

Chapter 6

HYPERMETRIC NARRATIVE IN THE OLD ENGLISH *DANIEL*

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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: xˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ)
in fæðm fyres lige, hwæðere heora feorh generede
(HA1: xˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ) (hA1: xˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ)
mihtig metodes weard. Swā þæt mænige gefrūnon,
(D*4: ˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ) (hA1: xˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ)
halige him þær help getēode, sende him of hēan rodore
(HA1: ˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ) (hA1: xˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ)
god, gumena weard, gāst þone hālgan.
(D4: ˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ) (A1: ˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌxˌ)
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 ƿo 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.	(Daniel 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)	(A1: _ x _ x)	
hæleða helpend,	and þec, hālig gāst,	
(A1: _ 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.