrand and Heaðubrand, between two armies; son and father arranged their gear properly, prepared their battle-garments; the warriors girt their swords over their mail shirts, when they rode to the battle.]⁸

In the introductory note, Pope explains that he has “based this version on an earlier translation by F. P. Magoun ... but ha[s] substantially revised Magoun’s text to bring it more into line with more recent editions and to make it a more literal translation.”⁹

⁵ “The Lay of Humptig Son of Dumpt, divided and edited by J. C. P., New Haven” (Box 23, Pope Papers).

⁶ My translation.

⁷ “Hildebrandeslēoð” (Box 9, Pope Papers).

⁸ My translation. I have used Pope’s “Supplementary Vocabulary and Notes,” provided at the end of the document (Box 9, Pope Papers).

⁹ Francis P. Magoun, Jr., “A Note on Old West Germanic Poetic Unity,” *Modern Philology* 43 (1945): 77–82. For a similar exercise made by John Mitchel Kemble in 1835, see my “The Newly-Found Kemble

After the publication of *The Rhythm of Beowulf* in 1942, Pope was widely recognized as one of the authorities on Old English prosody. According to Fred C. Robinson's obituary ("In Memoriam"), "[j]ust a few days before his death" on April 18, 1997, at the age of 93, "he completed an essay assessing the career and achievements of Eduard Sievers. This study consisting of 47 typescript pages" was published in the following year in a volume edited by Helen Damico under the title *Medieval Scholarship*.¹⁰ Approximately half a year prior to his death, Pope wrote to Damico (most likely on the occasion of sending her an earlier version of the manuscript for this essay): "Here at last is the essay on Sievers. I'm afraid you won't like it. It's too long and fussy, and my references to the bibliography are probably too elaborate." In the same letter Pope also describes a picture of Sievers, which he intended for Damico's volume: "It once belonged to a descendant by marriage of Sievers's daughter Nora ... The photo is full face, with a twinkle in the eye seen through his spectacles."¹¹

As mentioned in Robinson's "In Memoriam," Pope's essay "Eduard Sievers" covers many aspects of the life and work of this prominent German scholar. The research that Pope conducted for his last work takes up one full box in the Pope Papers, and the documents included there clearly show that the scope of his research far exceeded that of the published essay. For instance, the essay briefly refers to Sievers's correspondence with Albert Cook, an American scholar whom Sievers mentored during his visit, in 1881 and 1882, to the University of Jena (where Sievers taught between 1871 and 1883) in order to acquire his doctorate based on the research he had previously conducted in England. While Pope spends a relatively short portion of his published essay on this correspondence, Box 11 of the archival collection contains Pope's transcriptions of Sievers's letters to Albert S. Cook.¹² To take his first letter as an example, Pope simply mentions in his essay that in this letter Sievers offers "to give him private instruction in some aspect of 'Anglo-Saxon' if he comes to Jena."¹³ But this letter, which is dated to October 17, 1881, as a whole reveals Sievers's generous and unassuming character, allowing us not only to understand the basis of the long-lasting correspondence between the two scholars but also to have a glimpse of the collegial atmosphere of Old English and early Germanic studies during the formative years of the discipline.¹⁴

Notebook and an Old English *Hildebrandslied*: A Mirror of the New Philology in the 1830s," *Poetica* 86 (2016): 87–106.

10 Fred C. Robinson, "In Memoriam: John Collins Pope (1904–1997)," *Old English Newsletter* 30.3 (1997): 8–9. Pope's essay was published a year after his death: John C. Pope, "Eduard Sievers (1850–1932)," in *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline, Volume 2: Literature and Philology*, ed. Helen Damico (New York: Garland, 1998), 177–99.

11 This draft of Pope's letter to Damico is dated to October 12, 1996 (Box 11, Pope Papers). Sievers's photo is printed on page ii of Damico's volume.

12 For archival details, see Pope, "Eduard Sievers," 197.

13 Pope, "Eduard Sievers," 181.

14 "Letter 1, to 'Professor Albert C. Cook'" (Box 11, Pope Papers).

Dear Sir,

I should be most happy to be of any service to you in case you decide on coming over to Jena; only I cannot promise you that you will find here what you require. First of all, the library is in a sad state as to Anglo-Saxon books; it would not afford the necessary help for literary studies in that department. However, I daresay you could have the books sent over from some other public library, in case you want them particularly, and the trouble and expense of getting them would be but small. I may also add, that I think that my own little collection together with what the University Library has, would do for grammatical studies, if they are not *too* special. —As to my seminar, I shall have to treat some easy Middle High German text, so it would scarcely be worth your time attending that course; in fact almost all the lectures I give here are meant for mere beginners, and all very elementary. However, if you decided on coming I think we might arrange a short Anglo-Saxon course on whatever subject you would like best (grammar, or texts, etc.), say two hours in the week. I am sorry not to be able to offer you more than about that time, but my own time is rather taken up at present, partly by literary engagement whose fulfilment I have been obliged to put off from year to year on account of bad health, partly by some extra official duties.

At all events I should be very glad if you could decide on paying your intended visit to Jena at once on coming over from England. We could then talk the whole subject over more satisfactorily than it could be done in a letter, and decide on what course it would be best for you to take.

Yours very sincerely

The rest of the correspondence transcribed by Pope shows that for many years following Cook's return to the United States, Sievers wrote him on various subjects including his work on Old English metre and grammar ("you see," he says in a letter from 1885, "I have not got rid of Anglo-Saxon yet").¹⁵

Pope on Sievers's *Altgermanische Metrik*

At the end of his essay on Sievers, Pope provides an assessment of his *Altgermanische Metrik* along with his earlier publications on the metre of Old English and Old Norse—a body of work that was "long regarded as fundamental authorities for students of Old Germanic alliterative verse."¹⁶ Generally speaking, Pope's theory of the rhythm of Old English poetry is so different from Sievers's metrical theory that the two systems may seem to have very little in common. But Pope's essay shows that he held *Altgermanische Metrik* in high esteem and had a very clear understanding of its system. To take Sievers's idea of "member" (*Glied*) as an example, Pope explains how this concept was necessary for Sievers to establish four-syllabic half-lines as a basis for Germanic metre:¹⁷

¹⁵ "Letter 6 (no. 5 to Cook), Tübingen, 7. März 85" (Box 11, Pope Papers).

¹⁶ Pope, "Eduard Sievers," 191.

¹⁷ For a full index of key technical terms used in this chapter and volume, readers should consult the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices.

except for anacrusis, Sievers was able to show that the four-syllable verses were the basic pattern for almost all the longer verses by postulating that each verse had four “members” (*Glieder*) rather than four syllables. Extra syllables were accounted for in two ways: either by the frequent “resolution” (*Auglösung*) of a lift or half-lift into a short syllable and an unstressed sequel ... or by the designation of additional unstressed syllables in unbroken sequence as forming the unstressed member demanded by the type.¹⁸

In this section of the essay, Pope further uses Type A as an example to demonstrate the effectiveness of Sievers’s four-member system. This most common of his five metrical types includes seemingly very different half-lines, such as “lange ahte” (*Beowulf* 31b) and “sealde þam þe he wolde” (*Beowulf* 3055b). Even though the former half-line consists of only four syllables and the latter of as many as seven, both can be rendered to the metrical pattern for Type A: just as the *-e* in *lange* in the former comprises the second member of the verse (that is, the first “x” of the pattern $\angle x \mid \angle x$), the unstressed sequence of syllables “-de þam þe he” in the latter verse “counts as a single member” in the same position. “In this way,” Pope concludes, “Sievers was able to reduce almost every normal verse to four members ... Thus all five types, from A to E, each with one or more subtypes, could be reduced to an intelligible order.”¹⁹

We have seen how Pope’s essay offers a succinct descriptive summary of *Altgermanische Metrik*, showing his appreciation of Sievers’s metrical system. But this very observation prompts us to ask our next question: if Pope was aware that Sievers’s theory was both elegant and powerful, why did he develop a theory of his own? The key, I believe, is the verb “to reduce” used twice in this context. Sievers’s system is elegant and powerful, because it can “reduce almost every normal verse to four members” and allows all five types, “from A to E,” to be “reduced to an intelligible order” (my emphasis). But this astonishingly efficient theory has tended to retain us within this abstract system, rather than encouraging us to broaden our attention to other aspects of Old English verse.

Pope’s view on the overall purpose of the study of the subject is expressed in the opening of the introductory chapter of his monograph *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, which he dedicated to Menner:

Metrical studies of ancient poetry have at least two immediate aims, the establishment of the text and the recovery of the pleasure inherent in verse. We have gained much if we can feel reasonably certain that the words are the poet’s own, but unless we know also the rhythm to which he set them, half their glory has departed.²⁰

Pope here argues that the first purpose of studying metre is to reconstruct poetic texts at a reasonable level of certainty, based on the evidence preserved in the manuscript. In his essay, Pope traces the development of Sievers’s work on metre during the 1880s and 1890s in order to acknowledge the magnitude of his contribution to this branch of prosodical study. Even years before the publication of *Altgermanische Metrik*, he used

¹⁸ Pope, “Eduard Sievers,” 192.

¹⁹ Pope, “Eduard Sievers,” 192–93. *Beowulf* quotations above are taken from Klaeber 4.

²⁰ Pope, *Rhythm of Beowulf*, 2nd rev. ed., 3.

"the syllabic structure of the normal verses in *Beowulf*" to recognize "editorial false quantities of vowels, mistakes in lineation, and manuscript spellings for which more metrically regular variants could be postulated." Subsequently, he not only "called attention to many such linguistic improvements" but also "extended them to other Old English poems, and even ... other Old Germanic alliterative verse." And last, he published *Altgermanische Metrik* to bring "his five-type system to its final refinement, concluding with a complete list of all his types and subtypes, ... as needed for the whole range of West Germanic and the most traditional portion of North-Germanic alliterative verse." In this sense, his monograph of 1893 marks the apex of his metrical work, casting, ever since, an enormous influence "on many of our Old Germanic texts, especially the text of *Beowulf*."²¹

When read against Pope's goal for the study of verse stated in *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, however, his evaluation of Sievers's metrical work, laudatory as it may be, turns out to be of somewhat limited scope, because it pertains only to the first of the "two immediate aims" of the study. Sievers has certainly helped us establish the text of a given Old Germanic poem to "feel reasonably certain that the words are the poet's own," but we would still be missing "half their glory," if we did not know "the rhythm to which he set them" and thus recover "the pleasure inherent in verse."²² As Pope points out, however, Sievers eventually became aware of the importance of rhythm and other aspects of performance. In fact, already in the 1890s, while Sievers was bringing his metrical work to completion, he was, Pope explains, already "focus[ing] his attention on the rhythms and intonations implicit in literary texts, ancient and modern," so that he might explore "fresh fields."²³ Interestingly, Pope's essay on Sievers devotes a sizable portion to his controversial theory known as *Schallanalyse*, which "dominate[d] the last years of his life."²⁴ Even in his own days, however, Sievers's theory of *Schallanalyse* had "a mixed reception," and it did not "long survive its inventor."²⁵ There seems to have been a good reason for it. Compared to his metrical work, *Schallanalyse* is far less systematic in its pursuit of the concept of "curve," a pattern of speech sounds allegedly inherent in each individual. In case of his analysis of *King Lear*, for instance, Sievers detected different curves in the text and attributed this Shakespearean tragedy to "three principal authors," convinced as he was that "everyone is born with a curve that never changes throughout life."²⁶ In a draft version of the essay preserved in the Yale archives (Box 11), Pope

21 Pope, "Eduard Sievers," 193.

22 Pope, *Rhythm of Beowulf*, 2nd rev. ed., 3.

23 Pope, "Eduard Sievers," 184.

24 Pope, "Eduard Sievers," 184. Pope briefly mentions *Schallanalyse* in *The Rhythm of Beowulf* (2nd rev. ed., 14–15).

25 Pope, "Eduard Sievers," 186 and 189.

26 Pope, "Eduard Sievers," 188. Pope also points out that Sievers was unable to recognize "Ælfric's distinctive 'rhythmical prose'" in his Old English translation of the Ely Privilege (Pope, "Eduard Sievers," 187). For this subject, see further John C. Pope, "Ælfric and the Old English Version of the Ely Privilege," in *England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971),

refers to *Schallanalyse* as a “notoriously subjective system of analysis” and concludes a paragraph with the remark: “[m]ost of the work of this later period is of greater interest for the psychological development of the man than for what can be regarded as its enduring contribution to literary and linguistic knowledge, medieval or modern.” Pope has however crossed out this passage in the draft; and in the published essay he uses a remark by another scholar, Gerold Ungeheuer, as a verdict on *Schallanalyse*: “As a scholarly method of research it must be rejected, being in every way subjective. It cannot be generally applied, nor generally communicated, nor generally learnt.”²⁷

I believe that Ungeheuer’s assessment of *Schallanalyse*, which Pope quotes in his essay, gives us a clue for understanding the purpose of his own work on the rhythm of Old English poetry: namely, to offer a “scholarly method of research” on the sounds of verse that could be, unlike *Schallanalyse*, generally applied, generally communicated, and generally learned. Not unlike *Schallanalyse*, however, Pope’s work on poetic rhythm was intended to be applied not just to early medieval alliterative verse but to *all* English verse. As mentioned earlier, the Pope Papers include numerous musical notebooks analysing various verses according to his system of notation. And these analyses are not limited to *Beowulf* and other Old English poems, for Pope also analysed verses by Shakespeare, John Donne, Milton, Tennyson, Robert Frost, among others.

