Beowulf, Ælfric, and Old English Metrics

Literatura y Lingüística Inglesas

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Garantizamos, al firmar esta tesis doctoral, que el trabajo ha sido realizado por el doctorando bajo la dirección del director de la tesis y hasta donde nuestro conocimiento alcanza, en la realización del trabajo, se han respetado los derechos de otros autores a ser citados, cuando se han utilizado sus resultados o publicaciones.

En Granada, a 15 de mayo de 2014

El director de la tesis, José Luis Martínez-Dueñas Espejo, y el doctorando, Rafael Juan Pascual Hernández

Resumen de la tesis doctoral

"*Beowulf*, Ælfric, and Old English Metrics"

La tesis doctoral "*Beowulf*, Ælfric, and Old English Metrics" analiza algunas de las cuestiones más importantes de la historia métrica y literaria del inglés antiguo, como son: (1) la autenticidad del verso cataléctico de tres posiciones métricas SxS en *Beowulf* y en el resto del corpus poético inglés antiguo; (2) la motivación de la fiel adhesión del poeta de *Beowulf* a la regularidad lingüística conocida como ley de Kaluza, y las implicaciones cronológicas de dicha adhesión; (3) la historia semántica de algunas palabras para referirse a los monstruos del poema y su implicación cronológica; y (4) la naturaleza del estilo rítmico-aliterativo de Ælfric de Eynsham. Sobre estos temas, que figuran entre los más controvertidos de la disciplina, han escrito recientemente algunos estudiosos (véase, por ejemplo, Bredehoft 2004, 2005; Frank 2007; y Weiskott 2012, 2013). Como arguyo en mi tesis doctoral, dichos estudios han sido realizados de una manera acientífica y antiprobabilística. El **objetivo principal** de mi tesis es evidenciar que en sus recientes ensayos Eric Weiskott, Roberta Frank y Thomas A. Bredehoft trabajan sobre asunciones falsas y desarrollan argumentos defectuosos, llegando consecuentemente a conclusiones erróneas sobre los temas arriba enumerados. De esta manera, mi tesis doctoral avanza de modo considerable nuestro conocimiento sobre la historia métrico-literaria inglesa antigua, asentándolo sobre unas sólidas bases empíricas.

Las contribuciones más importantes de mi tesis doctoral están contenidas en los capítulos 2-4. El capítulo 2, centrado en la métrica de *Beowulf*, analiza la autenticidad del contorno métrico cataléctico SxS en *Beowulf* (estudio de caso número uno) y estudia la motivación de la adhesión del poeta a la ley de Kaluza (estudio de caso número dos). El capítulo 3, que contiene el tercer estudio de caso, ofrece apoyo semántico

independiente a las conclusiones métricas alcanzadas en el capítulo 2. Por último, el

capítulo 4 evalúa la teoría métrica del verso inglés antiguo tardío desarrollada por

Bredehoft y su aplicación a los textos rítmicos de Ælfric de Eynsham. El capítulo 1

ofrece una visión general de la métrica poética clásica (es decir, del siglo VIII), que

cumple a su vez un **<u>doble objetivo</u>**: por un lado, aporta la información mínima necesaria

para poder seguir los argumentos presentados en los capítulos subsiguientes; y por otro,

constituye una nueva introducción a la métrica inglesa antigua. R.D. Fulk (ver Pope

2001) y Jun Terasawa (2011) han producido recientemente introducciones a la métrica

inglesa antigua. Con todo, la introducción de Fulk, aunque excelente, es demasiado

breve por motivos de espacio (es parte de una antología poética); y la de Terasawa, en

su intento por mantener un equilibro entre las diferentes teoría métricas, es a veces

demasiado acrítica. Por ejemplo, no llega a afirmar con rotundidad el papel crucial que

tiene la métrica a la hora de datar la poesía (ver Pascual 2011: 203). La introducción que

se ofrece en el capítulo 1 de mi tesis doctoral, por el contrario, ofrece una extensa

descripción de los principales fenómenos métricos a la par que afirma el papel crucial

que tiene la métrica a la hora de datar (véase, por ejemplo, §34) y editar los textos

poéticos anglosajones (a tal fin, se incluyen sistemáticamente capturas de los

manuscritos). Esto, espero, hará que el estudiante inicial de métrica inglesa antigua sea

consciente de que la disposición de la poesía en los manuscritos anglosajones es

simplemente una convención que no representa la estructura métrica del verso ni

necesariamente refleja la práctica original de los poetas (los errores de escriba son

relativamente abundantes en los manuscritos).

El primer estudio de caso del capítulo 1, "Three-Position Verses and the

Metrical Practice of the *Beowulf* Poet," evalúa el reciente ensayo de Eric Weiskott

"Three-Position Verses in *Beowulf*" (2013), donde éste arguye que la prohibición contra

el verso cataléctico de tres posiciones métricas SxS de la métrica tradicional sieversiana es infundada, y que consecuentemente las instancias de ese tipo de verso que se encuentran en el manuscrito de *Beowulf* deben ser consideradas productos genuinos de la práctica métrica del poeta. Weiskott basa su argumento en una lista de trece versos de *Beowulf* que él mismo ha reunido, todos los cuales tienen supuestamente una configuración métrica del tipo SxS. La primera parte de mi estudio de caso analiza los trece versos que presenta Weiskott y concluye que casi todos ellos no pueden ser clasificados de manera inequívoca como instancias del patrón métrico cataléctico SxS. Así pues, el argumento de Weiskott a favor de la autenticidad del tipo de verso SxS está en realidad fundado sobre la evidencia ofrecida por sólo un verso en *Beowulf* (*lissa ġelong*), lo que es a todas luces una base empírica insuficiente. Weiskott también sugiere que el tipo de verso SxS podría haber sido reanalizado a lo largo de la historia métrica inglesa antigua. En la segunda parte de mi estudio de caso, arguyo que si tal y como la evidencia inequívocamente sugiere, el contorno cataléctico SxS era considerado métricamente irregular ya en un poema inicial como *Beowulf*, donde los versos tienden a estar constituidos por cuatro o cinco sílabas, difícilmente podría haber sido el contorno cataléctico SxS regularizado en poesía posterior, puesto que en la tradición tardía se produce un aumento drástico del número de sílabas por verso como consecuencia de los cambios lingüísticos propios del período. Evalúo también los obstáculos empíricos existentes que desaconsejan aceptar la legitimidad formal del tipo de verso SxS en poesía inglesa antigua, con lo que reafirmo la validez de la prohibición tradicional de la métrica sieversiana contra versos constituidos por menos de cuatro posiciones métricas.

Que *Beowulf* es un poema inicial ha sido cuestionado por Weiskott en un ensayo diferente (2012). En *Beowulf*, las secuencias bisilábicas resolubles bajo acento

secundario suspenden el proceso de resolución si terminan en una consonante o en una vocal que tenía entonación circunfleja en protogermánico (tradicionalmente, estas vocales han sido consideradas trimóricas); complementariamente, estas secuencias bisilábicas sí sufren resolución si terminan en vocales que o bien eran breves en proto-germánico, o bien se acortaron en inglés antiguo prehistórico (es decir, las vocales protogermánicas tradicionalmente consideradas monomóricas y bimóricas). Esta regularidad lingüística es conocida como la ley de Kaluza. La distinción entre vocales históricamente breves y largas parece ser estrictamente observada por el poeta de *Beowulf*, que colocó secuencias bisilábicas resolubles terminadas en vocales en posiciones métricas resolubles o irresolubles en función de la longitud etimológica de dichas vocales. Dado que la distinción entre vocales históricamente breves y largas se perdió en torno al año 725 en Mercia, R.D. Fulk ha concluido que *Beowulf* debe haber sido compuesto aproximadamente antes de ese año. Weiskott ha argumentado, por el contrario, que la distinción entre vocales etimológicamente breves y largas se transformó en una distinción semántica entre palabras que se refieren a cosas y abstracciones, por un lado, y palabras que se refieren a monstruos y personas, por otro. Dado que dicha distinción semántica permaneció operativa durante todo el período anglosajón, Weiskott sostiene que *Beowulf* no debe haber sido compuesto necesariamente antes del momento en que la distinción fonológica arriba descrita se perdiese. En el segundo estudio de caso del capítulo 2, "The Dating of *Beowulf* and the Conditioning of Kaluza's Law," se demuestra que el argumento de Weiskott está fundado en una contradicción lógica. También se arguye que la motivación de la ley de Kaluza es, como se ha sostenido tradicionalmente, de naturaleza exclusivamente fonológica, y que por tanto la datación que hace Fulk en función de la misma sigue siendo totalmente válida.

Como Leonard Neidorf ha señalado (2013: 7-8), los intentos de datar la poesía inglesa antigua lingüísticamente se pueden dividir en dos grandes grupos: los métricos y los léxicos. Ambos lidian con fenómenos independientes, de todos modos, y en consecuencia las conclusiones a las que llegan los estudios métricos pueden ser contrastadas con las conclusiones a las que llegan los estudios léxicos. Datar la composición de *Beowulf* a comienzos del siglo VIII en función de la adherencia fiel del poeta a la ley de Kaluza es un ejemplo paradigmático de estudio métrico. El capítulo 3 de esta tesis, "Material Monsters and Semantic Shifts," que consiste en un estudio de caso que data *Beowulf* a través de un análisis de la historia semántica de ciertas palabras, es un ejemplo de argumentación léxica. En concreto, me centro en las palabras *scucca* y *þyrs*. Según el diccionario Bosworth-Toller, *scucca* significa "demonio" y *þyrs* significa "gigante, demonio, hechicero." Con respecto a *scucca*, está claro que "demonio" es el significado que tiene esa palabra en textos ingleses antiguos tardíos como los de Ælfric. Pero yo arguyo que es improbable que signifique "demonio" en *Beowulf*, donde Hrothgar, un pagano que ignora la revelación cristiana, usa la palabra *scucca* para referirse a los Grendels. El poeta de *Beowulf* describe a sus personajes paganos sistemáticamente como desconocedores de la ascendencia diabólica de los monstruos. De hecho, el marcado contraste entre el conocimiento del narrador cristiano sobre el origen de los monstruos y la ignorancia al respecto por parte de los personajes paganos es una importante fuente de tensión dramática en el poema. Así pues, si el poeta de *Beowulf* hubiese puesto una palabra con el significado "demonio" en boca de un personaje pagano como Hrothgar habría violado su propio designio artístico. Lo mismo puede decirse de la palabra *þyrs*, que es pronunciada por Beowulf para referirse a Grendel. Yo arguyo que la razón por la cual el poeta de *Beowulf* puso estas palabras en boca de sus personajes (paganos) es porque las mismas retienen su significado

precristiano en el poema, y que por tanto *Beowulf* debe haber sido compuesto antes de que *scucca* y *þyrs* adoptasen sus significado postcristiano ("demonio"). Un análisis de las primeras apariciones de dichas palabras en glosas inglesas antiguas nos permite datar dicho cambio semántico antes del siglo IX. Así pues, la conclusión de mi estudio léxico aporta confirmación independiente a la conclusión de mis estudios métricos.

Los capítulos 1-3 de mi tesis tratan principalmente con el período inicial de la historia literaria inglesa antigua. En el capítulo 4, me ocupo del estilo rítmico-aliterativo de Ælfric de Eynsham. En 2004, Thomas A. Bredehoft afirmó que este peculiar estilo es en verdad verso, y que la razón por la que el estilo de estos textos rítmicos de Ælfric ha sido tradicionalmente considerado prosa rítmica es la rigidez de la métrica sieversiana, que habría sido incapaz, sostiene Bredehoft, de explicar las reglas métricas que regulan la práctica de Ælfric. Así pues, Bredehoft proporciona una nueva teoría métrica que es lo suficientemente flexible como para explicar la transición de la poesía inglesa antigua inicial, representada paradigmáticamente por *Beowulf*, a la tardía, dentro de la cual él incluye los textos rítmicos de Ælfric. Yo someto la teoría métrica a un análisis crítico, para concluir que si ésta fuese aceptada como válida, entonces un número sustancioso de regularidades métricas quedaría sin explicar, por lo que deberían ser consideradas producto de la casualidad. También arguyo que el intento de Bredehoft de formular un conjunto sencillo de reglas flexibles según las cuales los poetas tardíos, Ælfric incluido, habrían compuesto da lugar a un sistema que es en realidad incapaz de diferenciar poesía de prosa, por lo que ha de ser incorrecto.

La metodología utilizada a lo largo de lesta tesis doctoral es la filológica, que a su vez es de naturaleza eminentemente probabilística. Por ejemplo, con respecto al estilo rítmico de Ælfric, ambas posiciones, la tradicional (que sostiene que dicho estilo es prosa rítmica) y la de Bredehoft (según la cual dicho estilo es verso) no pueden ser

verdad al mismo tiempo. La manera de determinar cuál es más fiable es comprobando cuál de ellas produciría el mayor número de improbabilidades de ser tomada como cierta, para descartarla a posteriori como inválida. Por ejemplo, no hay nada en la teoría de Bredehoft que prevenga la aparición de versos como *wiga mǣre*, en los que la primera sílaba acentuada es breve. Sin embargo, estos versos no ocurren en poesía anglosajona. La ausencia de los mismos en el corpus poético anglosajón es significativa, ya que los poetas favorecían versos de dos palabras y cuatro sílabas, como *hūsa sēlest*, en los que ambas sílabas acentuadas son largas. La explicación más probable para dicha ausencia ha de ser que los poetas conscientemente evitaron componer versos de cuatro sílabas cuando la primera sílaba acentuada era breve—o, en otras palabras, los poetas consideraban dichos versos irregulares. Dado que los principios teóricos de Bredehoft no clasifican como irregular ese tipo de verso, la teoría que él propone nos obligaría a creer que la casualidad o el azar es la razón detrás de la ausencia de versos como *wiga mǣre*. La improbabilidad de la hipótesis de Bredehoft es tan severa que su teoría ha de ser rechazada como incorrecta.

De modo análogo, en el tema de la semántica, creer que el poeta de *Beowulf* puso las palabras *scucca* y *þyrs* en boca de personajes paganos en una época en la que esas palabras ya significaban claramente "demonio" y no "monstruo" nos obligaría a creer que sólo en esas dos palabras el poeta falló en la construcción de su designio artístico, que es sin embargo muy preciso en otros aspectos. Es sencillamente más probable aceptar que *Beowulf* fue compuesto en una época en la que *scucca* y *þyrs* no significaban aún "demonio," sino sólo "monstruo."

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation addresses several issues pertaining to the metrical and literary history of Old English: (1) the authenticity of the three-position SxS verse type in *Beowulf* and elsewhere in Old English poetry; (2) the conditioning of Kaluza's law and its bearing on the dating of *Beowulf*; (3) the archaic semantics of *Beowulf* and its date of composition; and (4) the nature of Ælfric of Eynsham's rhythmical-alliterative style and its relation to classical Old English poetic metre. These issues have been recently addressed by a number of scholars in a non-scientific, antiprobabilistic manner (see Bredehoft 2004, 2005; Frank 2007; Weiskott 2012, 2013). This dissertation submits the arguments of such scholars to critical scrutiny in an attempt to cleanse the field of Old English literary history of their dilettantism. In doing so, it vindicates the crucial role of probabilistic reasoning in elucidating the history of Old English literature, and reconfirms the need to base metrical and philological arguments upon empirical facts.

The core of the argument is contained in the last three chapters of the dissertation: chapter 2, on the metre of *Beowulf*, deals with the authenticity of catalectic measures in the poem (case study one) and with the rationale behind the poet's faithful adherence to Kaluza's law (case study two); chapter 3, which contains the third case study, offers independent support from the field of semantics to the conclusions reached in chapter 2; and, finally, chapter 4 analyzes Bredehoft's theory of late Old English verse and its application to Ælfric's rhythmical writings. Chapter 1 offers an outline of classical (i.e., eighth-century) Old English poetic metre, which serves a double purpose: on the hand, it furnishes the necessary background information to follow the arguments laid out in the three subsequent chapters; on the other, it provides a new introduction to the principles of Old English metre. R.D. Fulk (see Pope 2001) and Jun Terasawa (2011) have recently produced introductions to Old English metre. Nevertheless, the

former, though excellent, is too short; and the latter, in its attempt to maintain a balance between the different metrical theories, is at times too uncritical (see Pascual 2011: 203). My introduction to Old English metre, on the contrary, provides an extensive description of its main features while at the same time acknowledging the role of metre in dating (see, for example, §34) and editing Old English poetic texts correctly (to that effect, manuscript snips are systematically offered). This, I hope, will make the beginning student of Old English metre aware that the display of poetry in medieval manuscripts is simply a convention that does not represent the metrical structure of the line, and which does not necessarily reflect the original practice of the authors'.

   The first case study in chapter 1, "Three-Position Verses and the Metrical Practice of the *Beowulf* Poet," addresses a recent essay by Eric Weiskott, "Three-Position Verses in *Beowulf*" (2013), where he argues that the stricture traditionally held against the three-position SxS pattern by Sieversian metrics is unfounded, and that therefore instances of that pattern found in the *Beowulf* manuscript should be considered the authentic products of the metrical practice of the *Beowulf* poet. His claim is based on the evidence offered by a list of thirteen verses he has gathered from *Beowulf*, all of which supposedly feature the catalectic SxS pattern. The first part of my case study analyzes Weiskott's thirteen instances and concludes that twelve of them do not unambiguously feature the SxS pattern. Thus, Weiskott's case for the authenticity of the SxS pattern is in actuality predicated upon the evidence furnished by a single unambiguous instance, a clearly insufficient empirical basis. Weiskott also suggests that the SxS pattern might have been reanalyzed over the course of Old English metrical history. In the second part of my case study, I argue that if, as the evidence unambiguously suggests, the catalectic SxS pattern was considered unmetrical in an early poem like *Beowulf*, where verses tend to feature four or five syllables, hardly

could it have been regularized in later poetry, where the number of syllables per verse

drastically increased as a result of the changes that took place in the Old English

language. I also assess the empirical obstacles to accepting the formal legitimacy of the

three-position SxS pattern in Old English verse, thereby reaffirming the validity of the

stricture of traditional Sieversian metrics against verses consisting of less than four

metrical positions.

The earliness of *Beowulf* has also been questioned by Eric Weiskott in a

different essay (2012). In *Beowulf*, resolvable sequences under secondary stress suspend

resolution if they end either in a consonant or in a vowel that had circumflex intonation

in Proto-Germanic; and they resolve if they end in vowels that were short in Proto-

Germanic, or else had shortened in pre-historical Old English. This regularity is known

as Kaluza's law. The distinction between historically short and long vowels thus seems

to be strictly observed by the *Beowulf* poet, who placed resolvable disyllabic sequences

ending in vowels in resolvable or non-resolvable positions under secondary stress

according to their etymological length. Since the distinction between historically short

and long vowels was lost ca. 725 in Mercia, R.D. Fulk has concluded that *Beowulf* must

have been composed before that time. Weiskott has argued, however, that the

distinction between etymologically short and long vowels was semanticized into a

distinction between words referring to things and abstractions, on the one hand, and

words referring to monsters and humans, on the other. Since that semantic distinction

remained operative throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, Weiskott maintains, *Beowulf*

needs not have been composed before the phonological distinction was lost. In the

second case study of chapter 2, "The Dating of *Beowulf* and the Conditioning of

Kaluza's Law," which is the result of my collaboration with Dr. Leonard Neidorf, we

demonstrate that Weiskott's semantic replacement is predicated upon a logical

contradiction. We also argue that the phonological conditioning of the law remains the most probable rationale behind the complementary distribution of resolvable disyllabic sequences endings in vowels under secondary stress, and that therefore Fulk's dating of *Beowulf* remains unsound.

As Neidorf has pointed out (2013: 7-8), linguistic attempts to date Old English poetry fall into two distinct categories: metrical and lexical. Metrical and lexical studies, however, deal with separate phenomena, and hence the conclusions drawn by metrical studies can be tested against the conclusions independently drawn in lexical studies. Dating *Beowulf* to the early eighth-century on the basis of its faithful adherence to Kaluza's law is a paradigmatic example of metrical argumentation. Chapter 3, "Material Monsters and Semantic Shifts," which consists of a case study that dates *Beowulf* by analyzing the meanings of certain words, furnishes an example of lexical argumentation. In particular, I pay attention to the words *scucca* and *þyrs*. According to Bosworth-Toller, *scucca* means "devil"; and *þyrs* means "giant, demon, enchanter." With respect to *scucca*, it is clear that "devil" is its meaning in late Old English texts like Ælfric's. But I argue that it is improbable that it means "devil" in *Beowulf*, where Hrothgar, a pagan ignorant of Christian revelation, uses the word *scucca* to refer to the Grendels. The *Beowulf* poet systematically depicts his pagan characters as unaware of the diabolical pedigree of the monsters. Indeed, the marked contrast between the Christian narrator's knowledge of the monsters' origin and the pagan characters' ignorance is an important source of dramatic tension in the poem. Thus, if the *Beowulf* poet had put a word meaning "devil" in the mouth of a pagan character, he would have violated his own artistic design. The same holds true for *þyrs*, which is pronounced by Beowulf. I argue that the reason why the *Beowulf* poet put these words in the mouths of his characters is because these words retain their pre-Christian meanings in *Beowulf*,

and that therefore *Beowulf* must have been composed before *scucca* and *þyrs* adopted their post-conversion semantics. An analysis of the earliest attestations of these words in Old English glosses allows us to date this semantic change before the ninth century. Thus, the conclusion drawn in my lexical study lends independent support to the conclusion of my metrical study.

Chapters 1-3 of my dissertation thus deal largely with the earliest period of Old English literary history. In chapter 4, I address the nature of Ælfric's rhythmical-alliterative style. In 2004, Thomas A. Bredehoft claimed that Ælfric's peculiar style is verse, and that the reason why his rhythmical texts have traditionally been considered prose is because of the rigidity of Sieversian metrics, which has been unable to account for the metricality of the Ælfrician style. Bredehoft provides a new metrical theory that is flexible enough to explain the transition from early Old English metre, paradigmatically represented by *Beowulf*, to late Old English poetry, of which Ælfric's rhythmical-alliterative would constitute a representative expression. I submit Bredehoft's metrical theory to critical analysis and conclude that if it were accepted as valid, an important number of metrical regularities would have to be ascribed to chance, since his theory is so flexible that it lacks the rules to account for them. Also, I argue that Bredehoft's attempt to formulate a simple set of flexible rules according to which late Old English poets, including Ælfric, supposedly composed results in a system that is unable to differentiate prose and verse, which is in turn a clear indication that it must be incorrect.

1. CLASSICAL OLD ENGLISH POETIC METRE

§1. General Remarks

The largest part of the surviving corpus of Old English poetry is contained in four codices. These are informally known as the Junius Manuscript, the Vercelli Book, the Exeter Book, and the *Beowulf* Manuscript. Old English poems vary in length from 2 to 3,182 lines; in date of composition, from the seventh century to the early twelfth; in quality, from doggerel to sublime; and in regard to topic, we can find a heterogeneous variety: charms, proverbs, scripture, history, hagiography, lyric, and heroic poetry.[1] The total number of surviving Old English poetic lines amounts to approximately 30,000. This means that the quantity of surviving verses is approximately 60,000,[2] since each line comprises two verses bound together by a carefully controlled system of initial rhyme, also called alliteration, which is described below.[3] Nevertheless, verses are written continuously in the manuscripts, as if they were prose, and only a dot is sporadically inserted between them, never systematically.[4] The poetic texts in the Vercelli manuscript, for instance, are punctuated more frequently than the poetic texts contained in the other manuscripts.[5] Further, medieval word grouping in manuscripts does not meet the expectations of modern readers, with syllables assembled by the rhythm of the recitation and words at manuscript line-ends cut in such a way that the next line tends to begin with a consonant.[6]

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[1] See R.D. Fulk, "Old English: Literary Language," in *English Historical Linguistics: An International Handbook*, ed. Alexander Bergs and Laurel J. Brinton (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 385-98.

[2] Roughly equivalent to the combined length of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

[3] For an overview of the Old English poetic corpus, including the total number of independent literary pieces, the major manuscripts in which they survive and their physical arrangement therein, see André Crépin, *Old English Poetics: a Technical Handbook* (Paris: Publications de l'Association des Médiévistes de l'Enseignement Suepérieur, 2005), esp. 11-35.

[4] See *Klaeber IV*, xxix; see also Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 13-14, §28.

[5] See Cable, "Syllabic Weight in Old English Meter," *Diachronica* 11 (1994): 7-8.

[6] See Crépin, *Old English Poetics*, 27.

§2. Medieval and Modern Editorial Conventions

Differences between medieval and modern editorial practices are illustrated by the figure below (Cotton Vitellius A.xv, fol. 136r, ll. 8-13), which shows the beginning of *fitt* III of *Beowulf*.[7] The corresponding passage in *Klaeber IV* is offered immediately for purposes of comparison:[8]
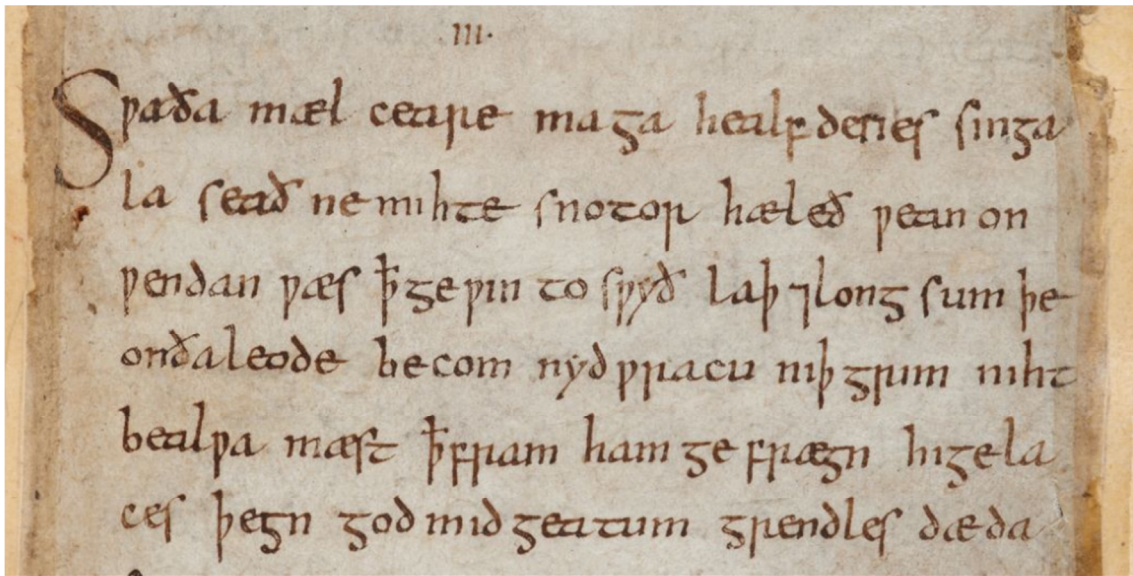
Swā þā mǣlċeare   maga Healfdenes

singāla sēað;   ne mihte snotor hæleð

wēan onwendan;   wæs þæt ġewin tō swȳð,

lāþ ond longsum,   þē on ðā lēode becōm,

nȳdwracu nīþgrim,   nihtbealwa mǣst.

Þæt fram hām ġefræġn   Hiġelāces þeġn

gōd mid Ġēatum,   Grendles dǣda; (ll. 189-195)

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[7] Old English longer poems, including *Beowulf*, were all divided into sections that were most probably known as *fitta*, the plural form of the feminine noun *fitt*. The evidence for this is the Latin preface to the Old Saxon epic poem *Heliand*, where it is stated that its author "omne opus per *vitteas* distinxit, qua nos lectiones vel sententias possumus appellare." Latin *vitteas* corresponds to the plural form of the Old English word *fitt* and the Old Saxon word *fihtea*. See *Klaeber IV*, xxxiii.

[8] In the following pages, examples are accompanied by manuscript snips in order to make the student acquainted with Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, and also in order to ease understanding of the process of induction underlying any description of Old English metre.

[Thus Healfdene's son continuously brooded over the sorrow of the time; the wise man could not put aside misery; the strife that came onto the people was too harsh, too despicable and long-lasting, cruel and violent persecution, greatest of night-attacks. Hygelac's thane, good among the Geats, heard that from home, Grendel's doings.][9]

Comparison of the two formats immediately brings to light obvious differences between them. For example, archaic characters are modernized. Thus, *Klaeber IV* replaces insular *g* with its modern Carolingian variant; uses a *w* instead of manuscript *wynn* and a minuscule *s* instead of a long *s*; and expands the letter thorn with a stroke (which is an abbreviation for *þæt*) to its unexpanded equivalent (see manuscript ll. 10 and 12). In the manuscript, two different words may appear written together (e.g. *swaða*, l.8; *onða*, l.11), while a compound like *mǣlċeare* is written as two distinct words (l. 8). Further, as has been stated, words at manuscript line-ends are cut so that the following line begins with a consonant (see the end of ll. 8, 9, and 12 above). This is particularly clear in the following example:
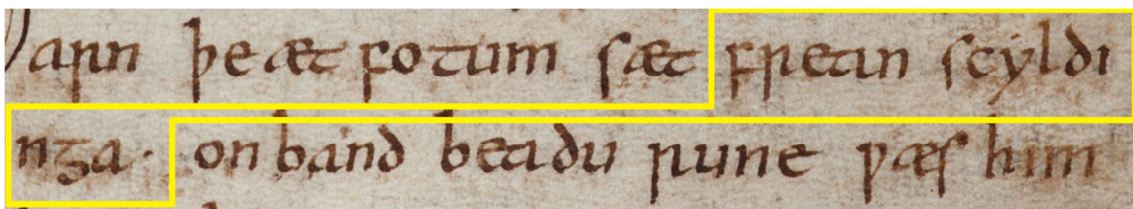
Frēan Scyldinga (*Beowulf* 501b)

[of the lord of the Scyldings]

As we can appreciate, the word *Scyldinga* is cut in such a way that the next manuscript line begins with the consonant *n*—even if integrity of the syllable *-din-* is disturbed.

The modern edition incorporates a number of diacritics, like a dot above the letters *c* and *g*, which indicates that they are palatal; a dot below the letter *o* (l. 190b)

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[9] All translations from Old English are mine, unless otherwise stated. Problems of meaning are commented only when they are relevant to the argument.

indicating that it is a parasitic or epenthetic vowel which must be skipped in scansion; and macrons to mark long vowels.[10] But for our purposes, the most substantial difference is that manuscript lines have been reorganized in the modern edition so that the underlying metrical structure is visualized. Manuscripts containing Old English poetry do not have a metrically coherent lineation, and consequently this has been to be inductively determined. Alliteration plays a fundamental role in this process of induction.

1.1.   ALLITERATION

§3. The Alliterative Long Line

The alliterative long line is the result of binding two verses together by means of a strictly regulated pattern of alliteration that affects only stressed syllables.[11] Modern editions print the long line with a space or caesura in the middle. This caesura indicates where the boundary between the two verses falls. Nevertheless, the alliterative long line is originally prehistoric,[12] and hence its appreciation relied on its audible perception, not on its graphic representation—which, either medieval or modern, is simply a question of convention.[13] Consequently, and despite the convenience of the term "line," the original poets must have distinguished between verses and verse pairs, as does Snorri Sturluson in his *Háttatal*.[14] In order to refer to each of the two verses of a line, I use the terms "on-verse" and "off-verse," not "*a*-verse" and "*b*-verse." That way, confusion

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[10] Old English long vowels are occasionally doubled in early Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, as in the Corpus Glossary (see Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 13-4, §26). The major poetic manuscripts, being late, do not mark them.

[11] See Pope-Fulk 2001, 132. For stress assignment within Old English words, see below. If unstressed syllables in the line happen to alliterate, this alliteration is usually considered accidental. Sometimes, ornamental patterns of alliteration, more elaborated than the basic one, are used by the poets. On these, see A. Orchard, "Artful Alliteration in Anglo-Saxon Song and Story," *Anglia* 113 (1995): 429-63.

[12] See Pope-Fulk 2001, 130. See also Donald Scragg, "The Nature of Old English Verse," in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. M. Godden and M. Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 50.

[13] From my point of view, the fact that early Germanic metre is not a product of literacy lends strong support to Geoffrey Russom's word-foot theory.

[14] For a reliable modern English translation, see A. Faulkes, *Edda* (London: Dent, 1987), 165-220.

with Sievers's rhythmic types A and B is avoided. A small letter *a* or *b*, however, is inserted immediately after a line number in order to indicate that the reference is either to the on- or the off-verse respectively. *Beowulf* 195b, for example, refers to the off-verse of line 195, *Grendles dǣda*, and 195a designates the on-verse, *gōd mid Ġēatum*.

§4. Consonantal Alliteration

Alliteration between consonants is usually exact in Old English verse, as can be seen in the abovementioned lines from *Beowulf*: *m* alliterates with *m* (*mǣlċeare* and *maga*); *w* with *w* (*wēan*, *onwendan*, and *ġewin*); *l* with *l* (*lāþ*, *longsum*, and *lēode*); *n* with *n* (*nȳdwracu*, *nīþgrim*, and *nihtbealwa*); and so on. Further, there are two different varieties of *c*, palatal (*ċ*) and velar (*c*), which in older poems such as *Beowulf* alliterate with each other, as in the following instance:
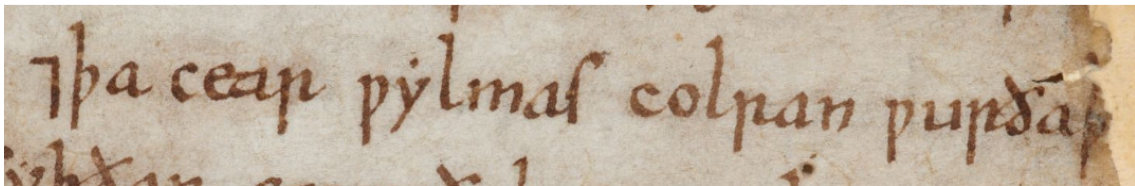
ond þā ċearwylmas   cōlran wurðaþ (l. 282)

[and the anxious emotions become cooler]

In this line, the only fully stressed syllable of the on-verse,[15] *ċear-*, which begins with palatal *ċ*, alliterates with the first fully stressed syllable of the off-verse, *cōl-*, which begins with a velar *c*.

The same holds true for the palatal and velar variants of *g* in *Beowulf*, as in l. 195, where *gōd* (velar), *Ġēa-* (palatal), and *Gren-* (velar) alliterate (see above). Nevertheless, in a late poem like *The Battle of Maldon*, which must have been composed after 991, when the battle it commemorates took place, a distinction is

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[15] For phrasal stress assignment, see below.

maintained between the palatal and velar variants in terms of alliteration. Such a

distinctive usage is most probably a symptom of late composition.

If an alliterating stressed syllable begins with two consonants, usually only the

first alliterates. For example, in *Beowulf* 195, the word Grendel, which begins with the

consonant cluster *gr*, alliterates with the *g* of *gōd* and the *ġ* of *Ġēatum*. The consonant

clusters *sc*, *sp*, and *st*, however, are exceptional in that each of them alliterates with

itself exclusively, and not with an *s* or an *s* followed by any other consonant, as we can

see in the following examples:
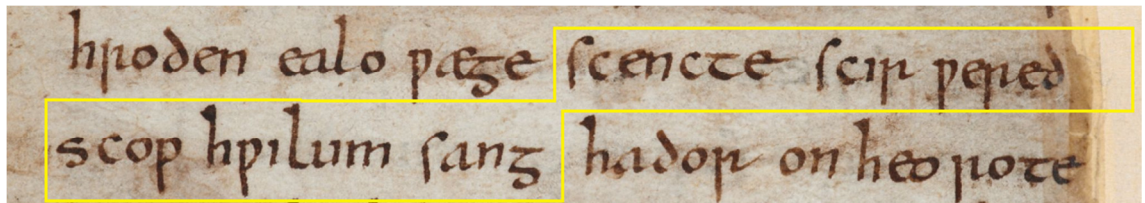
scencte scīr wered.   Scop hwīlum sang (*Beowulf* 496)

[poured out bright, sweet drink. The bard now and again sang]
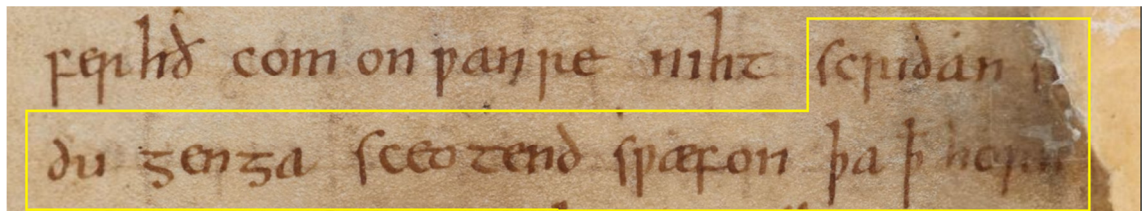
scrīðan sceadugenġa.   Scēotend swǣfon (*Beowulf* 703)

[(came) gliding the shadow-walker. The shooters slept]

In the first instance, the verb *scencte*, the adjective *scīr*, and the masculine *a*-stem *scop*

(all of them beginning with *sc*) alliterate,[16] while *sang* does not. Similarly, in the second

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[16] For a concise definition of the term "stem," see R. Lass, *Old English: A Historical Linguistic Companion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 123-4; see also Jeremy J. Smith, *Old English: A Linguistic Introduction,* Cambridge Introductions to the English Language (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). The standard accounts of Old English noun morphology are Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 222-60, §§568-637; and Richard Hogg and R.D. Fulk, *A Grammar of Old English*, vol. II, *Morphology* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 7-145. For a comparative Germanic view, see Eduard Prokosch, *A Comparative Germanic Grammar* (Philadelphia: The Linguistic Society of America, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), 225-59, §§76-88. Notice that Germanic *a-*, *ja-*, and *wa*-stems, on the one hand, and *ō-*, *jō-*, and *wō*-stems, on the other, correspond to Indo-European *o-*, *jo-*, and *wo*-stems, on the one hand, and *ā-*, *jā-*, and *wā*-stems, on the other. The reason is that Indo-European

instance, s*crīðan*, *sceadugenġa*, and *scēotend* alliterate, but *swǣfon* does not. These two

examples are particularly interesting. In Old English verse, the second stressed syllable

of the off-verse must not participate in the alliterative pattern of the line (see below). If

sang and *swǣfon* alliterated with stressed words beginning with *sc*, they could not have

been placed at the end of the off-vese, where alliteration is strictly forbidden. Let us

consider a few more examples.
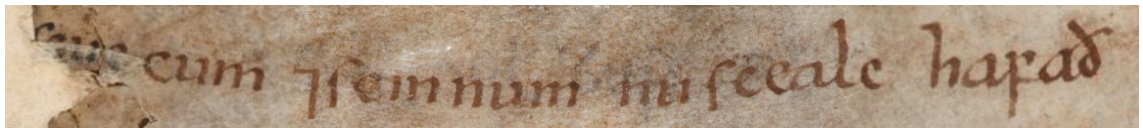
    scuccum ond scinnum.   Nū scealc hafað (*Beowulf* 939)

[(against) evil spirits and spectres. Now a warrior has...]
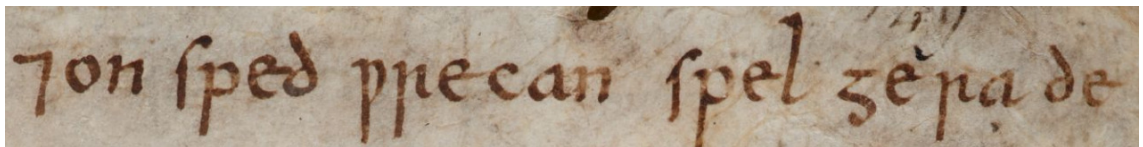
    ond on spēd wrecan   spel ġerāde (*Beowulf* 873)

[and (began to) recite skilfully an apt story]

In the first example, *scealc* alliterates with *scuccum* and *scinnum*, while *hafað* does not

alliterate. In the second line, *ġerāde* is forbidden to participate in the alliteration of the

line, which is clearly on *sp* (*spēd* alliterates with *spel*). The consonant clusters *sc-* and

sp- alliterate only with themselves, and so does also the cluster *st-*, as can be appreciated

in the following line, which extends across two folios:

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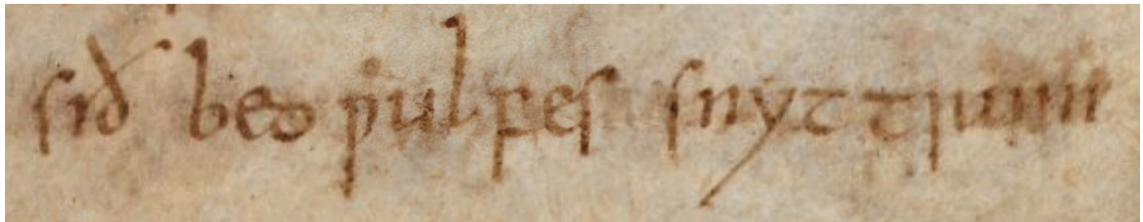
o and *ā* merged with Germanic *a* and *ō* respectively; see Lass, *Old English*, 17-9; Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 38-9; and Prokosch, *A Comparative Germanic Grammar*, 99-100, §§37-8. For a linguistic introduction to the main concepts used in morphological discussion, see L. Bauer, *Introducing Linguistic Morphology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press) chs. 1-3.
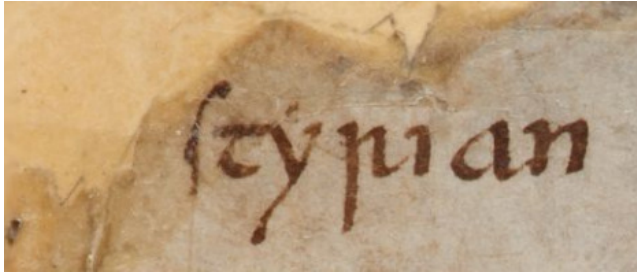
<u>sī</u>ð Bēowulfes   <u>s</u>nyttrum <u>st</u>yrian (*Beowulf* 872)

[(began to) recount the exploit of Beowulf skilfully]

In this line, *sīð* alliterates with *snyttrum*, which means that the *n* of the consonantal
sequence *sn* can be disregarded for purposes of alliteration. Since the last stressed
syllable of a line must not alliterate, *styrian* cannot alliterate either with *sīð* or *snyttrum*
(if it alliterated, the line would not feature an acceptable pattern of alliteration). Thus,
this line furnishes evidence that the cluster *st* was regarded as an integral alliterative unit
by the *Beowulf* poet.

