

Chapter 8

SINGLE HALF-LINES AND HEAVY HYPERMETRIC VERSES IN *MAXIMS I* RECONSIDERED

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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* *Hiörvarzsonar*, *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 *ljóðahátttr/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 *ljóðahátttr* 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 *ljóðahátttr/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 *ljóðaháttir*-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 *ljóðaháttir*-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 *ljóðaháttir*-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.