Pope on the Rhythm of Old English Poetry

Pope’s essay on Sievers concludes with a brief summary of the reception of his work on metre and points out that “the major studies of Old English verse form ... have been influenced, often strongly, by Sievers.”²⁸ Pope also acknowledges that he belongs to a group of scholars who “have differed sharply from Sievers in their interpretation of the basic rhythm of the verse” and especially that of Sievers’s “foot division of types B and C.” Pope further traces Sievers’s response to this particular problem: he “recognized the rhythmic difficulty and tried to overcome it” by introducing a certain subtype of stress; “[b]ut this solution,” Pope concludes, “disregards the fundamental sovereignty of the traditionally stressed alliterating syllables and has not found favor.”²⁹ In *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, Pope provides a response to Sievers in many places. In the chapter “Previous Theories,” for instance, he closely analyses Sievers’s metrical theory, emphasizing the

85–113. As cited by Pope, see also Eduard Sievers, *Metrische Studien*, 7 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1901–19): 4: 588.

²⁷ Pope, “Eduard Sievers,” 189, quoting from Gerold Ungeheuer, “Die Schallanalyse von Sievers,” *Zeitschrift für Mundartforschung* 31 (1964): 97–124 at 124. In the article Ungeheuer continues, however: *Schallanalyse* “should not be neglected, even though the method of ‘Schallanalyse’ is discredited. It is suggested that the ‘Schallanalyse’ can only be replaced by the test methods of psychological phonetics” (Ungeheuer, “Die Schallanalyse von Sievers”).

²⁸ Pope, “Eduard Sievers,” 194.

²⁹ Pope, “Eduard Sievers,” 193.

“damaging” results it has caused on the study of the effect of verse “on the ear.” “To Sievers’ theory may be attributed,” he explains, “many an infelicitous, clumsily rhythmized performance that could yet call itself faithful to the original.”³⁰ In the chapter “The New Theory,” Pope organizes his argument around Sievers’s controversial treatment of Types B and C. But in the “Preface” to the second revised edition of his monograph, he expresses a somewhat different view: “I have overemphasized my disagreement with Sievers and so failed to convey my deep and abiding respect for his work ... I have felt with increasing conviction that a firm grasp of his analysis of the five types is essential for an understanding of the finer points of my interpretation.”³¹

It seems that Pope’s response to Sievers’s metrical theory shifted over the decades. We find Pope’s view on the subject more than a decade after this last remark in an archival document titled “Old English—Talk on the Rhythm of *Beowulf*” (Box 23). This single typewritten sheet has a penciled memo on its top right corner that reads “1979 Apr[il] 3—Fred’s class,” suggesting that this was probably a note prepared for a lecture given to Fred Robinson’s Old English class towards the end of the academic year, when students had already completed an introductory Old English course and read a good portion of *Beowulf*. Despite its title and occasion, this lecture undertakes to place Old English versification within the history of English-language literature. According to the note, the lecture began with a section called “Meter and rhythm,” in which Pope was to present examples of iambic pentameter so as to “illustrate some of its rhythmic varieties.” The purpose of this opening section was evidently to establish that English poets from later periods followed a prescribed form (such as iambic pentameter) but still used acceptable “rhythmical varieties” within this metrical framework.

In contrast, we have no direct evidence to prove that this was the case with early medieval English poets (“[f]or Old English, both meter and rhythm are conjectural”). In order to consider the speculative nature of Old English prosody, the lecture, according to the note, at this point moves on to Sievers’s five metrical types. Pope at once accepts that there is an “[o]rder within each type.” But he asks the crucial question: “is there an inclusive order” in the five types as a whole? His answer is: “[m]any things suggest that there should be.” In a hand-written draft of the lecture note, Pope offers a slightly more detailed account of what is meant by “many things” here: namely, “common, basic features that suggest [an] inclusive order” (Box 23). In the lecture note Pope identifies three features with which Sievers constructed his inclusive metrical system: (1) “[s]trict alliterative rules”; (2) a “[d]ifference between long and short syllables when stressed”; and (3) a “[d]ifference in allowable number of syllables in certain positions and between verses that have minimum stress and those that have maximum.” In order to illustrate this inclusivity, Pope prepared on a separate sheet a list of half-lines of varying lengths (to be written out “on the board”) arranged according to Sievers’s metrical types.

30 Pope, *Rhythm of Beowulf*, 2nd rev. ed., 7.

31 Pope, *Rhythm of Beowulf*, 2nd rev. ed., xv.

The lecture note makes it clear that Pope established the reliability of Sievers's metrical system in an early section of his lecture so that he could proceed to discuss the question of rhythm. In the opening part of his *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, as we recall, Pope identifies one of the aims of the study of a literary tradition from the past to be "the recovery of the pleasure inherent in verse" by finding "the rhythm to which [the poet] set his words." Seen in this light, Sievers's metrical theory, however inclusive, may be said to flatten the art of Old English poetry by reducing the vast variety of half-lines to no more than five patterns and in the process directing our attention away from the (very likely) possibility that Old English poets, too, used acceptable rhythmical varieties within the metrical system they followed. According to the note, Pope provided various half-lines in this part of the lecture in order to contrast between Sievers's five metrical types and his own rhythmical measures. He then asked the question: "What is gained?"—that is, what new insight might be gained by superimposing his theory of Old English verse rhythm onto Sievers's theory of Old English metre. Here I use the word "superimposed," because I believe that Pope's theory of rhythm is by and large not incompatible with Sievers's metrical theory. Pope's archive contains numerous sheets showing his scansion of individual half-lines first according to Sievers's five types and then according to his own system. As Robinson states, Pope "accepted by and large the five-type scansion explained by Sievers." Or to put it slightly differently, Pope used Sievers's metrical theory as a starting point for his own theory of rhythm.³²

The lecture note further provides three answers to the question "what is gained" from this comparison:

1. Every syllable has its place in the scheme.
2. Within the *order* thus perceived there is room for expressive variation.
3. The rests themselves occur where pauses are appropriate and thus add to the expressiveness of the passage.³³

We notice that all of these points are meant to enhance our understanding of Old English verse at the performative level. As for the first point, Pope's rhythmical theory is intended to make us mindful of the presence of all syllables—including unstressed syllables—in each and every half-line, rather than reducing some of them to one member within a metrical scheme. As for the second point, pertaining to certain "room for expressive variation" (that is, within Sievers's metrical framework), Pope uses a slightly different expression in the hand-written draft: a "[r]egulated variety allows varied expression." As for the third point, namely, the effect of rests or pauses to be found in the rhythm of half-lines, this draft version reads: "Rests provide natural rhetorical pauses."

³² Robinson, "In Memoriam," 8. In his essay on Sievers (194), Pope points out that Thomas Cable takes a similar strategy in his *The Meter and Melody of Beowulf* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974).

³³ Emphasis in the original. The hand-written draft of the lecture provides a fourth answer: "A *continuous* rhythm for sentence and paragraph" (emphasis in the original).

Robinson's "In Memoriam" offers a clear account of why Pope developed a theory of the rhythm of Old English poetry: in his efforts "to determine what the poetry sounded like when the *scop* performed it," he became "[c]onvinced that if the verses were to sound harmoniously at all, they must be isochronous"—that is, each half-line should take the same amount of time to perform.³⁴ In his lecture note, Pope states that "each of the normal verses" should be read "according to the time and structure required for two measures of quadruple time—basically |♩♩♩♩|♩♩♩♩| with free substitution."³⁵ It is well known that Pope's theory of isochrony has not met with general acceptance; but, as he explains in his lecture note, he did not use this concept in a mechanical sense:

This doesn't mean that the time has to be kept rigidly. It means that the theoretically rigid time has to be *approximated* nearly enough to enable a listener to recognize it as the underlining principle of order. [Musicians in the modern era follow a mathematically precise score, but they do this in an approximate way.]

Today musical notation is often associated with Pope's theory of rhythm, but this practice was often followed by scholars from his generation.³⁶ Furthermore, Pope applied various musical concepts to explain the performance of Old English verse. In his essay on Sievers, for instance, he explains "one or two prefatory syllables of anacrusis"—a regular irregularity in Sievers's metrical theory—as features "sometimes resembling grace notes in music."³⁷

Pope on Verse, Metre, Rhythm

In this final section, I will briefly discuss a larger theoretical context in which Pope developed his work on Old English poetic rhythm. According to Robinson, Pope was influenced by general theoretical works on rhythm available at the time, such as Sidney Lanier's *The Science of English Verse* (1880) and William Thompson's *The Rhythm of Speech* (1923). In his monograph, Pope dedicates a large portion to Sievers and other scholars who have written on early Germanic metre, but he does not provide a comparable discussion on scholars, like Lenier and Thompson, who worked on rhythm and other aspects of performance of verse. This was rather unfortunate, because, as Robinson informs us, Pope "assumed that those evaluating his book would read those works before judging his own theory. Some of the scholars who rejected his theory did so, he suspected, because they had not first familiarized themselves with these foundational works that underlay his study."³⁸

³⁴ Robinson, "In Memoriam," 8.

³⁵ It is probably because of Pope's principle of isochrony for his theory of the rhythm of Old English verse that he did not include Ælfric's alliterative composition (often called "rhythmical prose") as part of his work on rhythm, even though he lineates alliterative portions of Ælfric's homilies in his EETS edition.

³⁶ On this point, see the next section.

³⁷ Pope, "Eduard Sievers," 192. Robinson mentions that, Pope "studied piano from an early age ... and loved music throughout his life" ("In Memoriam," 8).

³⁸ Robinson, "In Memoriam," 9.