The following example is also interesting:
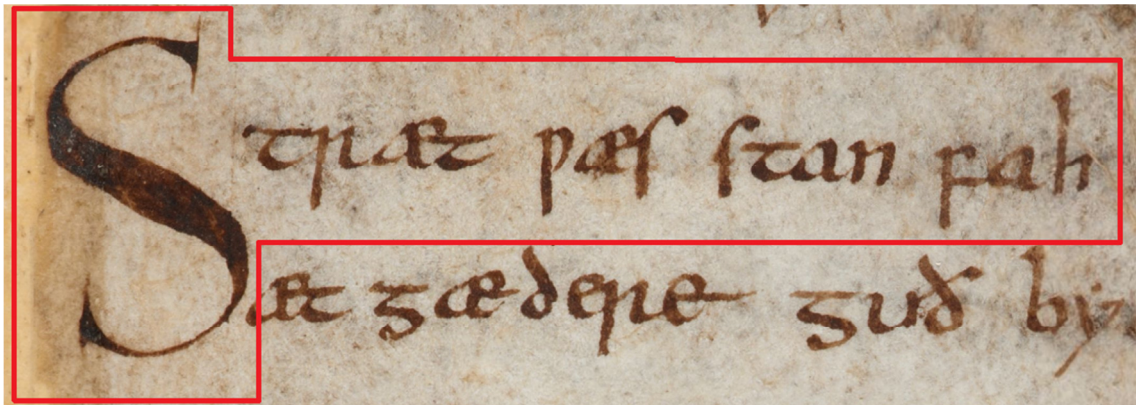
<u>Str</u>ǣt wæs <u>st</u>ānfah,   <u>st</u>īġ wīsode (*Beowulf* 320)

[The street was adorned with stones, the path led…]

The *st* of *strǣt*, with an *r* immediately after the cluster, can alliterate with the *st*-clusters
of *stān* and of *stīġ*, which are not followed by an *r*.

§5. Vocalic Alliteration

When an alliterating stressed syllable begins with a vowel, it can alliterate with any other stressed vowel, as in the two following examples:
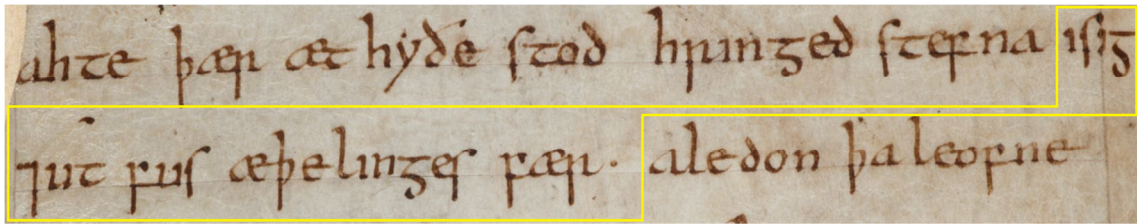
īsiġ ond ūtfūs —æþelinges fær (*Beowulf* 33)

[covered with ice and eager to depart —the vessel of a prince]
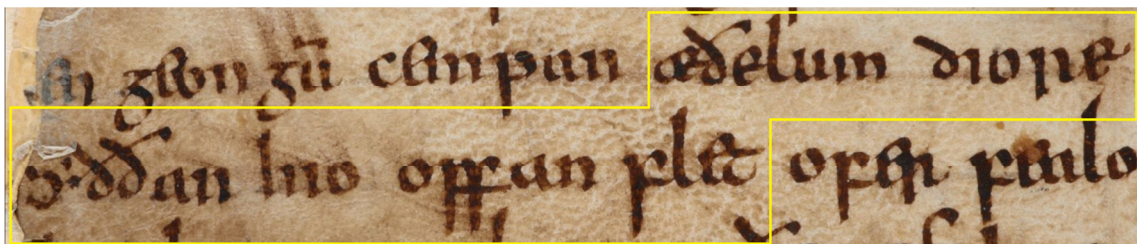
æðelum dīore,   syððan hīo Offan flet (*Beowulf* 1949)

[the precious one of noble lineage, after she the hall of Offa]

In the first example, the alliterating sounds of the line are (1) long *i* (/iː/, represented in *Klaeber IV* as *ī*), which is the stressed syllable of the adjective *īsiġ*; (2) long *u* (/uː/, represented as *ū*), which is the stressed syllable of the adjective *ūtfūs*; and (3) short *æ* (/æ/), which is the stressed syllable of the masculine *a*-stem *æþeling*—all of which are stress-words (for a definition of "stress-word," see below). In the second instance, short *æ*, the stressed syllable of the neuter *ja*-stem *æþelu*, alliterates with short *o*, which is the stressed syllable of the proper noun *Offa*, an *n*-stem.

As these examples show, alliteration between exact vowels is not usual in Old English verse. In fact, it tended to be avoided, as Snorri Sturluson points out in his *Háttatal* with regard to Old Norse verse. The rationale behind vocalic alliteration in both Old English and Old Icelandic verse seems to be that a glottal stop preceded all vowels at the time when the metrical system was established, before Proto-Germanic

separated into the different dialects. It was this glottal stop, and not the vowels

following it, that was originally perceived as the alliterating sound of the line.[17]

§6. Inorganic *H*

In the following example, Unferth is about to harass Beowulf right after the Geatish

hero has offered himself to fight against Grendel and cleanse Heorot:
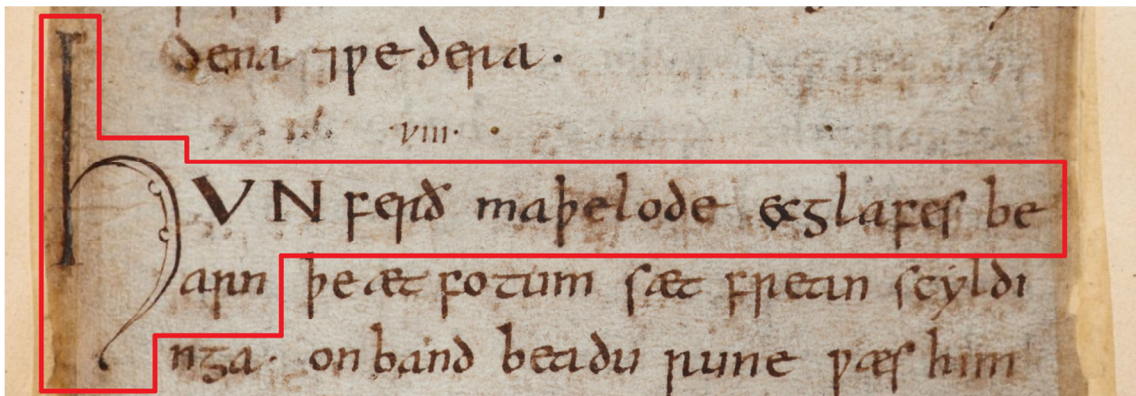
Ūnferð maþelode,[18]   Ecglāfes bearn (*Beowulf* 499)

　　　[Unferth spoke, Edgelaf's son]

The alliteration of this line must be vocalic, since the first stressed syllable of the off-

verse is *Ecg-*. It is therefore very probable that the scribe inserted an inorganic *h* at the

beginning of the name *Unferð*,[19] thus spoiling the original alliterative scheme. Indeed,

this is the stance adopted by the editors of *Klaeber IV*, who indicate that the scribal error

has been corrected by italicizing the capital letter *U*.[20]

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[17] See Pope-Fulk 2001, 133; and also Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 16.

[18] For a study of the origin and usage of the Old English verb *maþelian*, "to speak, to make a speech," see Matti Risanen, "*Maþelian* in Old English Poetry," in *Words and Works: Studies in Medieval English Language and Literature in Honour of Fred C. Robinson*, ed. Peter S. Baker and Nicholas Howe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 159-72. Bredehoft notices that the type A verses containing a name and the past singular form of the verb *maþelian*, *maþelode*, seem to be excluded from the requirement of double alliteration. Otherwise, the useful verb *maþelian* would be restricted to appear in verses containing names with *m*; see Bredehoft, *Early English* Metre, 126n17.

[19] The name seems to have been altered because *Ūn-* was a rare name element in the late Old English period, when the *Beowulf* manuscript was composed; see *Klaeber IV*, 150.

[20] For a convincing argument making chronological sense of all the scribal errors in proper names in *Beowulf*, see Leonard Neidorf, "Scribal Errors of Proper Names in the *Beowulf* Manuscript," *Anglo-Saxon England* 42 (2013): 249-69.

§7. Language and Metre: Reduplicating Verbs in Gothic

As has been stated above, and as will be emphasized below, the five basic rhythmic patterns allowed by the Old English metrical system are a selection from the rhythmic patterns that naturally occur in the spoken language.[21] Consequently, the analysis of the linguistic aspects underlying the rhythm of the natural language is crucial for a correct understanding of the basics of Old English metre. But the relation between the native metrical system of the Anglo-Saxons and their language is not limited to the inventory of basic rhythmical types. It has long been noticed that some of the metrical rules seem to be transpositions of more basic linguistic rules.[22] For example, the rule of resolution, which equates a stressed long syllable to the sequence formed by a stressed short syllable and its immediate successor, can be conceptualized as the metrical reflex of High Vowel Deletion (HVD), the linguistic process whereby word-final -*i* and -*u* disappeared or were retained depending on the resulting total weight of the stem syllable of the word. Similarly, the metrical rule that governs alliterative equivalence seems to be the metrical reflex of the old Germanic rule of reduplication.[23]

As has been stated in the previous section, when a stressed syllable that participates in the alliterative pattern begins with two consonants, only the first of the two is required to alliterate. For example, in *Beowulf* 195, *Grendel* alliterates with *gōd*. The exceptions to this norm are the consonant clusters *sc-*, *st-*, and *sp-*, which behave as integral units in terms of alliteration. Thus, in *Beowulf* 496, *scīr* and *sang* do not alliterate. Also, when the stressed syllable that participates in the alliteration begins with a vowel, alliteration with the same vowel is not required and in fact it usually is avoided

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[21] See Bliss, *An Introduction to Old English Metre*, 6, §8.
[22] See Kuryłowicz, *Die sprachlichen Grundlagen der altgermanischen Metrik*; see also Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*.
[23] See Kuryłowicz, "The Linguistic Fundamentals of the Meter of *Beowulf*," in *Linguistic and Literary Studies in Honor of Archibald A. Hill, IV: Linguistics and Literature; Sociolinguistics and Applied Linguistics*, ed. Mohammad Ali Jazayery, Edgar C. Polomé, and Werner Winter (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 112-114; see also Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 64-5.

(see *Beowulf* 33, where the stressed syllables of *īsiġ*, *ūtfūs*, and *æþelinges* alliterate). This behaviour is parallel to that of stressed root syllables in reduplicating verbs in Gothic, the only Germanic dialect in which this linguistic feature remained fully operative.[24]

The distinction between strong and weak verbs in Germanic languages is well-known. Strong verbs form their past tenses by changing the root vowel according to the corresponding *Ablaut* or gradation series, while weak verbs add a dental suffix to their roots. Depending on the series of vowels, on the one hand, or on the specific dental suffix that is added to the root, on the other, we can distinguish between different subclasses of strong and weak verbs. In Gothic, however, the seventh class of strong verbs is exceptional in that it expresses tense distinctions by means of an entirely different process, called reduplication. Reduplicating verbs form their preterit tenses by adding to their roots a prefix formed by the first consonant of the root syllable plus a vowel spelled *aí*, which stands for a short open *e*-sound similar to Modern English /æ/.[25] For example, the strong verb *háitan*, "call, name," (cf. Old English *hātan*) has a third person singular preterit indicative form *haíháit*. As we can see, the prefix *haí*, consisting of the first consonant of the root syllable (*h*) plus the vowel *aí* has been added to *háit*, the base form (cf. Old English *hēt*). The following table shows the behaviour of other consonants and consonant clusters in Gothic reduplicating verbs (a hyphen has been introduced between the prefix and the base form for clarity's sake):

Infinitive	Meaning	3rd sg. pret. ind.
láikan	"leap"	laí-láik

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[24] For an authoritative grammar of the Gothic language, see Joseph Wright, *Grammar of the Gothic Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910). On reduplicating verbs, see pp. 146-9, §§311-14. For an abridged introduction to the Gothic language, see Orrin W. Robinson, *Old English and Its Closes Relatives* (London: Routledge, 1992), 54ff.

[25] See Wright, *Grammar*, 8, §10.

máitan	"cut"	maí-máit
blandan	"mix"	baí-bland
flōkan	"bewail"	faí-flōk
fráisan	"tempt"	fraí-fráis
grētan	"greet"	gaí-grōt
slēpan	"sleep"	saí-slēp
skáidan	"divide"	skaí-skáiþ
ga-staldan	"possess"	ga-staí-stald
af-aíkan	"deny"	af-aí-áik
áukan	"add"	aí-áuk

As we can appreciate, only the first consonant of the base form appears in the reduplicating prefix (*blandan* → *baí-bland*, not *blaí-bland; *slēpan* → *saí-slép*, not *slaí-slép; and so on). Nevertheless, the consonant clusters *sk-* (the Germanic equivalent of Old English *sc-*) and *st-* are treated as integral units as regards reduplication (*skáidan* → *skaí-skáiþ*, not *saí-skáiþ).

Also, verbs whose root syllables begin with a vowel form their preterit tenses by adding the vowel *aí*, regardless of the value of their initial root vowels (*áukan* → *aí-áuk*). This is exactly the way alliteration works in Old English (for example, *scente* alliterates with *scīr* and *scop*, not with *sang*; *īsiġ*, *ūtfūs*, and *æþelinges* alliterate between themselves). Thus, the metrical rule governing alliterative equivalences in Old English verse can be considered the transposition of the linguistic rule of reduplication into the metrical system. Although reduplication survived only in Gothic, the metrical system must have originated in Proto-Germanic, when reduplication was still fully operative,

since the rule of alliterative equivalences, patterned on reduplication, was inherited by all the early Germanic verse traditions.

§8. Alliteration and Syntax I: Asyndetic Parataxis and Adverb Clauses

No matter what syntactic relation exists between them, it is alliteration that combines two different verses into a single unit. This point can be illustrated with the short run-on passage from *Beowulf* in which Hrothgar's reaction to Grendel's first attack on Heorot is described, since it contains a variety of syntactic relations:
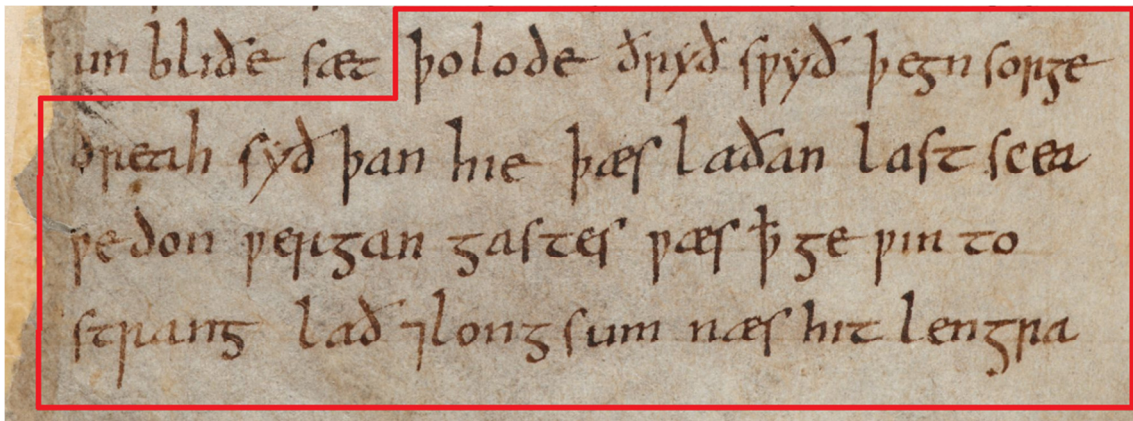
þolode ðrȳðswȳð,   þeġnsorge drēah,

syðþan hīe þæs lāðan   lāst scēawedon,

werġan gāstes;   wæs þæt ġewin tō strang,

lāð ond longsum. (ll. 131-134a)

[The powerful one suffered,endured sorrow for the thanes, after they saw the

footprint of the hated one, of the accursed creature; the strife was too strong,

despicable and long-lasting.]

In line 131, each verse is a clause in itself (*þolode ðrȳðswȳð*, *þeġnsorge drēah*),[26] and there is an asyndetic paratactic relation between them.[27] The next three verses (*syðþan*

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[26] For a fuller treatment of the relationship between verses and clauses, see "The Verse-clause," on pp. __ below.

[27] In asyndetic parataxis, no connection words appear between the involved clauses. When the connection words appear, we speak of syndetic parataxis. For a succinct introduction to the syntax of Old English

hīe þæs lāðan lāst scēawedon, werġan gāstes) constitute a subordinate adverb clause

that is dependent on the two immediately preceding paratactic clauses. Its syntactic

function is adverbial (adjunct of time), since it provides the time at which the powerful

one (Hrothgar) suffered and endured sorrow: "after they saw the footprint of the hated

one, of the accursed creature." The noun phrase *þæs lāðan lāst*, "the footprint of the

hated one," which functions as the direct object of the verb of the subordinate adverb

clause (the past verb form *scēawedon*) is distributed across verses 132a and 132b. That

a single phrase is split between two different verses, as in this example, is a rare feature

in Old English poetry, since the syntactic integrity of the verse is not usually disturbed.

Verses in Old English poetry are characterised by a relatively high degree of syntactic

discreteness, although exceptions exist, as in this instance.[28]

The following verse, *werġan gāstes*, is a genitive phrase that is in variation with

þæs lāðan and depend therefore on the same noun, *lāst*. Verses 133b-134 comprise a

new independent main clause (*wæs þæt ġewin tō strang, lāð ond longsum*). Regardless

of these the different syntactic relations, and regardless of the single noun phrase split

between verses 132a and 132b,[29] what holds each verse pair together is alliteration of

stressed syllables, which falls on *þ/ð* in line 131,[30] on *l* in 132, on *w* 133, and again on *l*

in 134. The following table summarizes (1) the syntactic progession of *Beowulf* 131-

134a; (2) the syntactic relation between verses in a line; and (3) the alliterative sounds

that link them into lines—together with the graphic representation of those sounds:

Verse Pair	Syntactic Relation	Alliterating Sound	Graphic

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poetry, see G.A. Lester, *The Language of Old and Middle English Poetry* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 67-87. For an exhaustive account of parataxis, see Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, vol. I: *Concord, the Parts of Speech, and the Sentence* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 693-767.
[28] See Pope-Fulk 2001, 131. Two other possible instances of a violation of the syntactic coherence of the verse are to be found at *Maldon* 33 and 151.
[29] See Pope-Fulk 2001: 131.
[30] Since the letter thorn and eth are word-initial in this line, they represent the voiceless dental sound /θ/.

			Representation
131a-131b	Asyndetic parataxis	/θ/	<þ>/<ð>
131b-132b	Hypotaxis	Ø	Ø
132a-132b	Phrase-internal caesura	/l/	<l>
132b-133a	Variation	Ø	Ø
133a-133b	Asyndetic parataxis	/w/	<w>
133b-134a	Variation	Ø	Ø

"Variation" indicates that the beginning of a new line does not mark the beginning of a new clause, but that an element of the same clause is paraphrased. For example, *werġan gāstes* (133a) is in variation with *þæs lāðan* (132a-132b); and *lāð ond longsum* (134a) is in variation with *tō strang* (133b). "Phrase-internal caesura" indicates that a phrase is split between two verses (132a-132b), which is somewhat infrequent;[31] and "Ø" is used

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[31] For some other instances of phrase-internal caesura, see, for example *Beowulf* 843, *þāra þe tīrlēases | trode scēawode*, "who looked at the inglorious' footprint," where the noun phrase that functions as the Direct Object of the verb *scēawode*, *tīrlēases trode*, which consists of a genitive singular strong adjective modifying the accusative singular form of the *ō*-stem *trodu*, is split between the two verses; see also *Beowulf* 901, *siððan Heremōdes | hild sweðrode*, "after Heremod's prowess in war diminished," where the noun phrase *Heremōdes hild*, which is the Subject of *sweðrode* is likewise split. In the case of *Beowulf* 875a-876a, the dative plural form of the feminine *i*-stem *ellendǣd* appears one line ahead of the genitive *Siġemundes* that modifies it. For a syntactic commentary of these verses, see below. Two more instances can be found in *Beowulf* 418, *forþan hīe mæġenes | cræft mīn[n]e cūþon* (because they knew my power of strength"), and 627, *þæt hēo æniġne | eorl ġelȳfde* ("that she counted on any warrior"). In both these lines, a noun phrase is split between the two verses. For more on the syntactic integrity of the verse, see Pope-Fulk 2001, 131, where it is stated that "it is unusual, for example, to find an attributive adjective at the close of one verse modifying a noun at the opening of the next." Mitchell comments on it insightfully: "It is an accepted commonplace that the language of OE poetry is made up of a selection of ordinary prose patterns. This can be expressed in different words by saying that there is in OE poetry a tendency for the smaller syntactical units to occupy a line or half-line and so to coincide with the metrical units." See Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, vol. II: *Subordination, Independent Elements, and Element Order* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 989-90, §3959. See also Russom, Beowulf *and Old Germanic Metre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 30; *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 15; and D. Minkova, *Alliteration and Sound Change in Early English*, Cambridge Studies in Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 40-41.

to indicate that no alliterative link exists between an off-verse and the following on-verse, since alliteration links verses into lines but does connect one line to another.[32]

§9. Alliteration and Syntax II: Syndetic Parataxis and Adjective Clauses

Although syndetically connected coordinate clauses and adjective clauses occur frequently in Old English verse, the abovementioned passage from *Beowulf* does not contain any instance of the two. They appear, however, in the following passage, in which the narrator recalls Beowulf's fight with Grendel immediately before the attack of Grendel's mother takes place (f. 161r):
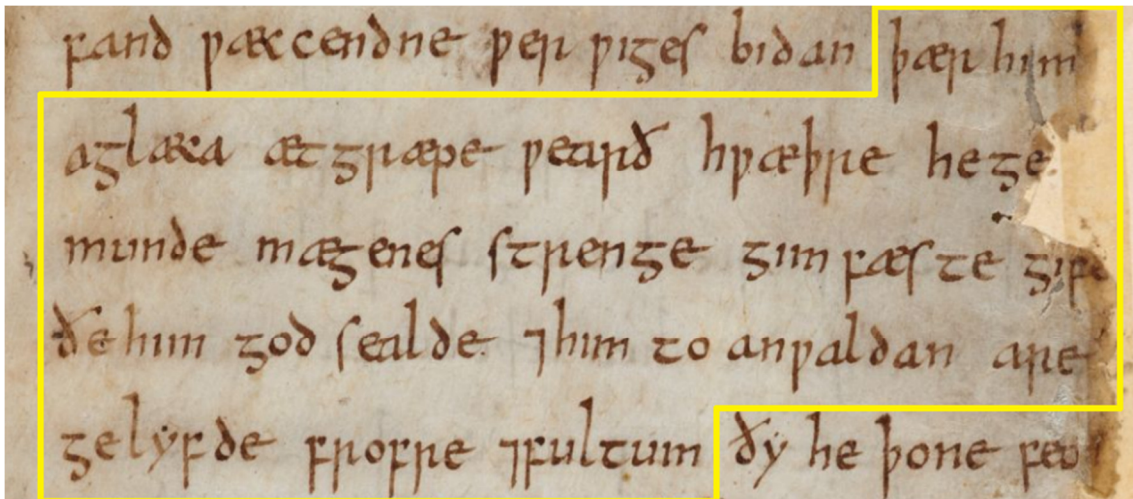
> Þǣr him āglǣċa   ætgrāpe wearð;
>
> hwæðre ġemunde   mæġenes strenġe,
>
> ġimfæste ġife   ðe him God sealde,
>
> ond him tō anwaldan   āre ġelyfde,
>
> frōfre ond fultum;" (ll. 1269-1273a)

---

[32] A rare alliterative pattern exists, however, which connects the off-verse of a line to the following on-verse. This pattern, which is known as "linked alliteration," is not structural, but an additional embellishment. See also Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 19.

[There the troublemaker grasped him with the hands; he thought, however, of the mighty strength, the liberal gift that God gave him, and he trusted benefit from the ruler, help and support;]

Him and *āglǣċa* ("troublemaker") in verse 1269a refer to Grendel and Beowulf respectively.[33] This *āglǣċa*—that is, Beowulf—is also the subject of the two following main clauses, whose verbs are *ġemunde* and *ġelyfde*. The direct object of *ġemunde* (the noun phrases *mæġenes strenġe*, *ġimfæste ġife*) is modified in turn by a *þe*-relative clause which occupies the off-verse of line 1271.[34] 1272a begins with a new main clause that stands in a syndetic paratactic relation to the previous one (the explicit coordinator is the copulative conjunction *ond*). Alliteration falls on vowels in 1269;[35] on *m* in 1270; on *ġ/g* in 1271; again on vowels in 1272; and on *f* in 1273 (notice *feo* in manuscript, which is the beginning of the word *fēonde*).

§10. Alliteration and Syntax III: Additional Examples

To clarify the notion that alliteration combines verses into alliterative long lines irrespective of their syntactic relation, I will quote two more extracts from *Beowulf*. In the first one, Wiglaf, Beowulf's young kinsman, is speaking about Beowulf's death:
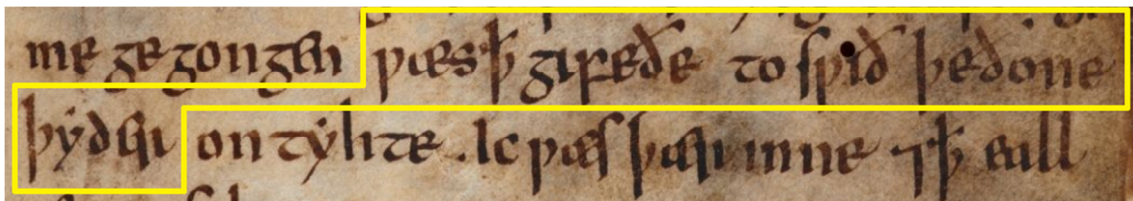
wæs þæt ġifeðe tō swīð

þē þone [þēodcyning]   þyder ontyhte. (ll. 3085b-3086)

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[33] For "troublemaker" as translation of *āglǣċa*, see Andy Orchard, "*Beowulf*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. M. Godden and M. Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 143-4.

[34] For a succinct summary of the main types of relative clauses in Old English, see Mitchell and Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, 70-93. For a comprehensive view, see Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, vol. II, 1-904.

[35] For vocalic alliteration, see above.

[the fate that had impelled the king of the people to that place was too harsh.]

In this instance, the *þe*-relative clause that modifies the noun phrase *þæt ġifeðe* (*þē þone þēodcyning þyder ontyhte*) exceeds the limits of a single verse and extends along a whole line, both of whose verses are linked by alliteration on the voiceless dental consonant *þ* (/θ/). (In fact, that the word that the manuscript is missing begins with *þ* is revelead by the alliterative pattern of the line). In l. 1271b (*ðe him God sealde*), discussed above, a relative clause occupying a single off-verse is linked by alliteration to its on-verse, which contains the syntactic consituent that is modified by the relative clause (the noun phrase *ġimfæste ġife*, which stands in variation to *mæġenes strenġe*, both of which are the direct object of the verb *ġemunde*). Thus, line 1271 is formed by a noun phrase that occupies the on-verse plus its modifying relative clause, which occupies the off-verse. In 3086, on the contrary, the two verses that constitute the line contain a single relative clause that modifies a syntactic constituent contained in the previous off-verse. Regardless of these different syntactic relations, it is alliteration that binds verses into lines.

In the following extract, in which Beowulf is speaking, we read (fol 178r):
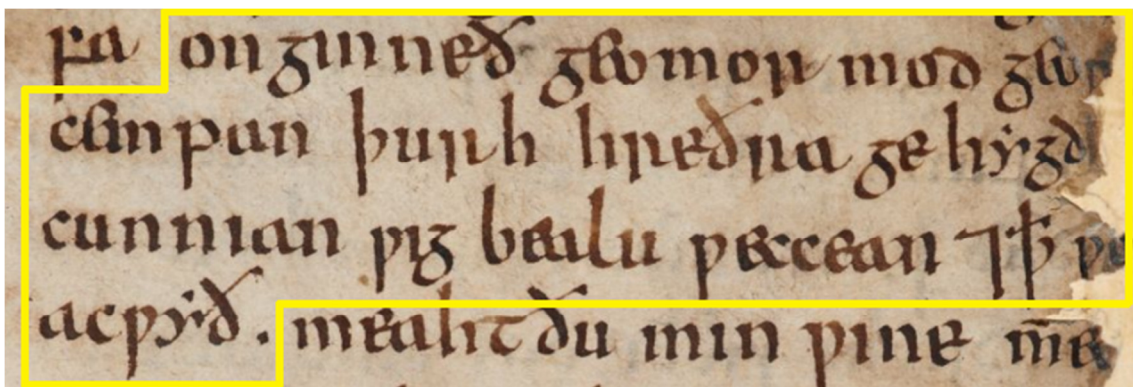
onġinneð ġeōmormōd   ġeong(um) cempan

þurh hreðra ġehyġd   hiġes cunnian,

wīġbealu weċċean,   ond þæt word ācwyð:[36] (ll. 2044-2046)

[the sad of mind begins to tempt the heart of a young warrior by means of the

thought of the breasts, to stir up war, and this word utters: (...)]

In verse 1272a above, an on-verse coincides with the beginning of a new paratactic

main clause (*ond him tō anwaldan*). As we can see in this extract, in 2046b, a new

paratactic main clause can likewise begin at an off-verse, which is in turn linked to its

on-verse by alliteration on *w*. All these examples should have made it clear that

alliteration combines two verses into long lines independently of the syntactic relation

that exists between them. Also, a single phrase does not usually occupy more than one

verse at a time. But exceptions occur, as in *Beowulf* 132, where the single noun phrase

þæs lāðan lāst occupies two different verses.

These examples also show other important features of alliteration in Old English

poetry. For one, alliteration is exclusively restricted to stressed syllables. In other

words, the syllables that participate in the alliterative pattern are only those that receive

the highest degree of stress in the word. For another, stressed syllables of semantically

important words take alliterative precedence over others systematically. For example,

Beowulf 1271, *ġimfæste ġife | ðe him God sealde*, shows alliteration between *ġ* and *g*,

which are the initial sounds of the nouns *ġimfæste*, *ġife*, and *God*; but *ðe* and *him*, both

of which are pronouns, are excluded from the alliterative pattern. The rule of alliterative

presence is dealt with in the following section.

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[36] In the adjective *ġeōmormōd*, the macron is placed over the letter *o* and not over the letter *e* because that *e* does not represent a genuine vocalic sound. Rather, it is a diacritic indicating that the consonant *g* is etymologically palatal even if the following vowel is back. Other instances of the letter *g* used as a diacritic indicating the palatality of the preceding consonant are *sēċean* (besides *sēċan*); *ġeþinġea* (besides *ġeþinġa*); *fisceas* (besides *fiscas*); *sceolon* (besides *sculon*); etc. In the case of *sceolon/sculon*, the letter *e* was used to indicate that the sequence *sc* is palatal despite the following back vowel *u*. It seems, however, that the graphic sequence *eu* was avoided by Anglo-Saxon scribes, and so *eo* was then used to substitute for *eu*. The same holds true for *ġeong*, where the letter *e* is a diacritic and where the *o* stands for *u*. See Lass, *Old English*, 79-80; see also Baker, *Introduction*, 18.

§11. Rules of Alliteration

As has been stated above, each Old English poetic line is constituted by two verses,

each of which usually contains two stressed syllables. Regardless of their syntactic

relation, the two verses are bound together by a rule-governed system of alliteration:

1. **Rule 1**: The first stressed syllable of the off-verse must alliterate with the first

    stressed syllable of the on-verse.

2. **Rule 2**: The second stressed syllable of the on-verse must not alliterate.

3. **Rule 3**: The second stressed syllable of the on-verse may alliterate.

Example:

>   mistiġe mōras;   men ne cunnon (*Beowulf* 162)

>   [misty moors; men did not know]

1. The first stressed syllable of the off-verse, *men*, alliterates with the first stressed

    syllable of the on-verse, *mist-*.

2. The second stressed syllable of the off-verse, *cun-*, does not alliterate.

3. The second stressed syllable of the on-verse, *mō-*, participates in the alliteration,

    but it may not, as in the following example:

>   lange þrāge;   hē him ðæs lean forġeald. (114)

>   [for a long time; He (God) for that repaid them (the giants)]

§.12 Metrical Compounding

The rationale behind these rules probably lies in the metrical structure of the line, which

consists of strong and weak elements distributed according to the following tree

diagram:
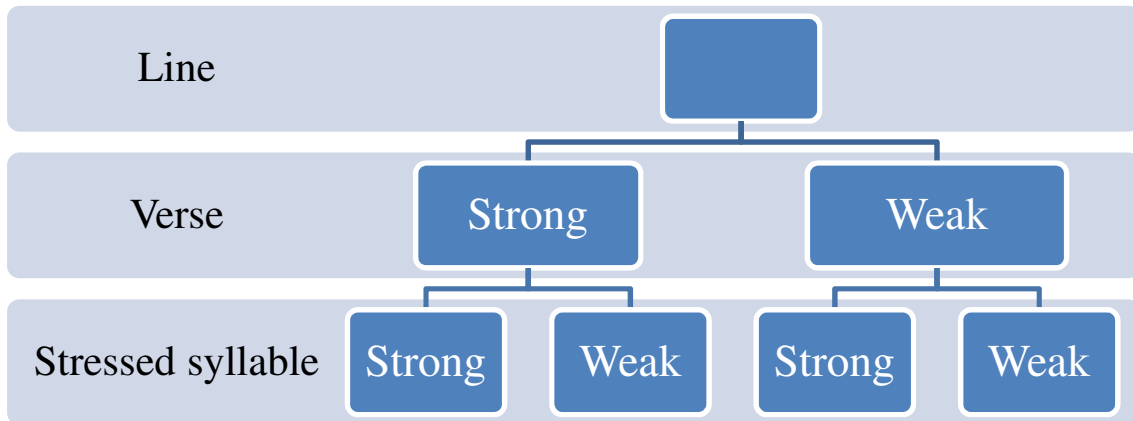
The verse on the left would thus be stronger than the verse on the right. At the same time, within each verse, the stressed syllable on the left would in turn be stronger than its counterpart on the right. Consider the following line from *Beowulf* and its subsequent tree analysis:

mistiġe mōras;   men ne cunnon (162)

[misty moors; men did not know]
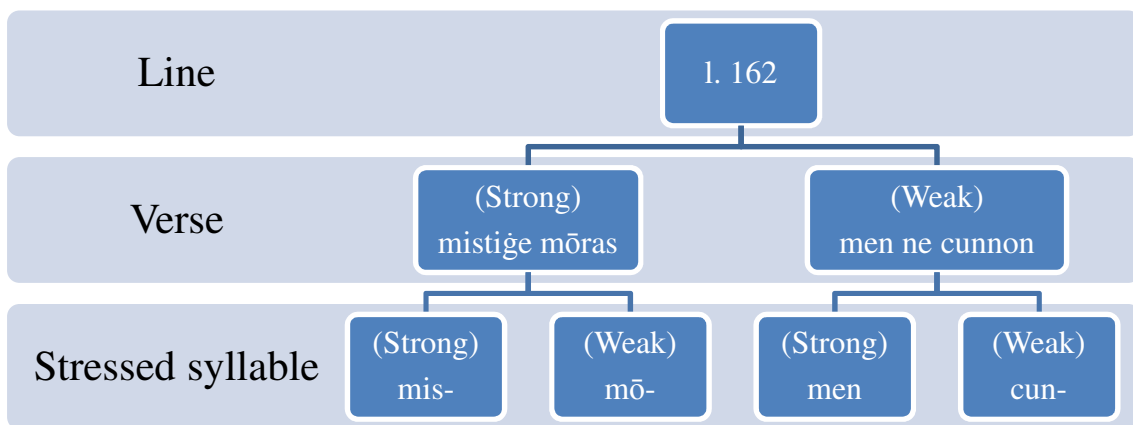
Rule 1 above prescribes that alliteration links the strong stressed syllable of each verse (*mis-* and *men*). The second stressed syllable of the on-verse (*mō-*), being weaker than the first, may participate in the alliteration, as is mandated by rule 2. The second stressed syllable of the off-verse is a weak constituent of a weak constituent. It is this doubly subordinated status that is behind the stricture against alliteration formulated in rule 3. As we can see, the alliteration of the line is determined by its metrical structure,[37]

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[37] See Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 21.

which is in turn predicated upon a process of metrical compounding, according to which rightward constituents are subordinated to their leftward counreparts.

The process of metrical compounding seems to be patterned on the analogous linguistic process of compounding, whereby a lexical element is subordinated to another in terms of stress in order to achieve a single compound. For example, the compound *middanġeard* receives two different degrees of stress according to the following scheme:
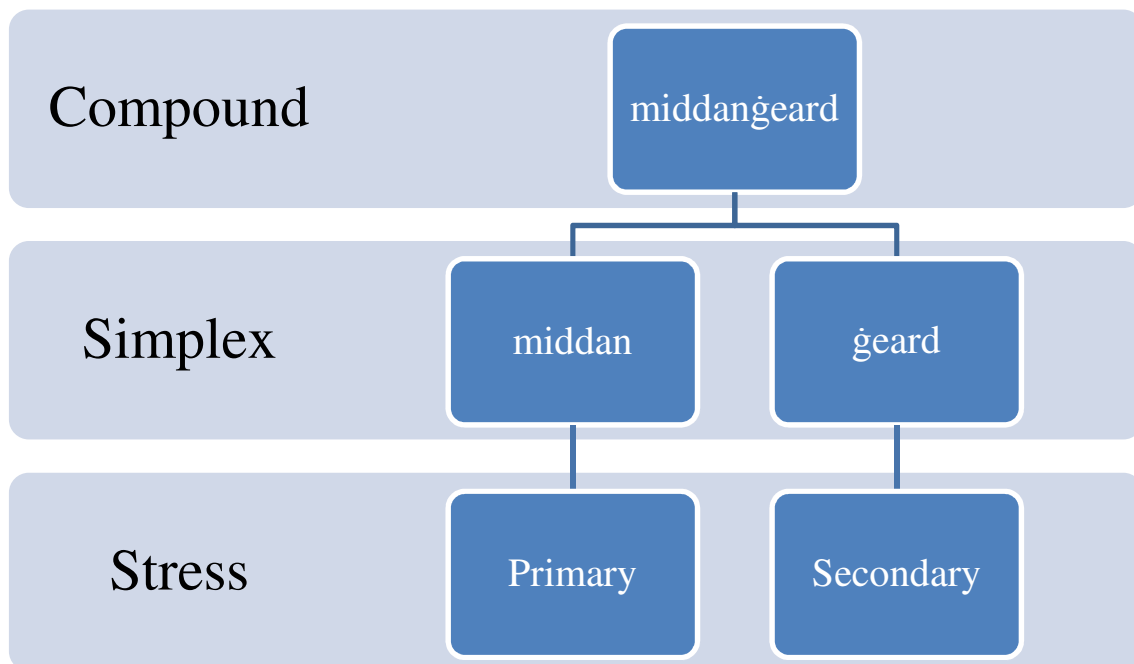
Just like the stress of the rightward element, *ġeard*, is subordinated to the stress of the leftward element, *middan*, in order to form a compound, the second stressed syllable of each verse would be subordinated to the first; and the second verse would be subordinated to the first. Thus, as has been stated above, metrical rules seem to be patterned on linguistic rules.[38]

§13. Alliterative Rule of Precedence

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[38] Russom, *Old English Metre*.

Above, it has been argued that leftward elements are more likely to alliterate. A different but complementary view of the alliterative pattern of the long line is furnished by the Alliterative Rule of Precedence, according to which lexically important words take alliterative precedence over lexically less prominent words regardless of their position in the verse. Consider, for example, the following line from *Beowulf*:

Ġewāt ðā neosian,   syðþan niht becōm (l. 115)

[He (Grendel) then departed, after the night came, seeking out (Heorot)]

Alliteration is on *n*. Thus, although *ġewāt* is at the left of *neosian*, it is *neosian* that alliterates, because infinitives are lexically more prominent than finite verbs.[39]

§14. Left Dominance

When the two words in a verse are of the same lexical prominence, the one at the left alliterates, as is mandated by the rules of alliteration. Consider the following example from *Beowulf*:

lange þrāge;   hē him ðæs lean forġeald. (114)

[for a long time; He (God) for that repaid them (the giants)]

Alliteration falls on *l* in 114a, where both the adjective *lange* and the noun *þrāge* are lexically relevant words. *Lange* takes alliterative precedence over *þrāge*, however, because *lange* is at the left of *þrāge*. Thus, when two semantically relevant words, like an adjective and a noun, are part of the same verse, as in 114a (*lange þrāge*), the one at the left takes alliterative preference over the one at the right (*lange* over *þrāge*). The following table summarizes (1) the Alliterative Rule of Preceden, and (2) Left Dominance:

Verse	Alliteration	Lexical Prominence	Alliterative Rule

---

[39] See Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 21.

ġewāt ðā neosian	/n/	*ġewāt < neosian*	Precedence
lange þrāge	/l/	*lange = þrāge*	Left Dominance

§15. Alternative Patterns of Alliteration

From what has been explained in the previous sections, it follows that there are three

basic patterns of alliteration in Old English verse, which can then be represented as

follows:

Pattern of Alliteration	Example
AA: AX	**m**istiġe **m**ōras: **m**en ne cunnon
AX: AY	**l**ange þrāge: hē him ðæs **l**ean forġeald
XA: AY	Ġewāt ðā **n**eosian: syðþan **n**iht becōm

"A" indicates an alliterating stressed syllable. "X" and "Y" indicate non-alliterating

stressed syllables. The colon represents the caesura between the two verses of a line.

The first pattern features double alliteration in the on-verse, which is a relatively

optional characteristic. The second pattern is found in verses like *Beowulf* 114a, *lange*

þrāge, where left dominance obtains. Another frequent pattern of alliteration is XA:

AY, which is found in verses like *Beowulf* 115a, *Ġewāt ðā neosian*, where a finite verb

precedes a semantically relevant word. Because of the alliterative rule of precedence

described in the previous section, the latter takes alliterative precedence over the former.

As can be seen, regardless of the alliterative pattern, the last stressed syllable of the

line—that is, the second stressed syllable of the off-verse—never alliterates.

Besides these three regular alliterative patterns, other ornate patterns can occur. These are crossed, transverse, and linked or enjambed alliteration,[40] and are sporadically used by the poets. Crossed alliteration (sometimes called "cross alliteration") features the pattern AB: AB, as in *Beowulf* 1475:
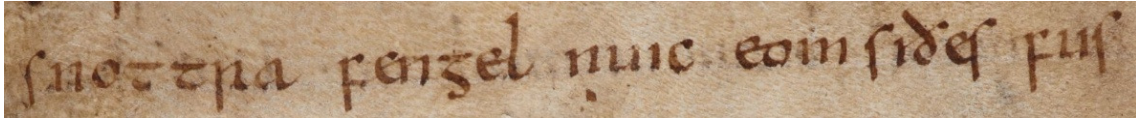
> snottrafenġel,   nū iċ eom s̲ī̲ðes f̲ūs

[prudent prince, now I am ready for the expedition]

As we can see, the first stressed syllables of each verse, *snot-* and *sī-*, alliterate with each other, as do also the second stressed syllables (*fen-* and monosyllabic *fūs*).[41] This pattern is very infrequent, and it may represent an accidental deviation from the norm.

The same can be said of transverse alliteration, which features the pattern AB: BA, as in *Beowulf* 2615:
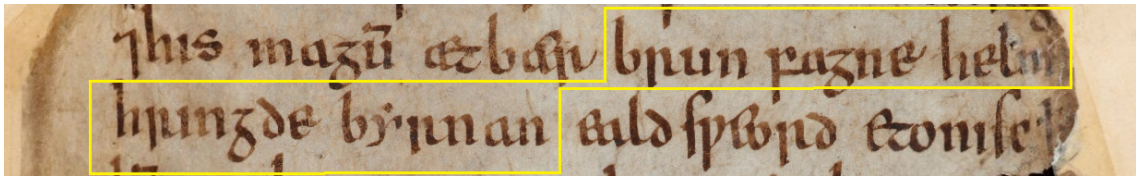
> b̲rūnf̲āgne h̲elm,   h̲ringde b̲yrnan

[shining helmet, ringed coat of mail]

The first stressed syllable of the on-verse (*brūn-*) alliterates with the second stressed syllable and off-verse (*byr-*), while the second stressed syllable of the on-verse (*helm*) alliterates with the first of the off-verse (*hring-*).

Finally, in linked or enjambed alliteration, each line features one of the three regular alliterative patterns, with the particularity that the last stressed syllable of each

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[40] The terms used to refer to these alternative patterns of alliteration vary among scholars. See Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 18n4.

[41] *Nū*, *iċ*, and *eom* (a monosyllabic adverb, a personal pronoun, and a finite verb, respectively) are excluded from the alliterative pattern because they are not as semantically relevant as the noun *sīdes* (see below).

line provides the alliterating sound of the following line. Terasawa provides an illustrative example from Cynewulf's poem *Elene* in his book.[42]

1.2. THE LINGUISTIC FOOTING OF OLD ENGLISH METRE

§16. General Remarks

The metrical patterns of Old English verse, which are analyzed in detail below, are a choice from some of the most usual stress patterns in natural discourse.[43] This means that the metrical system relies heavily on the linguistic features of Old English. Consequently, a proper understanding of the metre necessarily involves an understanding of the linguistic basis of the rhythm of the Old English language. The linguistic elements of Old English upon which its rhythm is predicated are (1) syllable quantity and (2) stress. Both of them play a structural role in the metrical system of Old English.

§17. Syllable Quantity

Syllabification in Old English is straightforward: a single consonant between vowels always belongs to the second syllable, not to the first. Hence, the nominative and accusative plural form of the neuter *a*-stem *scip*, *scipu* ("ships"), is syllabified *sci-pu*, not *scip-u*. Syllables can be either long (or heavy) or short (or light).[44] This distinction

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[42] See Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 19.
[43] See Bliss, *An Introduction to Old English Metre*, 6; Pope-Fulk 2001, 136.
[44] As Tom Cable indicates, the terms "long" and "short" are preferred in traditional philological circles. "Heavy" and "light" are in turn preferred in modern linguistics (see Cable, "Syllable Weight in Old English Meter," 11, n. 1). Roger Lass criticizes the traditional usage as confusing, and he consequently adopts the contrast "light-heavy" to distinguish syllabic quantity in his succinct introduction to the history of Old English; see Lass, *Old English*, 36.

is of utmost importance in Old English metre, since certain metrical positions can only be occupied by long syllables.[45]

As has been stated, in Old English vowel length is phonemic, which means that the long equivalent of any short vowel was a distinct phoneme. For example, Old English *mæġþ*, "woman, maiden," is a completely different word from *mǣġþ*, "nation, people." Similarly, *man*, "man," has a completely different meaning from *mān*, "crime," the latter term featuring the long equivalent of the vowel of the former. An Old English syllable is long if it ends in a long vowel or diphthong or in a short vowel or diphthong followed by a consonant.[46] Otherwise, the syllable is short. Thus, the monosyllabic word *scip* is a long syllable because it ends in a vowel closed by a consonant. Nevertheless, the two syllables that constitute its nominative-accusative plural form, *sci-* and *-pu*, are short, since both of them end in a short vowel.

As Lass has pointed out,[47] a syllable (S) can be thought of as a hierarchical structure consisting of two major elements: the onset (O), which is the material that precedes the syllabic element (for example, /ʃ/ in *scip* /ʃip/); and the rhyme (R), which is the syllabic element and all the immediately following material (/ip/ in *scip*). The rhyme of a syllable can be further subdivided into the nucleus (N) or syllabic element (/i/ in *scip*), and the coda (Co), which is all the material that follows the nucleus (/p/ in *scip*). The Old English monosyllabic word *scip* would present the following syllabic structure:

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[45] This is also true of the resolved equivalents of long syllables (see below).

[46] For a comprehensive introduction to Old English vowels and diphthongs, see A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 14-19; see also R.M. Hogg, *A Grammar of Old English. Volume 1. Phonology* (Chicester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 25.

[47] Lass, *Old English*, 36-37.
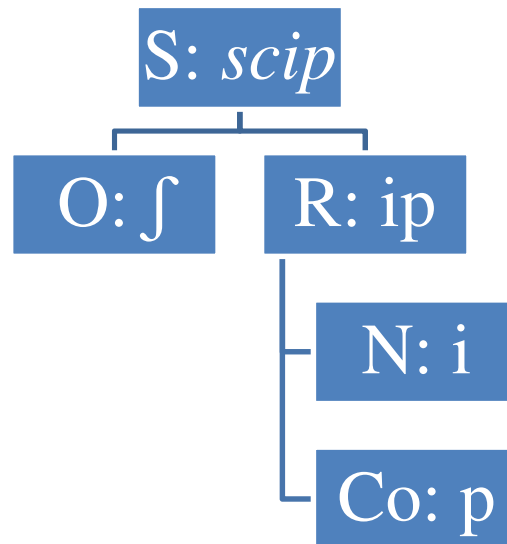
Pope-Fulk 2001 conceptualizes this distinction in terms of morae.[48] A mora is a unit of phonological length equivalent to the time that it takes to pronounce any single consonant (C) or a short vowel or diphthong (V). A syllable is short or light if its rhyme contains a single mora, and it is long if it contains two or more morae. Assuming (1) that C stands for a single consonant; (2) that V represents a short vowel or diphthong; and (3) that VV represents a long vowel or diphthong, the distinction between long and short syllables can be represented this way:

Short	Long
CV → **sci**(pu), (sci)**pu**	CVC → **scip**
	CVV → **lēo**(fa)[49]
	CVVC → **lār**

In the case of dissylabic *scipu*, both its syllables are short because their rhymes contain just one mora (V, in both cases). A cursory glance at their syllabic structures reveals that they are short:

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[48] See Pope-Fulk 2001, 136.
[49] This is the weak nominative singular masculine form of the adjective *lēof*.
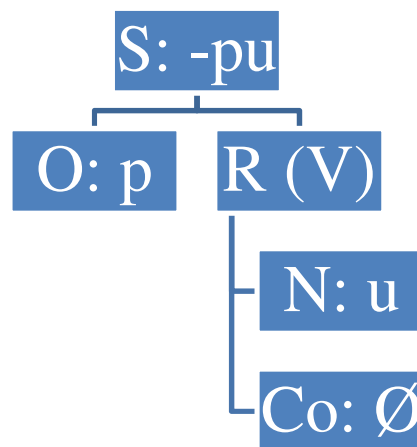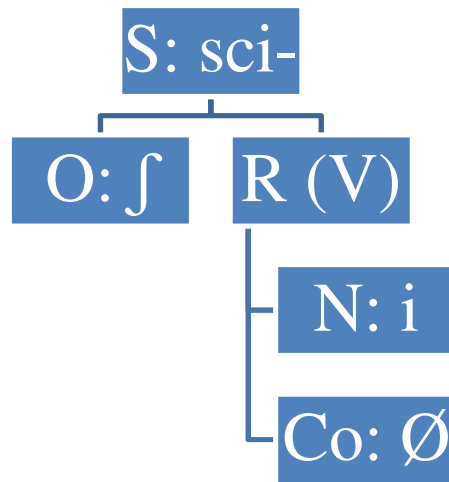
Syllables in the right column of the table above, on the contrary, present syllabic structures whose rhymes contain two or more morae, as the representation of their syllabic structures reveal:
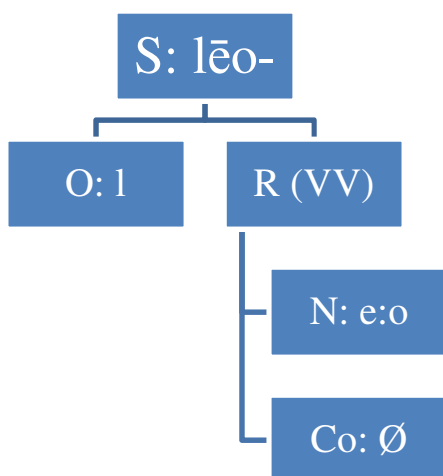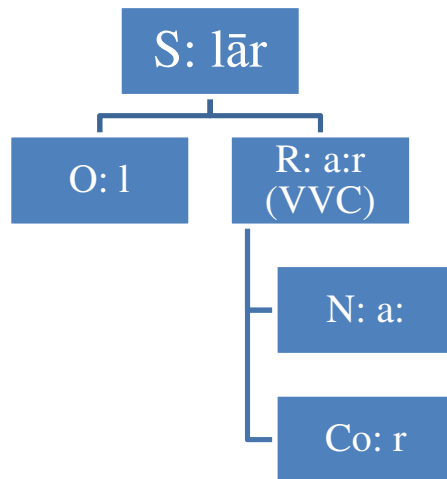
Syllables whose rhymes contain two morae are long. Syllables like *lār*, whose rhyme

contains three morae, as the diagrams above show, are considered "superlong" or

"superheavy" by some authors.[50] The distinction between short and long syllables is

crucial to the understanding of the workings of Old English metre, since certain metrical

positions can only be occupied by long syllables (see below).

§18. Stress

Two different types of stress must be distinguished: (1) sentence or phrasal stress and

(2) word or lexical stress. Sentence stress governs which words receive emphasis or

prominence within syntactic units, while lexical stress governs which syllables within a

certain word receive the greater amount of acoustic energy when uttered.[51] Both of them

play a crucial role in the process of Old English versification.

§19. Sentence Stress

In Old English, as in modern English, nouns, adjectives, non-finite forms of verbs, and

some adverbs receive more prominence than other words of different categories within a

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[50] See Lass, *Old English*, 36.
[51] See Pope-Fulk 2001, 137-140.

given sentence.[52] These are called stress-words (*Satzteile* in German, i.e., "sentence parts"), i.e., words that receive the greatest amount of stress in a sentence or clause. A different category of words is the one formed by proclitics or *Satzteilpartikeln* (i.e., "sentence-part particles"), grammatical words which do not carry a meaning of their own and which are semantically dependent on other words within the sentence. They include unstressed prefixes,[53] prepositions, conjunctions, and demonstrative and possessive adjectives when they are in attributive position (as in *þēos weorold*, for example). Proclitics are systematically unstressed unless they are displaced from their standard position in the sentence, immediately preceding the lexical element upon which they depend. In a middle layer between stress-words and proclitics are particles (*Satzpartikeln*, i.e. "sentence particles"), which unlike proclitics are semantically independent, but like them may or may not receive stress depending on their position within the sentence.[54] Particles comprise finite forms of verbs, monosyllabic adverbs, and personal and demonstrative pronouns.[55] Thus, the main difference between a proclitic and a particle is that the proclitic is subordinated to a "sentence part" or stress-word (for example, in the phrase *of londe* the preposition *of* depends on the dative singular of the neuter *a*-stem *lond*, a stress-word). A particle, on the contrary, is semantically independent (for instance, in the sentence *þā cōm hē gangan*, "then came he advancing," the adverb *þā*, the finite verb *cōm*, and the personal pronoun *hē*, all of which are particles, do not depend on the infinitive *gangan*).

Closely related to these three different categories of words according to their relative prominence is the notion of the verse-clause, a notion which is particularly

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[52] Usually, adverbs of more than one syllable receive full stress; see Pope-Fulk 137.

[53] The reasons why unstressed prefixes are treated as proclitic to the following words and not as part of them are set forth in Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 8-9.

[54] Whether a particle is stressed depends on Kuhn's first law (see below).

[55] See Pope-Fulk 2001, 137; see also Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 27-29.

relevant to the scansion of verses containing particles, and which is treated immediately

before the section on Kuhn's laws (see below).

§20. Lexical Stress

Word or lexical stress determines which syllables within a single word receive

prominence when uttered.[56] There are three different levels of lexical stress: primary,

half-stress, and no stress at all. Primary stress usually falls on the first syllable of all

stress words excluding verbs. The only exception is nouns and adjectives beginning

with the prefixes *ġe-* and *be-*, and sometimes also *for-*. Nouns beginning with these

unstressed prefixes will be stressed in their root syllable, which usually is the second

syllable in the word. For example, the masculine *n*-stem *ġefēa*, "joy, gladness," is

stressed in its root syllable (*ġeféa*), not in the first (*ġéfēa). (The prefix *ġe-* is always

unstressed in Old English).[57] Prepositions, conjunctions, and compound adverbs are

usually stressed on the second element. For instance, the adverb *onweġ*, "away, forth,

out, off," and the prepositional adverb *onġēan*, "towards, against; opposite, back," are

stressed in their second syllables: *onwéġ* and *onġéan*, respectively, not *ónweġ and

*ónġēan.[58] With regard to verbs, the stress falls systematically upon the root syllable,

even if it is not the first syllable in the word in question.

Since alliteration and stress are intimately associated in Old English metre, it is

possible to illustrate the differences in lexical stress between Old English nouns and

verbs with an example from verse. Compare the following couple of lines from

Beowulf:

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[56] See Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 30-5, §§71-92.
[57] See Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 31, §74.
[58] See Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 32, §§78-9.
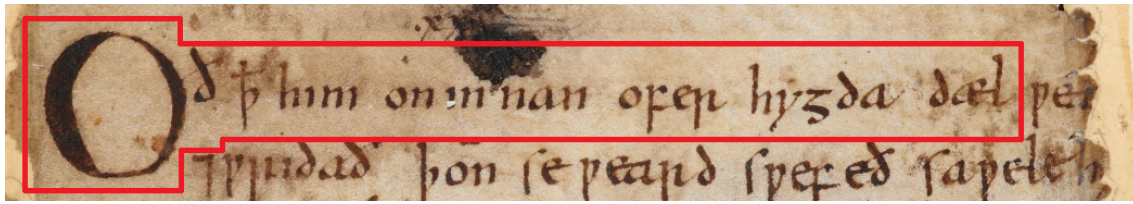
oð þæt him <u>on</u> <u>i</u>nnan   <u>o</u>ferhyġda dǽl (1740)

[until a measure of arrogance within him]
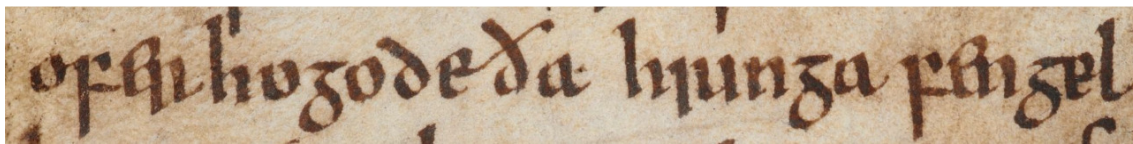
Ofer<u>h</u>ogode þā   <u>h</u>ringa fenġel (2345)

[the king of rings then despised]

Alliteration is a metrical phenomenon consisting of the repetition of certain stressed sounds in order to bind the two halves of a poetic line together (see above). Underlined letters in the edited text of the two examples above indicate alliterating sounds. Alliteration in *Beowulf* 1740, which is vocalic,[59] reveals that the feminine/neuter *i*-stem *oferhyġd* is stressed in its first syllable, *óferhyġd*, and not in its root syllable, **oferhýġd*. Otherwise, the alliterative pattern of this line would be defective, since it is obligatory that the first fully stressed syllable of the off-verse participates in the alliterative pattern of the line. In *Beowulf* 2345, alliteration on *h* indicates that it is the root syllable of the past singular form of the weak verb *oferhycgan*, *oferhogode*, that must be stressed, not the prefix *ofer-*. Thus, *oferhógode*, not **óferhogode*. Otherwise, the line would not alliterate.[60]

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[59] Since the preposition on, which is a proclitic, is displaced from its standard position immediately preceding the semantically relevant word upon which it depends, it receives sentence stress and can participate then in the alliterative pattern. This is explained below.
[60] According to Kuhn's first law, the finite verbal form *oferhogode*, which is clause-initial, should not be stressed (see below). This instance, however, must be considered exceptional, since if it were not stressed,

There are two types of half-stress: secondary and tertiary. Secondary stress is the stress received by the second element of a compound. Thus, in *mǣl-cearu*, "sorrow of the time," or *seld-guma*, "retainer," *mǣl* and *seld* receive primary stress and *-cea-* and *-gu-* receive secondary stress. Tertiary stress is the stress carried by the long middle syllable of words of three or more syllables when they are not compounds.[61] For example, the word *aldorlēase*, "without a lord," is the strong nominative plural form of the adjective *aldorlēas*, and it appears in *Beowulf* 15b. It is formed by the masculine *a*-stem *aldor* and the privative suffix *-lēas*, "less." *Aldorlēase* receives primary stress on *al-*, which is the first syllable of a stress word, and tertiary stress on *-lēa-*, because it is the long middle syllable of a four-syllable word which is not a true compound. According to the same rule, *aldorlēas* would not receive tertiary stress on *-lēas* because it is not the medial syllable of the uninflected form of the adjective. Any syllable which lacks either primary or half-stress, like *lēas* in *aldorlēas*, is unstressed.

§21. The Interplay between Sentence and Lexical Stress

Below follow a few examples of sentence and lexical stress assignment in Old English verse:

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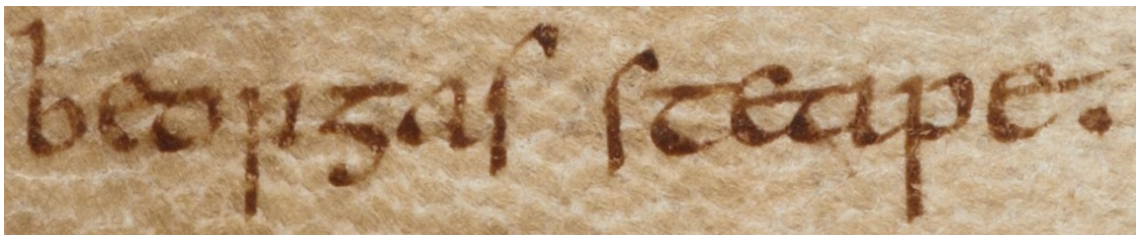
the line would lack alliteration. For a discussion of the exceptional metrical treatment of this kind of verbs, see Bliss, *The Metre of* Beowulf, 14-7, §§19-21, where they are classified as part of group (5). See also Kendall's transformational rule, which states that in a clause-initial segment which lacks stress-words (as in *oferhogode þā*), sentence particles acquire metrical stress from right to left in accordance with the stress and phrase rules of Old English until the first valid metrical contour emerges (*The Metrical Grammar of Beowulf*, 96).

[61] See Pope-Fulk, 139-40. Notice that although "tertiary stress" is here retained as a useful concept, the application of Fulk's law demonstrates that ictus at the tertiary level is exclusively predicated on syllable quantity (*HOEM*: §268).

beorgas stēape (*Beowulf* 222b)

[towering cliffs]

Stress level	S	x	S	x
Syllable	beor-	-gas	stēa-	-pe

This verse consists of two semantically relevant words: the disyllabic accusative plural form of the masculine *a*-stem *beorh*, *beorgas* (the subject is *līþende*, "adventurers," and the verb is *ġesāwon*, "saw"); and the corresponding strong form of the adjective *stēap*, *stēape*. Both words receive phrasal stress because they are stress-words. And because we are dealing with a noun and an adjective, both words receive lexical stress on their first syllables.

Lexical stress assignment is different if the adjectives or nouns begin with the prefix *ġe*-, as in the following examples:
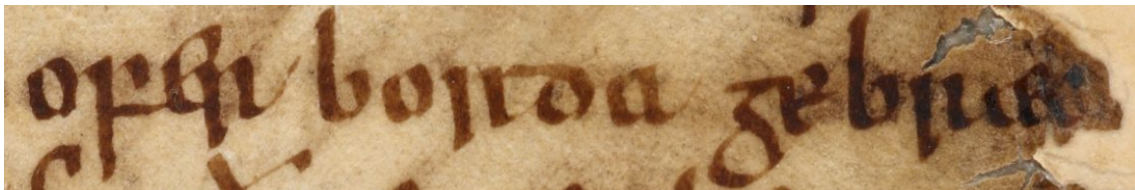
ofer borda ġebræc (*Beowulf* 2259a)

[across the crashing of shields]

Stress level	x	x	S	x	x	S
Syllable	o-	-fer	bor-	-da	ġe-	-bræc

The preposition *ofer*, "over, across," as a proclitic, does not receive any degree of phrasal stress. The two stress-words of the verse, the neuter *a*-stems *borda* (genitive plural) and *ġebræc* (accusative singular, governed by *ofer*) receive phrasal stress. Lexical stress is assigned according to the rule stated above: nouns receive stress on

their first syllables (*bórda*), unless they begin with certain prefixes, such as *ġe-*

(*ġebrǽc*). Likewise, if an adjective begins with the prefix *ġe-*, its root syllable receives

prominence, as in:
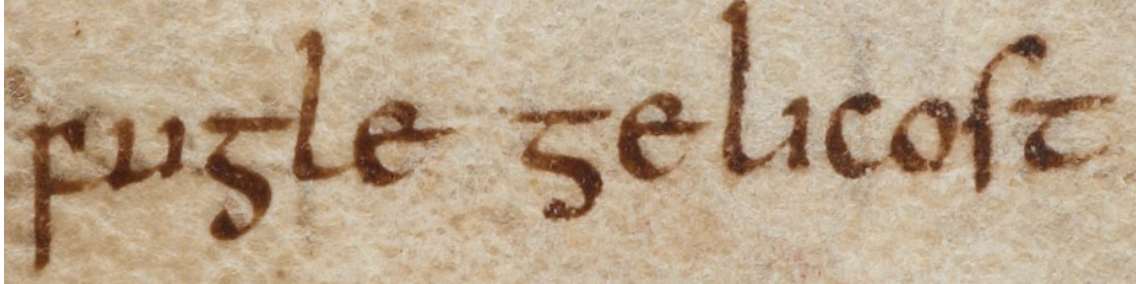
fugle ġelīcost (*Beowulf* 218b)

[most like a bird]

Stress level	S	x	x	S	x
Syllable	fug-	-le	ġe-	-lī-	-cost

As we can see, only the root syllable of the superlative *ġelīcost*, *-lī-*, receives full stress,

even if it is not the first syllable of the word. So far, we have analyzed a verse

containing stress-words exclusively and two verses containing both stress-words and

proclitics. We will consider now a verse containing particles.
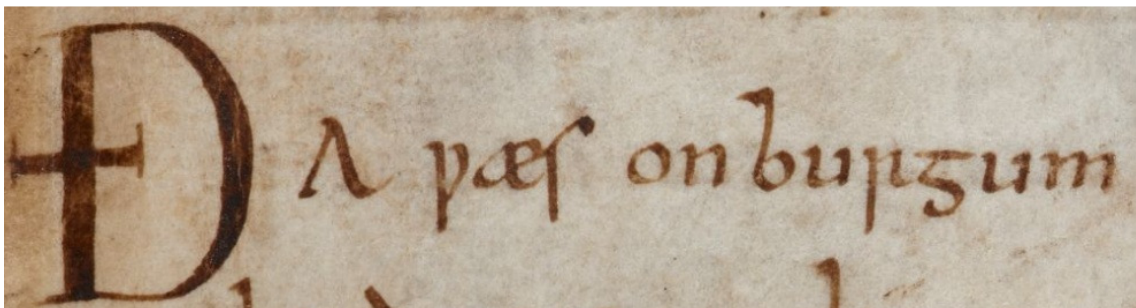
Ðā wæs on burgum (*Beowulf* 53a)

[Then was (Beow) in the stronghold]

Stress level	x	x	x	S	x
Syllable	Ðā	wæs	on	bur-	-gum

The symbols 'x' and 'S' indicate lack of stress and full stress respectively. This verse consists of four words, of which only the noun, *burgum*, receives sentence stress. The other three are two particles and a proclitic that have not been displaced form their prescribed position, and so they do not receive stress: the particle *ðā*, "then," a monosyllabic adverb; the particle *wæs*, "was," a finite verb; and the proclitic *on*, "in," a preposition that depends on the following noun. With regard to lexical stress, it is the first syllable of *burgum*, *bur-*, that receives prominence because nouns are stressed in their first syllables.

Let us now consider one verse featuring half-stress:
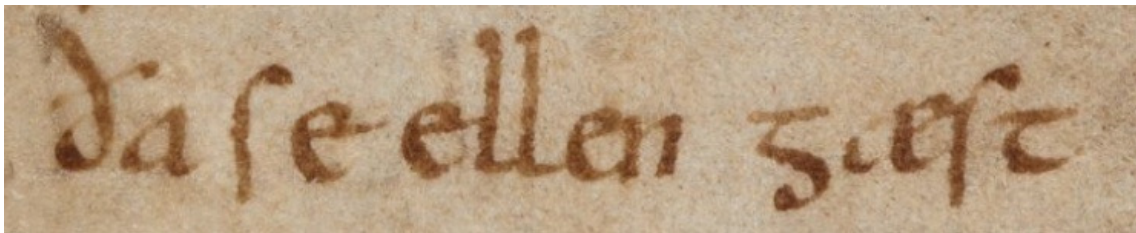
Đā se ellengǣst (*Beowulf* 86a)

[Then the mighty creature]

Stress level	x	x	S	x	s
Syllable	Đā	se	el-	-len	gǣst

As in the previous example, *þā*, "then," is a monosyllabic adverb, and so it does not receive phrasal stress. *Se* is a definite article that depends on the following stress-word, and consequently it is not stressed. *Ellengǣst* is the only semantically relevant word of the verse, and hence it is the only one that receives stress. Since it is a compound, it receives primary stress on the first syllable of its first element, the disyllabic noun *ellen*, "courage, valour," and secondary stress (represented by lowercase *s*) on its second element, the monosyllabic noun *gǣst*, "creature."

1.3. ANALYSING OLD ENGLISH METRE

§22. The Four-Position Principle

In Old English poetry, the most frequently attested verse type is the four-syllable pattern SxSx, as in *Beowulf* 34b, *lēofne þēoden*, "dear prince." Verses with a larger numer of syllables, however, are not uncommon. Sieversian metrics reconciles the preponderance of four-syllable verses with the occurrence of verses with a larger number of syllables by arranging all the syllables in the verse, regardless of their number, into exactly four sequences, no less and no more. These sequences of syllables have traditionally been known as "positions" (German *Glieder*). A metrical position is ideally realized by one syllable, depending on whose degree of stress three different kinds of positions are distinguished: the lift (S), which accommodates a long syllable with primary stress; the half-lift (s), occupied by a long syllable with secondary or sometimes tertiary stress; and the drop, which is ideally occupied by an unstressed syllable, regardless of its quantitity. The verse *lēofne þēoden* can then be metrically analyzed as follows:

Linguistic Material	lēof-	-ne	þēo-	-den
Degree of Stress	Primary	No stress	Primary	No stress
Syllabic Quantity	Long	Irrelevant	Long	Irrelevant
Metrical Position	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop

Since the quantity of unstressed syllables is not pertinent to the working of Old English metre, it is marked as "irrelevant" (see, however, section on Kaluza's law below). Thus, this verse is an ideal four-syllable realization of the basic four-position metrical pattern.

§23. Resolution

As has been stated in the previous section, a metrical position is ideally realized by a single syllable. Nevertheless, it is possible for metrical positions to accommodate a larger numer of syllables under restricted circumstances. For example, a lift may accommodate a stressed syllable plus its unstressed successor as long as the stressed syllable is short. This process of phonological equation whereby a short stressed syllable and its unstressed successor are made equivalent to a long stressed syllable is known as resolution (German *Auflösung*). This process has been said to derive from the Old English language in a natural and straightforward manner. Since in Old English there are no stressed monosyllables ending in short vowels or diphthongs, a stressed syllable ending in a short vowel or diphthong in a polysyllabic word is perceived as phonologically abnormal. Resolution clears away the abnormal situation by somehow lengthening the short stressed vowel. (This is clearly explained in Pope-Fulk 2001, but notice that the word "long" confusingly occupies the place where "short" should be expected).[62]

In *Beowulf* 101a, *fyrene fremman*, "wicked deeds perform," we have a five-syllable realization of an underlying four-position pattern, with resolution of its first lift. Below follows the metrical analysis:

Linguistic Material	fy-	-re-	-ne	frem-	-man
Degree of Stress	Primary	No stress	No stress	Primary	No stress
Syllabic Quantity	Short	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Long	Irrelevant
Metrical Position	Lift		Drop	Lift	Drop

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[62] See p. 148. This must be an error, since there exist stressed monosyllables ending in long vowels or diphthongs in Old English, such as the masculine and feminine *n*-stems *rā*, "roe," *frēa*, "lord," *wēa*, "woe," *dā*, "doe," *tā*, "toe," *bēo*, "bee" (see Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 251, §619). Cf. Bliss, *An Introduction to Old English Metre*, 9, §12: "in OE there are no short final stressed vowels". See also Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 11-2: "Although short stressed monosyllables occur in some languages (...) this situation does not arise in Old English"; and Bredehoft, *Early English Metre*, 124n5: "in Old English, no word ends with a short stressed vowel."

As we can see, although this verse consists of five syllables, its number of metrical positions remains four. The reason is that the first lift is able to accommodate a syllable with primary stress (*fy-*) and the succeeding unstressed syllable (*-re-*) because the syllable with primary stress is short.

§24. Protracted Drop

It is also possible for a non-verse-final drop to accommodate several unstressed syllables as long as they are all adjacent to each other. Thus, although *Beowulf* 292b, *wǣpen ond ġewǣdu*, "weapons and equipment," consists of six syllables, its underlying metrical structure is the basic four-position pattern:

Linguistic Material	wǣ-	-pen	ond	ġe-	-wǣ-	-du
Degree of Stress	Primary	No stress	No stress	No stress	Primary	No stress
Syllabic Quantity	Long	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Long	Irrelevant
Metrical Position	Lift		Drop		Lift	Drop

In this instance, the first drop, which is non-verse-final, accommodates three adjacent unstressed syllables. Regardless of its six syllables, this verse features the same four-position metrical structure as *fyrene fremman* and *lēofne þēoden*.

§25. The Foot

Metrical positions, realized by syllables, are organized into feet. The foot is a metrical unit bigger than the position and smaller than the verse.[63] Some scholars dispense with

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[63] See Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 132.

the notion of the foot.[64] Their role, however, is crucial for accounting for the internal

structure of hypermetric verses, which cannot be persuasively explained in terms of

Sievers's metrical stress patterns exclusively. Since, as Pope has stated, "no metrical

theory, whether of *Beowulf* in particular or of Germanic poetry in general, can rest

unchallenged if it fails to offer some reasonable interpretation" of hypermetrics,[65] the

notion of the foot is retained here as a theoretical convenience.

Also, in Russom's word-foot theory, the normative verse type is made of two

feet with a stress pattern corresponding to that of two trochaic words, Sx/Sx, as in *lēofne*

þēoden.[66] In this verse, foot boundaries correspond perfectly to word boundaries.

Bracketing mismatches, however, are relatively frequent, as in *Beowulf* 81a, *sinċ æt*

symle, "treasure at the feast," which also scans Sx/Sx. In this other verse, the

preposition *æt* is proclitic to the second stress-word and yet it belongs metrically in the

first foot, not the second (cf. *wǣpen ond ġewǣdu*, where the prefix *ġe-* is proclitic to the

second lift, *-wǣ-*, and yet it belongs in the first drop). According to Russom, verses like

sinċ æt symle are patterned on verses like *lēofne þēoden*.[67] This bracketing mismatch, in

which a word that is syntactically attached to an element is metrically related to a

different constituent, seems to add to the scannable complexity of the verse, which is

compensated by the quasi-obligatory requirement for double alliteration. As Bredehoft

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[64] See, for example, B.R. Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995) and S. Suzuki, *The Metrical Organization of* Beowulf*: Prototype and Isomorphism* (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996). Cable's theory, first presented in *The Meter and Melody of* Beowulf and refined in his *The English Alliterative Tradition*, also dispenses with the concept of the foot. Notice Bredehoft's misleading remark that in "virtually all of the major metrical theories," verses are conceived of as a combination of two feet (see *Early English Metre*, 22-3).

[65] See Pope, *The Rhythm of* Beowulf, 99.

[66] See Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 2-3; see also Beowulf *and Old Germanic Metre*, 6.

[67] See Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 15-19; see also Beowulf *and Old Germanic Metre*, 21-3.

points out, 90 per cent of the verses that feature a mismatch of this kind show double alliteration, as opposed to 25 per cent of the verses without the bracketing mismatch.[68]

In his account of metrical subordination within the foot, Russom points out that heavy verses like *Beowulf* 1278b, *sunu dēoð wrecan*, which contain three fully stressed words, feature single alliteration because the first two words (*sunu* and *dēoð*) fall in the first foot.[69] In complementary fashion, if two of the three words fall in the second foot, as in *Beowulf* 3105a, *bēagas ond brād gold*,[70] then double alliteration is compulsory—which means that such verses can only appear in the first half of the long line.[71] The fact that the notion of the foot allows us to detect regularities such as this is an indication of their metrical significance.[72] Accordingly, the notion of the foot is retained in this introductory account of classical Old English poetic metre.[73]

§26. The Verse

Each verse is made of two feet. A foot in turn usually contains two metrical positions—realized by syllables—although it can contain a minimum of one and a maximum of three. The hierarchical structure of the standard Old English verse can then be schematized as follows:

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[68] See Bredehoft, *Early English Metre*, 25 and 134n32; see also Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 83-4.

[69] "[Her] son's death avenge." The word s*unu* is the genitive singular form of the isomorphic *u*-stem *sunu*. Since it belongs in the noun phrase whose head is the masculine *a*-stem *dēoð*, and since foot boundaries must coincide with major constituent breaks (Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 16), *sunu* and *dēoð* constitute the first foot of this verse. The spelling *-u* instead of expected *-a* in the genitive singular of a masculine *u*-stem is a late development. See *Klaeber IV*, cxl, §19.2; Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 156-7, §377; and Hogg, *Phonology*, 241, §6.60.

[70] "rings and broad gold." The adjective *brād* and the neuter *a*-stem *gold* constitute a syntactic unit and hence they belong in the same metrical foot.

[71] See Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 84-5.

[72] On what constitutes a metrically significant difference, see Bliss, *The Meter of* Beowulf, 4, §§6-7.

[73] For more on the importance of the foot in Old English Metre, see my summary of Geoffrey Russom's word-foot theory, on p. __ below.
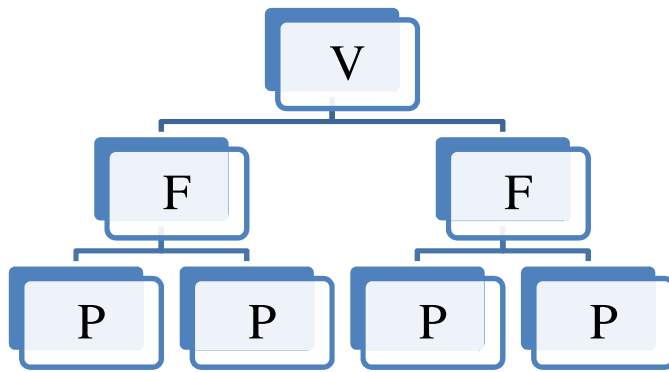
Where 'V' indicates verse, 'F' indicates foot, and 'P' stands for metrical position. A verse is metrical as long as it contains four metrical positions.

§27. The Line

Given that the line is the result of binding together two verses, the hierarchichal structure of the standard Old English alliterative long line can be represented this way:
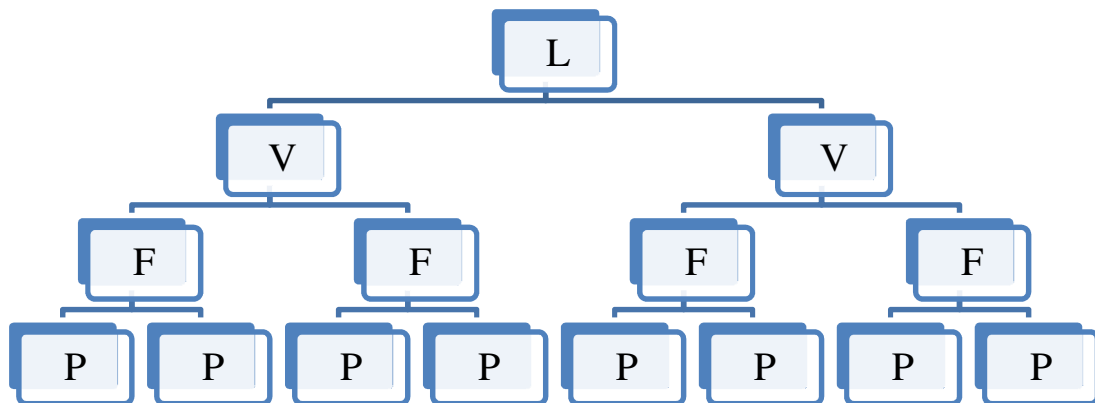
Thus, a regular Old English long line will contain eight metrical positions, organized into four feet, which will in turn combine into two verses, linked by alliteration.