There are, however, a number of documents in the Pope Papers that explain his theory of rhythm. Though mostly undated, their contents seem to be in general agreement with each other, suggesting that Pope maintained a certain general theory of rhythm throughout his long career. We may, for instance, learn about Pope's encounter with Lanier's work from a four-page document kept in a folder titled "Aspects of English Verse Rhythm," a talk that he gave at a gathering of a club at Yale University on October 17, 1990 (Box 9). This hand-written paper, with the title "May it please the Club," begins with an account of Old English studies in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, when scholars were trying "to make out how the Old English *Beowulf* might have sounded." They were, Pope explains, all in agreement with grammatical and metrical aspects of Old English poetry, such as "[t]he pronunciation of individual words, the accentual and syllabic structure of verses, the carefully placed alliterations that bound together the pair of verses we call a line, not to mention the grammatical rules and the syntax that governed phrase and clause." In contrast, "scholars disagreed about how the seeming irregularities in the syllabic structure of the verses could be accommodated to anything like a basic, consistent rhythmic scheme." Because of this disagreement, "not many scholars ventured to read the poem aloud, and those who did failed to agree with each other or to produce readings that were both consistently rhythmical and true to the linguistic and semantic features of the verses."

It was in this rather frustrating situation that Pope was first introduced to Lanier's *The Science of English Verse* by "a fellow instructor in English."³⁹ In the talk, Pope recollects his initial reaction: "I found the book exciting and at the same time irritating"—exciting, because "Lanier's use of musical notation to describe the rhythms of spoken verse seemed right and helpful," and irritating, because "his notation of particular verses"—especially Old and Middle English alliterative verse—"often seemed wrong," as he wrote the book before Sievers and other German scholars established the metrical principles for the poetry. Pope was nonetheless inspired by Lanier's suggestion as to "what could be done by beating time to a reading of verse, ancient or modern, and recording in a musical or comparably structured notation what particular rhythm one had produced." Having been "enlightened by his theory and his example," Pope then "spent a whole summer feverishly testing rhythms in modern verse." The script for this talk ends with a brief reference to Thompson: soon after being introduced to Lanier's work, Pope "discovered that the most elaborate and copiously illustrated analysis of verse rhythm was that of William Thompson, a Scottish schoolmaster whose massive book *The Rhythm of Speech* was published in 1923."⁴⁰ Pope's hand-written script fades off at this point, and the rest of his talk seems to have been dedicated to illustrations of verse rhythms with materials taken from modern poetry (for this mixed audience), since the folder for the talk contains a number of sheets with such titles as "Varied

39 Sidney Lanier, *The Science of English Verse* (New York: Scribner, 1880).

40 William Thompson, *The Rhythm of Speech* (Glasgow: Maclehose, Jackson, 1923).

measure-structure in Iambic Pentameter," "Trochaic Substitution," and "Conflicts of Meter and Sense: Possible resolution by elevated pitch," together with the entire poem of John Mansfield's "Cargoes." All of these illustrations come with his analyses of individual verse lines with musical notation.

While it is not the aim of this essay to analyse Pope's general theory of rhythm, I would like to end with a brief discussion of an undated two-page document titled "Verse-Rhythm" (Box 9, Pope Papers), which includes sections on rhythm and metre, respectively. In the section on rhythm, Pope maintains that not every rhythm belongs to the study of verse. In "the broadest sense," he writes, rhythm "may be defined as orderliness of motion"; but "[m]ore narrowly, when applied to a particular utterance, it may refer to the unique order of the utterance." That is to say, "every utterance has *a* rhythm, meaning only that it has a unique (and therefore inimitable and unintelligible) order" (emphasis in the original). As such, unique orders belong to individual persons' individual performances. In other words, "[u]nique order, though they may be usefully studied in the Laboratory as physical foundations for our sensations and concepts, must be subjected to human sense of orderliness." To put it differently, specialists in poetics do not investigate "a rhythm" but instead "rhythm," that is, "an intelligible (orderly) order which the utterance more or less closely approximates," and which they can apprehend as "an intelligible order to which both the original utterance and any imitation can be referred as a norm." In the section on verse, Pope identifies metre as "a special handling of rhythm" and its "indispensable feature" as "the single verse or line—a group of words short enough to be spoken in a single breath (though often not so spoken)." Nevertheless, metre is not an abstract and mechanical concept, because a group of words in a given line of verse are "so chosen that a trained speaker will produce a single rhythm pattern, or one of a few slight variations of such a pattern." In short, both rhythm and metre are essential components of verse, and neither can exist without the other.

In this chapter, I considered John Pope's interpretation of Sievers's metrical theory with the hope that we may begin to explore possibilities for a new approach to Old English poetry by recognizing the importance of balancing what Pope calls "two immediate aims" for the study of poetry from the past. If recent interest in sound theory may be an indication, rhythm and sound of verse may be becoming of greater interest to scholars in various fields including literature, language, music, and cognitive psychology. Just as Sievers's metrical theory offered Pope an entry point for his exploration of the sound and rhythm of alliterative poetry, we may perhaps gain a deeper insight into the study of alliterative metre by considering questions that have been asked by Pope and other scholars who have considered performative aspects of the Old English poetic art.⁴¹

41 I would like to thank the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the Yale University Library and the organizing team for the Anglo-Saxon Metre and Literary Studies Workshop. I would also like to thank Benedick Turner for his editorial assistance.

THE MYSTERY OF OLD ENGLISH TYPE A2K

Geoffrey Russom*

WORKING WITH A nineteenth-century theory of language when the index card was the most advanced sorting technology, Eduard Sievers distinguished acceptable Old English verses from unacceptable ones with such precision that his work is still routinely employed by editors of Old English poetry. The great linguistic achievements of Sievers's era were "laws," categorical rules that applied without exception to explain language change. Comparable laws for the metre would have applied to all verses, isolating the spurious ones as violations. Sievers provided categorical rules for some important metrical features but others resisted analysis. There were tantalizing statistical trends but they all seemed to be plagued with exceptions. Sievers focused on manageable areas of uncertainty by sorting verses with well-attested linguistic patterns into "types." Some types were interpreted as subtypes of a major type and the number of major types was reduced to five: A, B, C, D, and E.¹ Verses with unusual patterns were then evaluated for possible assignment to an established type. In the era of Sievers, the most efficient way to analyse the metre of *Beowulf* was to create 6,364 index cards, one for each verse, and to organize the cards according to subtype and line number. The verse and its features of possible interest could be added in the main body of the card.

While grouping similar verses together, Sievers made some remarkable discoveries. As a historical linguist, he knew that some Old English syllables had been derived from two syllables by vowel contraction and that some disyllabic sequences had been derived from one syllable by epenthesis.² Apparent exceptions containing these syllables conformed perfectly to a common pattern if the earlier value was assumed. Either value could apparently be employed at need. In some cases the later value was required for normal scansion. Sievers also knew that some linguistic rules recognized an equivalence between a long stressed syllable and the disyllabic "resolvable" sequence of a short vowel with primary word stress followed by a single consonant and an unstressed vowel.³ In some cases, apparent exceptions with resolvable sequences conformed perfectly to an established type if the sequences were assigned a monosyllabic value; in other cases, the disyllabic value was required for normal scansion.

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1 On Sievers's verse types, and on other key technical aspects referred to in this chapter and volume, see the Glossary of Metrical Terms in the Appendices. Quotations from *Beowulf* are from Klaeber 4, and from *Jdgll* are from *ASPR*.

2 Eduard Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1893), 123–27.

3 Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik*, 127–28; A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959), 143–47.

To appreciate these discoveries, it is important to disentangle their metrical aspect from their linguistic aspect. Sievers's "prosodic rules" for resolution, vowel contraction, and epenthesis are based on uncontroversial facts about the Old English language. The only metrical aspect of these rules is employment of the same word with two different prosodic values to satisfy a variety of metrical requirements.⁴ It is also important to distinguish metrical fact from metrical theory. Sievers based his types on linguistic patterns that have significant frequency within the corpus of verses that survive in manuscripts. The frequencies of these linguistic patterns are facts, about as close to "pure" facts as the empirical sciences can come; and many linguistic patterns favoured by the poets have strikingly lower frequency in Old English prose.⁵ The pattern frequencies in *Beowulf* are genuinely *metrical* facts.

Sievers confronted serious problems when he tried to identify just what made his acceptable patterns acceptable. In formal terms, this meant discovering general principles that applied to all verses. Verse types had been defined in terms of their stress patterns and these were quite various. There was considerable variety even among subtypes of the same type. General principles would be required to show that these subtypes were significantly related to one another rather than lumped together to make the theory look simpler than it actually was. The difficulty of the task was particularly evident in the case of resolution. Sievers had shown that some verses required resolution and that others required non-resolution. As we shall see, however, he did not formulate rules for resolution that applied consistently to all types or even to all subtypes of a given type. Perhaps the most stubborn obstacle was the mysterious Type A2k, a variant of Type A2a, a subtype of Type A2, which is a subtype of Type A.⁶

Type A1 is by far the most common subtype of Type A and the most common pattern overall. Sievers represents it as a pattern with two primary lifts occupied by stressed syllables, notated as "/," and two dips occupied by unstressed syllables, notated as "x." Type A1 is divided into two trochaic foot patterns, notated as / x, and the verse pattern is represented as / x | / x, with the foot boundary notated by a vertical bar. In Type A2a, the first foot contains a secondary lift normally occupied by a syllable with subordinate stress. The secondary lift is notated with a backslash and Type A2a is represented as / \ | / x. Type A2k is a variant of this pattern in which the second primary lift is occupied by an unresolved short syllable and the second syllable of the resolvable sequence occupies the verse-final x position. Items (1) and (2) are examples of Types A1 and A2k from *Beowulf*.

⁴ For theoretical analysis of prosodic rules see Paul Kiparsky, "The Rhythmic Structure of English Verse," *Linguistic Inquiry* 8 (1977): 239–44.

⁵ Geoffrey Russom, "Metrical Complexity and Verse Placement in *Beowulf*," in *Old English Philology: Studies in Honour of R. D. Fulk*, ed. Leonard Neidorf, Rafael J. Pascual, and Tom Shippey (Cambridge: Brewer, 2016), 95–97.

⁶ Definitions of Sievers's subtypes come from *Altgermanische Metrik*, 33–35. We will not need to consider hypermetrical types.

(1)	<i>lēofne / þēoden</i> “beloved lord” (34b)	Type A1	/ x / x
(2)	<i>hlēoburh / wera</i> “shelter-fort of men” (1731b)	Type A2k	/ \ / x

Resolution is obligatory on the first alliterating lift of the verse, which is always a primary lift. There are also significant trends: non-resolution is common on secondary lifts and among syllables with subordinate stress. Further precision is difficult to achieve within Sievers’s system. Resolution seems to be obligatory on the second primary lift in Types A1 and A3, with a handful of possible exceptions.⁷ Non-resolution is very common on the second primary lift of Type A2k, however. There is quite a dramatic difference in this respect between A2k and the other A subtypes, making it difficult to argue that Type A is a metrically significant grouping of verse patterns.

Sievers tried to solve the mystery of Type A2k with evidence from other verse types. Non-resolution was also common on the second primary lift of his Type C, represented as x / | / x. Item (3) is a Type C1 verse with a long stressed syllable on the second primary lift; item (4) is a Type C3 verse with an unresolved short syllable on the second primary lift.

(3)	<i>on twā / healfa</i> “on two sides” (1095b)	Type C1	x / / x
(4)	<i>on dēop / wæter</i> “on deep water” (509b)	Type C3	x / / x

Sievers explained non-resolution in Type C3 by positing a metrical rule of subordination, a “rhythmical” rule peculiar to the poetry.⁸ This metrical rule rendered the second of two adjacent lifts equivalent to a secondary lift, the kind of lift on which non-resolution normally occurs. Introducing a second kind of stress subordination complicated the metrical system but there is independent evidence for this analysis of Type C. Sievers had discovered a strong tendency within the verse toward placement of syllables with prominent phrasal stress, such as those in nouns and adjectives, before less prominent syllables, such as those in verbs and phrase-final function words.⁹ A syllable on the first primary lift is normally more prominent than a syllable on the second one. This difference between lifts is emphasized by alliteration, which is strongly associated with linguistic prominence, not only in Old English metre but in alliterative metres generally.¹⁰ Alliteration is obligatory on the first primary lift but not on the second. It

⁷ Klaeber’s *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 330. Citations of Old English poetry come from this edition unless otherwise specified, with suppression of diacritics not required for scansion. The alliterating lift in type A3 is represented as the second primary lift by Sievers, who posits a non-alliterating first lift in this subtype.