§28. The Five Rhythmical Types

Each Old English verse must contain four metrical positions. Depending on the type of metrical positions of which the verse consists, and depending on the configuration of its positions, five different types of verses are distinguisged. These are known as the five rhythmical types. The table below displays them in descending order of frequency. (The symbol '|' marks foot divisions):

RhythmicType	Metrical Configuration
A	lift, dip | lift, dip
	S x | S x
B	dip, lift | dip, lift
	x S | x S
C	dip, lift | lift, dip
	x S | S x
D	lift | lift, half-lift, dip
	S | S s x
E	lift, half-lift, dip | lift
	S s x | S

In the following pages, the hierarchical structure of each rhythmic type is shown, along with a paradigmatic example from *Beowulf*.

TYPE A: FALLING-FALLING

Metrical configuration:
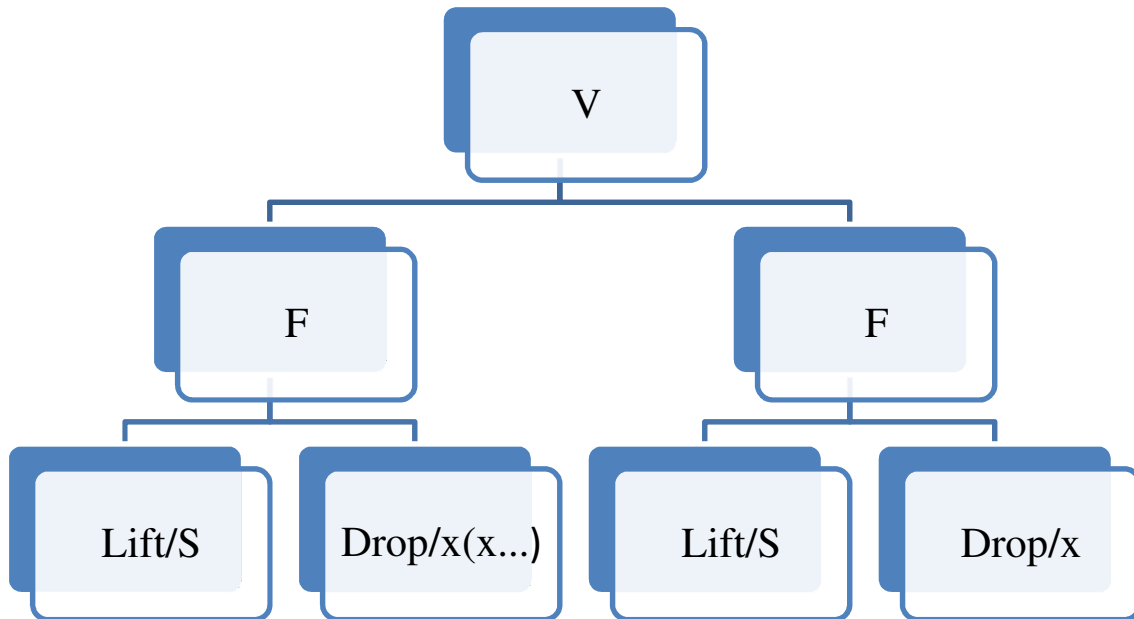
'S' designates a stressed heavy syllable or its resolved equivalent, 'x' designates any unstressed syllable, and '(x...)' indicates the possibility to expand the drop of the first foot by inserting more unstressed syllables. The drop of the second foot, being verse-final, does not admit any additional unstressed syllabe.

Ideal realization:
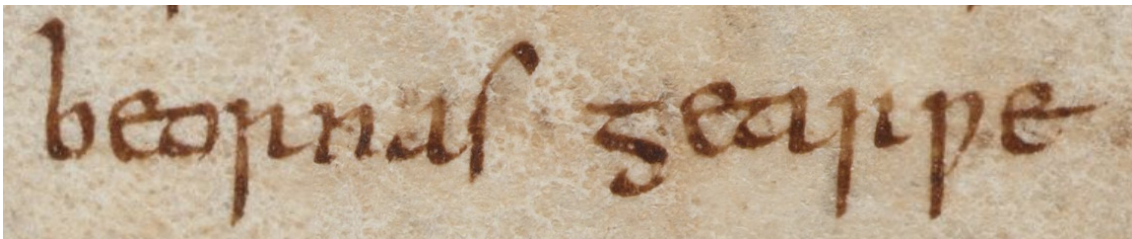
       Beornas ġearwe (211b)

   [equipped warriors]

TYPE B: RISING-RISING

Metrical configuration:
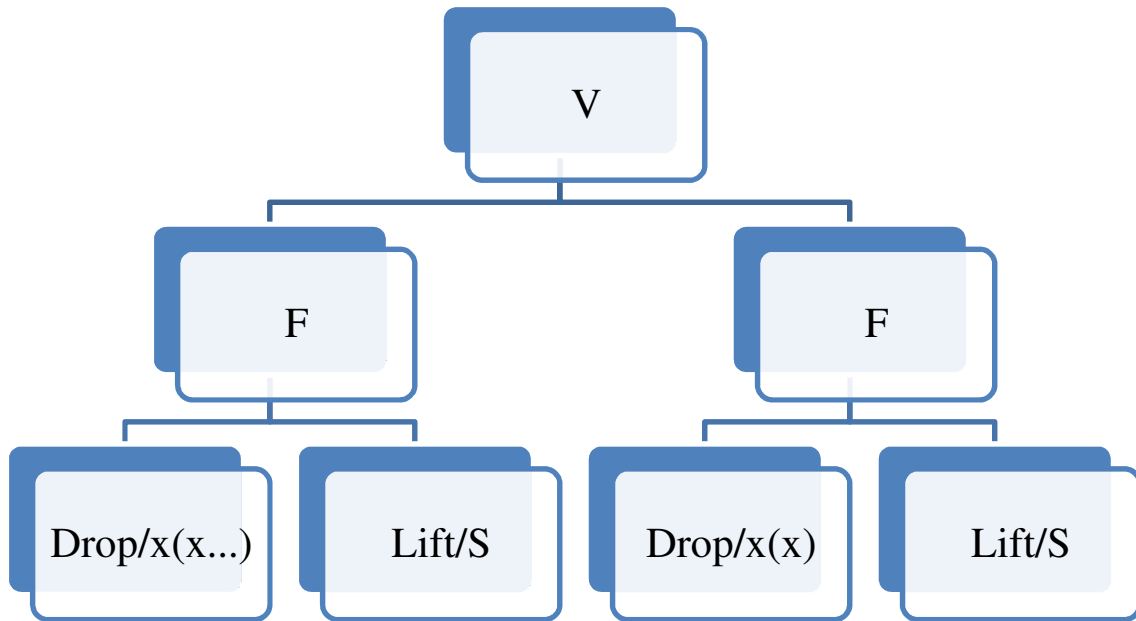
As can be seen, both drops are expandable, since none of them is verse-final. The drop

of the first foot, however, admits a larger number of additional syllables than the drop of

the second, which admits a maximum of two.

Ideal realization:
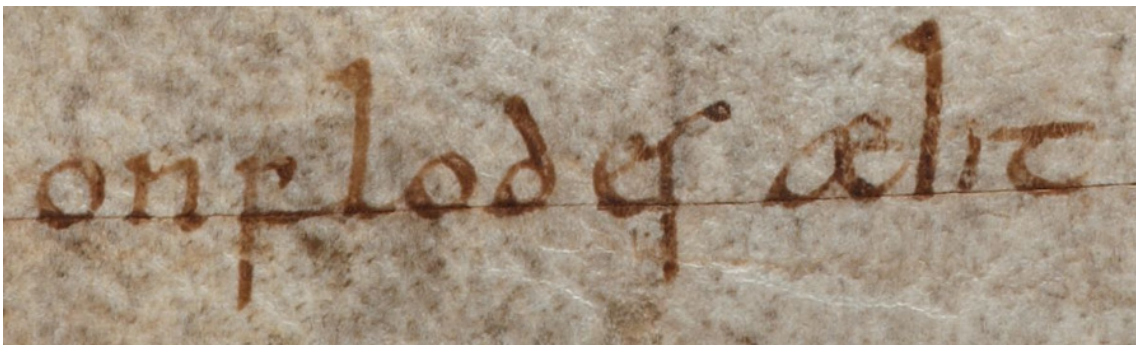
on flōdes ǣht (42a)

[into the sea's power]

TYPE C: RISING-FALLING

Metrical Configuration:
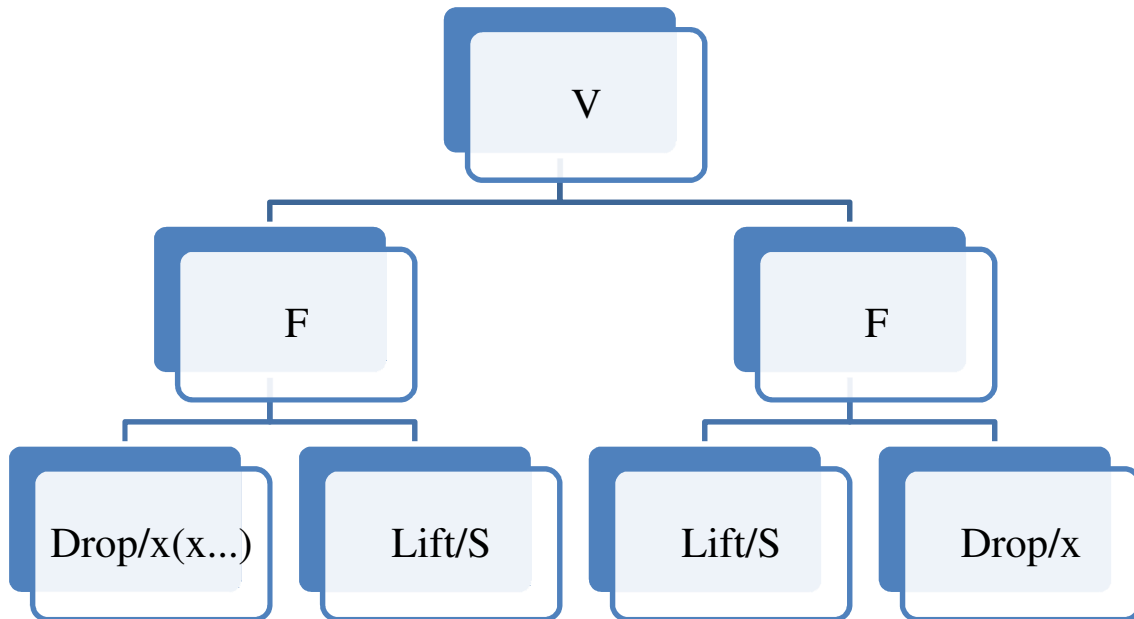
The first drop admits a larger number of syllables. Since the second drop is verse-final,

it is strictly forbidded to expand it by adding more unstressed syllables.

Ideal realization:
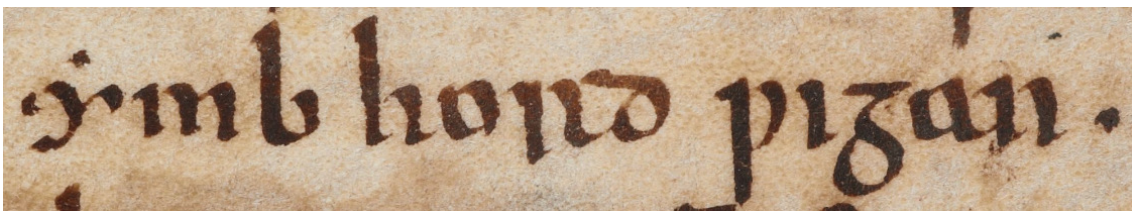
ymb hord wīgan (2509b)

[(will not) battle about the treasure]

So far we have dealt with verse types consisting of feet of equal weight. The two

remaining verses feature feet containing an unequal number of metrical positions.

TYPE D: LIFT+CASCADING UP-DOWN

Metrical configuration:

```
                              ┌─────────┐
                              │    V    │
                              └─────────┘
                    ┌──────────────┴──────────────┐
              ┌─────────┐                    ┌─────────┐
              │    F    │                    │    F    │
              └─────────┘                    └─────────┘
                   │              ┌───────────────┼───────────────┐
           ┌─────────┐      ┌─────────┐    ┌──────────┐     ┌─────────┐
           │ Lift/S  │      │ Lift/S  │    │  Half-   │     │ Drop/x  │
           │         │      │         │    │  lift/s  │     │         │
           └─────────┘      └─────────┘    └──────────┘     └─────────┘
```
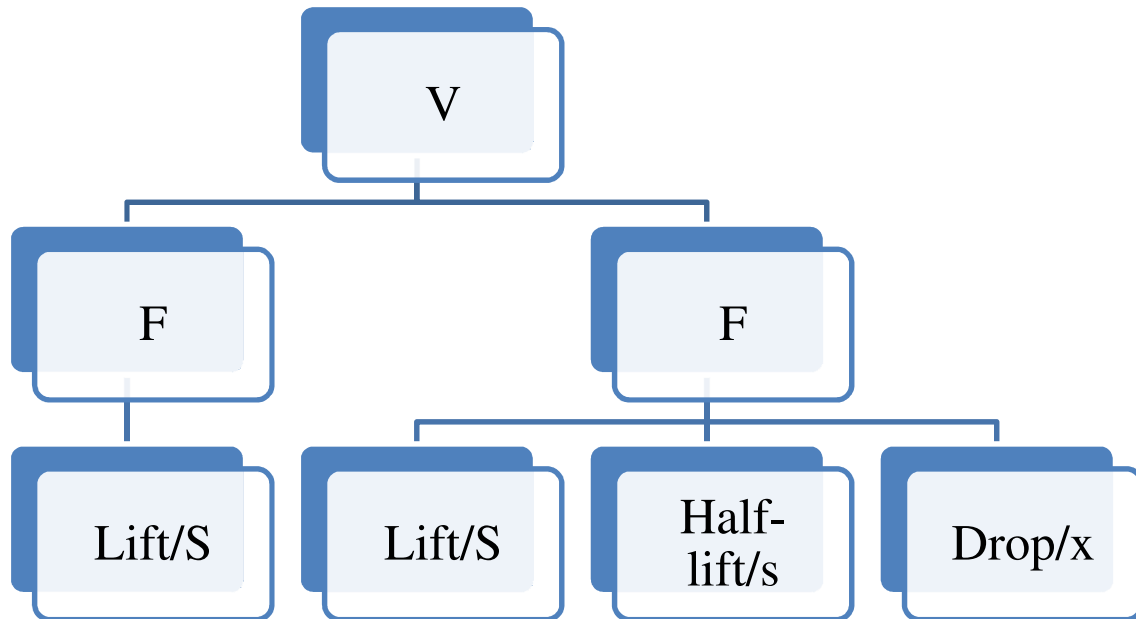
The metrical position of the half-lift is linguistically realized by a syllable bearing half-stress (either secondary or tertiary), which is represented by a lowercase letter *s*. The number of syllables in the drop of the second foot (the only drop in standard type D) is strictly limited to one, since it is verse final.

Ideal realization:
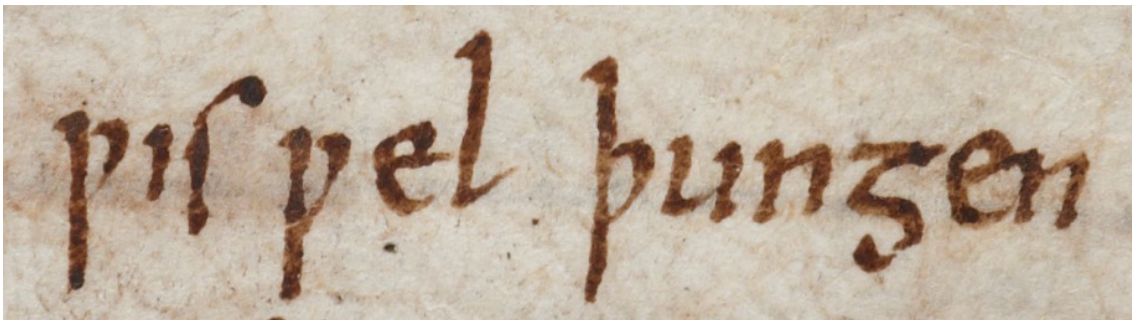
      wīs wēlþungen (1927a)

   [wise and excellent]

TYPE E: CASCADING UP-DOWN+LIFT

Metrical configuration:
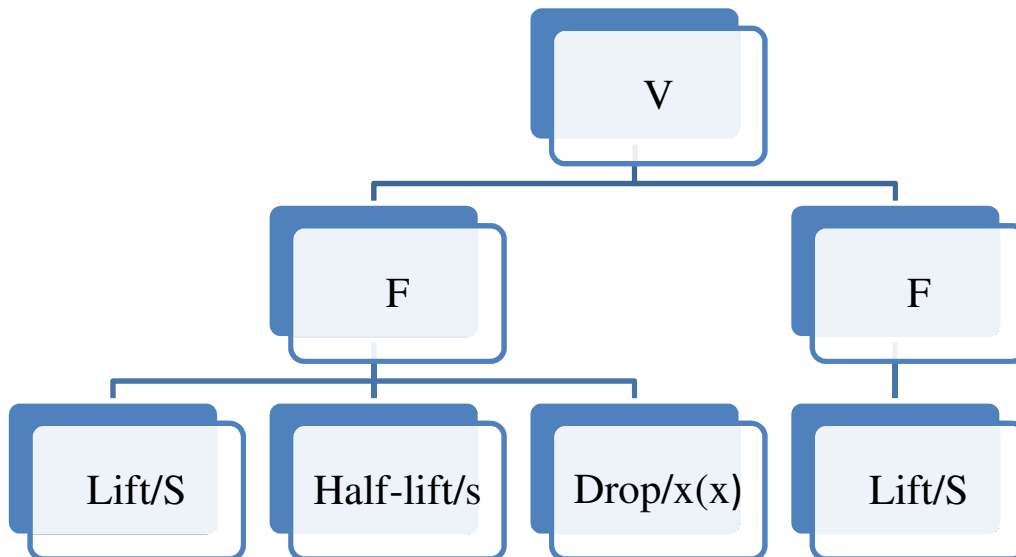
As has been stated elsewhere, type E is a mirror image of type D.[74] The cascading up-down foot, which in type D is verse-final, constitutes the onset of this type. Its only drop is part of the cascading up-down foot, i.e., it is verse-internal. It therefore admits up to one additional syllable, no more. Thus, Fulk's statement that verse-internal drops "may comprise several syllables" needs qualification.[75]

Ideal realization:
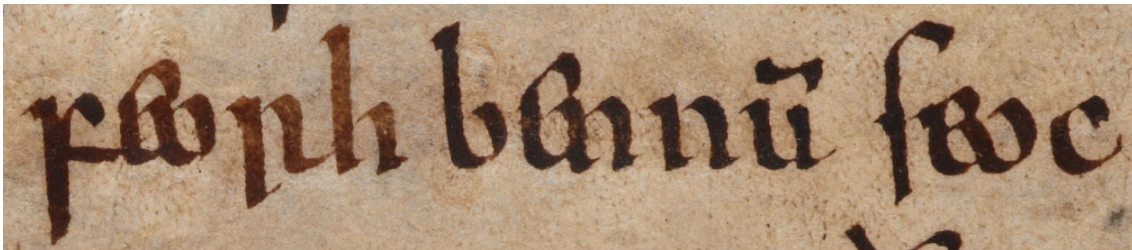
feorhbennum sēoc (2740a)

[sick with mortal wounds]

§29. Syllables, Positions, and Metricality

Regardless of its number of syllables, a verse must feature one of these five four-position metrical configurations to be metrically regular. As has been stated above, a

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[74] See Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 42; see also Bredehoft, *Early English Metre*, 28-9.
[75] See Pope-Fulk 2001, 141.

metrical position is ideally realized by one syllable and must be occupied by at least one. Under restricted circumstances, however, metrical positions can accommodate a larger number of syllables. It follows that a verse with less than four syllables is unmetrical, but not all verses with four syllables or more than four syllables are automatically regular. Five- and six-syllable verses like *fyrene fremman* and *wǣpen ond ġewǣdu* are considered acceptable, marked four-position variants of the ideal four-syllable type (*lēofne þēoden*). A five-syllable verse like **murnende mōde*, with a stress contour SsxSx, however, is unmetrical on account of is five-position configuration. Thus, the condition for metricality in Old English poetry is that a verse must feature an acceptable configuration of exactly four metrical positions, no less and no more.

Verse	No. of Syllables	No. of Positions	Ideal/Marked	Metricality
lēofne þēoden	4	4	Ideal	Metrical
fyrene fremman	5	4	Marked	Metrical
wǣpen ond ġewǣdu	6	4	Marked	Metrical
lēof þēoden	3	3	Ø	Unmetrical
swǣs ġesīþ	3	3	Ø	Unmetrical
swǣse ġesīþas	5	4	Marked	Metrical
wrǣclāstas trǣd	4	4	Ideal	Metrical
wrǣclāstas trǣdon	5	5	Ø	Unmetrical

As we can see, it is invariably on the number of positions that metricality depends. All metrical verses in the table have four positions, while the unmetrical verses have either three or five.

§30. Ideal vs. Marked Realizations

As the previous section shows, metrically acceptable verses with more than four syllables are considered marked variants of the ideal four-syllable realizations. The

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present section explores the relationship between ideal and marked variants more extensively.

As has been explained above, in Old English metre the monosyllabic nominative and accusative singular form of the neuter *a*-stem *scip*, "ship," which is long because its rhyme contains two morae (VC), is metrically equivalent to the rest of its disyllabic oblique cases, *scipes*, *scipe*, *scipu*, *scipa*, *scipum*, all of which consist of the concatenation of a stressed light syllable and its unstressed successor. Let us consider *Beowulf* 302b:
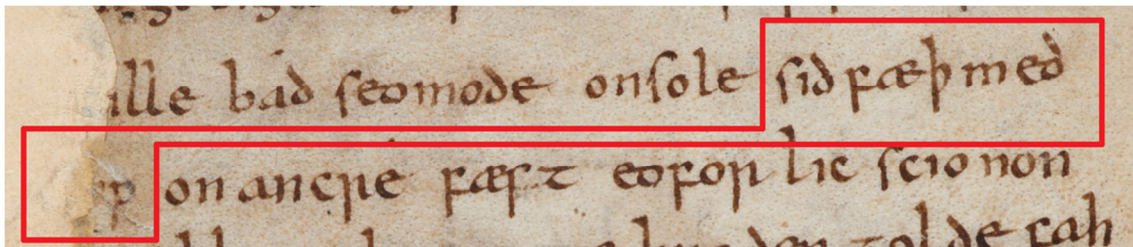
      sīdfæþmed scip

[spacious ship]

This is a type E verse, as the stress contour of the linguistic material that realizes its metrical positions reveals:[76]

Linguistic material	sīd-	-fæþ-	-med	scip
Stress contour	S	s	x	S
Metrical position	Lift	Half-lift	Dip	Lift

The first and second lifts are realized by long stressed syllables (*sīd-* and *scip*). The syllable occupying the first lift, *sīd-*, is long because its rhyme contains three morae (long vowel plus consonant, and hence VVC); and the syllable occupying the second lift, *scip*, is likewise long because its rhyme consists of two morae (VC).

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[76] Notice that *scip* is the second lift of an off-verse (302b), and as such it does not alliterate with the previous three lifts of the line: *seomode*, *sāle*, and *sīd*. Thus, this verse indicates that the consonant cluster *sc* does not alliterate with *s* (see above).

But the disyllabic oblique cases of *scip*, that is, *scipes*, *scipe*, *scipu*, *scipa*, and *scipum*, all of which consist of a stressed light syllable followed by another unstressed syllable,[77] can also occupy the metrical position of the lift by undergoing resolution. Consider the following example from *Beowulf*:
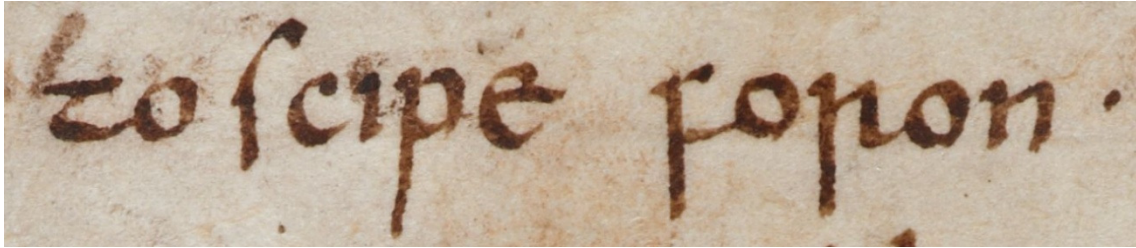
tō scipe fōron (1895b)

[went to the ship]

If we apply the rules of phrasal and lexical stress assignment outlined above, the stress contour that emerges from the linguistic material of which this verse consists is xSxSx. The preposition *tō*, as a proclitic preceding the element on which it depends (the neuter dative singular *a*-stem *scipe*), does not receive sentence stress and is therefore represented as 'x'. As a noun, *scipe* receives stress on its root syllable, *sci-*. In terms of stress, this disyllable is then represented Sx. The finite verb *fōron*, a particle, receives stress on its root syllable because it is displaced from its natural syntactic position (the first drop of the verse clause). Apparently, the resulting stress contour, xSxSx, is not one of the basic stress contours allowed by the metrical system.

The stress pattern xSxSx appears recursively in the poetic texts only when the first lift is occupied by a stressed short syllable. If the syllable occupying the position of the first lift is long, an unstressed syllable almost never follows.[78] This distribution is so regular that it cannot be ascribed to chance. The most satisfactory way to account for such regular distribution coherently is to assume that in instances such as this, the first

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[77] For syllabification in Old English, see above.
[78] This statement does not take anacrustic syllables into account. For anacrusis, see below.

lift is not realized by the short stressed syllable alone, but also by its immediate
unstressed successor—both of which are said to be 'resolved.' Once resolution obtains,
the actual stress contour of the linguistic material of this verse (xSSx) emerges:

Linguistic material	tō	scipe	fō-	-ron
Stress contour	x	[/x]	/	x
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Lift	Drop

That the syllabic sequence *sci-* plus *-pe* is resolved is signalled by putting its stress
contour in square brackets. They indicate that the short stressed syllable *sci-* and its
unstressed successor *-pe* behave as a metrically integral unit, that is, that the two
syllables occupy a single metrical position at once. The configuration of its metrical
positions confirms that this verse is a five-syllable, marked realization of a type C.

Not only one, but the two lifts of a verse can also be realized by resolved
syllabic sequences, as in the following example:
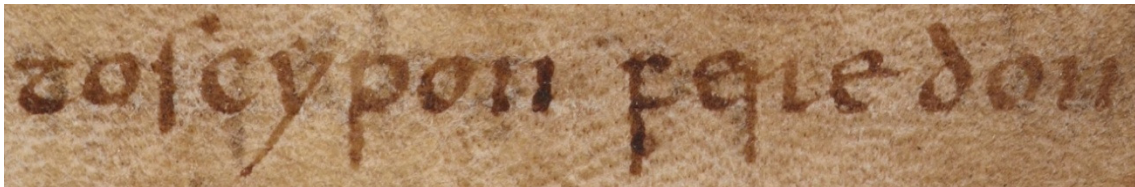
tō scypon feredon (*Beowulf* 1154b)

[to the ships brought]

The application of the rules governing phrasal and lexical assignment results in the
following stress contour for the words that constitute this verse:

Linguistic material	tō	scipon	feredon
Stress contour	x	Sx	Sxx

The stress pattern xSxSxx does not correspond to any of the stress contours allowed by the metrical system. In fact, the maximum number of unstressed syllables in verse-final drops is strictly one, not two, as the verse-final drop of this verse apparently comprises (*-redon*). It is possible to accommodate the stress contour of this verse to a metrically acceptable pattern, however, if the syllabic sequences *sci-* plus *-pon*, on the one hand, and *fe-* plus *-re*, on the other, are scanned as resolved, as shown in the following table:

Linguistic material	tō	scipon	fere-	-don
Stress contour	x	[Sx]	[Sx]	x
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Lift	Drop

The linguistic material of this verse thus corresponds to the stress pattern of type C verses. (And the verse-final drop consists of only one unstressed syllable, as is mandatory). As we can see, its two lifts are realized by resolved disyllabic sequences rather than by single long stressed syllables. In Old English metre, resolved disyllabic sequences count as single long stressed syllables almost to all respects. This means that the metrical structure of *Beowulf* 1154b, *tō scypon feredon*, is the same as that of any ideal four-syllable type C verse, as the following table shows:

Verse	No. of Syllables	No. of Positions	Ideal/Marked	Metrical Structure
ymb hord wīgan	4	4	Ideal	xSSx
tō scipe fōron	5	4	Marked	x[Sx]Sx
tō scipon feredon	6	4	Marked	x[Sx][Sx]x
tō brimes faroðe	6	4	Marked	x[Sx][Sx]x

§31. Suspension of Resolution

When a short syllable occupies the first lift, resolution is mandatory. Compulsory resolution in that position explains why verses like *guma mǣre*, "famous man," are systematically absent from the Old English poetic texts, while similar verses like *Beowulf* 474a, *gumena ǣngum*, are relatively frequent. Since resolution of the first list of a verse is mandatory, the only possible scansion for *guma mǣre* is [Sx]Sx, an unmetrical three-position configuration. In *gumena ǣngum*, on the contrary, the extra-syllable furnished by the genitive plural inflection prevents the verse from falling short of a position. The following table captures the distinction:

Verse	No. of Syllables	No. of Positions	Metrical Structure	Metricality
guma mǣre	4	3	[Sx]Sx	Unmetrical
gumena ǣngum	5	4	x[Sx]Sx	Metrical (Type C)

Unlike resolution of first lifts, resolution of second lifts can be suspended if the short stressed syllable is immediately preceded by another lift which is not realized by a resolved disyllabic sequence.[79] In such a case, a short syllable alone, without its immediate unstressed successor, is allowed to occupy the metrical position of the lift. To put it another way, resolution of the short stressed syllable and its unstressed successor may be suspended only when another lift realized by a long stressed syllable immediately precedes the potentially resolvable sequence, as in this instance:

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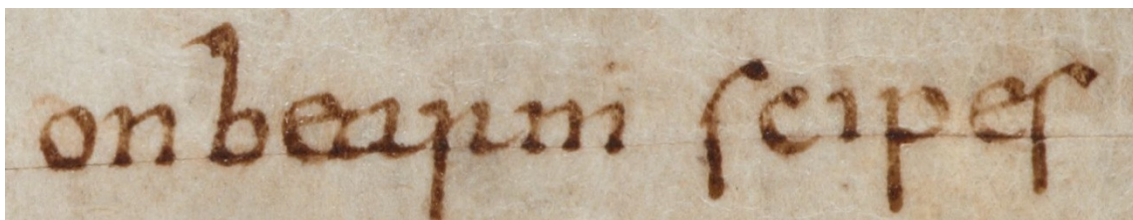
[79] See Bliss, *An Introduction to Old English Metre*, 23.

on bearm scipes (*Beowulf* 35b)

[in the ship's bossom]

Linguistic material	on	bearm	sci-	-pes
Stress contour	x	S	S	x
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Lift	Drop

In this instance, the stressed syllable occupying the first lift, *bearm*, is long, as expected. But the stressed syllable occupying the second lift, *sci-*, is short. As the table below shows, if resolution obtained, the resulting stress contour would render the verse unmetrical, since verses must contain at least four metrical positions:

Linguistic material	on	bearm	scipes
Stress contour	x	S	[Sx]
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Lift

A metrical verse cannot consist of a drop and two lifts solely. This means that in cases like this, where it would render verses metrically inacceptable, resolution is suspended. This happens only when the short syllable occupying the lift is immediately preceded by another lift that is realized by a long stressed syllable.

This means that verses like the following one do not occur in Old English poetry:

*þurh atol spere

[by means of a terrible spear]

This apparently is a type C verse with two verse-internal clashing stresses. It features two potentially resolvable sequences: (1) the strong neuter accusative singular form of the disyllabic adjective *atol*, and (2) the accompanying disyllabic accusative form of the

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neuter *i*-stem *spere*. Since resolution of lifts is mandatory unless they are preceded by a

lift realized by a long syllable, *atol*, which is not preceded by any lift, must undergo

resolution; and since *atol* is resolved, *spere* must undergo resolution too, since it is not

preceded by a non-resolved lift. This leaves only one possible scansion for **þurh atol

spere*:

(1) x [Sx] [Sx]

 (1) is a three-position pattern, and as such is unmetrical. Indeed, verses featuring that

stress pattern are virtually absent from the surviving records of Old English poetry,

which indicates that it must have been prohibited.

A lift can also be occupied by a single short stressed syllable if this is

immediately preceded by a half-lift realized by a long syllable, as the two following

examples from *Beowulf* show:

EXAMPLE 1
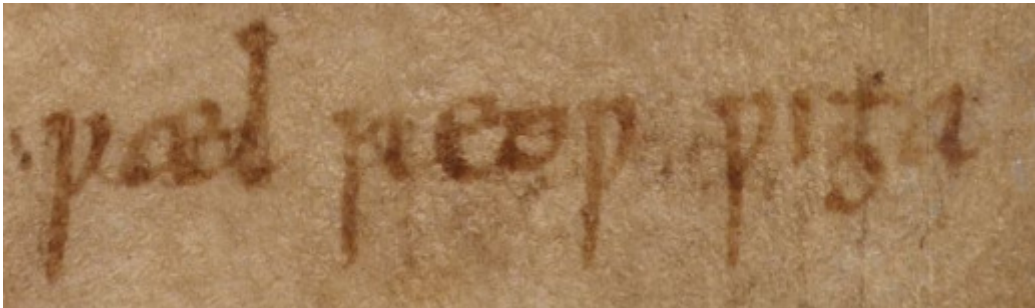
wælrēow wiga (*Beowulf* 629a)

[battle-fierce warrior]

If *wiga* were resolved, the verse would fall short of a position. Indeed, the non-

occurrence of verses like **wælrēow secg*, "battle fierce warrior," confirms that

resolution of *wiga* in 629a is forbidden. Verses in which the second lift is short and is

immediately preceded by a half-lift occur only if the half-lift is realized by a long

syllable. Or, to put it another way, verses like **goldwine grama*, "fierce gold-friend," in

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which the half-lift is realized by a resolved disyllabic sequence,[80] do not occur in

Beowulf. Thus, the stricture against suspension of resolution after a resolved half-lift is

supported by strong empirical evidence. *Beowulf* 629a thus scans as follows:

Linguistic material	wæl-	-rēow	wi-	-ga
Stress contour	S	s	S	x
Metrical position	Lift	Half-lift	Lift	Drop

EXAMPLE 2
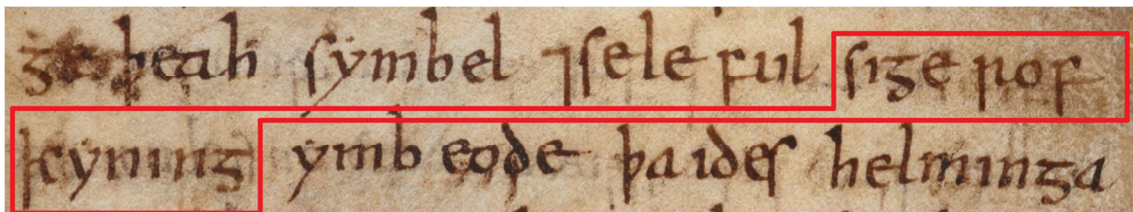
siġerōf kyning (*Beowulf* 619b)

[victorious king]

This verse contains two potentially resolvable disyllabic words, *siġe* and *kyning* (an

orthographic variant of *cyning*).[81] Resolution of both of them would render the verse

unmetrical, since a verse must consist of four metrical positions. (The resulting

configuration would be the three-position [Sx]s[Sx]). Resolution of one of them must

therefore be suspended necessarily. Since resolution of lifts is mandatory unless they are

immediately preceded by a lift or a half-lift realized by a single long syllable, and since

the first lift of a verse cannot be preceded by any other lift for obvious reasons, then *siġe*

must undergo resolution. This leaves the disyllabic sequence *kyning*, which is preceded

by a half-lift realized by a heavy syllable, as the only possible place where resolution

can be suspended. The correct scansion of *Beowulf* 619b therefore is:

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[80] See below.

[81] There are four other instances of the letter *k* in the manuscripts, all of them in the word *kyning*. See
Klaeber IV, xxix.

Linguistic material	siġe-	-rōf	ky-	-ning
Stress contour	[Sx]	s	S	x
Metrical position	Lift	Half-lift	Lift	Drop

It has been stated above that a short stressed syllable cannot occupy the metrical position of the lift if the immediately preceding lift is realized by a resolved disyllabic sequence. The same holds true for short stressed syllables preceded by half-lifts. Suspension of resolution is possible only if the immediately preceding half-lift is not resolved, as we have seen. Resolution of half-lifts is rare in Old English poetry, however, and indeed it tends not to occur if the half-lift is immediately preceded by a full lift. The only exception to this tendency is observed in *Beowulf*, where a half-lift is often resolved even if it is preceded by a full lift.[82] In *Beowulf*, a short stressed syllable cannot occupy the second lift of the verse if it is immediately preceded by a resolved half-lift. Thus, verses like the following ones do not occur in *Beowulf*:

> *goldwine grama

[fierce gold-friend]

> *bēahsele miċel

[great ring-hall]

These hypothetical verses feature two potentially resolvable disyllabic words, *-sele* and *miċel*. As we will see below, due to their etymological length, the second compound elements *-wine* and *-sele* must undergo resolution in *Beowulf* . Since resolution of second lifts immediately preceded by half-lifts can be suspended only if the half-lift is occupied by a single long syllable, resolution of *grama* and *miċel* is unavoidable. Thus,

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[82] Pope-Fulk 2001, 142.

the only possible scansion for the two abovementioned verses is S[s]S, an unmetrical three-position configuration.

The virtual absence of verses like *bēahsele miċel* casts doubt on the authenticity of the following manuscript reading:
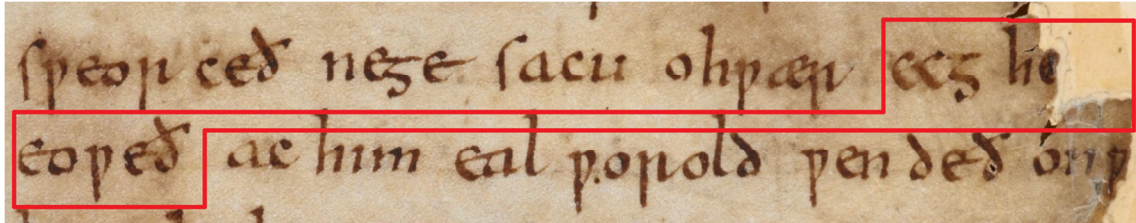
ecghete eoweð (*Beowulf* 1738a)

[sword-hatred manifests]

Like *-wine* and *-sele* above, the accusative singular form of the masculine *i*-stem *hete* must necessarily be resolved under secondary stress in *Beowulf*, as we will see below. Thus, in order for the verse not to fall short of a syllable, suspension of resolution in *eoweð*, which has an initial short syllable, is likewise necessary, despite being immediately preceded by a resolved half-lift. But the fact that verses like this almost never occur, together with the fact that *eoweð* is the late West Saxon analogical form either of the older variant *ȳweð* or of the non-West Saxon form *ēaweð*, suggests that *eoweð* is a scribal error, and that it is one the other two forms—which begin with a heavy syllable—that must be read here.[83]

The prohibition against a single short stressed syllable occupying the second lift of the verse if it is immediately preceded by a resolved half-lift can be schematically represented as follows:

Prohibited	$\acute{\smile}$	[$\smile$×]	$\smile$	×

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[83] See *Klaeber IV*, 215; Appendix C § 19; Language § 10.2 n1. See also Hogg and Fulk, *A Grammar of Old English*, II. *Morphology*, § 6.97 n6.

Allowed	´	`	˘	×

Consider, however, the following example:
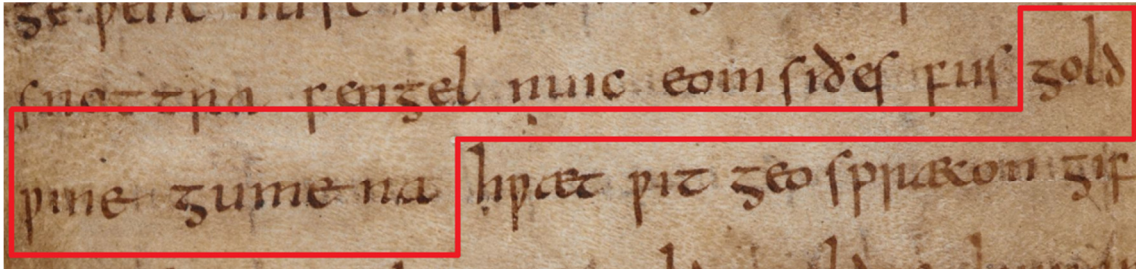
goldwine gumena (*Beowulf* 1476a)

[generous prince of men]

The nominative singular form of the masculine *i*-stem *wine* must be resolved under secondary stress in *Beowulf*.[84] Resolution of *-wine* is not problematic in this instance, however, because it results in a metrically acceptable four-position pattern, as we can appreciate in the following table:

Linguistic material	gold-	-wine	gume-	-na
Stress contour	S	[sx]	[Sx]	x
Metrical position	Lift	Half-lift	Lift	Drop

As the scansion of *Beowulf* 1476a reveals, resolution of a disyllabic sequence occupying a lift is possible, even if it is immediately preceded by a half-lift realized by a resolved disyllabic sequence, as long as the resulting stress contour corresponds to one of the four-position patterns allowed by the metrical system.[85]

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[84] This is a Kaluza I verse. The resolvable sequence under secondary stress, *-wine*, ends in a vowel that was short in early Old English and as a result it undergoes resolution in *Beowulf*. In complementary fashion, under the second part of Kaluza's law, if a disyllabic sequence under secondary stress in *Beowulf* ends in a vowel that is etymologically long, then resolution of such a sequence is forbidden. For an introduction to Kaluza's law, see further below.

[85] Compare the scansion of *Beowulf* 1154b, *tō scypon feredon* above. Its two lifts are realized by resolved disyllabic sequences but its stress contour corresponds to a metrically acceptable pattern.

As has been stated above, in Old English poems other than *Beowulf*, resolution of a half-lift is rare when this is immediately preceded by a full lift. The applicability or suspension of resolution in disyllabic sequences under secondary stress in *Beowulf* is strictly governed by a rule of etymological length known as Kaluza's law. Because of the implications of this rule for the dating of *Beowulf*, Kaluza's law is dealt with in a separate section in this dissertation. But before dealing with Kaluza's law, it is first necessary to consider a phonological rule of syllable weight governing a group of changes that affect the Old English high vowels *i* and *u* in unstressed syllables.

§32. Language and Metre: High Vowel Deletion

'High Vowel Deletion' (henceforth HVD) is the name given to the group of changes traditionally known as *i*- and *u*-apocope.[86] 'Apocope' is in turn the term used to designate the dropping of a word-final sound.[87] HVD thus refers to the disappearance of the high vocalic sounds /i, u/ when they are word-final, and hence in unstressed positions.

The occurrence of HDV depends on the quantity of the stem syllable that precedes the word-final sounds -*i* and -*u*. It is now in order to introduce the phonological terms 'segment,' 'suprasegmental,' and 'foot'. 'Segment' is a cover designation to refer to any vowel or consonant; 'suprasegmental' refers to any phonological property for whose description recourse to elements 'above' the segments is needed.[88] For example, the quantity of a syllable can be described only by reference to the particular configuration of the segments (i.e., the vowels and consonants) that constitute its rhyme, not to the segments themselves. Thus, syllable quantity is a

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[86] The term 'High Vowel Deletion' is used by S.J. Keyser and W. O'Neil in *Rule Generalization and Optionality in Language Change* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1985) and Lass (see *Old English: A Historical Linguistic Companion*, 98).

[87] Cf. 'syncope,' which designates the dropping of a word-medial sound.

[88] See Lass, *Old English*, 84.

suprasegmental. With regard to 'feet,' they are the units into which rhythmic structures are organized. In Germanic languages, a foot is a rhythmic unit that consists of a stressed syllable followed by zero, one, or a maximum of two unstressed syllables.[89]

Deletion or retention of -*i* and -*u* in word-final, unstressed syllables in Old English depends on a suprasegmental property: the total quantity of the foot to which the unstressed syllables containing the segments -*i* or -*u* belong. If retention of final -*i* or -*u* renders the foot long, then the high vocalic ending is retained; if the foot is rendered superlong, then the sound is lost (that is, HVD obtains). Let us consider a few examples.

The Old English masculine *i*-stem *þyrs*, "troll, demon, enchanter," descends from pre-Old English **þursi*, which features a word-final, unstressed *i*-sound liable to HVD. As a well-delimited rhythmic unit, **þursi* constitutes a phonological foot by itself, which consists of a long stressed syllable followed by a short unstressed syllable, as the following diagrammatic representation of its structure reveals:

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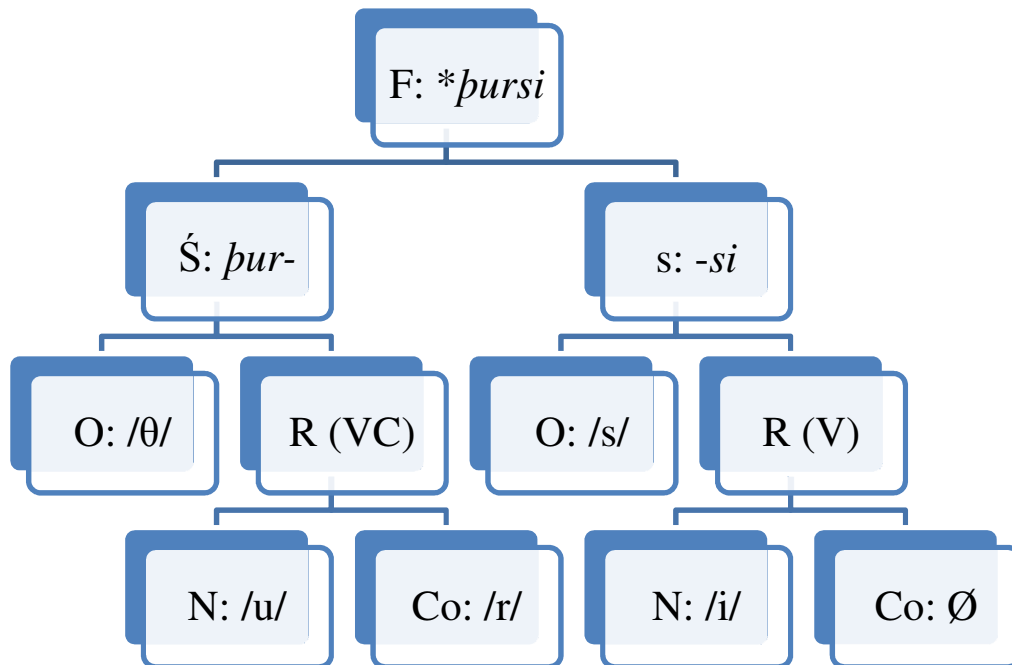
[89] Lass, *Old English*, 85.

In this diagram, 'F' stands for 'foot,' 'Ś' for its stressed syllabic constituent, and 's' for the immediately succeeding unstressed syllable. 'O, R, V, C, N, Co' have already been used in the section for syllable quantity above. As we can see, the first syllable, *þur-*, is long because its rhyme contains two morae, *u* and *r* (VC in the diagram). The unstressed syllable is short because its rhyme contains only one mora, *i* (V in the diagram). Since long (*þur-*) plus short (*-si*) equals superlong, the total quantity of the foot exceeds the allowable limit and, consequently, final *-i* disappears (not before causing *i*-mutation of /u/ to /y/). The historical form of the word that results after *i*-mutation and HVD obtain is, thus, *þyrs*.

The pre-Old English masculine *i*-stem **wini*, "friend," from which Old English *wine* descends, presents a different syllabic structure, as the following diagram shows:
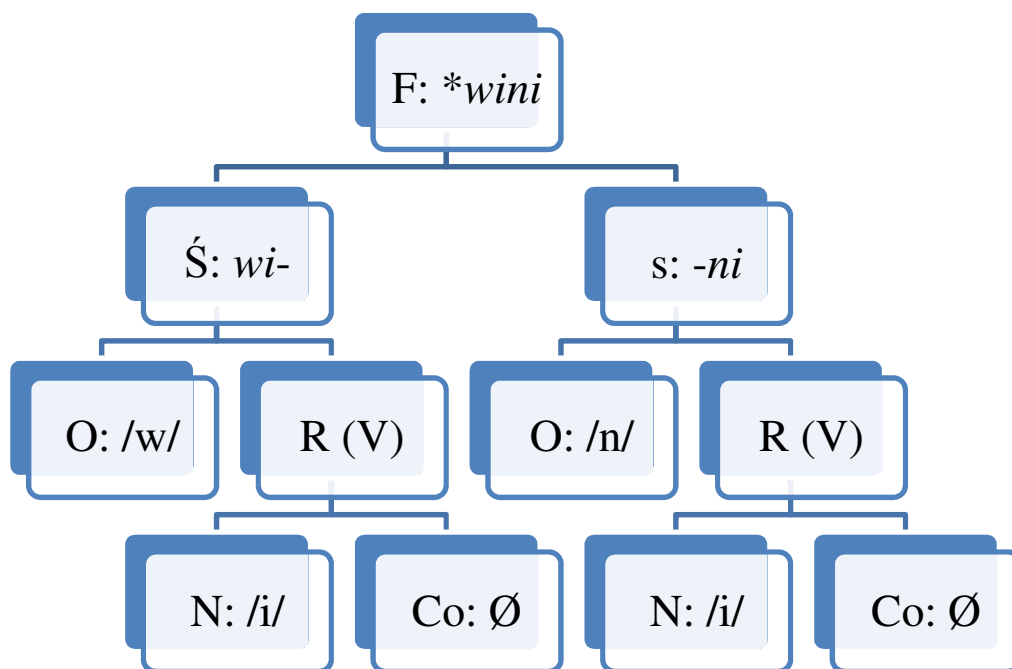
If we compare the two diagrams, in the case of **wini* both codas are realized by nil, while in the case of **þursi* the first coda contains a consonant. The nucleus of a syllable necessarily contains linguistic material. In both cases, the nucleus is realised by a short

vowel. This means that while the first syllable of *þursi* is long (VC), the first syllable of *wini*, as well as the second, is short (V); and since short plus short equals heavy, the total weight of the foot *wini* does not exceed the allowable limit. Consequently, HVD does not obtain and final unstressed -*i* is retained into the historical period as -*e*. The rationale behind these equations—short plus short equals heavy, and long plus short equals superheavy—seems to lie in the nature of Old English as a Germanic language. As a result of the Germanic Accent Shift, speakers of the early Germanic dialects evinced a strong tendency to invest most of the articulative energy in the first part of the word. Since uttering short syllables require a lesser amount of such energy than long syllables, it is more likely for an unstressed vowel to disappear after a long syllable, since most of the articulative energy has already been invested to pronounce it.[90]

   The operation of HVD can be further illustrated by a few more examples. The original nominative and accusative plural ending of all neuter *a*-stems is -*u*. As a word-final, unstressed high vowel, this ending is liable to HVD. The original nominative and accusative plural forms of the neuter *a*-stems *scip* and *word* were *scipu* and *wordu*, but only *scipu* retains final -*u* in historical Old English. The attested plural of *word* is *word*. The reason why the vocalic ending -*u* in *wordu* underwent HVD in early Old English while the same vocalic ending remained in *scipu* is clear in light of the examples considered above: the rhyme of *wor*- (like the rhyme of *þur*- in *þursi*) contains two morae and is therefore long; the rhyme of -*du* (like the rhyme of *-si* in *þursi* , and like the rhymes of *wi*- and *-ni* in *wini*) contains just one mora and is therefore short. Since long plus short is superlong, and since superlong is a larger quantity than is allowed, the ending -*u* disappears and the resulting historical

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[90] Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 11.

nominative and accusative plural form is *word*. On the contrary, the two vowels that constitute the foot **scipu*, *sci-* and *-pu*, are light, and final *-u* is retained.

The neuter disyllabic *a*-stem *werod*, "troop," has an interesting behaviour. Its original nominative and accusative plural form is **werodu*, which survives into the historical period as *werod*. The reason for *u*-apocope in this word lies in the syllabic structure of the prehistoric form, **werodu*, which can be represented diagrammatically as follows:
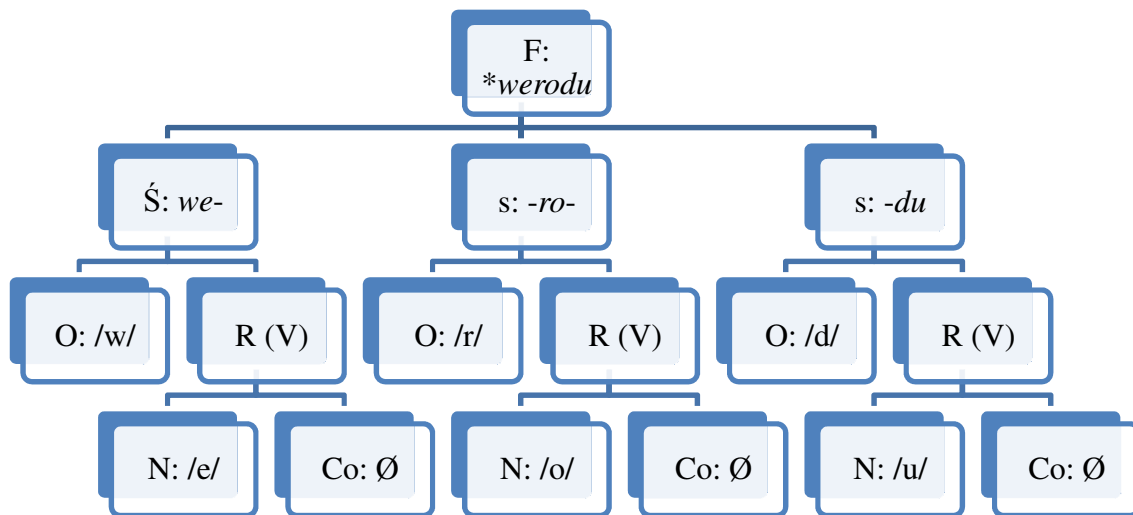
As we can appreciate, the first two syllables, *we-* and *-ro-*, are short, since they both contain rhymes consisting of no more than one mora. This means that the disyllabic *a*-stem *werod* behaves phonologically as the long monosyllable *word*, dropping its final *-u*. That HVD applies after the sequence *werod*, just like it applies after *word*, is evidence that a short stressed syllable plus its unstressed successor (*werod*) equals a long syllable (*word*) in phonological terms.

Pre-OE	Syllabification	Quantity	OE
*þursi	**þur-si*	2+1=3	þyrs
*wordu	**word-du*	2+1=3	word

*werodu	*we-ro-du	1+1+1=3	werod
*scipu	*sci-pu	1+1=2	scipu
*wini	*wi-ni	1+1=2	wine

Where '1' stands for short; '2' stands for lond; and '3' indicates superlong.

This process of phonological equation upon which the application of HVD depends is exactly the same as the process of resolution, whereby the disyllabic sequence formed by a short stressed syllable and its ustressed successor becomes equivalent to a long stressed syllable.[91] This equation can be schematized as follows:

´	=	˘ ✕

Or numerically: 2=1+1 (metrically speaking, *scip=scipu*).

§33. Kaluza's Law

As has been stated above, resolution of a short stressed syllable and its immediate unstressed successor may be suspended if the short stressed syllable is immediately preceded by a lift occupied by a long stressed syllable. For example, *Beowulf* 35b, *on bearm scipes*, features the pattern of stress xSSx because the short stressed syllable *sci-* is preceded by a lift occupied by a long stressed syllable (*bearm*), which precludes resolution of *scipe*. This means that depending on its context, the sequence of syllables Sx, where 'S' is short, can be equivalent to both S (long) and Sx (long+unstressed).[92] Thus, in *Beowulf* 35b, *scipes* is equivalent to Sx. But context is not the only factor that

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[91] See Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 31.
[92] See A.J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, rev. edn. 1967), 27.

determines the resolvability of the sequence Sx, with a short S. The internal structure of the resolvable sequence is also significant. Compare *Beowulf* 2827a and 193a:
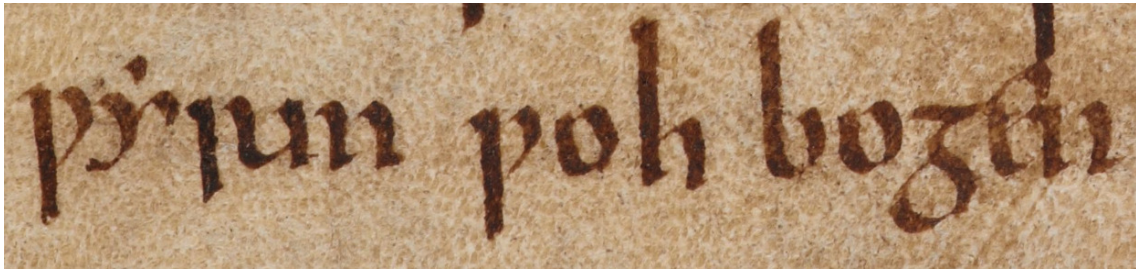
wyrm wōhbogen (2827a)

[coiled dragon]

A cursory glance at this verse reveals that it contains one potentially resolvable syllabic sequence, *bogen*. The stress pattern of *wōhbogen*, "coiled," is Ssx, with a short s. Resolution of -*bogen* would render the verse unmetrical, since a verse must contain at least four metrical positions:

wyrm	wōh-	-bogen
$'$	$'$	$[\smile×]$

As we can see, if the disyllabic sequence under secondary stress -*bogen* undergoes resolution, this verse falls short of a syllable. Consequently, resolution is suspended, which results in an acceptable type D verse with the minimum number of positions required by the metrical system:

wyrm	wōh-	-bo-	-gen
$'$	$'$	$\smile$	×

Thus, in *Beowulf* 2827a, *wyrm wōhbogen*, where the half-stress is immediately preceded

by a lift occupied by a long stressed syllable, suspension of resolution can take place.

But compare this other verse:
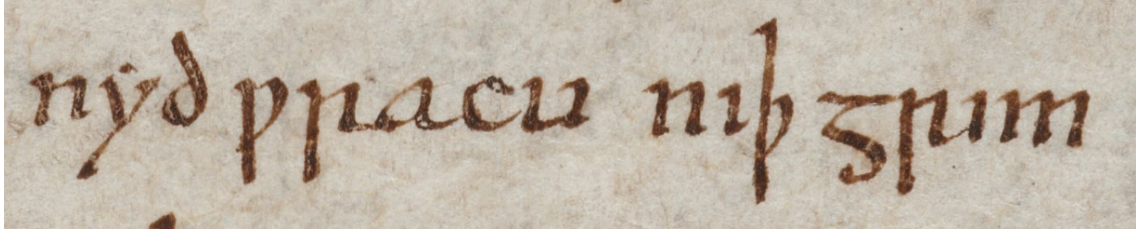
nȳdwracu nīþgrim (*Beowulf* 193a)

[cruel, violent persecution]

As in the previous example, the resolvable sequence of this verse, *-wracu*, is

immediately preceded by a lift occupied by a stressed heavy syllable (*nȳd-*).

Nevertheless, suspension of resolution would result in an unmetrical five-position

metrical pattern:

nȳd-	-wra-	-cu	nīþ-	-grim
´	˘	×	´	×

The SsxSx stress pattern is not allowed by the metrical system, as its virtually complete

absence from the surviving poetic corpus indicates.[93] The only way to accommodate the

stress pattern of this verse to a metrically acceptable pattern is by scanning *wra-* and *-cu*

as resolved, as in the following table:

nȳd-	-wracu	nīþ-	-grim
´	[˘×]	´	×

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93 See Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 27.

This is an acceptable four-position subtype of type A (see below). As we can see, resolution must take place even if the half-lift is immeditely preceded by a lift realized by a long stressed syllable.

In both instances, *wyrm wōhbogen* and *nȳdwracu nīþgrim*, there is a resolvable sequence under secondary stress (*-bogen* and *-wracu*) immediately after a lift realized by a long stressed syllable (*wōh-* and *nȳd-*, respectively). Despite their same metrical context, the behavior of each resolvable sequence is distinct. While *-bogen* suspends resolution, *-wracu* must be resolved in order to make for a metrically acceptable four-position verse. Thus, these two verses demonstrate that metrical context is not the only factor determining the application or suspension of resolution to disyllabic sequences of the type sx. There must be another factor.

The other factor conditioning resolution is the internal structure of the syllabic sequence in question. As was indicated above, a syllable whose rhyme contains two morae is long. A diagram of the internal structure of the second syllable of *-bogen* reveals that its rhyme contains two morae and that consequently it is long:
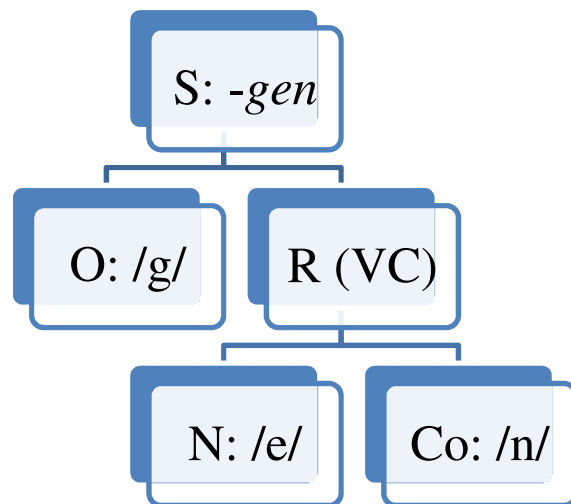
In *nȳdwracu nīþgrim*, on the other hand, the second syllable of the resolvable sequence, *-cu*, is short, since it consists of a single mora, as its internal structure reveals:
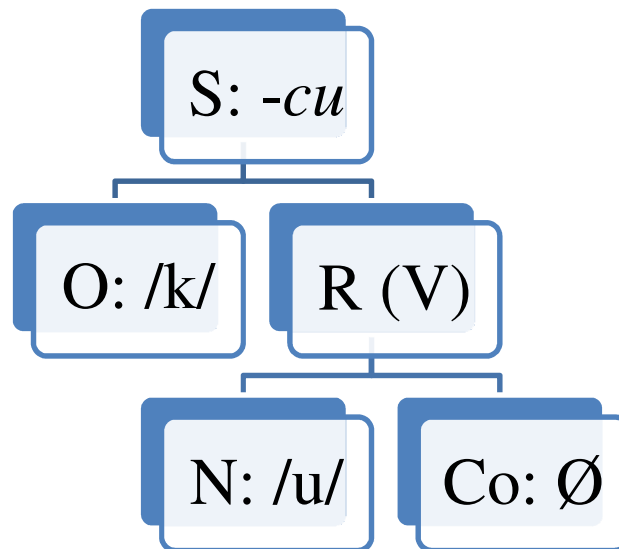
This means that resolution of a disyllabic sequence under secondary stress in *Beowulf*

takes place only if the second element of the resolvable sequence is short, as in *-wracu*.

In complementary fashion, resolution is suspended if the second syllable is heavy, as in

-bogen.

But things are not as simple as that. Compare the following verse from *Beowulf*:
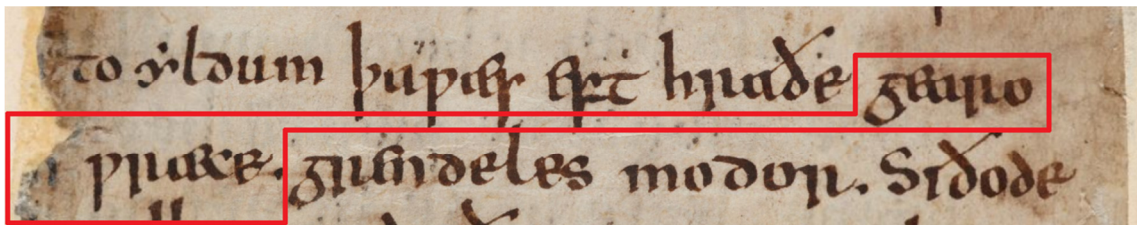
ġearo gyrnwræce (2218a)

[ready for the revenge for injury]

In this instance, both context and—apparently—syllabic structure favour application of

resolution. The half-lift (*-wræce*) is immediately preceded by a lift realized by a long

stressed syllable (*gyrn*), and the rhyme of the second syllable of the disyllabic sequence

under secondary stress contains a single vowel (i.e, it is short). And yet, resolution of

the disyllabic under secondary stress, *-wræce*, would render this verse unmetrical, as its

scansion shows:

ġearo	gyrn-	-wræce
[◡×]	´	[◡×]

Resolution of lifts is mandatory, and consequently *ġearo*, "ready," must be scanned as a single metrical unit. But resolution of *-wræce* would make the verse fall short of a syllable. It follows that resolution must be suspended even if the disyllabic sequence ends in a syllable that—apparently—is short. Thus, this verse scans as follows:

ġearo	gyrn-	-wræ-	-ce
[◡×]	´	◡	×

Its cascading stress contour shows that it is a D type. The adjective *ġearo* governs the genitive case. The reason why *-wræce* does not undergo resolution, even if its second syllable ends in a vowel, is that the *ō*-stem genitive singular ending *-e* descends from Proto-Germanic **-ôz*, which as the circumflex above the *o* indicates, was long in Proto-Germanic and remained long in early Old English.[94] Since the rhyme of the second syllable of the disyllabic sequence *-wræce* contains two morae from a historical point of view, resolution does not occur. In other words, it is the historical or etymological quantity of the second syllable of the potentially resolvable sequence that matters as regards resolution of disyllabic sequences under secondary stress in *Beowulf*.

Thus, resolution of a disyllabic sequence under secondary stress takes place only if the second syllable of the sequence is historically or etymologically short—that is, if it ends in a vowel that was short in early Old English. In complementary fashion, if the

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[94] The circumflex accent above a vowel indicates that it had an originally disyllabic pronunciation in Proto-Germanic (see *HOEM*, 419).

second syllable of a disyllabic sequence under secondary stress ends in a consonant or in a vowel that is historically long, then resolution is suspended.[95] These are the two parts of a principle now known as Kaluza's law, since it was named after Max Kaluza, the German philologist who first noticed the etymological distinction between endings such as those of -*wracu* and -*wræce*.[96] The following tables summarize this bipartite rule:

Kaluza's Law I		
Verse	**Metrical Structure**	**Etymological Length**
nȳdwracu nīþgrim	S[sx]Sx	Short

Kaluza's Law II		
Verse	**Metrical Structure**	**Etymological Length**
ġearo gyrnwræce	[Sx]Ssx	Long

The disyllabic sequence -*wracu* undergoes resolution and is etymologically short; the disyllabic sequence -*wræce* suspends resolution and is etymologically long. This perfect correspondence between resolution and etymological length is known as Kaluza's law.

A comparison between the following veses, which do not occur in *Beowulf*, makes the complementarity of the distribution apparent.[97]

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[95] See *HOEM*, 153-68; Fulk, "Old English Meter and Oral Tradition," 317-23. For a list of etymologically short and long inflectional endings, see *HOEM*, Appendix C, 419-25.

[96] See M. Kaluza, "Zur Betonungs- und Verslehre des Altenglischen," in *Festschrift zum siebzigsten Geburtstage Oskar Schade* (Königsberg: Hartung, 1896), 101-34.

[97] See Fulk, "Secondary Stress Phenomena in the Meter of *Beowulf*," *Interdisciplinary Journal for Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis* 3 (1998): 290. Fulk compares the verses *frēawine folca* and *fāh fēondscaða*, and points out that verses like **fēondscaða folca* and **fāh frēawine* are uncharacteristic of *Beowulf*.

1. *gyrnwræce ġearone

2. *nearo nȳdwracu

These two hypothetical verses seem to feature the stress patterns S[sx][Sx]x (with resolution of the genitive singular *ō*-stem *-wræce*) and [Sx]Ssx (with suspension of resolution of the nominative singular *ō*-stem *-wræcu*). In the first instance, the adjective *ġearo*, "ready," which governs the genitive case, appears in its strong accusative masculine singular form. Verses like this one (which could then be translated as "ready for the revenge for injury") do not occur in *Beowulf*. In order not to feature an unattested five-position distribution, it would require *-wræce*, which ends in a historically long second syllable, to undergo resolution. In the second instance, the verse *nearo nȳdwracu*, which could be translated as "oppressive, violent persecution," would require suspension of resolution in *-wracu* (which ends in a historically short syllable) so that it does not fall short of a position.

Thus, in *Beowulf*, a historically short ending (like the *-u* of *-wracu*) never appears in a metrical context where suspension of resolution is necessary. Complementarily, a historically long ending (like the *-e* of *-wræce*) never appears in a metrical context where the application of resolution is necessary. Given the significance of etymological length in disyllabic sequences under secondary stress in *Beowulf*, it would be convenient for metrical purposes, as Bliss has pointed out,[98] to signal historical length in verses governed by Kaluza's law. Thus:

nȳd-	-wracŭ	-nīþ-	-grim
S	[sx]	S	x

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[98] See Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 31n2.

The breve above the letter *u* indicates that it is the reflex of an original vowel that did

not bear the circumflex accent in Proto-Germanic (i.e., was short in early Old English)

and that, consequently, it undergoes resolution in *Beowulf*.

ġearo	gyrn-	-wræ-	-cē
[Sx]	S	s	x

In this instance, the macron above the letter *e* signals the presence of an etymologically

long syllable, since the genitive singular ending of *o*-stems bore the circumflex in Proto-

Germanic and consequently remained long in early Old English. As a result, it was

treated as non-resolvable by the *Beowulf* poet.

Out of sixty-two unambiguous examples, there are no exceptions to the first part

of the rule in *Beowulf*.[99] Its absolute fidelity to the first part of the law, together with the

complex distribution of endings involved and the low incidence of verses conforming to

it in the rest of the poetic corpus, demonstrates that the *Beowulf* poet recognized the

phonological distinction between etymologically short and long vocalic endings in early

Old English—which would in turn permit to establish a *terminus ad quem* for the

composition of the poem.

§34. Chronological Implications of Kaluza's Law

Kaluza's law has been defined as "the most important criterion" with regard to the

absolute dating of *Beowulf*.[100] The *Beowulf* poet's faithful adherence to Kaluza's law

demonstrates that he must have been aware of the phonological distinction between

etymologically short and long endings. Otherwise, the perfect distribution of

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[99] See Fulk, "Old English Meter and Oral Tradition," 317-18.
[100] *HOEM*, 381.

etymologically short and long endings in resolvable and non-resolvable positions would have to be ascribed to chance—and extremely improbable coincidence. The shortening of etymologically long vowels must have taken place at least a generation before the beginning of the process whereby -*æ* was centralized to-*e*.[101] Once that shortening took place, the distinction between etymologically short and long vowels was lost. The distinction can be demonstrated to have been lost ca. 725 in Mercia and ca. 825 in Northumbria. [102] *Beowulf* must have been composed before that distinction was lost. Because dialectal indications point to Mercian composition, Beowulf must have been composed no later than 725.

§35. Fulk's Law

As we have seen, resolvable sequences under secondary stress ending in historically short endings never appear in non-resolvable positions in *Beowulf*; and, complementarily, resolvable sequences ending in long endings never appear in resolvable positions. Compare, however, these two verses from *Beowulf*:
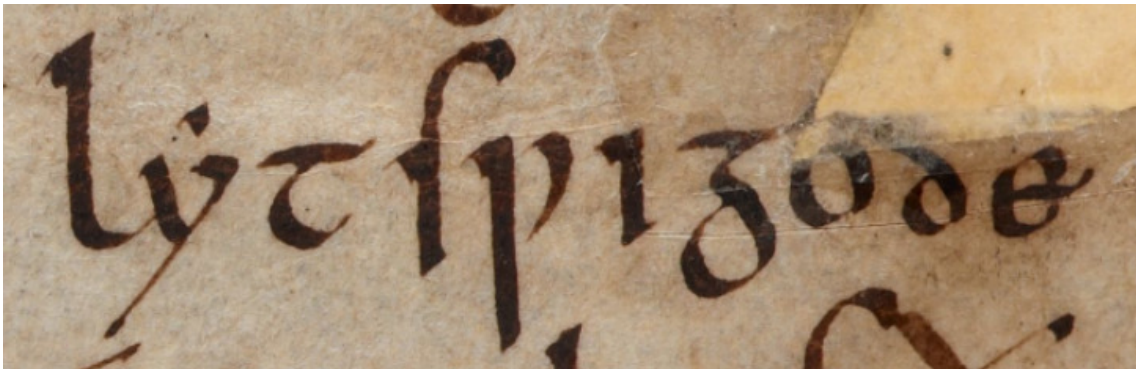
     Lȳt swīgode (2897b)

   [Not at all fell silent]

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[101] *HOEM*, 389.
[102] *HOEM*, 386-392.
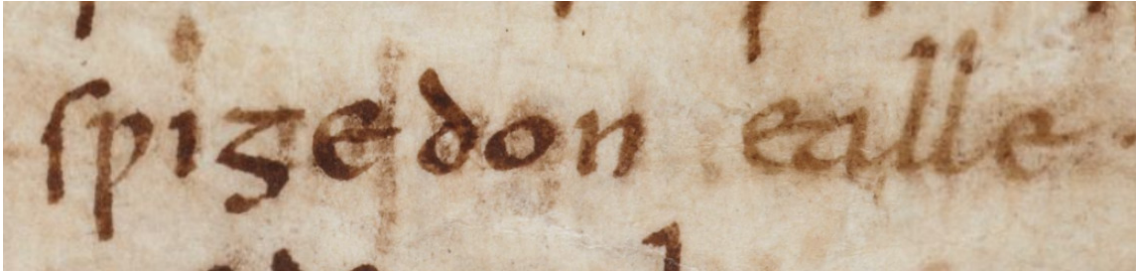
swīgedon ealle (1699b)

[all fell silent]

The first verse scans as follows:

Linguistic material	Lȳt	swī-	-go-	-de
Stress contour	S	S	s	x
Metrical position	Lift	Lift	Half-lift	Drop

If the penultimate short syllable -go- did not bear ictus, the verse would fall short of a position, since two adjacent unstressed syllables count as a single metrical position:

Linguistic material	Lȳt	swī -	-gode
Stress Contour	S	S	xx
Metrical Position	Lift	Lift	Drop

This is not a metrically acceptable stress contour, since it corresponds to an unmetrical three-position metrical configuration.

The second verse scans:

Linguistic material	swī-	-gedon	eal-	-le
Stress contour	S	xx	S	x
Metrical position	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop

The syllables *-gedon* must be unstressed, since otherwise this verse would feature an unmetrical five-position configuration, as the following table shows:

Linguistic material	swī-	-ge-	-don	eal-	-le
Stress contour	S	s	x	S	x
Metrical position	Lift	Half-lift	Drop	Lift	Drop

The three-position SSxx pattern and the five-position SsxSx pattern are unmetrical on account of their number of positions. The short middle syllable of the past form of the second class weak verb *swīgian*, *-ge-/-go-*, behaves differently in the two previous verses. In the first, it occupies a metrical position on its own; in the second, it occupies a drop besides *-don*. This metrical ambiguity is not random, but strictly regulated by Fulk's law.

According to Fulk's law, the metrical value of syllabic sequences with a short penultimate syllable under tertiary stress is determined by their position within the verse.[103] In the onset (all material preceding the coda), they occupy a single metrical position; but if they are in the coda (the last lift of a verse plus all the succeeding material), then each of their two syllables must constitute a single metrical position on its own. Thus, in *lȳt swīgode*, the sequence appears in the coda, after the last lift of the verse (*swī-*), and hence *-gode* occupies two metrical positions. In *swīgedon ealle*, the sequence *-gedon* appears in the onset, before the last lift of the verse (*eal-*), and consequently it occupies a single metrical position.

§36. Onset and Coda

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[103] Fulk names his law "Rule of the Coda" (1992: §§221-245). Notice that although "tertiary stress" is here retained as a useful concept, the application of Fulk's law demonstrates that ictus at the tertiary level is exclusively predicated on syllable quantity (Fulk 1992: §268).

The following tables show the boundary between onsets and codas in the five rhythmic types:

Type A	
Grendles	hēafod
Sx	Sx
Onset	Coda

Type B	
him wæs ġeōmor	sefa
xxSx	[Sx]
Onset	Coda

Type C	
tō brimes	faroðe
x[Sx]	[Sx]x
Onset	Coda

Type D	
fēond	mancynnes
S	Ssx
Onset	Coda

Type E	

uncūðne	nīð
Ssx	S
Onset	Coda

§37. The Displacement of Proclitics

Proclitics are systematically unstressed unless they are displaced from their natural position in the verse clause. The natural or unmarked position of a proclitic is before the semantically relevant element upon which it depends. In such a context, the proclitic or proclitics remain unstressed, as is dictated by their grammatical category. But if a preposition follows its noun, it will receive sentence stress despite being a proclitic. Given the major role of linguistic stress in Old English metre, any change pertaining to stress will have an impact on the metrical value of a specific item. The metrical consequence of the stress reassignment that results from syntactic displacement of a proclitic is that, under these new circumstances, a proclitic can occupy the metrical position of the lift. Compare, for example, these two verses from *Beowulf*:
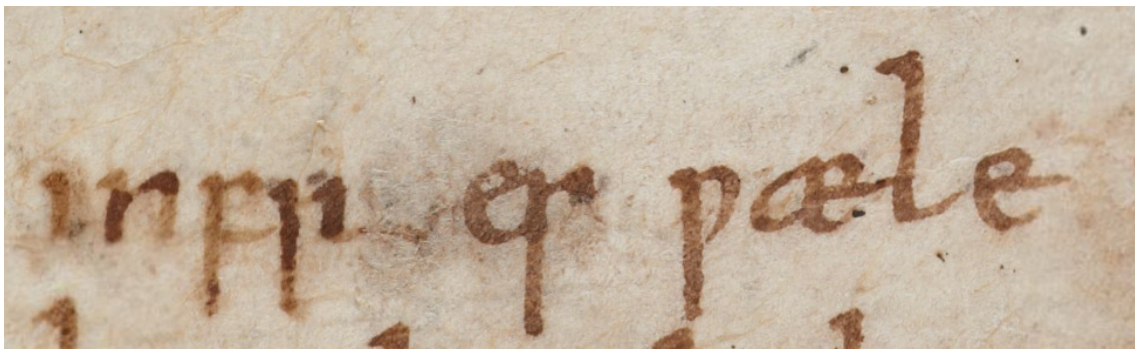
in Freswæle (1071a)

[in the Frisian massacre]
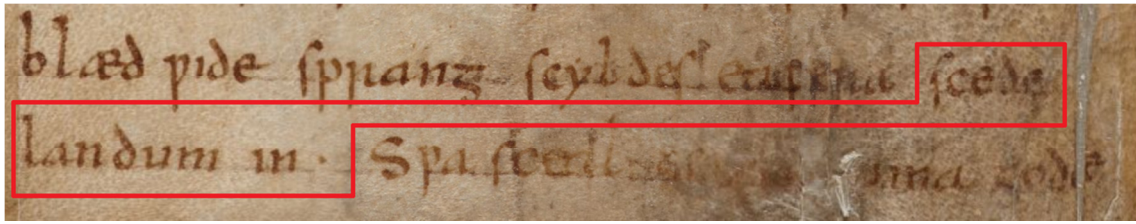
Scedelandum in (19b)

[in Skåne]

These two verses contain the preposition *in* and a neuter *a*-stem in the dative case. But whereas in the former the preposition precedes the noun *Freswæle* and does not receive sentence stress, it does receive stress in the latter, where it follows the noun *Scedelandum*.[104] Consequently, *in* occupies the metrical position of the drop in *Beowulf* 1071a, but it occupies the metrical position of the lift in the *Beowulf* 19b. (Otherwise, *Beowulf* 19b would not scan properly, since it would not conform to any of the five basic rhythmic patterns allowed by the metre). Thus, these two verses scan as follows:

Linguistic material	in	Fres-	-wæ-	-le
Stress contour	x	S	S	x
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Lift	Drop

Beowulf 1071a, *in Freswæle*, is then a type C verse. Resolution of the disyllabic sequence *wæle* is suspended because its stressed syllable, *wæ-*, despite being short, is immediately preceded by a lift realized by a stressed heavy syllable (*Fres-*).

Linguistic material	Scede-	-lan-	-dum	in
Stress contour	[Sx]	s	x	S

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[104] Michael Lapidge has studies the distribution of postponed prepositions in Old English poetry and has suggested that the possible origin of this stylistic feature might perhaps be found in latni authors like Vergil; see Lapidge, "An Aspect of Old English Poetic Diction: The Postpositioning of Prepositions," in *Inside Old English: Essays in Honour of Bruce Mitchell*, ed. John Walmsley (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 153-80. See also Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 36-7, §97; Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 154n1; and Fulk, "Old English: Literary Language," 390.