⁸ Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik*, 27–28.

⁹ Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik*, 41–42.

¹⁰ Paul Kiparsky, “The Role of Linguistics in a Theory of Poetry,” *Daedalus* 102 (1973): 273.

seems reasonable to conclude that the first primary lift subordinates following lifts, and an analogue for metrical subordination in Type C can be found in the natural language. The Old English rule for compound formation integrates two words into a larger word by subordinating the primary stress in the second word to the primary stress in the first word. Native speakers would have little difficulty with a rule that subordinated the second lift to the first lift as it integrated feet into a larger metrical constituent, the verse; and the analogy would be reinforced by verses realized as a single compound word, with one constituent of the compound in each foot. Such verses occur more than three hundred times in *Beowulf*, about once every ten lines on average.

Non-resolution also occurs on the second primary lift in Sievers's Type D. Item (5) is a Type D1 verse with a long syllable on the second primary lift. Item (6) is a Type D3 verse with an unresolved short syllable on the second primary lift.

(5)	<i>fēond</i> / <i>mancynnes</i> "enemy of mankind" (164b)	Type D1	/ / \ x
(6)	<i>feorh</i> / <i>cyninges</i> "the life of the king" (1210b)	Type D3	/ / \ x

Sievers attempted to solve the mystery of Type A2k by generalizing his rule of poetic subordination to cover all adjacent lifts, including a subordinate lift immediately followed by a primary lift. On the second primary lift in Type A2k, he argued, non-resolution was common because this lift was adjacent to a preceding subordinate lift in the pattern / \ | / x; and non-resolution was rare on the second primary lift in Type A1 because this lift was not adjacent to a preceding lift in the pattern / x | / x.¹¹

The solution offered by Sievers is not directly contradicted by metrical evidence but it ignores important metrical facts and creates theoretical problems that shake the foundations of his system. In Type D, the effect of metrical subordination is detectable but rather weak, raising doubts about the analogy with Type C. Compare items (4) and (6), repeated for convenience as (7) and (8).

(7) <i>on dēop</i> / <i>wæter</i> "on deep water" (509b)	Type C3	x / / x
(8) <i>feorh</i> / <i>cyninges</i> "the life of the king" (1210b)	Type D3	/ / \ x

Non-resolution occurs in 503 verses like item (7), 46 percent of 1102 Type C verses scanned by Sievers as x / | / x.¹² Non-resolution occurs in only 17 verses like item (8),

¹¹ Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik*, 27 and 33. In extending his non-resolution rule to type A2k, Sievers may have seen an analogy with "syncopation" in Greek lyric metres. For analysis of this compensatory device see Paul Kiparsky, "Indo-European Origins of the Greek Hexameter," in *Language and Meter*, ed. Dieter Gunkel and Olav Hackstein (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 77–128.

¹² The counts do not include verses with a weak class II verb that were scanned by Sievers as type C with non-resolution on the second primary lift. Sievers posited a subordinate stress on the medial syllable in weak class II but there is no linguistic evidence for this stress. See R. D. Fulk,

less than 5 percent of 374 Type D verses scanned by Sievers as / | / \ x.¹³ Sievers's analogy between Types C and D ignores these differences. Now consider Type D2 verses like item (9), which have non-resolution on the secondary lift of the second foot.

(9) <i>stēap</i> <i>stānhliðo</i> "steep stone-cliffs" (1409a)	Type D2	/ / \ x
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There are 90 verses like item (9) among the 374 Type D verses with the pattern / | / \ x (24 percent). In Type D, non-resolution on the secondary lift has much higher frequency than non-resolution on the second primary lift. The observed frequency differences on lifts make much better sense if the second lift in Type C is redefined as a secondary lift that is inherently subordinated as well as metrically subordinated. John C. Pope argued for this approach on rhythmical grounds and Klaus von See found independent linguistic evidence for it.¹⁴ Reanalysis of Type C requires abandonment of Sievers's claim that all verse patterns have two primary lifts; but as A. J. Bliss argued, that claim should be abandoned in any case because it is plagued by numerous exceptions of Type A3a. There is no independent evidence for a second lift in A3a.¹⁵ When the two-lift hypothesis is abandoned, Sievers's metrical subordination rule works perfectly; but we will need to rethink what all verses have in common.

The hypothesis that every verse has two feet remains defensible but we will also need to rethink what all feet have in common. With the second lift of Type C redefined as a secondary lift, the second foot in item (10) will have the same pattern as the second foot in item (11).

(10) <i>in</i> <i>geārdagum</i> "in days of yore" (1b)	Type C3	x / \ x
(11) <i>stēap</i> <i>stānhliðo</i> "steep stone-cliffs" (1409a)	Type D2	/ / \ x

Item (10) now has a light initial foot with an x position occupied by an unstressed word. In abandoning the two-lift hypothesis, we have also abandoned the hypothesis that all feet have one primary lift. Introducing light feet is a less radical change than might at first appear. In the metres most thoroughly studied by Western scholars, feet are defined as polysyllabic patterns with at least one prominent syllable and foot

A History of Old English Meter (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 228. Since short unstressed syllables cannot undergo resolution, they should not be lumped together with unresolved stressed syllables.

13 All verse counts come from my electronic scansions, which have been available gratis to researchers on request since 1998.

14 John C. Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 19; Klaus von See, *Germanische Verskunst* (Stuttgart: Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 4–5.

15 A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 61–62.

patterns are repeated to establish a predictable linguistic rhythm. As Sievers observed, however, the feet employed by Germanic alliterative poets do not conform to the usual definition of “foot.”¹⁶ Foot patterns are repeated only in Types A and B; and there are heavy feet of an unfamiliar kind in his Types D and E. In Sievers’s system, every metrical foot can be realized as a stressed word. If we add unstressed function words, a simpler generalization emerges: every foot can be realized as a word.¹⁷

Sievers’s solution to the mystery of Type A2k has fatal flaws of a purely theoretical kind. It seems at first glance to explain why non-resolution is avoided on the second primary lift in all subtypes of Type B ($x / | x /$) and Type E ($/ \backslash x | /$). In these types the second primary lift is immediately preceded by a dip and is never occupied by an unresolved short syllable. If the many verses of Types B and E were relevant, they would provide impressive data coverage for Sievers’s solution. In fact they are irrelevant. Short syllables are excluded from the verse-final lift in Types B and E not because there is a metrical rule against them but because non-resolution is linguistically impossible on a verse-final lift. Due to syntactic constraints on enjambment in Old English metre, a verse-final lift is always occupied by the last syllable of a word, and stressed word-final syllables are never short in Old English.¹⁸

There are no short stressed monosyllables in Old English and no short monosyllabic constituents in compounds, so there are no relevant examples with non-resolution on the second primary lift in the pattern $/ x | / \backslash$ (Type A2b) or the pattern $/ x | / \backslash x$ (Types D*1 and D*2).¹⁹ Non-resolution is linguistically possible on the second primary lift in $/ x | / x \backslash$ (Type D*4), but a D*4 verse with non-resolution would also be acceptable with resolution as $/ x | / \backslash$ (Type A2b) or as D*4 with an unstressed syllable following the resolved sequence. The scansions with resolution are obviously preferable because resolvable sequences are normally resolved on primary lifts. Given the paucity of data coverage, it is time to refocus on the major theoretical problem posed by the high frequency of non-resolution in Type A2k: how to justify the claim that Type A is a metrically significant category rather than an arbitrary grouping of patterns. Sievers’s rule for non-resolution would address this problem if it applied across verse types. With the dubious evidence of Type C excluded, however, non-resolution on a primary

¹⁶ Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik*, 29.

¹⁷ The birth of alliterative metres in ancient Western Europe was triggered by a shift of stress to the first syllable of the word in Germanic, Italic, and Goidelic Celtic. Alliterative metres arose at about the same time in all three language groups. In some Irish word-foot metres, the foot was always realized as a single word and light word feet could be used. See Geoffrey Russom, *The Evolution of Verse Structure in Old and Middle English Poetry: From the Earliest Alliterative Poems to Iambic Pentameter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 39–45.

¹⁸ In English of all periods, a monosyllable that is short when unstressed becomes long when stressed, as for example with *the* in “not *the* Professor Einstein!” (compare unstressed “*the*” in “*the* professor”). On prefixes that acquire length when stressed see Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 30–31.

¹⁹ As in Type C, instances in Type D with a foot realized by a trisyllabic weak class II verb are excluded from consideration (cf. n12 above).

lift occurs with high frequency only in Type A2k. A rule that applies only to the anomaly requiring explanation is nothing more than an arbitrary restatement of the problem.

As we have observed, subordination after a primary lift would be easy for a native speaker to apprehend because it bears such a close resemblance to subordination after the first constituent of a compound word, which is apprehended with automatic facility during normal language use. There are no Old English compounds in which a constituent with subordinate stress subordinates a following stressed constituent. Metrical subordination in Type A2k would be quite difficult to apprehend because it posits subordination of the second primary lift to a preceding subordinate lift that is normally occupied by a syllable with subordinate linguistic stress, such as the second element of a compound. Some compounds with a structure similar to Type A2k are formed from an ordinary compound followed by a simplex word. In these triple compounds the second constituent is subordinate to the third and becomes vulnerable to reduction, as when *Cant-wara-byrig* (Kent-dwellers' city) becomes *Canterbury*. From a native speaker's point of view, Sievers's rule gets things exactly backwards.

Theory construction is a laborious undertaking. If a theory that seemed promising encounters serious problems, simply discarding it would be a terrible waste of effort. A new theory should retain important contributions by earlier theorists while solving a wider variety of problems. The most famous example of good theoretical practice is Einstein's theory of relativity, which incorporates Newton's entire theory of motion into a very different kind of theory that also explains subtle problems encountered by nineteenth-century physicists.²⁰ Since the 1980s I have been working on a theory of Old English metre that retains important features of Sievers's system:

1. Metrical patterns based on linguistic patterns favoured by Old English poets
2. Division of the verse into two metrical feet
3. Heavy metrical feet with two lifts
4. A distinction between primary lifts and secondary lifts
5. Heavy verses included in Sievers's Types A, D, and E
6. Resolution
7. Prosodic rules for contraction and epenthesis
8. Metrical subordination

Problems with the five-types system can be attributed in part to problems with the positivist linguistics of the nineteenth century, which focused on accurate description of observed data and had not developed rigorous criteria for explanation of data, which requires attention to what is *not* observed and exploration of alternatives in thought

20 Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics: The Growth of Ideas from Early Concepts to Relativity and Quanta* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1938).

experiments.²¹ When Sievers formulated his metrical rule for non-resolution, he did not ask himself what would happen if his rule did not apply and so failed to notice that non-resolution is often impossible due to rules of ordinary language. The prestige of “laws” in nineteenth-century linguistics valorized metrical rules without exceptions and led to neglect of important statistical trends. It is not sufficient to distinguish what happens from what does not happen. It is no less important to distinguish what happens much of the time from what happens only sporadically.²²

Sievers’s neglect of correlations across verse types is also attributable to the limitations of index-card technology. My critique of the non-resolution rule has required verse counts for correlations of long and short syllables with primary and subordinate lifts in both feet as well as with primary and subordinate linguistic stress. Exploring these correlations across types in a set of 6,364 index cards would be error-prone, laborious, and extremely time-consuming. Today an Old English poem can be analysed in a database management system of the kind routinely supplied with personal computers. The user of such a system is initially presented with a table of empty rows and columns. If a line-by-line version of a poem is already available in electronic form, it can be inserted into a column on the table and each verse will be copied automatically into a single row. The verse number and significant metrical features of each verse can be marked in other columns on the same row with the verse. A filtering function can be used to select any marked feature or combination of features in any number of columns. The user can then obtain, say, a complete list of all b-verses of Type E that have a long syllable on the first primary lift, a short syllable on the secondary lift, and resolution on the second primary lift. It took me no more than a few seconds to determine that verse 1009b is the only instance in *Beowulf*. With this technology a metrist can do correlations across verse types while thinking through alternative hypotheses.

Since the advent of Chomsky in the 1950s, language-particular rules have gradually been reformulated as rules based on universal linguistic norms. Today’s phonologists have replaced categorical rules with violable rules that apply in languages generally.²³ Violable rules are ranked in a hierarchy of influence and differences among languages are explained as differences in ranking. Consider syllable length, the linguistic feature of special interest here. A short syllable can be defined as a syllable with one unit of phonological length, called a *mora* in technical idiom. A long syllable can be defined as

21 The classic refutation of positivism in linguistics is Noam Chomsky, “A Review of B. F. Skinner’s *Verbal Behavior*,” *Language* 35 (1959): 26–58.

22 This point must now be argued rather than simply assumed, given the devaluing of relative frequencies in recent work on a four-position theory of the metre, a trend initiated by skepticism about the relevance of Bliss’s statistical observations in Nicolay Yakovlev, “The Development of Alliterative Metre from Old to Middle English” (unpublished DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 2008), 49–55.

23 On the usefulness of violable rules for analysis of poetic form, see Geoffrey Russom, “Optimality Theory, Language Typology, and Universalist Metrics,” *Studia Metrica et Poetica* 5 (2018): 7–27.

a syllable with two *morae*.²⁴ In stress-based languages, the most prominently stressed syllable in a word is normally long. The energy invested in primary word stress normally expands into a second mora. This tendency can conflict with another: stress is normally confined to a single syllable. We can formulate the two tendencies as violable rules: (1) stress must expand into a second *mora*; and (2) stress must be confined to a single syllable. If rule (2) is ranked higher, as in Italian, rule (1) can be violated and short stressed monosyllables can occur, as with *no* in “Credo di *no*” (I think not). If rule (1) is ranked higher, as in English, rule (2) can be violated and short stressed monosyllables are ruled out. In English of all periods, as in most other languages, a single consonant between vowels belongs to the syllable occupied by the second vowel.²⁵ When the initial short vowel of an Old English resolvable sequence bears the most prominent stress in a word, the stress energy cannot be confined within the short vowel and must expand into the next syllable. On this analysis it is easy to see why rule (1) is often violated under subordinate stress. Subordination reduces the energy of expansion. Categorical requirements and significant tendencies are explained by the same violable rules as they apply in various linguistic environments.

My universalist theory of OE metre employs violable rules and universal principles of poetic form to attack problems that arise within the five-types theory.²⁶ We need to consider the following principles.

- P1. Metrical constituents such as feet, verses, and lines are derived from linguistic constituents such as words, phrases, and sentences.
- P2. It must be possible, under normal conditions of reception, to determine whether a larger metrical constituent contains the required number of smaller constituents. The larger and smaller constituents must be readily distinguishable from one another to make this possible.
- P3. Norms for a metrical constituent are based on norms for the corresponding linguistic constituent.
- P4. Departure from norms causes metrical complexity, inhibiting frequency and placement toward the end of a larger metrical unit (the universal principle of closure).

²⁴ René Kager, *Optimality Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 146–47.

²⁵ When two consonants stand between vowels, the first consonant usually closes the first syllable and makes it long. Exceptions are due to an independent tendency to maximize onsets, which promotes assignment of consonant clusters to the onset when they are acceptable there. On length in stressed syllables and related features of syllable structure, see Kager, *Optimality Theory*, 91–95.

²⁶ For application of the proposed universal principles to some representative world metres, see Russom, *Evolution of Verse Structure*, 28–53. For analysis of type A2k, I employ the most recent formulations of these principles, which are applied to a variety of other problems in Geoffrey Russom, “The Word-Foot Theory of Old English Meter, Version II” (*JEGP*, forthcoming).

- P5. Norms governing a larger metrical unit rank higher than norms governing a smaller metrical unit.²⁷
- P6. Rules for sound echoes that add metrical prominence, such as rhyme and alliteration, correspond to rules that add linguistic prominence, such as the nuclear stress rule of Modern English, which elevates the prominence of final constituents, or the Germanic stress assignment rule, which elevates the prominence of initial constituents.

The rules of a particular metre follow from the universal principles as corollaries. We will need to consider Old English rules R1–R6.

- R1. Old English metre employs “word feet”– foot patterns that correspond to word patterns. There are nine foot patterns, one for every native word pattern, unstressed words and compounds included (except for compounds large enough to fill a whole verse, with one constituent of the compound in each foot). The normative foot pattern corresponds to the normative word pattern in Old English, which has a long syllable with primary word stress followed by an unstressed syllable. A foot is normally realized as a single word.
- R2. Old English metre employs verses (or “half-lines”) of two feet. The normative verse pattern is a phrase consisting of two normative feet, each occupied by a single word. This linguistic pattern has much higher frequency in poetry than in prose.
- R3. Normative placement of words within the verse is based on normative placement of words within the phrase during the late Proto-Germanic era when the metre was born. Within the verse, constituents with prominent phrasal stress such as nouns and adjectives normally precede less prominent constituents such as verbs and phrase-final function words.²⁸
- R4. The normative verse pattern establishes norms for all verses. Multiple departures from these norms may make a verse pattern unacceptable. One foot may exceed the norm of two positions, for example, but not both. There are twenty-five permissible combinations of word feet. Each counts as a distinct verse pattern.²⁹

27 On the operation of this principle in iambic pentameter see Gilbert Youmans, “Milton’s Meter,” in *Rhythm and Meter*, ed. Paul Kiparsky and Gilbert Youmans (San Diego: Academic, 1989), 376–79. The same principle applies in the phrasal stress rules of English: syllables receiving stress at sentence level subordinate syllables receiving stress in phrases below sentence level, which in turn subordinate syllables receiving stress at word level.

28 Verbal infinitives and participles are less prominent than lexical nouns and adjectives but more prominent than finite (tensed) verbs. For our purposes here the relevant difference is between verbs and the more prominent nouns and adjectives. See Russom, “Metrical Complexity and Verse Placement,” 90–91.

29 The total number of word-foot patterns is not much greater than the number of subtypes in Sievers’s system (nineteen, not counting subtypes considered doubtful by Sievers or those attested only in Old Norse metres). Unlike Sievers’s subtypes, word-foot verse patterns all conform to a

- R5. The Old English line consists of two verses. The normative line pattern is based on the normative sentence pattern in late Proto-Germanic. The line normally ends with a weakly stressed constituent.
- R6. Assignment of alliteration acts like the Germanic stress assignment rule and subordinates following lifts at all levels of metrical structure.³⁰ The a-verse subordinates the b-verse, and a second primary lift in the b-verse is more deeply subordinated than a second primary lift in the a-verse. At verse level, alliteration is obligatory on the first constituent with metrically significant stress, normally a prominent constituent such as a noun or adjective. Constituents of lower prominence have a lower probability of alliteration where alliteration is optional. Alliteration is forbidden on a subordinate lift in the b-verse.

In previous publications I have shown how violable rules can explain the frequencies of representative verse patterns and their distributions within the alliterative line.³¹ Here we will keep the focus on Type A2k and on associated peculiarities of resolution that I have not discussed before.

The universalist theory divides Types A, D, and E into feet as Sievers does. Types B and C are divided immediately before the first alliteration. To avoid confusion between two partially similar scansion systems, I use a distinct word-foot notation, employing “S” for the primary lift and “s” for the secondary lift. I retain “x” for unstressed syllables but do not collapse all adjacent unstressed syllables into one dip as Sievers does.³² Members of the same Sievers type are no longer assumed to be analogous but I retain the familiar type designations as expository devices with no theoretical significance. Items (12)–(16) are examples of the most common A, B, C, D, and E patterns with all lifts occupied by long syllables and each foot realized as a single word. The boundary between feet is marked with a forward slash in the word-foot scansions.

(12) <i>bēaga/bryttan</i> “distributor of rings” (35a)	Type A	Sx/Sx (= / x / x)
(13) <i>pis/ellenweorc</i> “this deed of valor” (2643a)	Type B	x/Sxs (cf. x / x /)

single set of rules based on universal norms, forming a coherent metrical system that could readily be internalized by native speakers.

30 Metrical subordination of lifts within the line can be represented by a standard binary tree structure in which all branching nodes branch into one strong node and one weak node. See Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 67–82.

31 Well-attested realizations of each verse type are discussed in Russom, “Metrical Complexity and Verse Placement.”

32 Unstressed words are included in word feet only when the verse would be unacceptable without them, as for example with “ond” in *Beowulf* 121a, “grim ond / grædig” (grim and greedy), analysed as Sx/Sx with a word group in the first foot. All other unstressed words are excluded from the basic pattern as extrametrical and must obey special rules that distinguish extrametrical words from light word feet. See Geoffrey Russom, *Beowulf and Old Germanic Metre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 45–59.

(14) <i>on/gylpspræce</i> “in boasting speech” (981a)	Type C	x/Ssx (cf. x / \ x)
(15) <i>wis/wēlþungen</i> “wise, most accomplished” (1927a)	Type D	S/Ssx (= / / \ x)
(16) <i>bēaghroden/cwēn</i> “ring-adorned queen” (623b)	Type E	Ssx/S (= / \ x /)

The second lift of Type B is now reanalysed as secondary. Non-resolution is linguistically impossible on this lift because it stands at the end of the verse. Type B provides no evidence relevant to our present concerns. With the second lift of Type C reanalysed as secondary, the universalist theory explains frequencies of non-resolution consistently in Types C and D. As we have seen, however, this explanation cannot plausibly be extended to a primary lift preceded by a secondary lift. The mystery of Type A2k persists. When we turn to our rules and principles for help, the mystery deepens. If non-resolution causes complexity on a primary lift, how can we account for its unusually high frequency in Type A2k, as compared to its frequency in the normative Type A1, which should be most tolerant of added complexity, all other things being equal? Why does Type A2k favour the b-verse, where universal principle P4 restricts complexity? To get to the heart of this problem we need to resituate Type A2k within the universalist theory and see how the rules and principles interact.

Item (17) is an instance of Ss/Sx with a long syllable on the second primary lift. Item (18) has an unresolved short syllable on the second primary lift of the same word-foot pattern.

(17)	<i>frumsceft / fīra</i> “first-creation of men” (91a)	Old A2a	Ss/Sx (= / \ / x)
(18)	<i>hlēoburh / wera</i> “shelter-fort of men” (1731b)	Old A2k	Ss/Sx (= / \ / x)

Ss/Sx is heavy relative to the normative pattern Sx/Sx and has much lower frequency, with 242 total instances. As expected, Ss/Sx has lower frequency overall in the b-verse, with 67 instances out of 242 (28 percent). Our problem is with Ss/Sx variants like item (18), which have higher frequency in the b-verse, with 41 instances out of 68 (60 percent).

Our first task is to explain why non-resolution on the second primary lift is acceptable in Ss/Sx verses like (18) but rarely or never occurs in the normative Sx/Sx pattern. Item (19) is an exceptional realization of the Sx/Sx pattern with non-resolution on the second primary lift.