Metrical position	Lift	Half-lift	Drop	Lift

Since resolution of lifts is obligatory unless they are preceded by another lift realized by a long stressed syllable, *Scede-*, which is the first lift of the verse, must be resolved. If the preposition *in* were not fully stressed, the verse would feature the three-position metrical configuration *Ssxx, which is unattested and hence unmetrical. Since prepositions must scan as lifts only when they appear after the nouns upon which they depend, and since the metrical position of the lift must be realized by a syllable bearing stress, it follows that prepositions displaced from their usual position receive primary stress.

§38. The Verse Clause

The interaction between syntax and metre is complex but crucial to a genuine understanding of the principles underlying Old English verse compositions. Unfortunately, most introductory accounts of Old English metre take a basic knowledge of syntax for granted. Since this is usually not the case, it will be helpful to explain here the notion of the verse clause and to illustrate it with a few examples from the poetry. (This notion has already been advanced in the sections "Syntax and the Alliterative Long Line," but there the focus was on the relation between alliteration and verses, not on the relation between verses and clauses).

A verse clause is any clause that occurs in poetry. As we have seen above, according to the level of stress they receive within a sentence or clause, words can be classified into three different categories: stress-words, particles, and proclitics. A verse clause can be thought of as a clause that occurs in poetry and which is formed by a number stress-words, particles, or proclitics. The length of verse clauses varies widely,

since a verse clause can be contained within a single verse or it can be extended over several verses. The longer a verse clause is, the more elements it will contain.

This might seem straightforward at first, but the syntax of clauses in verse is subordinated to the most basic metrical rule, the four-position principle, which depends in turn on the sentence stress received by the constituenst of the verse clause. Below follow two examples of verse clauses with different lengths:
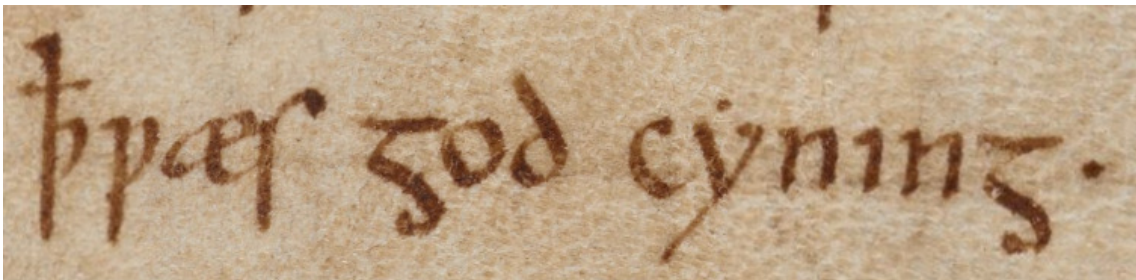
þæt wæs gōd cyning (11b)

[that was a good king]

This verse clause, which constitutes by itself the off-verse of *Beowulf* 11, is made of two particles (the pronoun *þæt* and the finite copula *wæs*) and two stress-words (the strong nominative singular form of the adjective *gōd* and the masculine *a*-stem *cyning*). It can be analysed syntactically as follows:
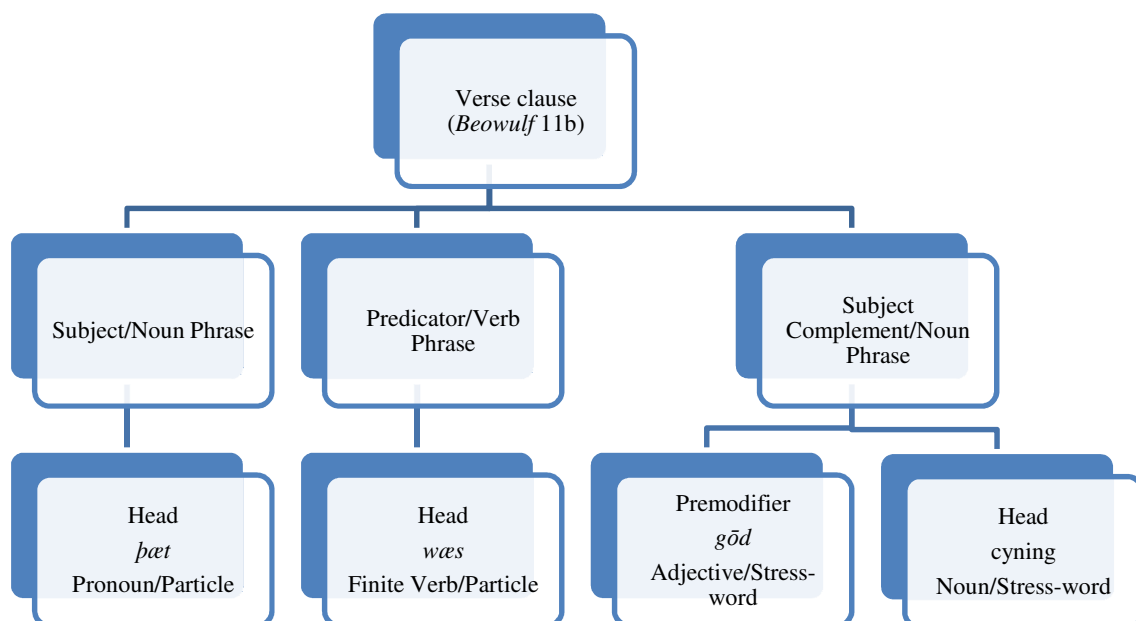
As we can see, the two particles precede the first stress-word of the verse clause, the adjective *gōd*, which provides, as expected, the alliterative link with the previous verse, *gomban ġyldan* (see "The Alliterative Rule of Precedence" above). As we have seen in the section "Syntax and the Alliterative Long Line," no matter what syntactic relation exists between two verses, these are linked together by means of alliteration.

As has been stated above, a verse clause can, and usually does, extend beyond the limit of a single verse and occupies several verses, as in the following example:
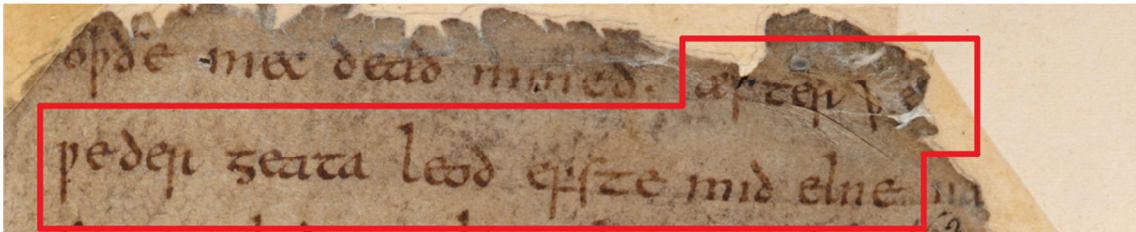
Æfter þǣm wordum   Weder-Ġēata lēod

efste mid elne (1492-1493a)

[After those words the prince of the Weder-Geats hastened courageously]

The distribution of words across the clause is different from that in *Beowulf* 11b, as the syntactic analysis reveals:

```
                         ┌─────────────────┐
                         │  Verse clause   │
                         │ (Beowulf 1492a- │
                         │     1493a)      │
                         └─────────────────┘
        ┌──────────────┬──────────┴───────────┬──────────────┐
 ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
 │   Adjunct/   │ │   Subject/   │ │  Predicator/ │ │   Adjunct/   │
 │ Prepositional│ │ Noun Phrase  │ │ Verb Phrase  │ │ Prepositional│
 │    Phrase    │ │              │ │              │ │    Phrase    │
 └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘
 ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
 │     Æfter    │ │ Weder-Ġēata  │ │              │ │              │
 │   þǣm wordum │ │     lēod     │ │     efste    │ │    mid elne  │
 └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘
```
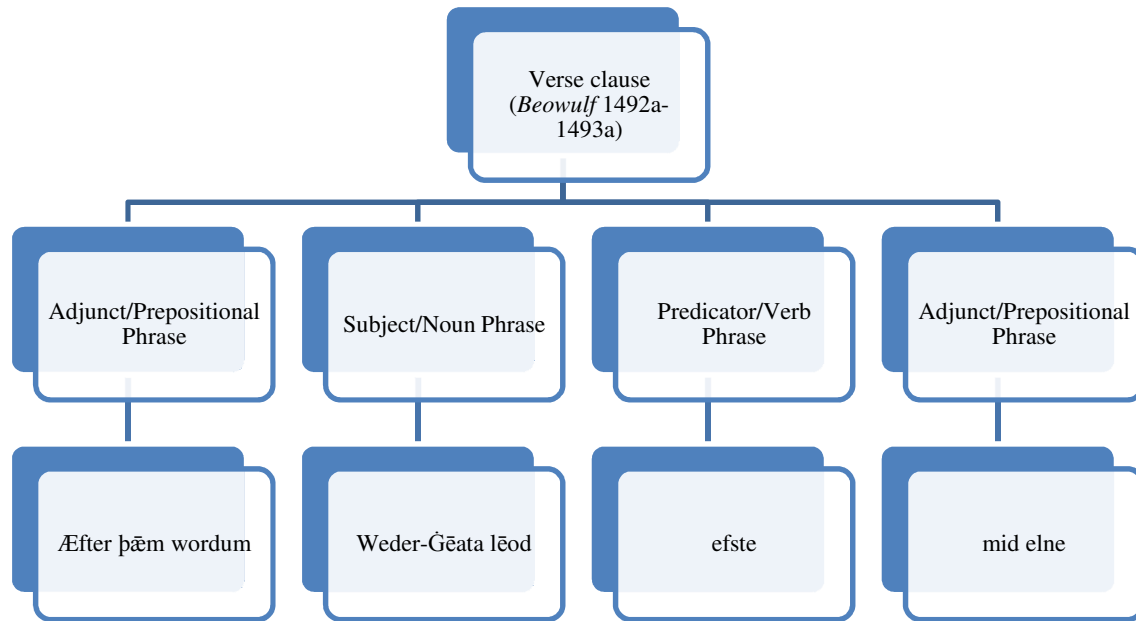
The classification of words according to the prominence they receive within the clause

is given in the table below:

Æfter	þǣm	wordum	Weder-Ġēata	lēod	efste	mid	elne
Prep	Prep	N	N	N	Fv	Prep	N
PRO	PRO	STR	STR	STR	PAR	PRO	STR

As we can appreciate, this verse clause contains three proclitics, all of them preceding

the stress-words upon which they depend; one particle, which appear at the beginning of

a verse but not at the beginning of the verse clause; and four stress-words.

Notice that subordinate clauses, i.e., clauses that function as constituents of

superordinate clauses, also count as verse clauses. For example, *Beowulf* 1580a-1591,

þonne hē Hrōðgāres / heorðgenēatas / slōh on sweofote,[105] is a subordinate verse clause

that functions as Adjunct of Time within the superordinate verse clause that extends

from 1575b to 1584. The initial drop of the subordinate verse clause, however, is the

---

[105] "when he [Grendel] slew Hrothgar's hearth-companions in their sleep."

one occupied by *þonne hē*, and not the one occupied by *Næs sēo* in 1575b, where the superordinate verse clause begins. This distinction is of utmost importance for understanding Kuhn's first law, which allows in turn the correct scansion of verses containing particles.

§39. Kuhn's First Law

We have seen that proclitics are unstressed unless they are displaced from their natural position, immediately preceding the stress-words upon which they depend. Particles, like proclitics, are also stressed if they are displaced from their standard position in the verse clause. The rule that determines what the standard position for particles is and hence when they receive sentence stress in Old English verse is known as Kuhn's first law, after the German philologist Hans Kuhn, who first formulated it.[106] See the two following clauses that extend over four verses:
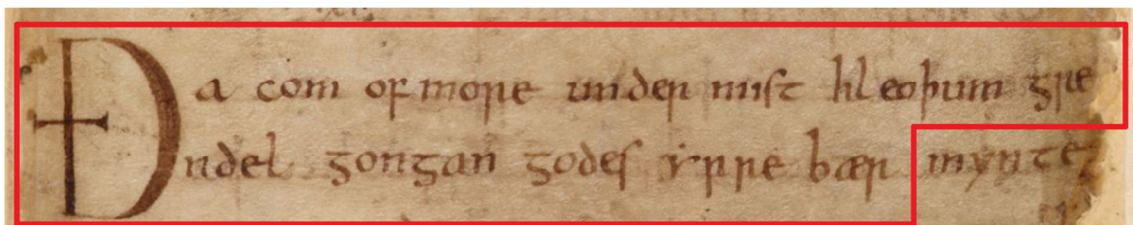
> Ðā cōm of mōre   under misthleoþum
>
> Grendel gongan,   Godes yrre bær (*Beowulf* 710-11)
>
> [Then Grendel came advancing from the marsh under the misty mountains, he
>
> carried God's anger]

These four verses, which contain two verse clauses (**clause 1**: *Ðā cōm of mōre under misthleoþum Grendel gongan*; **clause 2**: *Godes yrre bær*), scan as follows:

Linguistic material	Ða cōm of	mō-	-re

---

[106] See H. Kuhn, "Zur Wortstellung und -betonung in Altgermanischen," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 57 (1933): 1-109.

Stress Contour	xxx		S	x
Metrical Position	Drop		Lift	Drop

Linguistic material	under	mist-	-hleo-	-þum
Stress contour	xx	S	S	x
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Lift	Drop

Linguistic material	Gren-	-del	gon-	-gan
Stress contour	S	x	S	x
Metrical position	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop

Linguistic material	Godes	yr-	-re	bær
Stress contour	[Sx]	s	x	S
Metrical position	Lift	Half-lift	Drop	Lift

The first verse is a type A3; the second is a type C with resolution suspended after an immediately preceding lift realized by a long stressed syllable; the third is a standard type A; and the fourth is a type E. *Godes* depends on *yrre* syntactically and hence they are more closely related than *yrre* and *bær*; for that reason, *yrre* is scanned with half-stress, so that it belongs in the same foot as *Godes*. (Notice that if *bær* were assigned half-stress, then the verse would be a type D and *Godes* and *bær* would fall in different feet despite their close syntactic relationship).[107]

As has been stated above, according to the level of sentence stress they usually receive, nouns and infinitives are stress-words; monosyllabic adverbs and finite verbs

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[107] See Pope-Fulk 2001, 147-8; and Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 43-4.

are particles; and prepositions are proclitics. The two previous clauses can then be

analyzed as follows:

Đā	cōm	of	mōre	under	misthleoþum	Grendel	gongan	Godes	yrre	bær
Adv	Fv	Prep	N	Prep	N	N	Inf	N	N	Fv
PAR	PAR	PRO	STR	PRO	STR	STR	STR	STR	STR	PAR

If we compare the scansion of these verses with the category of each word according to

the degree of sentence stress it receives, we can appreciate (1) that the stressed syllables

of stress-words (*mō-*, *mist-*, *hleo-*, *Gren-*, *gon-*, *Go-*, and *yr-*) systematically occupy the

position of a lift; (2) that the two proclitics, *of* and *under*, occupy drops because they

precede the nouns upon which they depend (*mōre* and *misthleoþum*); and (3) that the

two particles that appear at the beginning of the first clause (*þā* and *cōm*) occupy a drop,

whereas the particle that appears at the end of its clause (*bær*) occupies the position of a

lift.

The above remark leads us to Kuhn's first law, the *Satzpartikelgesetz*, which

states that particles do not receive sentence stress—and hence cannot occupy the

position of the lift—unless they are displaced from their natural position in the first drop

of a verse clause.[108] Since *þā* and *cōm* are in the first drop of their clause, they do not

receive sentence stress. On the contrary, *bær* is not in the first dip of its verse clause,

which is occupied by *-des* alone. Consequently, *bær* stressed. Compare the following

two verses, which contain two verse clauses:

---

[108] A very succinct and convenient summary of Kuhn's first law is provided by Alistair Campbell: "This law is simply that unaccented elements which are not proclitic or enclitic to accented elements in a clause [i.e. *Satzpartikeln* or particles, which do not depend on *Satzteile* or stress-words] must be place either before the first stress, or between the first and the second stress of their clause. Once the second stress is passed, these elements will receive a stress if they are used. They are, principally, finite verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, and pronouns. They are contrasted with prepositions, articles, and grammatical endings, which are proclitic or enclitic to the accented elements of their clause [i.e., *Satzteilpartikeln*, or "sentence-part particles"]." See Campbell, "Verse Influences in Old English Prose," in *Philological Essays: Studies in Old and Middle English Language and Literature in Honour of Herbert Dean Meritt*, ed. J.L. Rosier (The Hague: Mouton, 1970).
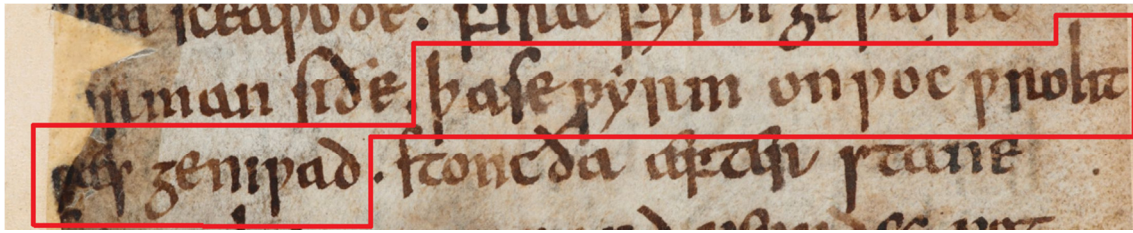
Þā se wyrm onwōc,   wrōht wæs ġenīwad (*Beowulf* 2287)

[When the dragon awoke, the strife was renewed]

A comparison between metrical positions and type of word according to level of stress

will illustrate Kuhn's first law more clearly:

Đā	se	wyrm	onwōc	wrōht	wæs	ġenīwad	
Adv	Art	N	Fv	N	Fv	Pptc	
PAR	PRO	STR	PAR	STR	PAR	STR	
x	x	S	xS	S	x	xSx	
xx		S	x	S	S	xx	S	x
Drop		Lift	Drop	Lift	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop

In the first verse clause, *onwōc* is stressed and occupies a lift because it is displaced

from its standard or unmarked position in the first drop of the clause, where the other

particle, *þā*, is. In the second verse clause, which is a type A and hence begins with a

lift, the particle *wæs* is in the first drop and, consequently, it is unstressed. Thus,

according to Kuhn's first law, the standard position for a particle is the first drop of the

clause, regardless of whether it precedes the first lift—as in types B and C—or follows

it—as in types A, D, and E. If the particle is found outside its standard position it

receives sentence stress and, consequently, it can occupy metrical positions usually

reserved to stress-words exclusively. Thus, in *Beowulf* 1493a, *efste mid elne*, the finite

verb *efste*, "hastened," must be scanned as stressed because it is displaced form the first

drop of its verse clause, which is in *Beowulf* 1492a (*æfter þǣm wordum*). The stress

contour of *efste mid elne* shows that it is a type A with double alliteration. The verse

clause occupying *Beowulf* 1492a-1493a scans then as follows:

Æfter	þǣm	wordum	Weder-Ġēata		lēod	efste	mid	elne	
Prep	Prep	N	N		N	Fv	Prep	N	
PRO	PRO	STR	STR		STR	PAR	PRO	STR	
xx	x	Sx	[Sx]sx		S	Sx	x	Sx	
xxx	S	x [Sx]	s	x	S	S	xx	S	x
Drop	Lift	Drop Lift	Half-lift	Drop	Lift	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop

As can be seen, all the proclitics of the verse clause, which precede the stress-words

upon which they depend, occupy metrical positions reserved to unstressed syllables

(i.e., drops). The only particle (*efste*), however, occupies a lift, a position usually

reserved to the root syllables of stress-words. The reason behind this mismatch between

metrical position and linguistic material is that the particle in question, the finite verb

efste, is not in the first drop of the verse clause, besides *æfter* and *þǣm*.

It should also be noticed that since subordinate clauses count as independent

verse clauses, the particle *hē* in *Beowulf* 1580a occupies the first drop in its verse clause,

even if the first drop of the superordinate clause is in verse 1575b. Thus, 1580a scans as

follows:

þonne	hē	Hrōðgāres		
Conj	Pron	N		
PRO	PAR	STR		
xx	x	Ssx		
xxx		S	S	x
Drop		Lift	Lift	Drop

The personal pronoun *hē*, a particle, remains unstressed and can consequently occupy the metrical position reserved to unstressed syllables because it is in the first drop of its (subordinate) verse clause—regardless of where the first drop of the superordinate clause lies.

This law is very strictly observed in *Beowulf* and very generally observed in the rest of the poems.[109] The following series of tables summarizes and exemplifies Kuhn's first law:

Þā cōm hē		**of**	**londe**	
xxx		x	S	x
Drop			Lift	Drop
Satzpartikeln, or particles	*Satzteilpartikel*, or proclitic		*Satzteil*, or stress-word	

Because of its metrical configuration, this is a type A3 verse. The adverb *þā*, the finite verb *cōm*, and the personal pronoun *hē* are not subordinate to any *Satzteil* or stress-word; consequently, they are sentence particles (*Satzpartikeln*). Since they are in the first drop of the verse clause, they remain unstressed. But compare the following table:

Þā hē	**of**	**londe**		**cōm**
xx	x	S	x	S
Drop		Lift	Drop	Lift
Satzpartikeln	*Satzteilpartikel*	*Satzteil*		*Satzpartikel*

---

[109] See Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 96. There are, however, a few exceptions to Kuhn's first law even in *Beowulf*, as in 1108b-1109 (especially 1109b): *Here Scyldinga ‖ betst beadorinca | wæs on bǣl ġearu*, "the best of the warriors among the descendants of Scyld was ready on the pyre." As we can see, in this clause, which extends over three verses, the first dip is realized by the unstressed final syllable of *Scyldinga* and does not contain the particle *wæs*, which should consequently be stressed. Remarkably, it is not, since it occupies the dip of a Type C with resolution of its second lift suspended (xx//x). See Bliss, *The Metre of* Bewulf, 9-23, §§12-29, for an explanatory account of the stress of finite verbs in classical Old English poetry.

Since one of the *Satzpartikeln* has now been displaced from its standard position in the first drop of its verse clause, it receives sentence stress, thereby occupying a lift. The same holds true for the other particles in the clause:

Cōm hē		of	londe		þā
xx		x	S	x	S
Drop			Lift	Drop	Lift
Satzpartikeln		*Satzteilpartikel*	*Satzteil*		*Satzpartikel*

Þā cōm		of	londe		hē
xx		x	S	x	S
Drop			Lift	Drop	Lift
Satzpartikeln		*Satzteilpartikel*	*Satzteil*		*Satzpartikel*

Each of the last three particle displacements transforms the original type A3 into a type B verse with its last lift realized by a particle that has been promoted to a stressed position. The same occurs if we place the preposition *of*, a proclitic, after the stress-word on which it depends:

Þā cōm hē		londe		of
xxx		S	x	S
Drop		Lift	Drop	Lift
Satzpartikeln	*Satzteilpartikel*	*Satzteil*		*Satzpartikel*

The displacement of the preposition *of* also leads to a change of verse type, from A3 to B. The two following examples illustrate the case even more graphically:
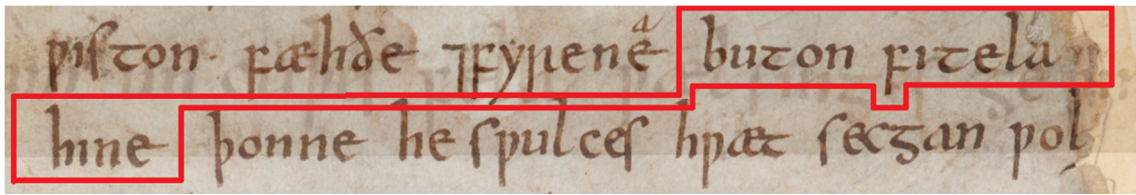
būton Fitela mid hine (*Beowulf* 879b)

[except for Fitela (who was) with him]
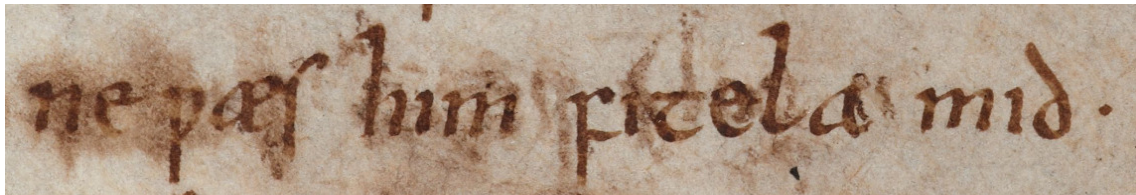
ne wæs him Fitela mid (*Beowulf* 889b)

[Fitela was not with him]

In the first example, *mid* has already disappeared in the manuscript, but the trace of the initial *m* can still be appreciated. Both verses refer to the Germanic hero Sigemund. The first appears in a context in which the narrator of *Beowulf* tells his audience that after discovering that Beowulf had killed Grendel, a scop began to narrate everything that he knew about Sigemund. The scop says that many of Sigemund's deeds were unknown to many men except to Sigemund's son and nephew, Fitela. In the second instance, the narrator says that Sigemund was by himself when he entered the dragon's lair. Let us see how these two verses scan:

Linguistic material	būton	Fite-	-la mid	hine
Stress contour	xx	[Sx]	xx	[Sx]
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift

Linguistic material	ne wæs him	Fite-	-la	mid
Stress contour	xxx	[Sx]	x	S
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift

As we can see, in the first verse the preposition is unstressed and occupies the metrical position of the drop. The reason for this is that it precedes the word to which it stands in a relation of proclisis, the particle *hine*, which is stressed and occupies the position of the lift (it is not placed in the first drop of the verse clause, besides *būton*). In the second verse, conversely, the preposition *mid* is stressed and occupies the metrical position of the lift at the end of the verse. The reason is that it shows up after the word upon which it depends, the particle *him*, which in this case is unstressed because it is placed in the first drop of the verse clause, besides the rest of the particles (*ne* and *wæs*).

The following example from *Beowulf* is also particularly interesting:
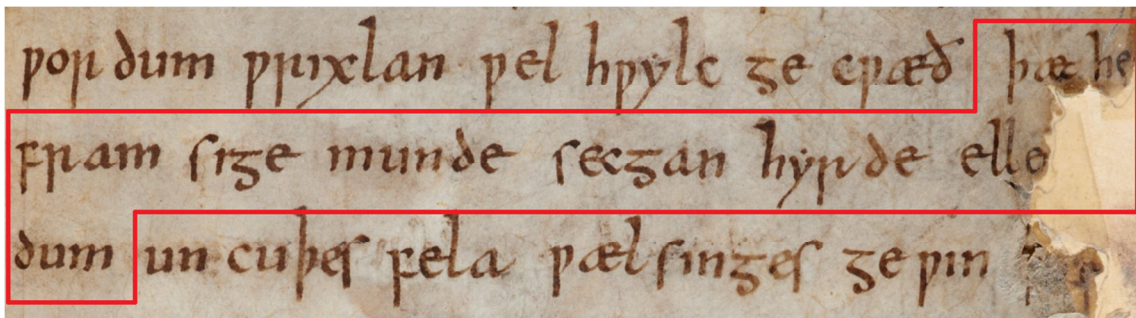
þæt hē fram Siġemundes   secgan hyrde

ellendǣdum (875a-876a)

[that he heard tell about Sigmund's brave deeds]

The manuscript reading *sige munde* is emended to genitive singular *Siġemundes* since otherwise the manuscript reading *Siġemunde*, which is a dative singular, would have to be interpreted as parallel to the dative plural feminine *i*-stem *ellendǣdum*, which seems illogical and hence highly improbable.[110] Since the preposition *fram* governs the dative case, the noun upon which it depends cannot be the genitive *Siġemundes*. The most probable interpretation, hence, is that *fram* depends on *ellendǣdum*—on which the

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[110] See *Klaeber IV*, 168.

genitive *Siġmundes* also depends. The stress pattern exhibited by *Beowulf* 875a

indicates that it is a type C, as we can see in the following table:

Linguistic material	þæt hē fram	Siġe-	-mun-	-des
Stress contour	xxx	[Sx]	S	x
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Lift	Drop

Alliteration on *s* with *secgan* in the next verse confirms that the preposition is

unstressed. The reason is that it precedes the element on which it depends, the dative

plural feminine *i*-stem *ellendǣdum*, which appears two verses later. Thus, a proclitic

that precedes the stress-word upon which it depends is invariably unstressed, even if the

stress-word does not follow immediately after the proclitic and shows up a few verses

later.

As we can see, the same linguistic material can generate different metrically

acceptable stress contours depending on how it is arranged. If a particle is displaced

from its standard position in the first drop of a verse clause, thus violating Kuhn's first

law, then it will receive sentence stress and will occupy a lift. If a proclitic is placed

after the element on which it depends, then it will similarly receive sentence stress and

will occupy a lift as well.

§40. Kuhn's Second Law

Kuhn's second law, the *Satzspitzengesetz*, governs clause-initial drops exclusively.

Thus, if a clause-initial verse does not begin with a drop, then that verse falls outside the

range of action of this law. Or, to put it another way, Kuhn's second law governs only

clause-initial type B and C verses (since type A, D, and E verses begin with a lift, their

usage will never result in a clause-initial drop, even if they are placed at the beginning

of a new clause). According to Kuhn's second law, proclitics alone cannot occupy a clause-initial drop—i.e., a clause-initial drop must also contain particles. The verse clause considered above, *Beowulf* 2287a, *Þā se wyrm onwōc*, complies with this law because (1) the verse begins with a drop that is clause-initial; and (2) the clause-initial drop contains not only the proclitic *se*, but also the particle *þā*. If *þā* were removed from the clause-initial drop, then the verse would not be acceptable at the beginning of a clause, even if it would still feature an acceptable metrical configuration:

> *se wyrm onwōc

> xSxS

The stress contour xSxS corresponds to an acceptable type B. This hypothetical verse, however, is prohibited at the beginning of a verse clause by Kuhn's second law, according to which a clause-initial drop cannot be occupied by proclitics alone. This law is generally observed in *Beowulf*, with not a few exceptions.[111] For example:
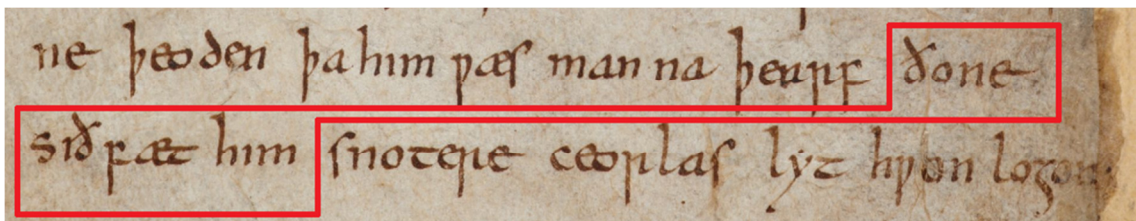
> Ðone sīðfæt him (202a)

> [(dissuaded) him from the adventure]

Since this type B verse initiates a clause, its first drop is clause-initial and, according to Kuhn's second law, it should not therefore be occupied by a proclitic alone (*ðone*).

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[111] In her 1997 study, H. Momma stated that Kuhn's first law was much laxer than previously thought and also that Kuhn's second law is dispensable; see H. Momma, *The Composition of Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). The validity of her study, however, has been thoroughly questioned by Fulk (see his reviews of Momma's work). Also, Donoghue has demonstrated the absolute validity of Kuhn's first law; see Donoghue, "Language Matters," in *Reading Old English Texts*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 59-78.

Thus, this verse constitutes an exception to Kuhn's second law.[112] But compare this other verse:
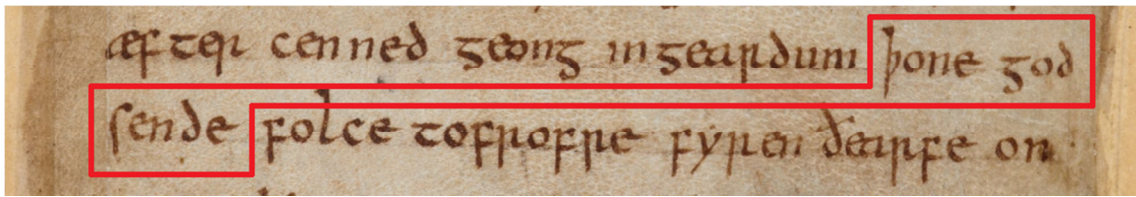
>   þone God sende (*Beowulf* 13b)

>   [who God sent]

Apparently, this verse also seems to breach Kuhn's second law, since *þone* occupies a clause-initial drop by itself. But this verse does not violate Kuhn's second law. The word *þone* is a relative pronoun that depends on a previous element (the *n*-stem *eafera*, "son," and the adjective *ġeong*, "young"), and hence it is not a proclitic but a particle.[113] Since there does not exist a prohibition against particles alone occupying the first drop of a verse clause, *Beowulf* 13b does not constitute an authentic counterexample of Kuhn's second law.

§41. First Drop of a Clause vs. Clause-Initial Drop

Crucial for the understanding of Kuhn's law is the distinction between the first drop of a clause and a clause-initial drop. The first drop of a clause coincides with its first series of unstressed elements, regardless of whether the verse clause begins with a drop or a lift. For example:

>   *Hē þæs frōfre ġebād* (*Beowulf* 7b)

>   [He for that consolation experienced]

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[112] There are fourteen exceptions in *Beowulf*, according to Kuhn (see "Zur Wortstellung und -betonung in Altgermanischen," 44). See also Hutcheson, "Kuhn's Law, Finite Verb Stress, and the Critics," *Studia Neophilologica* 64 (1992): 130. Verse 1492a, on p. __ above, violates Kuhn's second law (cf. 2669a).
[113] See Pope-Fulk 2001, 137.

Linguistic material	Hē þæs	frō-	-fre ġe-	-bād
Stress contour	xx	S	xx	S
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift

This is a type B verse whose first drop is both clause-initial and the first drop of the

verse clause. But compare:

Wīġlāf wæs hāten (*Beowulf* 2602a)

[Wiglaf was called]

Linguistic material	Wī-	-glāf wæs	hā-	-ten
Stress contour	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop
Metrical position	S	x	S	x

In this instance, the first drop of the clause coincides with *-glāf wæs*, but it is not clause-

initial, since the clause begins with a lift (*Wī-*). It follows, therefore, that all clause-

initial drops are also the first drops of their clauses, but not all the first drops are

necessarily clause-initial.

§42. Syntactic Classification of Verses

Kuhn's laws allow a classification of verses according to their syntax, as Calvin B.

Kendall has demonstrated.[114] Since particles must be placed together in the first drop of

a clause (Kuhn's first law), a verse containing particles in its first drop—regardless of

whether it precedes or follows the first lift—must be clause-initial. Similarly, since

proclitics alone cannot occupy the initial drop of a clause, a verse that begins with a

drop containing only proclitics must be clause-non-initial. Finally, if a verse begins with

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[114] See Calvin B. Kendall, *The Metrical Grammar of* Beowulf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

a lift and it does not contain particles in its first drop, then the verse is clause-unrestricted. Kendall refers to these metrico-syntactic types as I, II, and III, respectively.[115] Here follow a couple of examples of each metrico-syntactic type:
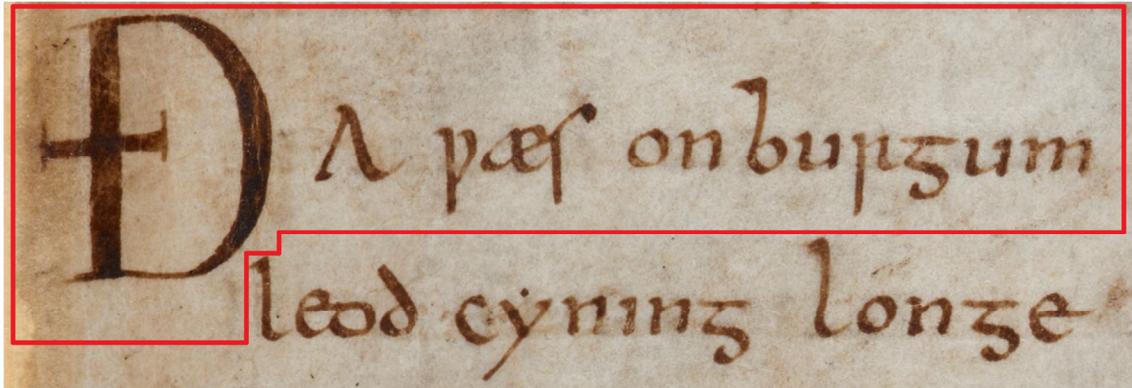
Ðā wæs on burgum (*Beowulf* 53a)

[Then was in the stronghold][116]
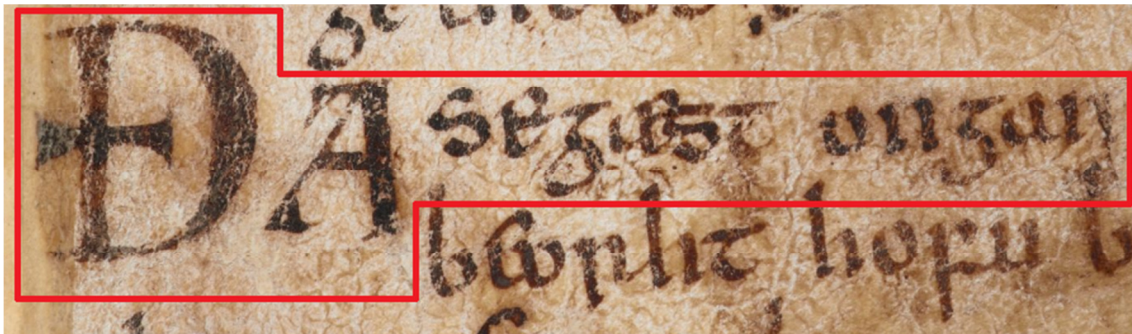
Ðā se gæst ongan (*Beowulf* 2312a)

[Then the creature began]

The metrical analysis of these verses reveals their metrico-syntactic type:

Verse	þā	wæs	on	bur-		-gum
Metrical Structure	Drop			Lift		Drop
Type of Word	PAR	PAR	PRO	STR		

Verse	þā	se	gæst	on	gan

---

[115] Kendall, *The Metrical Grammar of* Beowulf, 200.
[116] *Burgum* is a dative plural, but the meaning is singular (see *Klaeber IV*, 359, s.v. *burh*).

Metrical Structure	Drop		Lift	Drop	Lift
Type of Word	PAR	PRO	STR	PRO	PAR

These two verses begin with drops that contain particles (*þā wæs* and *þā* respecively) as well as proclitics (*on* and *se*), and both of them are therefore clause-initial (metrico-syntactic type I), as is in fact indicated by the capital letters marking the beginning of a new fit in the manuscript.[117] The finite verb *ongan* in 2132a receives stress because it is dislocated from the first drop of the clause, where *þā* is. The prefix *on-* is treated independently and does not receive stress because verbal prefixes were separate words at the time when stress patterns became fixed in Germanic.[118]

As has been stated, the first drop of a verse clause is not necessarily clause-initial, as in the following example:
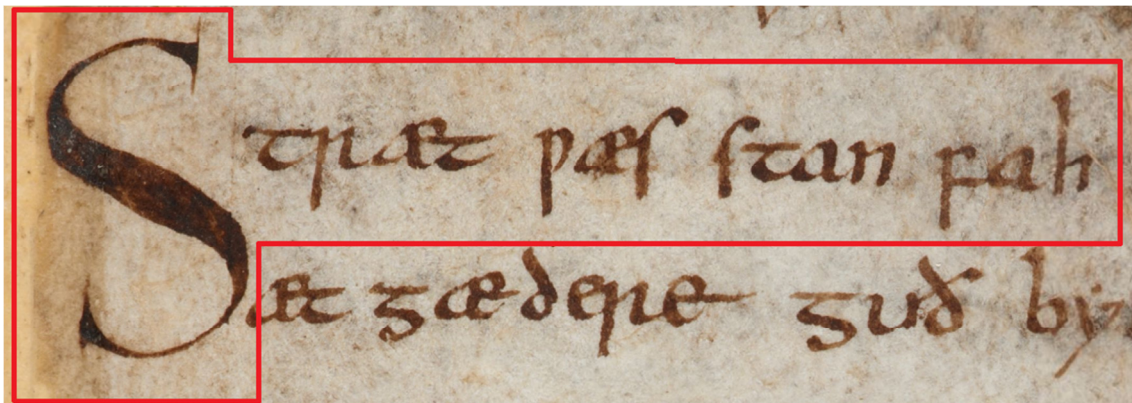
Strǣt wæs stānfāh (*Beowulf* 320a)

[The way was paved]

Verse	Strǣt	wæs	stān-	-fāh
Metrical Structure	Lift	Drop	Lift	(Heavy) Drop

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[117] Besides capitalization, *fitta* in the *Beowulf* manuscript can be marked out by end punctuation, by leaving a space between sections, and/or by numbering. See *Klaeber IV*, xxxiii.
[118] See Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 30 §§71-2.