(19)	<i>hwīlum / dydon</i> “did at times” (1828b)	Old A1	Sx/Sx
(20)	<i>wið / manna hwone</i> “with any one of men” (155a)	New B	x/Sxs
(21)	<i>bēod- / cyninga</i> “of the nation-kings” (2a)	Old D3	S/Ssx

(22)	<i>ond / þēodcyningas</i> “and nation-kings” (JdgII 162b)	New C	x/Ssx
(23)	<i>Him / Bēowulf þanan</i> “then Beowulf thence (went)” (1880a)	New B	x/Sxs

Item (19) has the same pattern of stress and length as the second foot in (20), a permissible realization of Type B with resolution on the verse-final lift. Routine employment of both (19) and (20) would violate universal principle P2, since the verse pattern of (19) would be indistinguishable from the foot pattern of (20). As we have observed, however, verses like (19) are vanishingly rare and apparent examples may only be apparent. In the original version of *Beowulf*, the manuscript form *dydon* was probably Anglian *dēdon*, with a long stressed syllable.³³ Principle 2 would also be violated by routine employment of Type D verses like (21) alongside Type C verses like (22), in which the second foot has the same pattern as verse (21); but (22) is just one of many odd verses in *Judgment Day II* and no such verses are found in *Beowulf*.³⁴ Our mysterious Ss/Sx verse in item (18) accords with principle P2 because resolution of “wera” would not yield an acceptable foot. The second syllable is unambiguously stressed in “hlēo-burh,” a poetic compound, and word groups like “hlēoburh wera” never appear in Type B. Apparent exceptions like item (23) do occur in *Beowulf*, but the only other one is verse 435b. In both instances, the second stressed syllable is the secondary constituent of a compound proper name, which can occupy an s position or an x position.³⁵ The only plausible scansion of (23) is as x/Sxs. The acceptability of (18) is explained straightforwardly by reference to universal principle P2.

Many acceptable verse patterns are quite complex and are largely or entirely confined to the a-verse. Our next task is to explain why Ss/Sx with non-resolution appears most often in the b-verse. Here we can turn to R5 for help. Rules for resolution apply at the level of the metrical position. The mysterious high frequency in the b-verse is attributable in part to R5, which promotes assignment of words with subordinate phrasal stress to line-final position. As a line-level rule, R5 can override position-level rules in accord with universal principle P5. We need to distinguish non-resolved Ss/Sx variants like (18), in which the last word is a prominent noun or adjective, from non-resolved variants like (24), in which the last word is a less prominent verb or function word.

(24)	<i>blōdfāg / swefeð</i> “sleeps bloodstained” (2060b)
(25)	<i>hrēawīc / hēoldon</i> “they controlled the killing ground” (1214a)

Due to the influence of R5, Ss/Sx verses like (24) have a b-verse frequency of 67 percent, with 14 a-verses and 29 b-verses. Ss/Sx verses like (18), on the other hand, have a b-verse

³³ Fulk, *History of Old English Meter*, 185.

³⁴ Fulk, *History of Old English Meter*, 98.

³⁵ Russom, *Old English Meter*, 101–2.

frequency of 48 percent, with 13 a-verses and 12 b-verses. The effect of R5 on these distributions can be cross-checked against the distributions for Ss/Sx variants with a long syllable on the second primary lift. Variants like (17), with a noun or adjective on this lift, have a b-verse frequency of 7 percent, with 79 a-verses and 6 b-verses. Due to the influence of R5, the b-verse frequency for variants like (25), with weak stress on the second primary lift, rises to 25 percent, with 55 a-verses and 18 b-verses. One final question now remains. If non-resolution on a primary lift causes complexity, why do non-resolved Ss/Sx variants like (24) have a b-verse frequency of 67 percent, higher than the frequency of 25 percent for otherwise similar variants like (25) that have a long syllable on the second primary lift? Here R6 comes to our assistance. Unresolved short syllables normally occupy secondary lifts that are inherently as well as metrically subordinated. The most suitable primary lift for an unresolved short syllable is the second primary lift of the b-verse, which is more deeply subordinated than the second primary lift of the a-verse. The complexity caused by non-resolution is overridden in (24) not only by R5 but also by R6, the line-level rule for metrical subordination of lifts.

In the universalist theory, subtypes of a given Sievers Type are no longer assumed to be analogous but there are meaningful analogies of other kinds, including analogies across types. Consider the Type E pattern Ssx/S, which has the same pattern of lifts as Ss/Sx but different placement of the dip. Constraints on non-resolution in Type A have no analogues in Type E because its second primary lift is verse-final and non-resolution is linguistically impossible on this lift. Constraints on verse placement imposed by R5 apply to both patterns, however, and in the same way, as expected.

(26)	<i>wonsǣli</i> / <i>wer</i> “ill-fated man” (105a)	Type E	Ssx/S
(27)	<i>græsmoldan</i> / <i>træd</i> “trod the greensward” (1881b)	Type E	Ssx/S

Type E variants like (26), with the second primary lift occupied by a prominent constituent such as a noun or adjective, have a b-verse frequency of 45 percent, with 99 a-verses and 82 b-verses. Type E variants like (27), with a lightly stressed verb or function word on the second lift, have a b-verse frequency of 88 percent, with 31 a-verses and 233 b-verses. In Ssx/S, as in Ss/Sx, the frequency of b-verses is elevated by the influence of R5.

A mathematician or physicist who proposes a theory will seldom have worked out all the consequences of its general principles.³⁶ Since at least the time of Euclid, the standard practice has been to show how abstract principles that are simple in the

36 Post-positivist attitudes towards theory and data are expressed with characteristic forthrightness by physicist Richard Feynman in *The Character of Physical Law* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1967), 171: “One of the most important things in this ‘guess—compute consequences—compare with experiment’ business is to know when you are right. It is possible to know when you are right way ahead of checking all the consequences. You can recognize truth by its beauty and simplicity. It

relevant sense apply in some clear cases, then to predict that they will apply correctly in all cases. Contributions from many researchers may be required to test the theory, explore subtle consequences, or sharpen hypotheses. “Ownership” of a theory can be a difficult sort of thing to define and that is certainly true where the universalist theory of Old English metre is concerned. The word-foot concept is appropriated from an important study of Irish alliterative metres.³⁷ Besides incorporating much of Sievers’s system, the universalist theory has an obvious debt to A. J. Bliss, who pioneered statistical analysis of Old English verse placement, and to linguists working toward a universalist theory of metre, especially Kristin Hanson, Bruce Hayes, Roman Jakobson, Paul Kiparsky, Jerzy Kuryłowicz, and Gilbert Youmans.³⁸ Software linguist Jacqueline Haring Russom introduced me to database management technology at an early stage of my research. In 1987, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory* concluded with a prediction that progress in our understanding of language would be sure to improve the word-foot theory. Significant progress occurred very promptly indeed. Just five years later, historical linguist Robert D. Fulk published *A History of Old English Meter*; a year after that, Alan Prince and Paul Smolensky introduced ranked violable rules to theoretical linguistics.³⁹ The universalist theory, in its current form, was made possible by these advances. I have also learned much from researchers who have tested word-foot concepts in a variety of original projects, especially Thomas Bredehoft, Michael Getty, Nelson Goering, Megan E. Hartman, Leonard Neidorf, Rafael Pascual, and Jun

is always easy when you have made a guess, and made two or three little calculations to make sure that it is not obviously wrong, to know that it is right.” Note the rehabilitation of a Romanticist view of truth and beauty that was taboo for positivists.

37 James Travis, *Early Celtic Verse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973).

38 In addition to the works cited above, see especially Kristin Hanson, “Generative Metrics: The State of the Art,” in *Current Trends in Metrical Analysis*, ed. Christoph Küper (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010), 45–62; Kristin Hanson, “Metrical alignment,” in *Towards a Typology of Poetic Forms*, ed. Jean-Louis Aroui and Andy Arleo (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009), 267–86; Kristin Hanson and Paul Kiparsky, “A Parametric Theory of Poetic Meter,” *Language* 72 (1996): 287–335; Bruce Hayes, *Metrical Stress Theory: Principles and Case Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Roman Jakobson, *Language in Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings Vol. 5: On Verse, its Masters and Explorers* (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 1979); Paul Kiparsky, “Metered Verse,” in *Annual Review of Linguistics* 6 (2020): 25–44; Jerzy Kuryłowicz, *Die sprachlichen Grundlagen der altgermanischen Metrik* (Innsbrück: Institut für vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft, 1970); and Gilbert Youmans, “For all this Werlde Riche: Syntactic Inversions as Evidence for Metrical Principles in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*,” in *Approaches to the Metres of Alliterative Verse*, ed. Judith Jefferson and Ad Putter (Leeds: Leeds Texts and Monographs, 2009); Gilbert Youmans, “Generative Tests for Generative Meter,” *Language* 59 (1983): 67–92.

39 Alan Prince and Paul Smolensky, *Optimality Theory: Constraint Interaction in Generative Grammar* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004). A 1993 manuscript of this was widely cited, for example, in Kager, *Optimality Theory*, 440.

Terasawa.⁴⁰ Robert D. Fulk integrated the word-foot theory with amazing speed and thoroughness into his 1992 book and later into what is now the standard edition of *Beowulf*. What I enjoy very much about metrical theory is the sense of having chanced upon a site where many ideas converge and we come a little closer to the core mystery of literary studies: How does literary form help us to express, and to understand, what matters most?

40 Important contributions by these researchers include Thomas E. Bredehoft, *Early English Metre* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Michael Getty, *The Metre of "Beowulf": A Constraint-Based Approach* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002); Nelson Goering, "Early Old English Foot Structure," *Transactions of the Philological Society* 114 (2016): 171–97; Megan E. Hartman, *Poetic Style and Innovation in Old English, Old Norse, and Old Saxon* (Berlin: Medieval Institute Publications, 2020); Leonard Neidorf, *The Transmission of "Beowulf": Language, Culture, and Scribal Behavior* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017); Rafael J. Pascual, "Sievers, Bliss, Fulk, and Old English Metrical Theory," in *Old English Philology*, ed. Leonard Neidorf, Rafael J. Pascual, and Tom Shippey (Cambridge: Brewer, 2016), 17–33; and Jun Terasawa, *Nominal Compounds in Old English: A Metrical Approach* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1994).

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.

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Appendix 2

SOME CORRECTIONS TO ALAN BLISS'S INDICES TO THE METRE OF *BEOWULF*,¹ TOGETHER WITH HIS LAST KNOWN VIEWS ON THE METRE OF THE POEM

Mark Griffith

I OFFERED THE following list of corrections to Rafa Pascual for the benefit of the CLASP project. He suggested that I might add this note on them for the wider audience of those interested in OE metre and in Bliss's contribution to our understanding of it.

The Examiners of my Oxford PhD thesis on the composition of Old English verse translation were Terry Hoad (internal) and Alan Bliss (external). After the viva (and an indication from them that the thesis would pass!), Bliss and I smoked a cigarette together. I expressed my admiration for *The Metre of Beowulf* (*MoB*); we agreed it would be enjoyable in future to discuss metrical problems. Some weeks later I was invited for interview for a temporary lectureship at University College, Dublin where Bliss was Professor; before that could happen I was appointed to a longer-term position at New College and so withdrew. I wrote to him, expressing my regret that we would not after all be able to talk as we had wished. With the letter I included a short list of errors I had come across in my work with *MoB*. A little while later, I received a reply dated August 1, 1985.

I had pointed out to him two slight, but not entirely trivial, problems:

1. His "Appendix C, The Scansion of *Beowulf*: Statistical Information Table I" (p. 122) gives the numbers of a-verses of Types 1A1 and 1A*1 with single alliteration as 12 and 25, respectively. As these departures from their usual double alliteration had been of interest to me in the thesis in my study of metrical and alliterative licences in OE poetic translation, I had checked all of the instances of these types in *MoB*'s closing "Index to the Scansion of *Beowulf*" (35–57) against the text. The correct numbers were 13 and 24, respectively! I included the lists.² He replied: "After so long a lapse of time I can only guess at the reasons for any lapses that turn up in the book. I note that the total number of instances of Type 1A1 and Type 1A*1 taken together is right, so it looks as if there is a single case of wrong classification. I suspect that at some stage I intended to take *nean* in 1174a as disyllabic, as I did in 839b, where the two words are transposed; then later I changed my mind." In 839b, the earlier

¹ First ed. Oxford, 1958; rev. ed. 1962, reprinted with corrections 1967.

² Type 1A1a: 682, 870, 1174, 1179, 1250, 1375, 1491, 1658, 1857, 1975, 2269, 3078; Type 1A1b: 665; Type 1A*1a: 72, 98, 603, 621, 624, 680, 777, 805, 871, 996, 1055, 1090, 1396, 1611, 1674, 1908, 2094, 2275, 2489, 2602, 2850, 2891, 2941, 2993.

uncontracted form is required by the metre, but not so in 1174a. This raises the question of whether uncontracted forms should be read only where metrically necessary, or always when metrically possible. Metrists tend to be conservative on the point; but a poet concerned with the distant past might have chosen, where his poetic language offered variants, always to use the older linguistic forms (in so far as he knew those). Bliss had, perhaps, recognized this problem.

2. In 928b and 1314a, he had noted secondary stress on the second element of *alwealda* (3E2, d2c), but not so in 316b or 955b (1D1, 3E1)! He responded: "As for *alwealda*, I have to plead guilty to inconsistency. My excuse is that it is genuinely a difficult word: I'm not surprised that I couldn't make up my mind. Since the meanings of the two elements must have been present in the whole it should have secondary stress; but since the form of the first element has been reduced and obscured it should not. The same problem arises in a more acute form with *ælmih̄tig*." He did not comment explicitly on the scansion he thought to be correct.

I would have liked to have pursued this and other questions further with him, but, alas, it was not to be, for he died on November 24 that same year. I should have replied more quickly, but I was in the throes of my first major teaching appointment and did not know that he was ill.

His letter of August 1 went on to give an amalgamated list of the errors that he had already spotted and the few which I had just sent to him. Only one was common to both. He did not comment on any of these apart from line 838 where he expressed surprise: "I can't imagine what happened to line 838, where both the notations bear no resemblance at all to the proper scansions."³ The list was as follows:

126b	for	d2a	read	d3a
301a	for	a1a	read	a1e
560b	for	d3b	read	d1b
838a	for	2A3b	read	d2b
838b	for	3E1	read	2A3b
1077a	for	2E2a	read	2E1a
1256a	for	2A3a	read	2A3b
1484a	for	2B1e	read	3B*1e
1787b	for	2A1	read	2A1
1823b	for	2C2c	read	2A1a
1824b	for	2A1a	read	2C2c

³ No line in the poem scans as 2A3b, 3E1. It is curious that the two lines in his Index with this scansion (838, 2979) are both erroneous.

1903a	for	2A1	read	2A1
2423b	for	3E1b	read	3B1b
2509a	for	1A1a	read	1A2a
2693a	for	2A1a	read	2A1
2716b	for	1D1	read	1D1
2907b	for	1D1	read	1D1
2909b	for	2A1	read	2A1

In addition, to the “Index to the Scansion of the Hypermetric Verses in Old English” (pp. 162–68), he changed the scansion of *The Metres of Boethius* 7.23b from 1A1c(2E1a) to 1A1a(2E1a) and added the omitted line 25.46, for which he offered the scansions 25.46a 2A1a(1A1a), and 25.46b a1b(2A1a).⁴

The supervisor of my thesis, who had recommended Alan Bliss as the external examiner, was Eric Stanley. Over the years we had many discussions about Old English studies; none, so far as I now recall, about *MoB* particularly, although I knew that he had a strong respect for it and its author. Eric died two years ago, and a section of his library came up for sale in January this year, 2020, at Mallams. I bought two items containing some 170 volumes of OE and ME studies, including quite numerous works on OE metre, amongst which were both the first and the revised edition of *MoB*. Eric reviewed the first edition, mainly very positively, for *EPS* 8 (1963), pp. 47–53. Quite a number of the 170 volumes were review copies and show that Eric did not much annotate those books he reviewed. Both copies of *MoB* are clean, except for the following pencilled corrections to the “Index to the Scansion of *Beowulf*,” which I give in the same form as above:⁵

109b	for	2B1a	read	2B1d
441b	for	2C2a	read	2C2d
687b	for	2C1a	read	2C1c
968b	for	3B*1a	read	3B*1d
996b	for	2C2	read	2C2d
1249b	for	d2c	read	d2d
1329a	for	2A1a	read	2A2
1560b	for	2C1a	read	2C1d
2311a	for	d3b	read	d3c
2620a	for	3B*1d	read	3B*1a (with note: ‘a or em[end] b’)

⁴ The list includes three errors—to 1077a, 1256a, 1484a—which are noted in the Errata on p. vii of the reprinted edition of 1967, but the change made there to 1069a 1D1 > 1D3 was not included in this list.

⁵ Eric noted, as Bliss had, the incorrect order of 1823b and 1824b.

In the case of 2620a, Eric's note reflects the fact that Klaeber 3 reads "He [ð̥a] frætwe geheold" with an editorial insertion (not accepted by Klaeber 4). The problem of 1329a is more interesting. Bliss allowed secondary stress in the compound in the phrase "iren ærgod" in 989a and 2586a, but not in "æþeling ærgod" in 130a, 1329a and 2342a (though Eric noted only 1329a). This could be another inconsistency, as Eric appears to have taken it to be, or—and I think this likelier—Bliss was influenced in this by Klaeber's Glossary ("*ær-gōdþ̥*, adj., GOOD *from old times, very good*; (īren) ærgōd, 989, 2586; (applied to: æþeling) ærgōd, 130, 1329, 2342") and interpreted the first element of the compound in the second phrase as an intensifying prefix, rather than a fully semantic element.

In the years since 1985, I have noted only three further corrections:

1143a	for	a1c	read	d1c
1689a	for	2A1	read	1A1
2979a	for	2A3b	read	2A3a

Most of these errors by Bliss are wholly trivial; he had a hand-written card index to the verses of the poem and in its production, or in turning it into the Index to the Scansion, <a> seems occasionally to have been misread as <d>, or vice-versa (so 109b, 441b, 968b, 1143a, 1560b, 2620a).⁶ Italics are occasionally an issue too (1787b, 1903a, 2716b, 2907b, 2909b), but are more probably slips by the printer. This leaves the question of his inconsistency over *alwealda*. Is there any evidence to suggest which scansion he would finally have preferred? Earlier in the letter, he remarks of *MoB* that "there are many things I should like to change: I can't now believe, for instance, that there is no secondary stress in such forms as *East-Dene* and the like." On the surface of it, this is a curious comment, because in *MoB* he scans all the instances of *East-*, *Norð-*, *West-*, and *Suð-Dene* with secondary stress! He also stresses *Gar-* and *Hring-Dene* in the same way. Only *Beorht-Dene*, in his scansion, lacks secondary stress (427a, 609a), presumably because of the perceived semantic opaqueness of the first element.⁷ He can only be alluding to the one footnote in the book on these names in "Chapter Three: Stress and Quantity." Tertiary stress, he says there, is found in proper names in which "the individual elements have no independent existence," to which he adds the following note:

⁶ He refers to the index and to the help of many friends and pupils in its production in his Preface to *MoB*, vi.

⁷ The adjective *beorht* may, however, be used of people to mean "excellent," "magnificent" (see DOE *beorht*, E 4), and it presumably means something of that sort in this name. Secondary stress on the second element of this compound would also be metrically unproblematic in his system (427a, 609a).

Compounds like *Suð-Dene* must be considered doubtful, since it is not agreed whether the prefix is intended to distinguish a particular group of Danes or is merely conventional and ornamental.⁸

It seems, then, that one matter on which he was, in his theory, no longer doubtful was that such “prefixes” in these tribal names were not conventional or ornamental, although he had, in practice, recognized that in his scansions.⁹ If this is correct, then the first part of his argument over *alwealda*—“since the meanings of the two elements must have been present in the whole it should have secondary stress”—would presumably have had more force for him than the second. Given also his assigning of secondary stress in 92a *ælmih̄tig* and 1500a *ælwih̄t*, it seems very probable that he would have recognized the extra stress also in *alwealda* in 316b and 955b.

What, however, the “many things” were that he would have liked to change in *MoB*, we can now only speculate.¹⁰

8 §32 (4), and §32 (4)n1.

9 This new lack of doubt presumably did not extend to the second element of the personal name *Healfdene*. Types 1D(*)2–6 are forbidden in the b-verse in Bliss’s system, but verses such as “maga Healfdenes” occur with some frequency there (189, 1020, 1040, 1474, 1652, 2011, 2143) (Klaeber 4). He first scanned the tribal name, *Healfdene*, in 1069a also with tertiary stress, but changed this to secondary stress in the revised edition.

10 I thank Peter Lucas for offering valuable suggestions on a draft version of this appendix.

Appendix 3

A GLOSSARY OF METRICAL TERMS

Rafael J. Pascual

Alliteration: Identity of sound at the beginning of a word. The words *bealu* and *bōt*, for example, alliterate because they both begin with the same sound (they are said to alliterate on *b*). The consonant clusters *sc-*, *sp-*, and *st-* alliterate only with themselves, but palatal and velar *g* and *c* can alliterate with each other. Thus, *sceadu* alliterates with *sceaðe*, not with *strang*, but *gōd* and *giefan* alliterate despite beginning with different sorts of *g*. Vowels and diphthongs also alliterate with each other (*earm* and *aldor*, for example, alliterate). In Old English verse, alliteration is metrically functional, in that it indicates stressed syllables and binds pairs of verses into lines. See also **Line** and **Double Alliteration**.

Anacrusis: One or two extrametrical syllables that can appear before the first lift of Types A and D. Only prefixes and the negative particle *ne* are generally found in anacrustic positions. For example, *The Dream of the Rood* line 14a, *forwunded mid wommum*, is a Type A with an anacrustic prefix ([x] / xx / x). Verses featuring anacrusis generally have Bliss's caesura in position 1: see **Caesura**.

A-verse: See **On-verse**.

B-verse: See **Off-verse**.

Caesura: The pause that separates the on- from the off-verse. It is generally indicated by a perceptible blank space in modern editions of Old English verse texts. It should be made noticeable during recitation. In Bliss's system, the caesura refers to a syntactic boundary within the half-line. Thus, in *Beowulf* 440a, *lāð wið lāþum*, Bliss's caesura falls in position 1 (*lāð | wið lāþum*), whereas in 2008b, *lāðan cynnes*, it falls in position 2 (*lāðan | cynnes*). Bliss discovered an important correlation between the position of the caesura, on the one hand, and **Anacrusis** and **Double alliteration**, on the other.

Clause-initial drop: The first metrical **Drop** of a **Verse clause**. For example, in the following verse clause from *Beowulf* (lines 661–62), *Ðā him Hrōþgār ġewāt/mid his hæleþa ġedryht,/eodur Scyldinga/ūt of healle*, there are seven metrical drops (*Ðā him*, *-gār ġe-*, *mid his*, *-þa ġe-*, *-ga*, *of*, and *-le*), but only *Ðā him* is clause-initial. If a **Particle** appears outside the clause-initial drop, then it receives a stress: see **Kuhn's laws**.

Contraction: The phonological process whereby a disyllabic word like **seohan*, with intervocalic *h*, lost its *h*, thereby becoming monosyllabic *sēon* (with compensatory lengthening). In earlier Old English poems, contracted words often scan according to their earlier, disyllabic form (a phenomenon known as non-contraction). For example,

in *Beowulf* 1275b, *dēapwiċ sēon*, *sēon* must scan disyllabic for the verse to feature four rather than three positions (/ \ / x, not / \ /).

Dip: See **Drop**.

Double alliteration: The presence of two rather than just one alliterating lift in a verse. Double alliteration is allowed only in the first half of the line, given that alliteration of the second lift in the second half-life is strictly prohibited in verse of the classical type.