Type of Word	STR	PAR	STR	STR

The particle *wæs* occupies the first drop of its verse clause, and is not clause-initial—the clause begins with a lift realized by the monosyllabic *ō*-stem *strǣt*.[119] Since this verse contains particles in its first drop, it is a metrico-syntatic type I (clause-initial), as is again indicated by the use of the capital letter *s* in the manuscript. Thus, any verse that contains particles in its first drop—regardless of whether it begins the verse—is a metrico-syntatic type I, i.e., clause-initial.

The two following verses begin with a drop containing proclitics alone:
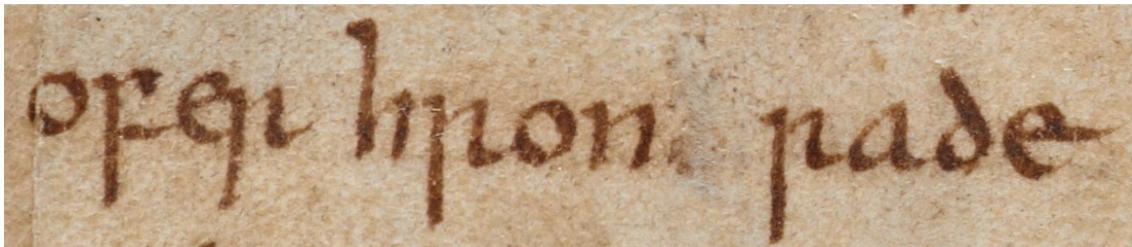
ofer hronrāde (*Beowulf* 10a)

[over the whale road]
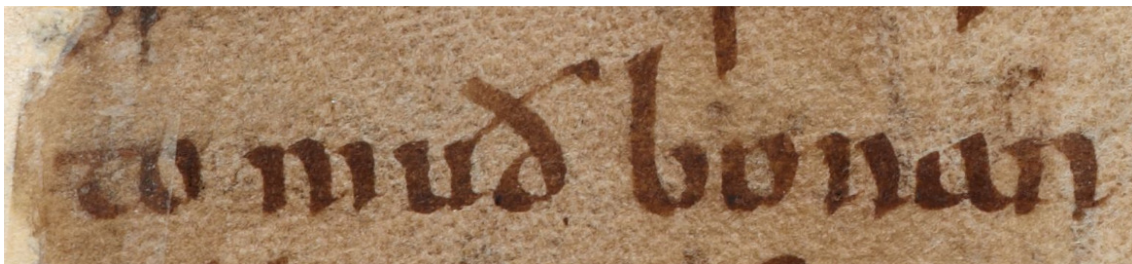
tō mūðbonan (*Beowulf* 2079b)

[(became) killer by the mouth][120]

These two instances are type C verses featuring the four-position metrical structure Drop-Lift-Lift-Drop. (In the second example, the short syllable *bo-* can occupy the position of the lift by itself because it is immediately preceded by another lift realized

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[119] Old English *strǣt* is originally a loan from Latin *strāta*, an *ā*-stem. Latin *ā*-stems were generally retained as *ō*-stems in Old English. See Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 208, §521.
[120] *Weorðan tō* has the meaning "become" in Old English. See *Klaeber IV*, 442, s.v. *tō*.

by a long stressed syllable, *mūð*-). Their initial drops contain only one proclitic each, without any particle. They must therefore be clause-non-initial (i.e., metrico-syntactic type II), since a drop at the beginning of a clause must not contain proclitics alone.

Thus, metrico-syntatic type III verses begin with a lift (otherwise they could be type II verses) and contain no particles in their first drops (otherwise they would be type I). For example:
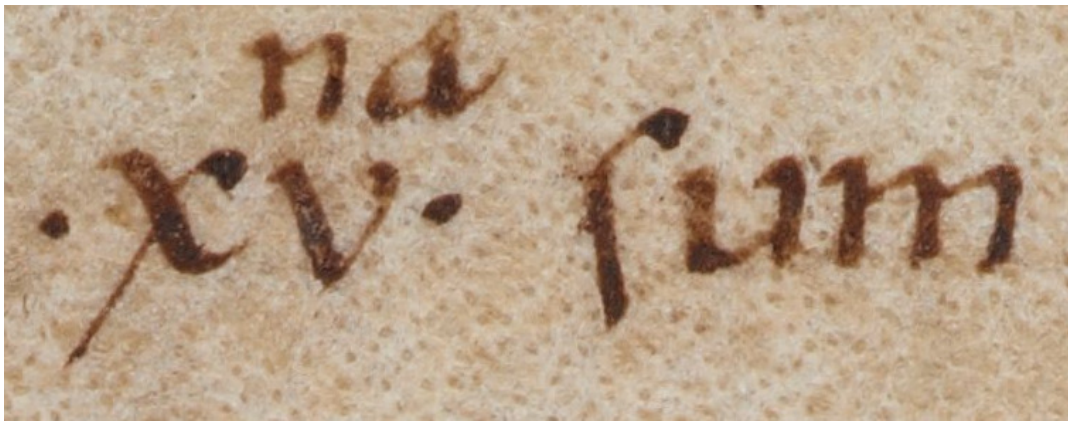
Fīftȳna sum (*Beowulf* 207b)

[one of fifteen][121]

Verse	Fīf-	-tȳ-	-na	sum
Metrical Structure	Lift	Half-lift	Drop	Lift
Type of Word	STR			STR

As its metrical configuration indicates (SsxS), this is a rhythmical type E verse. As such, it begins with a lift, which means that it cannot be a metrico-syntactic type II. Also, its first drop is occupied by the unstressed syllable of a trisyllabic compound and

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[121] This is an idiomatic way of saying "with fourteen others." See the running glossary in G. Jack, *Beowulf: A Student Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 40. See also *Klaeber IV*, 437, s.v. *sum*.

does not contain any particle, which means that it cannot be a metrico-syntactic type I. Consequently, this verse is type III, i.e. it is a clause-unrestricted verse:

findan mihte.   Fīftȳna sum

sundwudu sōhte.

[(...) could find. With fourteen others he went to the ship.]

In this particular case, the metrico-syntactic type III begins the clause.

Let us now consider two more clause-unrestricted verses appearing in different positions within the clause.
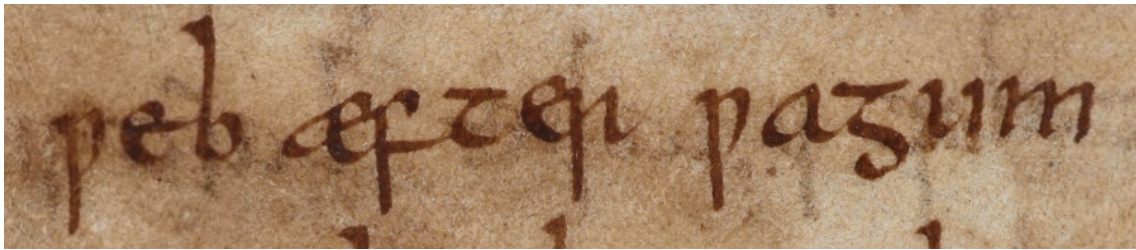
web æfter wāgum (*Beowulf* 995a)

[tapestries along the walls]

Verse	web	æfter	wā-	-gum
Metrical Structure	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop
Type of Word	STR	PRO	STR	

This verse is not governed by Kuhn's second law because it begins with a lift. Hence, it is not a metrico-syntactic type II. Further, its first drop contains a proclitic alone, which means that it cannot be a metrico-syntactic type I. Since it does not begin with a drop and its first drop does not contain particles, it is a metrico-syntactic type III, i.e., clause-unrestricted. Indeed, this verse appears in the middle of a clause:

ġestsele ġyredon.   Goldfāg scinon

web æfter wāgum,   wundọrsīona fela

secga ġehwylcum   þāra þe on swylċ staráð.

[(...) prepared the guest-hall. The gold-adorned tapestries gleamed, many

wonderful sights for each of the men who gaze at them.]
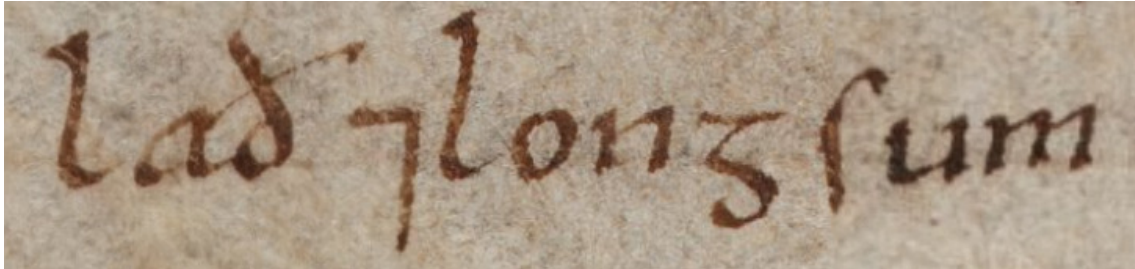
lāð ond longsum (*Beowulf* 134a)

[grievous and prolonged]

Verse	lāð	ond	long-	-sum
Metrical Structure	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop
Type of Word	STR	PRO	STR	

As in the previous example, this verse begins with a lift and does not contain particles in its first drop, which means that it is a metrico-syntactic type III. It appears at the end of a clause:

werġan gāstes;   wæs þæt ġewin tō strang,

lāð ond longsum.   Næs hit lengra fyrst

[(...) of the accursed creature. The strife was too severe, grievous and prolonged.

It was not a longer time (...)]

That *Beowulf* 134a, *lāð ond longsum*, closes the clause in which it appears is indicated by the fact that 134b contains particles in its first drop (*næs hit*), and must therefore be clause-initial.

According to this syntactic classification of verses, there are some differences that pass unnoticed to Sievers's purely rhythmical classification. Compare these two verses:
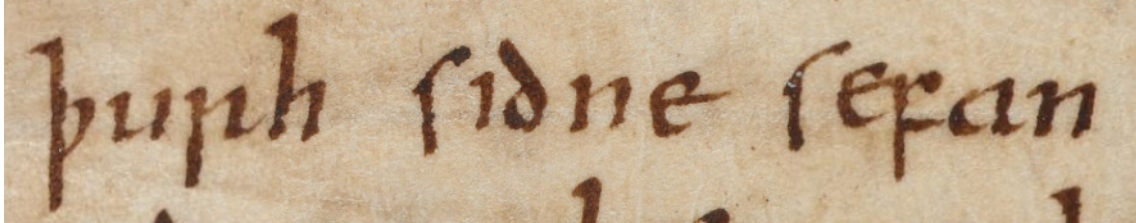
þurh sīdne sefan (*Beowulf* 1726a)

[because of His great heart]

Verse	þurh	sīd-	-ne	sefan
Metrical Structure	Drop	Lift	Drop	(Resolved) Lift
Type of Word	PRO	STR		STR
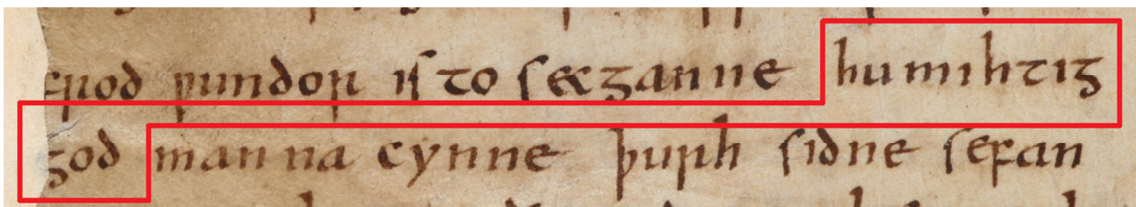
hū mihtiġ God (*Beowulf* 1725a)

[how mighty God]

Verse	hū	mih-	-tiġ	God
Metrical Structure	Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift
Type of Word	PAR	STR		STR

From a Sieversian perspective, they are both type B verses (they both feature the four-position metrical configuration Drop-Lift-Drop-Lift).[122] And yet an analysis of word types according to level of stress shows that they are syntactically distinct. *Beowulf* 1726a begins with a drop that contains a single proclitic. Therefore, it must be a metrico-syntactic tpe II, clause-non-initial; *Beowulf* 1725a, on the contrary, contains the monosyllabic particle *hū* in its first, initial drop, so that it is clause-initial, as we can see by having a look at the whole clause:
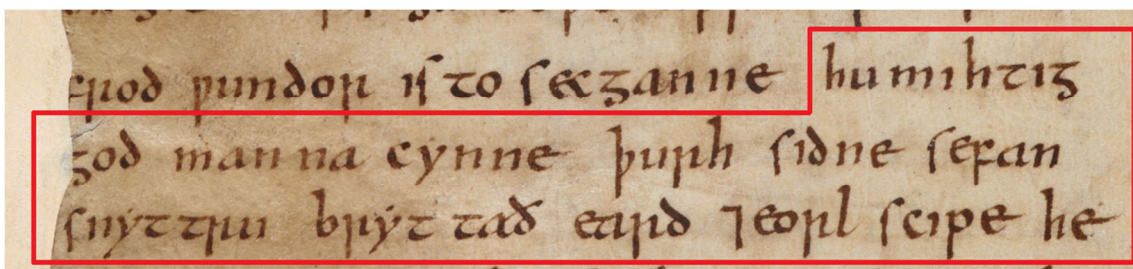
> hū mihtiġ God manna cynne
>
> þurh sīdne sefan snyttru bryttað (*Beowulf* 1725-26)
>
> [how mighty God, because of His great heart, distributes wisdom to the race of men]

As is expected from a metrico-syntactic type II verse, *þurh sīdne sefan* does not begin the verse clause. The clause is rather initiated by *hū mihtiġ God*, which contains a particle (*hū*) in its first drop, as expected from a clause-initial verse.

Compare the two following verses:
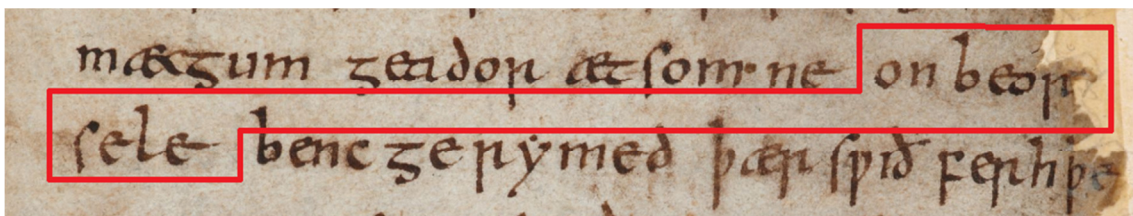
> on bēorsele (*Beowulf* 492a)

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[122] Resolution of the second lift of 1726a takes place because in the stressed syllable of the resolvable word *sefan* is preceded by an unstressed syllable (*-ne*), not by another lift realized by a long stressed syllable.

[in the beer-hall]

Verse	on	bēor-	-se-	-le
Metrical Structure	Drop	Lift	Lift	Drop
Type of Word	PRO	STR	STR	

This is a type C verse with resolution suspended in the second lift, which immediately follows another lift realized by a long stressed syllable (*bēor-*). Since the first drop is verse-initial and contains only one proclitic, this verse is a metrico-syntactic type II, or clause-non-initial, as opposed to the following verse :
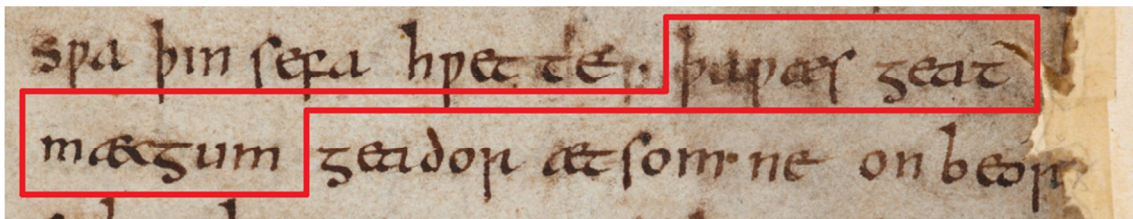
Þā wæs Ġēatmacgum (*Beowulf* 491a)

[Then was for the men of the Geats]

Verse	þā wæs		Ġēat-	-mac-	-gum
Metrical Structure	Drop		Lift	Lift	Drop
Type of Word	PAR	PAR	STR	STR	

Like *Beowulf* 492a, *Beowulf* 491a is a rhythmical type C. Nevertheless, they are syntactically different: the latter contains particles in its first drop, and hence it is a metrico-syntactic type I, clause-initial. This confirmed when we look at the whole clause:
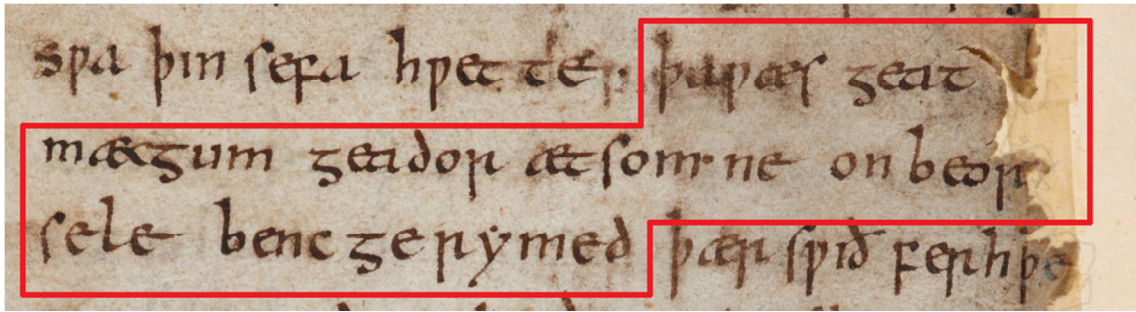
Þā wæs Ġēatmacgum   ġeador ætsomne

on bēorsele   benċ ġerȳmed; (*Beowulf* 491-92)

[Then a bench was cleared for the men of the Geats together]

As expected, the type C verse that contains particles in its first drop opens the clause, while the type C verse with a single proclitic in its verse-initial drop (492a) does not appear at the beginning of the clause. As we can see, Kendall's metrico-syntactic typology of verses provides some valuable information that is not furnished by Sievers's rhythmical types. The following table summarizes the relationship between the two classifications:

Rhythmical Type	Metrico-syntactic Type	Example
A	I	Strǣt wæs stānfāh
		Wundor is tō secgannẹ
	III	lāð ond longsum
		web æfter wāgum
A3	I	Þā wæs on burgum
		Þā se gæst ongan
B	I	hū mihtiġ God
	II	þurh sīdne sefan
C	I	Þā wæs Ġēatmacgum
	II	tō mūðbonan

		ofer hronrāde
		on bēorsele
D	III	bearn Ecgþeowes
		lēod Scyldinga
E	III	Fīftȳna sum
		wældrēore fāg

§43. Principal and Subordinate Clauses

In Old English, many adverbs and conjunctions are homonymous, i.e., they have exactly the same form.[123] For example, *ǣr* can mean both "formerly" or, as a conjunction, "before"; *nū* can mean "now" or "now that, because"; *siððan* can mean "afterwards" or "since"; *þā* can mean "then" or "when"; *þǣr* can mean "there" or "where"; *þenden* can mean "meanwhile" or "as long as, while"; *þider* can mean "thither" or "whither"; *þonne* can mean "then" or "when"; etc.[124] If any of these words functions as a conjunction, it links a main clause and a subordinate one. Since, as has been stated, punctuation is not used in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts containing Old English verse, sometimes it can be difficult to differentiate between main and subordinate clauses (i.e., to translate the word at issue as an adverb that is part of a main clause or as a conjunction that joins the main clause to its subordinate).

In prose, word order is relatively strict and hence it is easy to ascertain the function of the apparently ambiguous lexical item. If a clause beginning with the word at issue features a word order PS—where Predicator stands for Verb and S for

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[123] See A. Campbell, "Verse Influences in Old English Prose," 94. See also Fulk, "Old English: Literary Language," 389.

[124] For an elaborate list of non-prepositional conjunctions and some of their possible adverbial meanings, see Mitchell and Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, sixth edition, 83-8, §168.

Subject—then the word is an adverb and the clause is principal. Otherwise, the clause is subordinate. See, for example, the following sentence from Bede's account of the conversion of King Edwin in the Old English version of his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*:

<u>Þā</u> ðæt folc hine þā ġeseah swā ġescyrpedne, <u>þā</u> wēndon hēo þæt hē teola ne wiste

There are four distinct verbal forms in this complex sentence: *ġeseah*, *ġescyrpedne*, *wēndon*, and *wiste*. As the ending *-ne* indicates, *ġescyrpedne*, "accoutred, equipped", is a past participle here used as a strong masculine accusative singular adjective modifying *hine*; *wiste*, the past singular form of the preterite-present verb *witan*, "know, discern, perceive*,*" is the Predicator of the *þæt*-clause that functions as the Direct Object of the verb *wēndon*, the past plural of *wēnan*, "think". Which of the two remaining verbs (*wēndon* and *wiste*) is the Predicator of the main clause is made clear by the order of the constituents that follow each *þā*. Since the first *þā* is followed by the Subject (*ðæt folc*), which is in turn followed by its verb (*ġeseah*), the first clause is subordinate and *þā* must consequently be translated as the conjunction "when"; since the second *þā* is followed by a verb (*wēndon*), the clause is principal and this *þā* must hence be translated as the adverb "then". The whole sentence can be translated as follows:

When the people saw him thus accoutred, then they thought that he did not discern well.

The use in the same sentence of the correlative couple *þā... þā*, formed by a subordinating conjunction and an adverb with exactly the same form, is a characteristic feature of Old English prose writing. Some scholars have seen it as the result of the

earliest Old English writers' desire to develop a new style of writing.[125] Nevertheless, it

became a sophisticated stylistic element in later prose, as in the following extract from

Ælfric of Eynsham's preface to his *Life of Saint Edmund*:[126]

Þ̲ā̲ wurdon hī æt sprǣċe oþ þæt Dūnstān rehte be Sancte Ēadmunde, swā swā

Ēadmundes swurbora hit rehte Æþelstāne cyninge, þ̲ā̲ þ̲ā̲ Dūnstān ġeong man wæs and

se swurdbora wæs forealdod man. Þ̲ā̲ ġesette se munuc ealle þā ġereċċednysse on ānre

bēċ and eft, ð̲ā̲ þ̲ā̲ sēo bōc cōm tō ūs binnan fēawum ġēarum, þ̲ā̲ āwende wē hit on

Englisc, swā swā hit hēræfter stent.

In this short prose extract, there are five instances of *þā* that are pertinent to the topic

under discussion, and in two of them the particle *þā* is doubled. (The remaining instance

of *þā* is the accusative singular form of the definite article *sēo*, and is therefore

irrelevant to the present argument). The particle *þā* is usually duplicated by Ælfric when

it is a conjunction,[127] but even if it were not duplicated, word order would

unambiguously indicate the function of each *þā*.

The verb *wurdon* is the plural past form of *weorðan*. The Old English idiomatic

expression *weorðan æt sprǣċe* can be rendered as "come into conversation" in Modern

English.[128] The nominative plural third person personal pronoun *hī* is the Subject, which

means that the word order exhibited by this clause after the initial *þā* is PS. The initial

þā is then an adverb and the clause is principal. The same holds true for the clauses

beginning *Þā ġesette se munuc* and *þā āwende wē hit*, which clearly show the order PS

after the initial particle. In two instances where *þā* is doubled, on the contrary, the word

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[125] Mitchell and Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, 68, §150.
[126] For a brief introduction to Old English prose word order in Ælfric's *Life of Saint Edmund*, see Smith, *Old English*, 29-33.
[127] See Mitchell and Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, 69, §151.
[128] See Mitchell and Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, 205n129.

order exhibited by the clauses is distinct from PS. The first, *þā þā Dūnstān ġeong man wæs*, features the word order SCs—where Cs stands for Subject Complement. The second clause, beginning *ðā þā sēo bōc cōm*, features the order SP. In both of them, consequently, the doubled *þā* is a conjunction. The whole extract could be translated as follows:

Then they came into conversation until Dunstan spoke about Saint Edmund, as Edmund's swordbearer told King Athelstan when Dunstan was a young man and the swordbearer was old. Then the monk set down the whole narrative in one book, and afterwards, when the book came to us within two years, then we translated it into English, as it stands in the following pages.

In poetry, however, where word order is determined not by the nature of the clause but by the requirements of prosody, it can be more difficult to distinguish a main clause from a subordinate clause. See, for example, the following extract from *Beowulf* (room is being made for Beowulf and his companions in Heorot right after Hrothgar has approvingly greeted them:
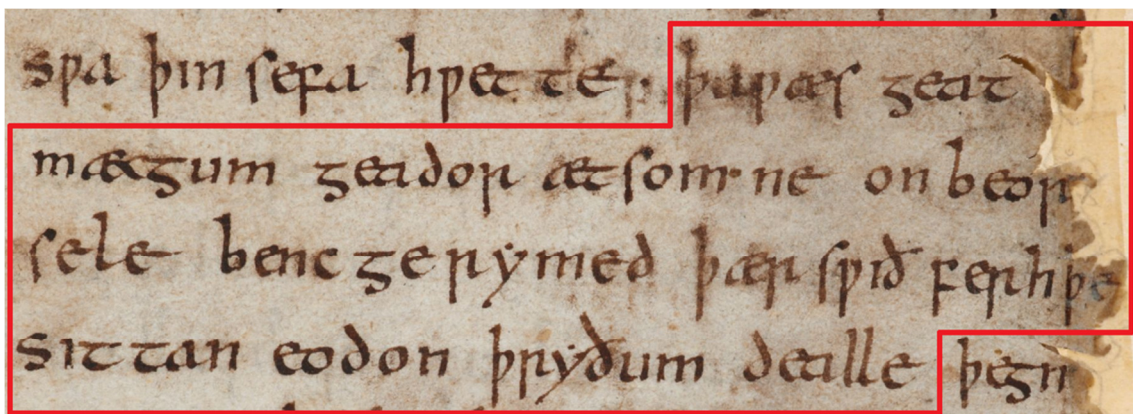
þā wæs Ġēatmæcgum   ġeador ætsomne

on bēorsele   benċ ġerȳmed

> þǣr swīðferhþe   sittan ēodon
>
> þryðum dealle
>
> (*Beowulf* 491-494a)

The edited text below the manuscript snip is lineated according to the metre and shows macrons above long vowels. Punctuation marks and capital letters—except that of *Ġēatmæcgum*, a proper noun—are omitted for the moment. Two possible translations present themselves, depending on whether *þā* is interpreted as an adverb or as a conjunction. If *þā* is an adverb, then the first clause, whose predicator is realized by the verb phrase *wæs ġerȳmed*, must be a main clause and, as such, is independent from the following one. Hence, a full stop or a semicolon should be inserted after *ġerȳmed*, where a new clause begins. If *þā* is a conjunction, then the clause is subordinate to the following one, which must be in turn the main clause—and a comma, not a full stop, should then be inserted after *ġerȳmed*:

> [Then a bench was cleared in the beer-hall for the men of the Geats together.
>
> There the brave ones of famous strength went to sit.]

> [When a bench was cleared in the beer-hall for the men of the Geats together,
>
> the brave ones of famous strength went to sit there.]

Is it possible at all to disambiguate the meaning of *þā*? In instances such as this one, where the predicator is a verb phrase consisting of an auxiliary and a non-finite form of a verb (*wæs ġerȳmed*), the position of the auxiliary with respect to the non-finite verb, in conjunction with Kuhn's laws, can help us to determine if *þā* is an adverb or a conjunction. If the auxiliary precedes the non-finite verb and does not receive rhythmic

stress, then the clause tends to be principal. Almost complementarily, if the auxiliary appears after the non-finite verb and receives rhythmic stress, then the clause tends to be principal.[129] Since in the above extract the auxiliary (*wæs*) appears before the past participle (*ġerȳmed*) and does not receive rhythmic stress (it is placed in the fist drop of the verse clause), the clause is probably principal and hence *þā* is an adverb. Consequently, the first translation is correct. *Klaeber IV* edits the text accordingly:[130]

> Þā wæs Ġēatmæcgum   ġeador ætsomne
>
> on bēorsele   benċ ġerȳmed;
>
> þǣr swīðferhþe   sittan ēodon,
>
> þryðum dealle.

Compare, however, the following extract from *Beowulf*, in which Grendel's evil intention is revealed by the narrator right after the monster has entered the hall for the last time:
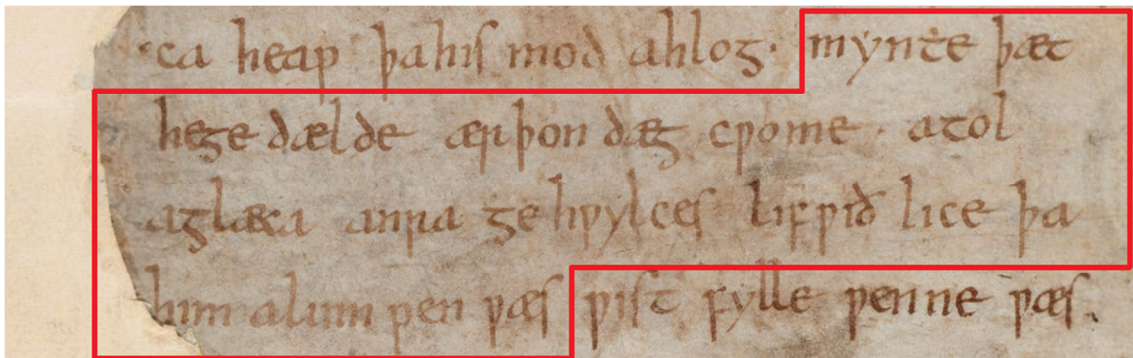
> mynte þæt hē ġedǣlde   ǣr þon dæġ cwōme
>
> atol āglǣċa   ānra ġehwylċes
>
> līf wið līċe   þā him ālumpen wæs
>
> wistfylle wēn
>
> (*Beowulf* 731-734a)

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[129] See Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 92.

[130] *Þǣr*, however, might be interpreted as a conjunction rather than an adverb. See Donoghue, *Style in Old English Poetry*, 70-1.

As in the previous extract, two different interpretations present themselves: (1) *þā* could be an adverb, in which case the clause would be principal and hence independent from the previous one; or (2) *þā* could be a conjunction, which would mean that the clause is dependent on the previous one. The two possible translations are:

(1) [he, terrible troublemaker, intended to sever the life of each one from the body before the day came. Then he experienced expectation of a lavish feast.]

(2) [he, terrible troublemaker, intended to sever the life of each one from the body before the day came, when he experienced expectation of a lavish feast]

The Predicator of the clause containing the particle *þā* is realized by a complex verb phrase consisting of an auxiliary (*wæs*) and a past participle (*ālumpen*) as in the previous example (*wæs ġerȳmed*). But contrary to the previous case, the auxiliary appears after the non-finite form of the verb and receives rhythmic stress (it is not placed in the first drop of its clause, besides *þā*, *him*, and *ā-*). This means that the particle *þā* is best interpreted as a conjunction and that, consequently, the clause is subordinate. Translation number (2) is therefore correct, and *Klaeber IV* edits the text accordingly:

> mynte þæt hē ġedǣlde,   ǣr þon dæġ cwōme,
>
> atol āglǣċa   ānra ġehwylċes
>
> līf wið līċe,   þā him ālumpen wæs
>
> wistfylle wēn

As we can see, a comma has been inserted immediately after *līċe*, since the clause that follows is a syntactic consitutent of the the previous clause.

Let us now consider two verses from *Beowulf* in which *þonne*, "then, when," is ambiguous (the first extract extends across two folios of the manuscript):
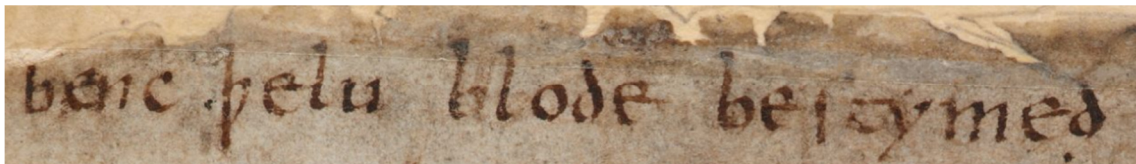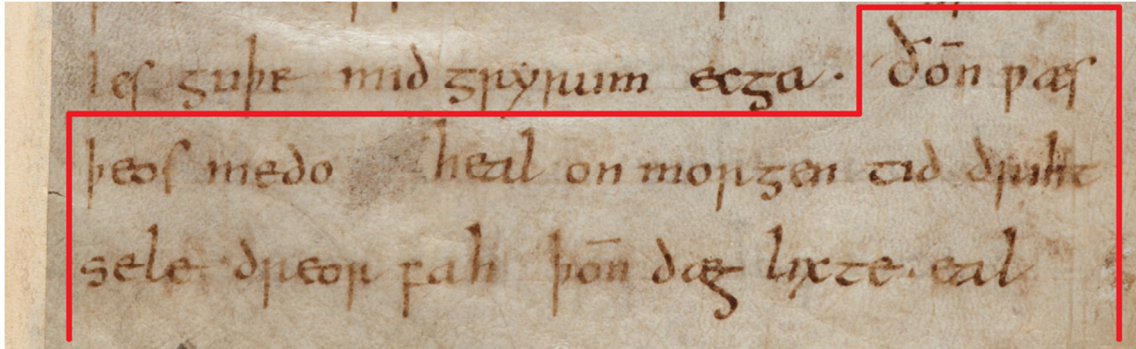
Þonne wæs þēos medoheal   on morgentīd,

drihtsele drēorfāh   þonne dæġ lixte,

eal benċþelu   blōde bestȳmed (484a-486b)
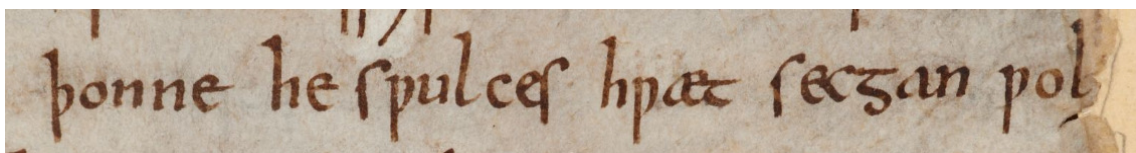
þonne hē swulċes hwæt   secgan wolde (880)

In the first example, the first *þonne* might seem ambiguous at first. But since the auxiliary *wæs* precedes the past participle *bestȳmed*, and since *wæs* is unstressed because it is placed in the first drop of its clause, the clause is principal and *þonne* must then be interpreted as an adverb. Below follows an appropriate translation:

Then in the morning this mead-hall, this splendid court, painted with gore when the day glittered, all the bench-planks wet with blood.

In the second instance, the auxiliary *wolde* follows the infinitive *secgan* and receives

stress because it is not in the first drop of the clause, besides *þonne* and *hē*.

Consequenly, *þonne* is a conjunction and the whole clause is subordinate. An

appropriate Modern English translation follows below:

> when he wished to say something of that matter

Daniel Donoghue represents the two possible patterns as follows:

(1) vV

(2) Vv́

Where 'v' indicates auxiliary, 'V' indicates the accompanying non-finite form of the

verb, and *the acute accent indicates rhythmic stress. He points, however, that the degree*

of fidelity to the practice of using the former structure in principal clauses and the latter

in subordinate ones varies from poet to poet, and that it is then a tendency, not a law.[131]

§44. Anacrusis

Some metrical types can have one or two extrametrical unstressed syllables before the

beginning of the metrical pattern itself. Of course, this can be true only of verse types

that begin with a lift, since it would be impossible to distinguish extrametrical

unstressed syllables from the metrical unstressed syllables contained by a verse-initial

drop. This phenomenon is known as anacrusis. Thus, types A and D, both of which

begin with a lift, can occasionally feature anacrusis, as opposed to types B and C, which

begin with a drop. Type E verses, however, which begin with a lift, do not permit that

anacrustic syllables be added to the metrical pattern. The reason for this stricture against

anacrustic type E verses seems to be syntactically motivated, as we will see below. A

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[131] See Donoghue, *Style in Old English Poetry: the Test of the Auxiliary* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 100-101.

consideration of some anacrustic verses in *Beowulf* will reveal the characteristic features

of this metrical phenomenon.
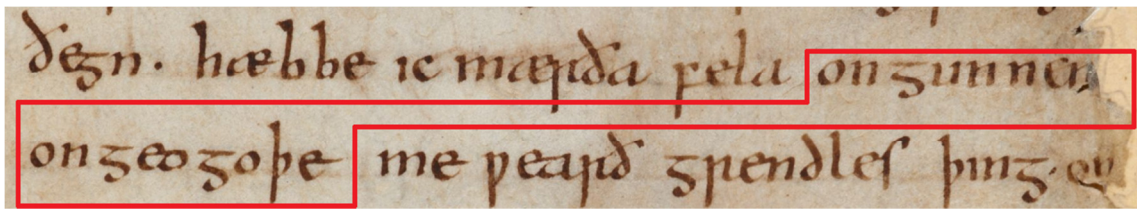
    ongunnen on ġeogoþe (409a)

    (x)Sxx[Sx]x

[undertaken in youth]
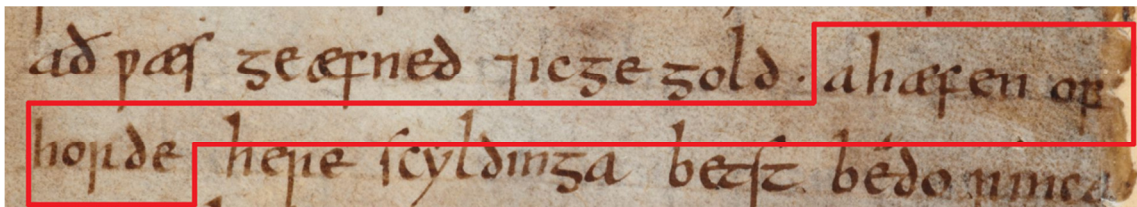
    āhæfen of horde (1108a)

    (x)[Sx]xSx

[brought from the hoard]
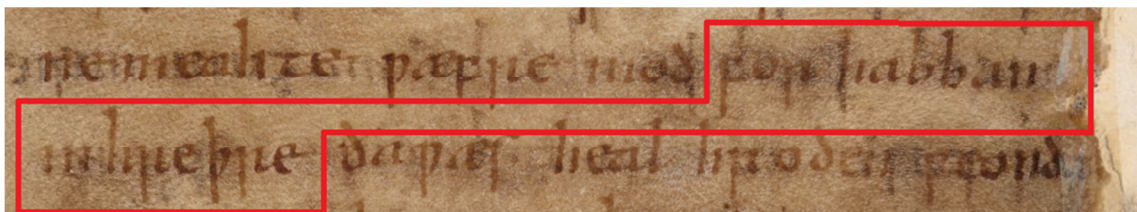
    forhabban in hreþre (1151a)

    (x)SxxSx

[restrain itself in the heart]
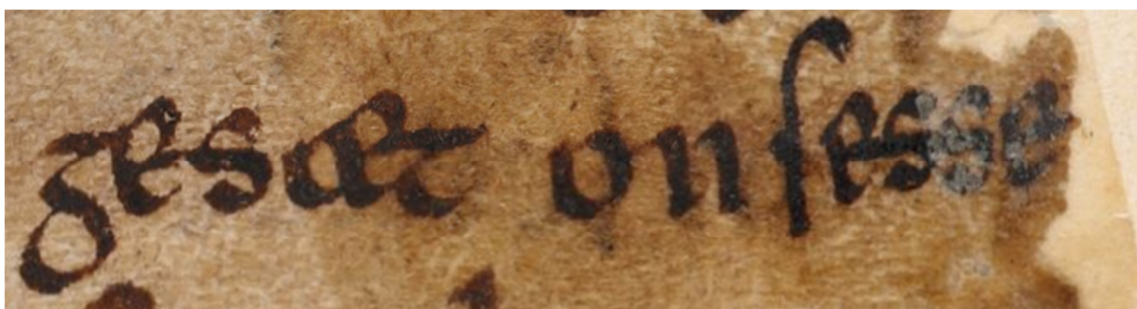
   ġesæt on sesse (2717a)

   (x)SxSx

  [sat on the seat]

The stress contour xSx(x…)Sx is not one of the five basic metrical patterns. Verses like the previous four are best conceptualized as type A verses exhibiting an underlying stress pattern Sx(x…)Sx preceded by one extrametrical, or anacrustic, unstressed syllable—the extrametricality of which is signalled in the scansion by putting the 'x' between parentheses. As can be seen, the anacrustic syllable usually coincides with an unstressed verbal prefix, like *on-*, *ā-*, *for-*, and *ġe-*. Other linguistic elements (such as prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, etc.), however, can also be anacrustic, as in the following instance:[132]
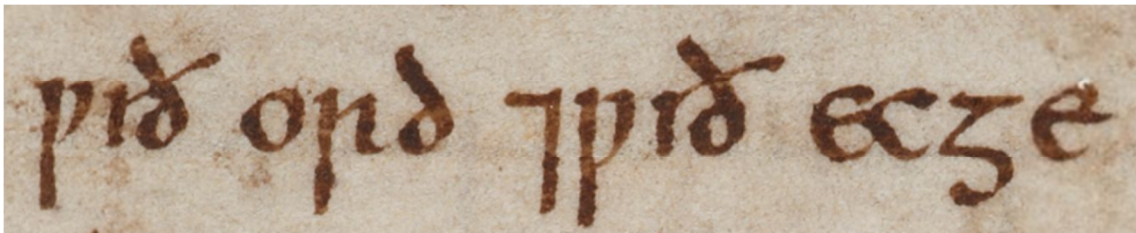
   wið ord ond wið ecge (1549a)

   (x)SxxSx

  [against point and edge]

In this instance, it is the preposition *wið* (not a verbal prefix) that stands in an anacrustic relation to the rest of the verse, which features a stress contour that corresponds to a rhythmical type A.