Drop: One of three possible metrical positions (the other two are **Lift** and **Half-lift**). A drop is generally occupied either by one unstressed syllable or by several adjacent unstressed syllables. Because an unstressed syllable is represented by a letter “x” in scansion, a metrical drop is generally represented by as many “x” letters as unstressed syllables are in the drop. See **Drop expansion/protraction**.

Drop expansion/protraction: One of the two processes of syllabic equivalence that enable the four-position principle to work. The other process is **Resolution**. By means of drop expansion, several unstressed syllables count as a single drop as long as they are all adjacent. For example, in the half-line *folce tō frōfre*, *-ce* (an inflectional syllable) and *tō* (a non-postponed preposition) are unstressed and adjacent, and so they constitute a single drop (*folce tō frōfre* is a four-position Type A: / xx / x). See also **Four-position principle**.

Epenthesis: See **Parasiting**.

Five types: Each of the five basic rhythmical patterns that a normal half-line of Old English poetry can adopt. They were first postulated by the German philologist Eduard Sievers, who labelled them A, B, C, D, and E in order of decreasing frequency. Assuming (1) that a verse consists of four positions, (2) that there are three types of metrical position, and (3) that the first stressed position of a verse cannot be a half-lift, then Sievers’s five types are the only stress patterns that can occur.

Four-position principle: The most fundamental rule of Old English verse composition, according to which a normal verse is metrical, regardless of its number of syllables, as long as it contains four positions. Verses of more than four syllables are adjusted to a four-position scheme by means of two processes: **Resolution** and **Drop expansion**. Thus, five-syllable verses like *sceaþena brēatum* (with resolution of *sceaþe-*) and *folce tō frōfre* (with *-ce tō* occupying a single, expanded drop) have the same four-position configuration as the four-syllable verse *hūsa sēlest*. There are two principled exceptions to the four-position principle: see **Type A3** and **Type D***.

Half-lift: One of three possible metrical positions (the other two are **Lift** and **Drop**). A half-lift is generally occupied either by a long syllable with secondary stress or by a resolved disyllabic sequence. If a half-lift is immediately preceded by an unresolved lift, then the half-lift may be occupied only by a short syllable with secondary stress (as in *Beowulf* 31a, *lēof landfruma*; but cf. 780a, *betlic ond bānfāg*, in which the half-lift *-fāg* is

long despite being immediately preceded by an unresolved lift). A half-lift is generally represented with a reverse solidus: \. See **Kaluza's law**.

Half-line: Also known as “verse.” A metrical unit that consists of four positions. Two half-lines linked by the alliteration of their first stressed positions constitute a **Line**. The first half of the line is known as **On-verse**, the second half as **Off-verse**.

Heavy syllable: See **Long syllable**.

Hypermetric verse: A special variety of verse that consists of more than four positions. In the first half-line, a hypermetric verse often consists of a lift and drop followed by a four-position Type A verse. In the second half-line, a hypermetric verse often consists of an expanded drop followed by a four-position Type A verse. For example, line 20 of *The Dream of the Rood*, *swætan on þā swīpran healfe. / Eall ic wæs mid sorgum ġedrēfed*, is hypermetric. Hypermetric verses generally occur in clusters and feature double alliteration in the first half of the line. The poem *Maxims I* features a heavier variety of hypermetric verse.

Kaluza's law: A generalization made by the German philologist Max Kaluza in 1896. Kaluza observed a correlation in *Beowulf* between the operation of **Resolution**, on the one hand, and the etymological length of the endings involved, on the other. Resolution obtains if the ending of the resolvable sequence was short in early Old English; if the ending was long, then resolution is suspended. Thus, in *Beowulf* 76a, *folcstede frætwan, -stede*, which must resolve for the verse to have four rather than five positions (/ \ / x, not / \ x / x), ends in a vowel that was short in early Old English (*stede* < **stædi*). On the other hand, in 31a, *lēoflandfruma, -fruma*, which must suspend resolution for the verse to have four rather than three positions (/ / \ x, not / / \), ends in a vowel that was long in early Old English (*fruma* < **frumō*). Kaluza's law has important implications for the dating of *Beowulf* and for Old English metrical theory.

Kuhn's laws: Two generalizations first made in 1933 by the German philologist Hans Kuhn about the **Metrical grammar** of Old English verse. According to Kuhn's First Law, the metrical behaviour of particles depends on their location within the **Verse clause**. If placed in the first drop of a clause (see **Clause-initial drop**), then particles are metrically unstressed, but they receive metrical stress if displaced from that location. According to the second law, the first drop of a clause must always contain at least one particle (in other words, a drop consisting only of proclitics cannot be clause-initial). Thus, the first drop of *Beowulf* 1277b, *ġegān wolde* (a Type C: x / / x), contains only a prefix, and no particles, and so it must be clause-non-initial.

Lift: One of three possible metrical positions (the other two are **Half-lift** and **Drop**). A lift is generally occupied either by a long stressed syllable or by a resolved disyllabic sequence. If a lift is immediately preceded by an unresolved lift, then that lift can be occupied by a short stressed syllable alone, as in *Beowulf* 1678b, *on hand ġyfen* (a Type C verse in which the second lift, *ġy-*, is short). A lift is generally represented with a solidus: /.

Light syllable: See **Short syllable**.

Line: The metrical unit that consists of two verses (or half-lines) linked by the alliteration of stressed syllables (i.e. lifts).

Long syllable: A syllable that ends in a long vowel or diphthong, or a vowel or diphthong (regardless of length) plus at least one consonant. For example, the root syllables of *gōdes*, *mēara*, and *worda* (*gō-*, *mēa-*, and *wor-*, respectively) are long.

Metrical grammar: The system of rules that govern the arrangement of the constituents of a **Verse clause**. From a metrico-grammatical point of view, a word will belong to one of three categories: **Stress-word**, **Proclitic**, and **Particle**. Particles, unlike stress-words and proclitics, evince a variable metrical behaviour, which is governed by **Kuhn's laws**.

Metrical position: See **Position**.

Non-contraction: See **Contraction**.

Non-parasiting: See **Parasiting**.

Off-verse: The second half of an alliterative long **Line**. Its first lift always alliterates with the first and sometimes also the second lift of the on-verse, whereas its second lift is systematically non-alliterating. Also known as "b-verse." See **Alliteration**.

On-verse: The first half of an alliterative long **Line**. Its first lift always alliterates with the first lift of the off-verse. Participation of the second lift in the alliteration depends on metrical and stylistic factors. Also known as "a-verse." See **Alliteration**.

Parasiting: The phonological process whereby monosyllabic words like prehistoric **wuldr* and **māðm*, which end respectively in a liquid and a nasal consonant, developed a parasite vowel before the final consonant, thereby becoming disyllabic (*wuldor*, *māðum*). In Old English verse (especially in earlier poems), words like *wuldor* and *māðum* must often scan according to their earlier monosyllabic value (a phenomenon known as non-parasiting). Parasiting is also known as "epenthesis."

Particle: A word that does not depend on any other element within the clause, but which is not as strongly stressed as a **Stress-word**. Particles include finite verbs, personal and demonstrative pronouns, conjunctions, and most adverbs (mostly monosyllabic). The metrical behaviour of particles is variable: see **Kuhn's laws** and **Clause-initial drop**.

Position: Each of the four structural components of a normal half-line. There are three different types of position: **Lift**, **Half-Lift**, and **Drop**. The possible permutations of these three types of position are the **Five Types** (assuming that a half-lift cannot precede the first lift of the verse).

Proclitic: A word that is rhythmically subordinated to a following **Stress-word**. Proclitics, which are almost always unstressed in verse, include prefixes, prepositions, and demonstratives and possessives in attributive position. If prepositions are postponed, however, they receive stress. See also **Particle**.

Resolution: One of the two processes of syllabic equivalence that enable the **Four-position principle** to work. The other process is **Drop expansion** or protraction. By means of resolution, a short stressed syllable and its unstressed successor become metrically equivalent to a long stressed syllable. Thus, the disyllabic sequence *ġiefan*, in which *ġie-* is short and stressed, undergoes resolution, thereby becoming equivalent to a long stressed syllable like *ġeald* (both disyllabic *ġiefan* and monosyllabic *ġeald* occupy just one **Lift**: /). Resolution can be suspended if the potentially resolvable sequence is immediately preceded by an unresolved stress, as in *Beowulf* 1678b, *on hand ġyfen* (a Type C verse).

Rhyme: Identity of sound at the end of a word. For example, the words *stunde* and *wunde*, both of which occur in verse-final position in *The Battle of Maldon* line 271, feature rhyme. In Old English verse of the classical type, rhyme plays no structural role.

Short syllable: A syllable that ends in a short vowel or diphthong. For example, the root syllables of *stede* and *ġiefan* (*ste-* and *ġie-*) are short. Some authors refer to them as light syllables.

Stress-word: A word that always receives metrical stress regardless of its location within the clause. Nouns, adjectives, infinitives, and participles are stress-words (which means that their stressed syllables generally occupy lifts or half-lifts in poetry). See also **Particle** and **Proclitic**.

Syncope/syncopation: The loss of a vowel from the middle of a word (e.g. *ængum*, from earlier *ænigum*). Scribes of Old English poetic texts were in the habit of restoring originally syncopated vowels, but these must often be ignored in scansion (as in *Beowulf* 2416b, *gumena ænigum*, which scans / x / x, not / x / \ x). Originally syncopated vowels are sometimes underpunctuated in scholarly editions of Old English poetry.

Type A3: One of the two non-four-position rhythmical types accepted by the metre. The other is **Type D***. Type A3 is a three-position verse consisting of an expanded drop, a lift, and a drop: x [...] / x. The initial drop contains particles, and so Type A3 verses are clause-initial: see **Kuhn's laws** and **Clause-initial drop**. Because of their exceptional character, Type A3 verses are confined to the on-verse. For example, *Beowulf* 710a, *Ðā cōm of mōre* (xxx / x, with *m* alliteration), is a Type A3.

Type D*: One of the two non-four-position rhythmical types accepted by the metre. The other is **Type A3**. Type D*, or D expanded, is a Type D verse with an extra unstressed position between the two lifts: / x / \ x. As can be seen, it consists of five positions. Because of their exceptional character, Type D* verses are confined to the on-verse and must feature double alliteration. For example, *Beowulf* 223a, *sīde sǣ-næssas* is a Type D*.

Verse: see **Half-line**.

Verse clause: Any clause that occurs in verse. In a given passage of poetry, there are as many verse clauses as verbal phrases. In *The Wanderer* line 14b, *hycge swā hē wille*, there are two verse clauses (*hycge* and *swā hē wille*). In *Beowulf* lines 191b–93, *wæs þæt*

ġewin tō swȳð, /lāþ ond longsum, /þe on ðā lēode becōm, /nȳdwracu nīþgrim, /nihtbealwa mǣst, there are also two (*wæs þæt ġewin tō swȳð, lāþ ond longsum*, on the one hand, and *þe on ðā lēode becōm, nȳdwracu nīþgrim, nihtbealwa mǣst*, on the other). The first drop in a verse clause is important from a metrico-syntactic point of view: see **Clause-initial drop** and **Kuhn's laws**.

Word-foot theory: Geoffrey Russom's theoretical alternative to Sievers's system. The basic principle is that each verse is made up of two metrical feet (whereas in Sieversian metrics each verse is made up of four positions). Metrical feet, according to Russom, are patterned on the rhythmical contours of native Old English words (there are, then, as many metrical feet as there are word-rhythms in the language). A set of rules governs the combination of feet into verses, and a different set governs the combination of verses into lines. An uninterrupted series of unstressed syllables between feet is considered extrametrical (whereas in Sievers's system it constitutes a metrical unit, known as **Drop**). The word-foot theory was first proposed by Russom in *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

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