  As has been stated above, a verse can contain up to two anacrustic syllables, as in the following instance:

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[132] See Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 45.
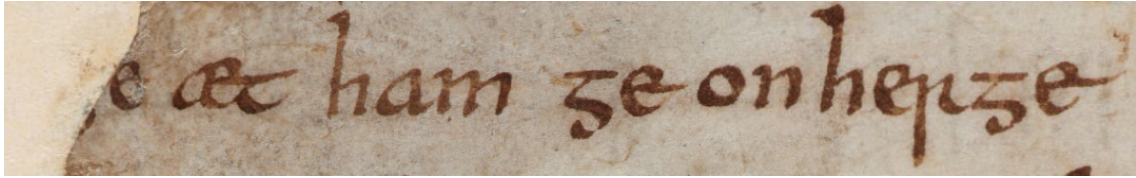
ġē æt hām ġē on herġe (1248a)

(xx)SxxSx

[both at home and in the army]

Here the poet has taken advantage of the possibility of adding up to two extrametrical unstressed syllables to a type A stress pattern in order to make the correlative structure ġē... ġē, "both...and," fit into the metre of the poem. There is only one more instance of a type A verse featuring disyllabic anacrusis in *Beowulf*:
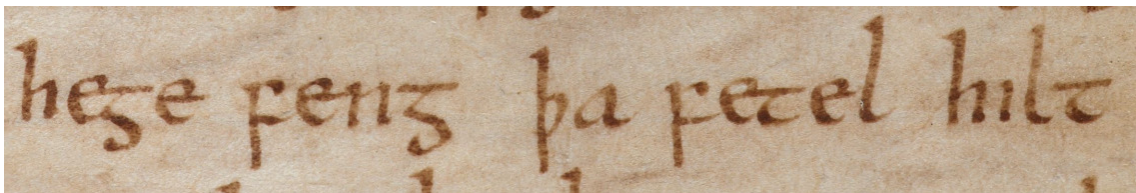
hē ġefēng þā fetelhilt (1563a)

(xx)Sx[Sx]s

[he seized the linked hilt]

Pope has argued, however, that *hē* is perhaps a scribal addition, so that this verse might originally have had only one anacrustic syllable (the verbal prefix *ġe-*).

Besides type A, type D—especially the varieties with secondary rather than tetiary stress—also features anacrusis with relative frequency, as in the following examples:

ġesēon sunu Hrǣdles (*Beowulf* 1485a)

(x)S[Sx]sx

[see Hrethel's son]
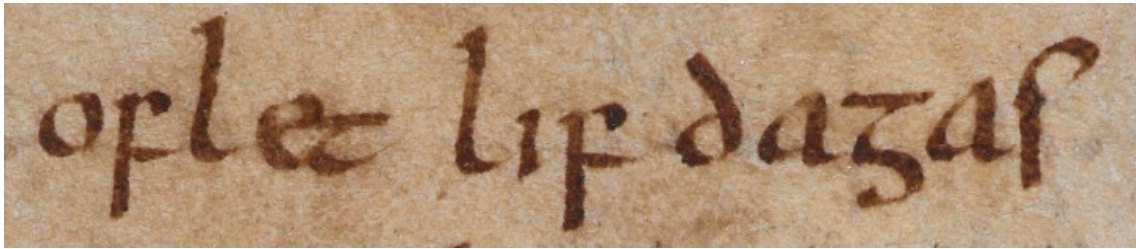
oflḗt līfdagas (*Beowulf* 1622)

(x)SSsx[133]

[left life-days]
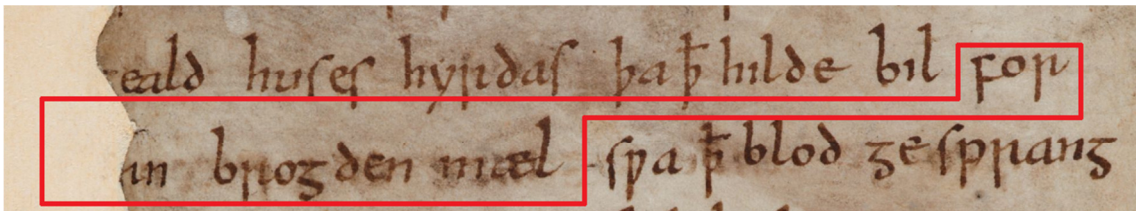
forbarn brogdenmǣl (*Beowulf* 1667a)

(x)SSxs

[burned up the patter-welded sword]
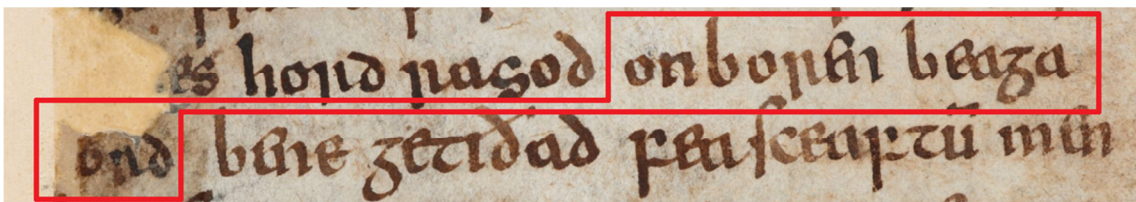
onboren bēaga hord (*Beowulf* 2284a)

(x)[Sx]Sxs

[the hoard of rings (was) diminished]

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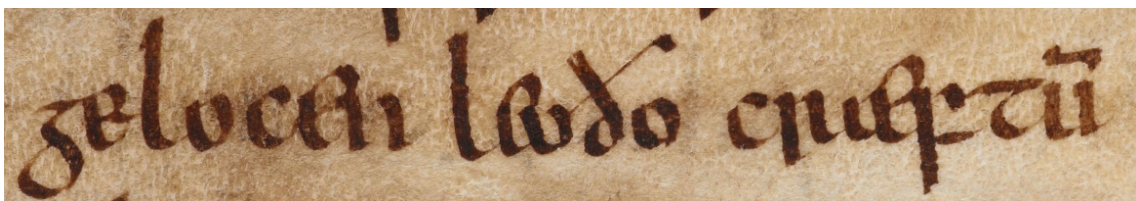
[133] The sequence -*dagas* does not resolve because it ends in a consonant (see section on Kaluza's above).

ġelocen leoðocræftum (*Beowulf* 2769)

(x)[Sx][Sx]sx

[woven with skill of hands]

This is a sample of different subtypes of type D featuring anacrusis. Subtypes of type

D* can also contain anacrustic syllables, as the following examples show:
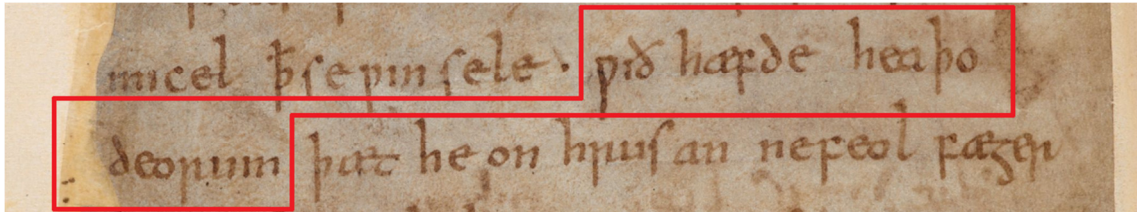
wiðhæfde heaþodēorum (*Beowulf* 772a)

(x)Sx [Sx]sx

[withstood the brave in battle]
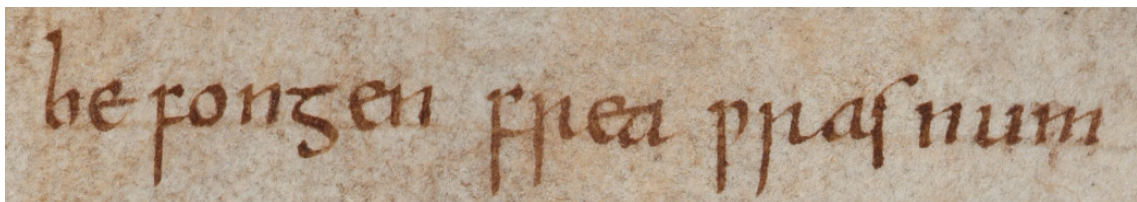
befongen frēawrāsnum (*Beowulf* 1451a)

(x)SxSsx

[encircled by a lordly chain]
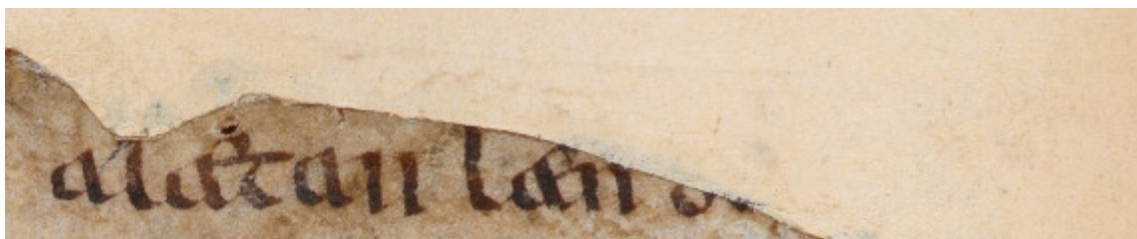
ālǣtan lǣndagas (*Beowulf* 2591a)

(x)SxSsx

[leave the transitory days]

The eight above-mentioned examples are all anacrustic type D verses with secondary, rather than tertiary, stress. As Bliss has observed,[134] the majority of instances of anacrusis in type D verses almost exclusively appear in the varieties with secondary stress, although two instances of anacrusis in type D verses with tertiary stress are remarkable:
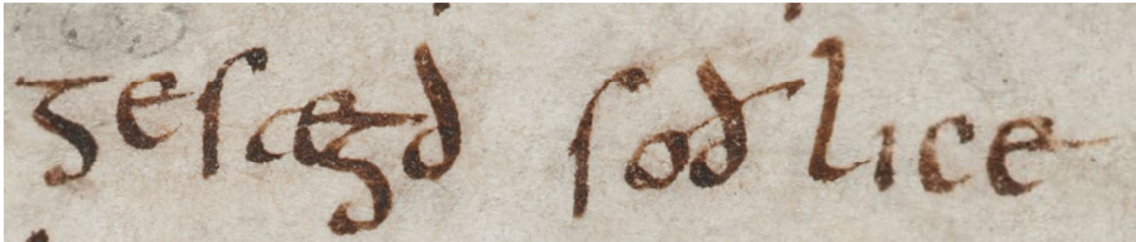
ġesǣġd sōðlīċe (141a)

(x)SSsx

[(was) told truly]
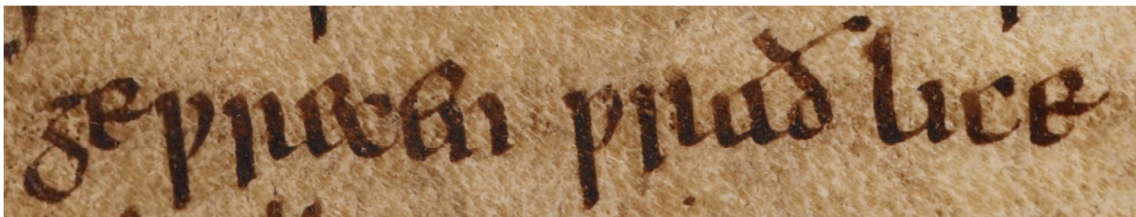
ġewrecen wrāðlīċe (3062a)

(x)[Sx]Ssx

[(was) avenged grievously]

These two verses are best conceptualized as featuring a stress contour corresponding to a type D with one unstressed extrametrical syllable, which corresponds to the verbal prefix *ġe-*.[135]

Scrutiny of the seventeen examples displayed above reveals one characteristic feature of anacrustic verses: their two lifts tend to participate in the alliterative pattern of

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[134] Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 42.

[135] The total number of type D verses featuring anacrusis in *Beowulf* depends on whether alliterating clause-initial finite verbs are considered to be fully stressed.

the line—which of course means that anacrustic verses are usually appear in the on-verse, since double alliteration is strictly forbidden in the second part of the line.[136] Indeed, *Beowulf* contains only seven indisputable instances of anacrustic off-verses with single alliteration.[137] The disproportionate relation of anacrustic off-verses with single alliteration to anacrustic on-verses with double alliteration in *Beowulf* confirms the tendency of anacrustic syllables to appear in on-verses with double alliteration. Nevertheless, a later and considerably shorter poem such as *The Battle of Maldon* contains a significant number of anacrustic off-verses with single alliteration—which is best interpreted as a sign of the decay of the poetic tradition.[138]

As has been stated, anacrustic syllables only appear in type A and D verses. They are forbidden in type E verses, despite the fact that type E, like types A and D, begins with a lift. The rationale behind this prohibition can only be understood if Bliss's notion of the breath-group is introduced. This willin turn show that the occurrence of anacrusis in types A and D, even though it appears to be arbitrary, is in actuality syntactically motivated.

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[136] Of the two apparent exceptions, 25a and 2093a, only the latter, *Tō lang is tō reċenne*, truly fails to feature double alliteration shown by anacrustic type A verses. In *Beowulf* 25a, *in mǣġþa ġehwǣre*, the genitivie *ġehwǣre* probably is a late West Saxon scribal substitution for genderless *ġehwām*—which would render a stress contour corresponding to a standard type B (see Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 41-42; and *Klaeber IV*, 114, note for verse 35a; and 333).

[137] See *Klaeber IV*, 333. These are 93b, 666b, 1223b, 1504b, 1773b, 1877b, and 2247b. These are all type A verses. The only two instances of anacrustic type D verses in the off-verse, 402b and 9b, are suspicious of scribal intervention. In 402b, *þā secg wīsode* ("then the man showed the way"), the adverb *þā* is inessential and probably not authorial. The same holds true for *þāra* in 9b, *þāra ymbsittendra* ("of those sitting around").

[138] See Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 45. Some anacrustic off-verses with single alliteration in *The Battle of Maldon* are 32b, 55b, or 72b, among others. A comparison between *The Battle of Maldon* 11, *Ēac him wolde Ēadrīċ | his ealdre ġelǣstan*, and *Beowulf* 2481, *þēah ðe ōðer his | ealdre ġebōhte*, proves particularly interesting. Both of them contain the phrase *his ealdre* followed by a verbal form with the prefix *ġe-* attached. But whereas the possessive adjective *his* in *The Battle of Maldon* is clearly part of the off-verse (which means that the off-verse is then irregularly anacrustic), it has been convincingly demonstrated that *his* must be part of the on-verse in *Beowulf* (*Klaeber IV*, 247-8). Why does *The Battle of Maldon* poet treat *his ealdre* irregularly while the *Beowulf* poet deals with the same linguistic material in a regular manner? It might well be that lines like 11 in *The Battle of Maldon*, with an irregular anacrustic possessive adjective in the off-verse, are the product of a late poet's reinterpretation of early lines like *Beowulf* 2481, where the possessive adjective is a dislocated stressed particle realizing the position of the second lift in the on-verse. This would furnish evidence supporting the notion that anacrustic off-verses are symptoms of late decay.

§45. Bliss's Breath-Groups

As we have seen above, an Old English verse consists of two feet. Above, a vertical stroke, 'ǀ', signals the foot division that exists within each type of verse. The metrical notion of the foot was originally devised by Sievers and is retained in both Pope-Fulk 2001 and in Terasawa 2011 (and consequently also in this dissertation). As Terasawa has pointed out, however, "the syntactic break in a verse does not necessarily correspond to the boundary between two feet."[139] In fact, it was with an eye to improving Sievers's analysis metrical analysis of the verse—whose arbitrariness and faulty correlation with syntax Bliss criticized—that he developed the notion of "breath-group," based on Andreas Heusler's *Atemgruppen*.[140]

According to the level of sentence stress they receive, the linguistic units of which Old English poetry consists, and which realize Old English metrical positions, can be classified into stress-words, proclitics, and particles. A clause of considerable size in Old English will contain a series of stress-words. These may be preceded by proclitics, and the whole series formed by the stress words and their dependent proclitics may in turn be preceded by one or several particles. The breath-group is a unit of sense that comprises one and only one stress-word together with all the unstressed linguistic elements that depend syntactically upon it. (Bliss's breath-groups are then small syntactic units, as opposed to Sievers's feet). Bliss uses the term "caesura" to signal the division that exists between breath-groups, which according to him coincides with the natural pauses in speech at which breath is taken.[141]

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[139] Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 46-47.

[140] See Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 36-37; see also A. Heusler, *Deutsche Versgesichte*, 55. Russom's word-foot theory, in turn, seems to be influenced by Bliss's notion of the breath-group.

[141] See Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 36-37; and also *An Introduction to Old English Metre*, 8 (§10), 10 (§13), and 14 (§18). Notice that Bliss's usage of the term "caesura" is different from the way it is used in this dissertation, where "caesura" refers to the line-internal boundary between verses.

The notion of the breath-group is meaningful in order to detect and account for certain regularities that would otherwise remain unnoticed. In type A verses, for example, the caesura can fall into three different positions, as the examples below show:
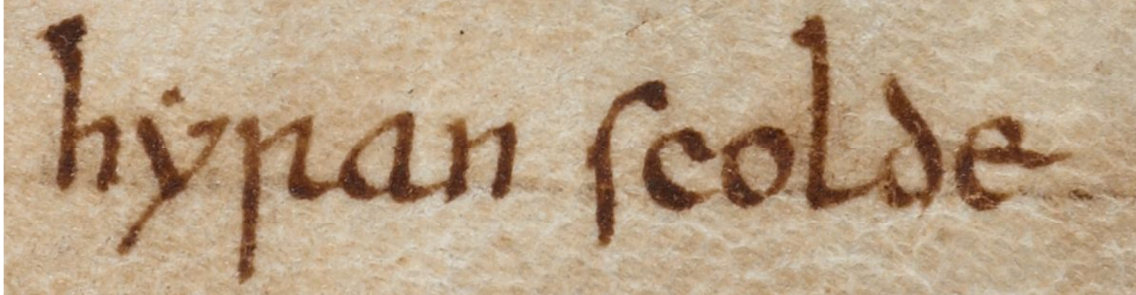
hȳran scolde (*Beowulf* 10b)

[should obey]

Since this is a type A verse that consists of only two stress-words without any dependent unstressed element, Sievers's foot division and Bliss's caesura, both signalled by a vertical stroke, coincide: Sx | Sx. But compare the following two verses:
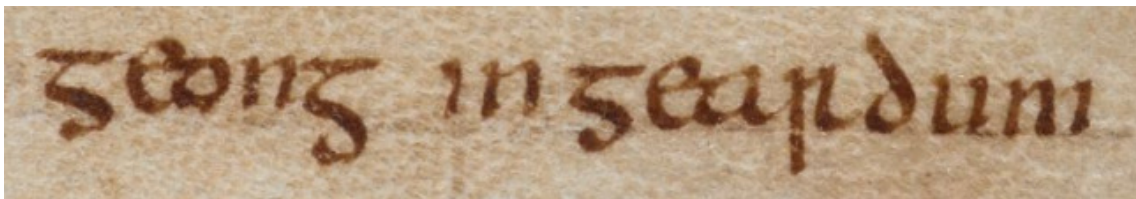
ġeong in ġeardum (13a)

[a young in the courtyard]

Sievers would place the vertical stroke marking foot division between *in* and *ġeardum*, Sx | Sx, thus disturbing the syntactic integrity of the prepositional phrase, which consists of a head, *in*, and a dative plural *a*-stem, *ġeardum*, as its complement. On the contrary, given that a breath-group contains one stress-word along with its attendant unstressed linguistic elements, Bliss's caesura would separate the noun phrase *ġeong* from the above-mentioned prepositional phrase thus: S |xSx.

There is a third different position in type A verses where Bliss's caesura may fall, as the next example shows:
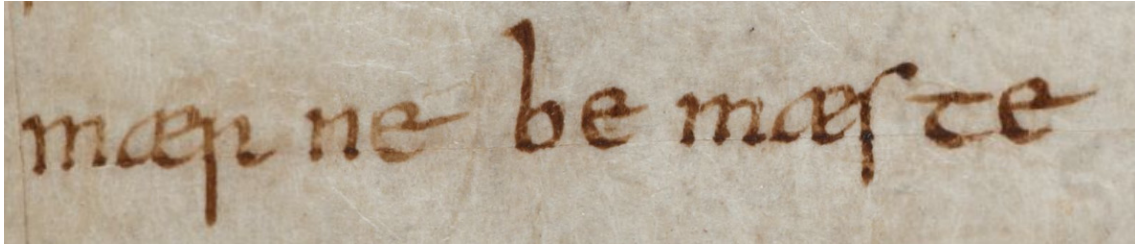
mǣrne be mæste (36a)

[the illustrious one by the mast]

The preposition *be* is a proclitic that depends on the dative singular *a*-stem *mæste*. Consequently, they constitute a single breath-group. This means that the strong masculine accusative singular form of the *ja*-stem disyllabic adjective *mǣre* constitutes another breath-group—since the caesura cannot fall in the middle of a word, according to Bliss. The caesura would thus fall between the adjective and the preposition, as this scheme shows: Sx | xSx.

According to Bliss, there are three different positions where the caesura may fall: (i) Sx | Sx, as in *Beowulf* 10b, *hyran scolde*; (ii) S | xSx, as in *Beowulf* 13a, *ġeong in ġeardum*; and (iii) Sx | xSx, as in *Beowulf* 36a, *mǣrne be mæste*. The table below comprises this information:

Verse	Sievers's Foot Division		Bliss's Caesura	
hyran scolde	Sx | Sx		Position (i)	
			Sx | Sx	
	hyran	scolde	hyran	scolde
ġeong in ġeardum	Sx | Sx		Position (ii)	
			S | xSx	
	ġeong in	ġeardum	ġeong	in ġeardum
mǣrne be mæste	Sxx | Sx		Position (iii)	
			Sx | xSx	

	mǣrne be	mǣste	mǣrne	be mǣste

 As has been stated, the significance of Bliss's caesura is made evident by the regularities it enables us to discern. Thus, as his statistics demonstrates,[142] type A verses with the caesura in position (i) are very numerous in the off-verse, while type A verses with the caesura in positions (ii) and (iii) are more frequent in the on-verse and usually exhibit double alliteration. That such a striking regularity can be detected by means of Bliss's caesura is no doubt an indication that the notion captures certain realities of Old English verse.[143]

The position of the caesura can account not only for the distribution of different varieties of type A verses, but also for the occurrence of anacrusis in certain varieties of types A and D. All the examples of anacrustic verses mentioned in the previous section have been scanned without indicating either foot division or the position of the caesura. The following table shows Sievers's and Bliss's analyses for the Anacrustic verses considered above along with position in which Bliss's caesura falls:

Verse Number	Verse	Sievers's Scansion	Bliss's Scansion	Position
409a	ongunnen on ġeoguþe	(x)Sxx | [Sx]x	(x)Sx | x[Sx]x	(iii)
1108a	āhæfen of horde	(x)[Sx]x | Sx	(x)[Sx] | xSx	(ii)
1151a	forhabban in hreþre	(x)Sxx | Sx	(x)Sx | xSx	(iii)
2717a	ġesæt on sesse	(x)Sx | Sx	(x)S | xSx	(ii)
1549a	wið ord ond wið ecge	(x)Sxx | /x	(x)S | xxSx	(ii)
1248a	ġē æt hām ġē on herġe	(xx)Sxx | Sx	(xx)S | xxSx	(ii)
1563a	hē ġefēng þā fetelhilt	(xx)Sx | [Sx]s	(xx)/ | x[Sx]s	(ii)

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[142] Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 37-38.
[143] Similarly, that the application of a rule devised within the framework of Sievers's five-type analysis like Kaluza's law leads to the discovery of so many remarkable regularities indicates that such an inductively derived framework must be essentially correct.

As we can appreciate in this table, when type A verses feature anacrusis, the caesura systematically falls in positions (ii) or (iii), never in position (i).[144] There are only two apparent exceptions, but they prove not to be exceptional when subjected to close scrutiny. These two apparent exceptions are *Beowulf* 414a (*under heofenes hador*) and 107a (*in Caines cynne*). The manuscript reading of the former is as follows:
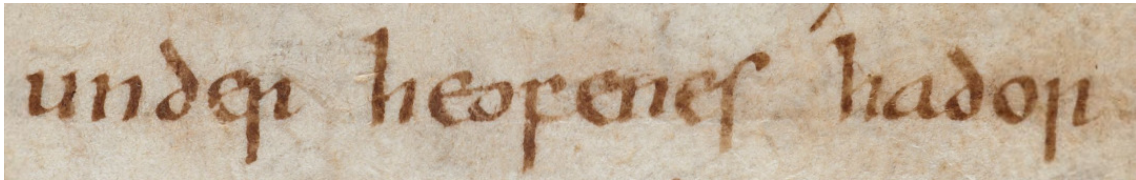
The word *hādor*, "brightness," has a long root vowel, and consequently this verse would scan as a type A with disyllabic anacrusis and a resolved first lift: (xx)[Sx]x | Sx. As we can see, caesura would fall in position (i), which would contravene the tendency of type A verses in the first part of the line to show anacrusis only when the caesura falls in positions (ii) or (iii). But since the word *hador* is nowhere else found as a noun, it is usually emended to *haðor*, "confinement," which features a short root vowel. Consequently, its resulting stress contour, xx[Sx]x[Sx], corresponds to that of a standard four-position rhythmical type B with both lifts resolved—which means that *Beowulf* 414a is not truly exceptional.

In regard to 107a, its manuscript reading is as follows:
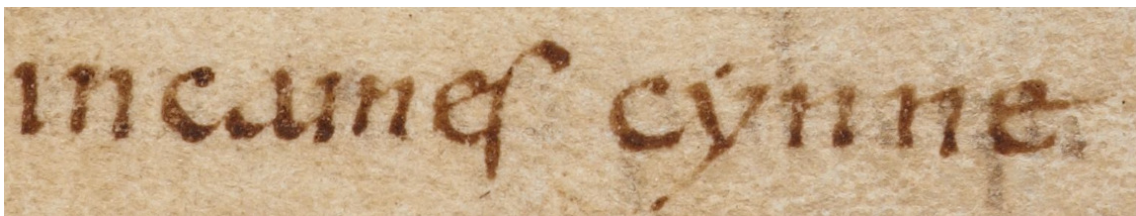
Sievers suggested that *ai* in Cain is a diphthong,[145] and hence that this verse would scan as an anacrustic type A with the caesura in position (i): (x)Sx | Sx.[146] Nevertheless, this

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[144] For more similar examples, see Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 40-41.

[145] See Sievers, *Zum angelsächsische Vocalismus* (Leipzing: Universität Leipzig, 1900), 7; see also Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 40.

verse is suspect on text-critical grounds. Originally, it read *cames* (i.e., the genitive form of the name Cam, a spelling variant for Cham, the son of Noah), but it was later on altered to *caines* (i.e., the genitive of Cain) through erasure of the *m* ligature. The verse is part of a passage in which Grendel's ancestry is described, and Grendel has traditionally been assumed to be directly descended from Cain. This assumption would have led the early eleventh-century scribe to correct *cames*, which he found in his exemplar, to *caines*. Nevertheless, Leonard Neidorf has convincingly argued that the *Beowulf* poet was here following an exegetical tradition which regarded Cham as the successor of Cain and the progenitor of monsters, and hence the original short-stemmed *cames* need not be replaced by long-stemmed *caines*.[147] Thus, if the scribe's confusion is disregarded, this verse scans as a standard four-position type C with a resolved first lift (x[Sx]Sx).[148]

Thus, since the two previous verses are not unambiguous exceptions, it can be stated that anacrusis is permissible in type A verses only when the caesura falls in positions (ii) and (iii). But what is the rationale behind this regular distribution of anacrusis? A cursory glance at the examples analyzed in the table above shows that the answer is the weight of each breath-group. Type A verses with the caesura in positions (ii) and (iii)—the varieties of type A that regularly exhibit anacrusis—consist of two breath-groups of unequal weight, while type A verses with the caesura in position (i) contain two breath groups of equal size. The attachment of one or two unstressed extrametrical syllables to the beginning of the first breath-group in verses where the caesura falls in positions (ii) or (iii) thus seems to compensate for the lesser size of the first breath-group, as we can see in the following examples:

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[146] For this scansion, see, for example, Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 45.

[147] See Neidorf, "Cain, Cam, Jutes, Giants, and the Textual Criticism of *Beowulf*" (forthcoming).

[148] Another apparent exception, 1608a, is based on a highly controversial emendation which is no longer accepted (see Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, 41).

Verse Number	Verse	Bliss's Scansion
10b	hyran scolde	Sx | Sx
1108a	āhæfen of horde	(x)[Sx] | xSx
Ø	*hæfen of horde	[Sx] | xSx

If *āhæfen of horde* did not show the anacrustic syllable *ā-*, the first breath-group would

be considerably less weighty than the second. This compensatory character of anacrusis

has the complementary virtue of accounting for the stricture against anacrusis in type E

verses. Unlike type D verses, type E has a weighty first breath-group, as the follwing

tabel shows:

Verse Number	Verse	Bliss's Scansion
2769a	ġelocen leoðocræftum	(x)[Sx] | [Sx]sx
Ø	*locen leoðocræftum	[Sx] | [Sx]sx
675b	ġylpworda sum	Ssx | S

Beowulf 2769a would feature a first breath-group considerably less heavy than the

second if the metrical pattern did not begin with the anacrustic verbal prefix *ġe-*. Thus,

as in the case of type A verses with the caesura in positions (ii) and (iii), anacrustic

syllables attached to the first breath-group of a type D verse compensate for its light

weight or brevity—a function which is clearly unnecessary in type E verses like 675b,

where the first breath group is systematically longer or heavier than the first. Hence, the

non-occurrence of anacrusis in type E verses is syntactically motivated, since it depends

on the weight of the first syntactically discrete group of linguistic elements in the

verse—i.e., the breath-group.

1.4. METRICAL SUBTYPES

1.4.1. TYPE A

§46. A1

Its metrical configuration is lift, drop, lift, drop. The first drop, which is verse-internal, can be expanded. The second, verse-final drop is strictly restricted to one unstressed syllable. The unmarked variant with just one unstressed syllable in each drop is very usual. (Indeed, Russom defines it as the most basic form of the metre, of which all the other metrical configurations are complex variants).[149] Alliteration is compulsory for the first lift and, in the on-verse exclusively, optional for the second. Alliteration of the second lift is strictly forbidden in the off-verse.

§47. A2

Either drop or both of them are realized by a syllable bearing half-stress. In other words, a half-lift substitutes for one of the two drops or for both of them. The possible stress contours of type A2 are, therefore, SsSx (A2a), SxSs (A2b),[150] and SsSs (A2ab). If the second metrical position is occupied by a half-lift realized by a long syllable, the following lift may be realized by a short stressed syllable. Also, a resolved disyllabic sequence can substitute for a lift or a half-lift.[151] The presence of one half-lift besides the two standard lifts makes this a very heavy type, so that it generally features double alliteration. Type A2ab, with two half-lifts in the place of the two drops, shows double alliteration exclusively and hence is restricted to the on-verse.[152] Consequently, it is

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[149] See, for example, Vickman, *Metrical Concordance*, 24-6, where it is clearly seen that the occurrences of the basic metrical type outnumber the occurrences of the other subtypes.

[150] A2a is more frequent tan A2b. See Vickman, *Metrical Concordance*, 27-8.

[151] As has been stated, resolution under secondary stress in *Beowulf* is phonologically determined. Only etymologically short word-final vowels may resolve in metrical positions under secondary stress.

[152] There occur five instances in *Beowulf*, two of which feature a resolved half-lift; see Vickman, *Metrical Concordance*, 29. The two resolved disyllabic sequences in A2ab verses (*Beowulf* 193a and 485a) end in vowels that are etymologically short (nominative singular ending of $\bar{o}$-stems and nominative singular ending of masculine *i*-stems; see *HOEM*, 420-1).

usually restricted to the on-verse.[153] The foot containing the half-lift in type A2 is

usually realized by a compound, but sometimes a word group can substitute for it.

Below follow several examples, the majority of which are on-verses.

§48. A2a

Metrical configuration: lift, half-lift, lift, drop.
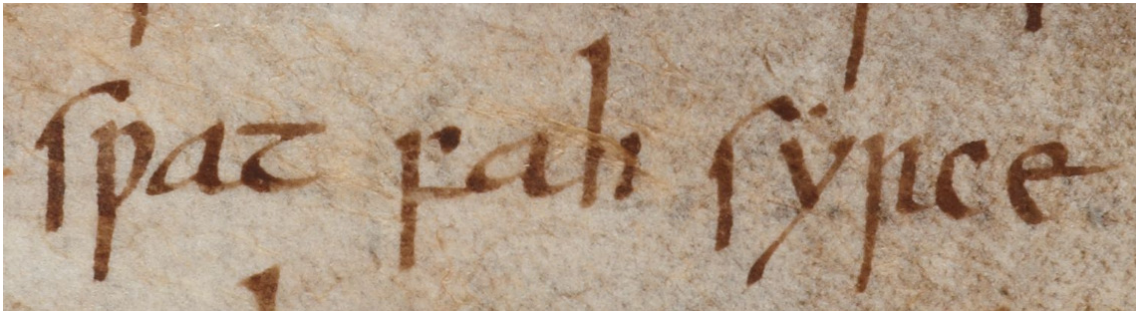
swātfāh syrċe (1111a)

[blood-stained mail-coat]

Linguistic material	swāt-	-fāh	syr-	-ċe
Stress contour	S	s	S	x
Metrical position	Lift	Half-lift	Lift	Drop
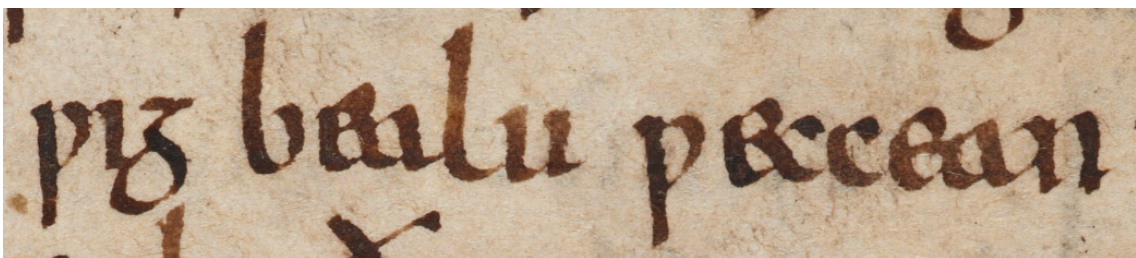
wīġbealu weċċean 2046a

[(begins to) arouse evil of war]

Linguistic material	wīġ-	-bealu	weċ-	-ċean

Stress contour	S	[sx]	S	x
Metrical position	Lift	Half-lift	Lift	Drop

In this verse, the half-lift is resolved.[154]
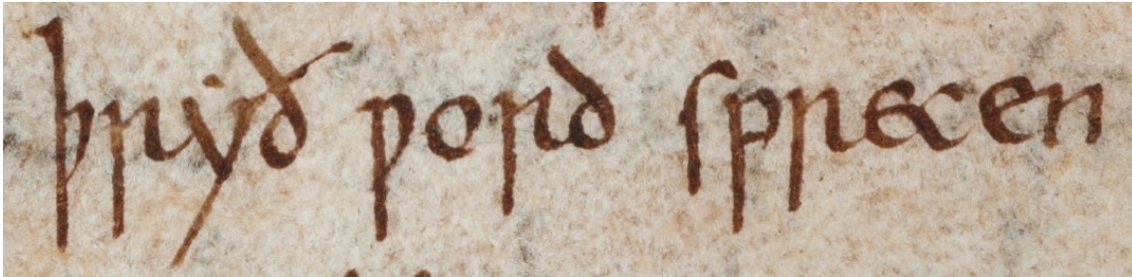
þrȳðword sprecen (643a)

[brave words spoken]

Linguistic material	þrȳð-	-word	spre-	-cen
Stress contour	S	s	S	x
Metrical position	Lift	Half-lift	Lift	Drop

In this example, the second lift is realized by an unresolved short stressed syllable. This is possible because the second lift is immediately preceded by a half-lift realized by a long syllable. If the half-lift were realized by a resolved sequence, the second lift should necessarily be realized either by a long stressed syllable or its resolved equivalent.
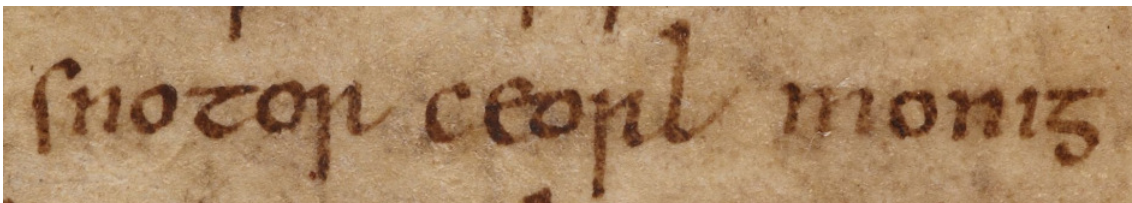
snotor ċeorl moniġ (908b)

[many a wise man]

---

[154] The neuter *wa*-stem accusative singular ending *-u* is etymologically short. See *HOEM*, 420.

Linguistic material	snotor	ċeorl	mo-	-niġ
Stress contour	[Sx]	s	S	x
Metrical position	Lift	Half-lift	Lift	Drop

In this example, a word group substitutes for a compound in the first foot, whose lift is realized by a resolved disyllabic sequence. Also, the second lift is realized by an unresolved short stressed syllable (notice the immediately preceding half-lift, realized by a long stressed syllable, as in the previous example). Since it is an off-verse, this verse features single alliteration (the on-verse is *swīðferhðes sīð*).

§49. A2b

Metrical configuration: lift, drop, lift, half-lift.
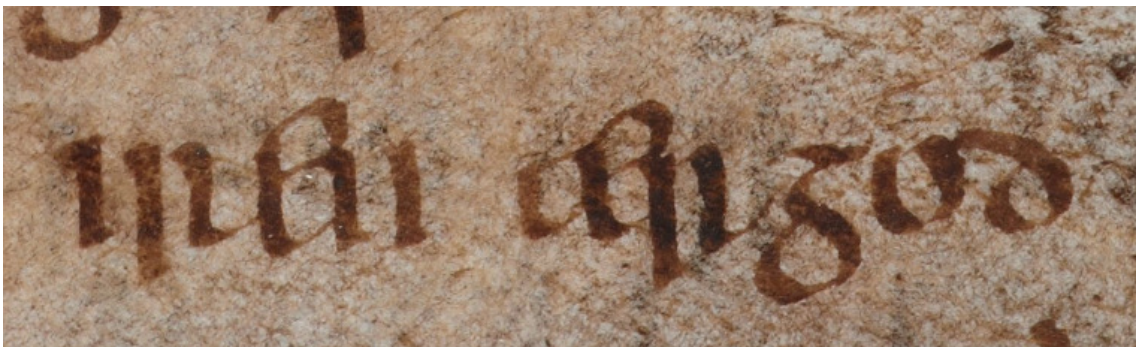
īren ǣrgōd 2586a

[sword hitherto excellent]

Linguistic material	ī-	-ren	ǣr-	-gōd
Stress contour	S	x	S	s
Metrical position	Lift	Drop	Lift	Half-lift
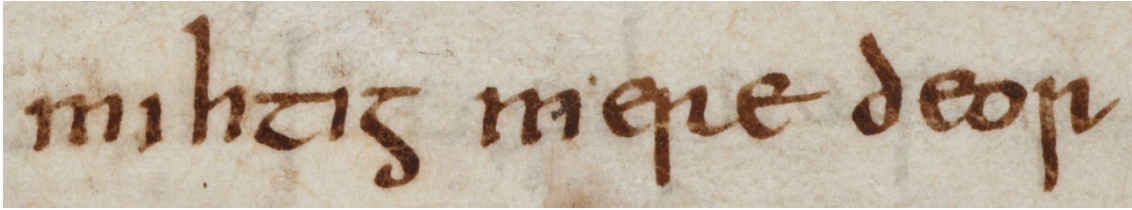
mihtiġ meredēor 558a

[mighty sea-beast]

Linguistic material	mih-	-tiġ	mere-	-dēor
Stress contour	S	x	[Sx]	s
Metrical position	Lift	Drop	Lift	Half-lift

This verse features a resolved second lift.

§50. A2ab

Metrical configuration: lift, half-lift, lift, half-lift.
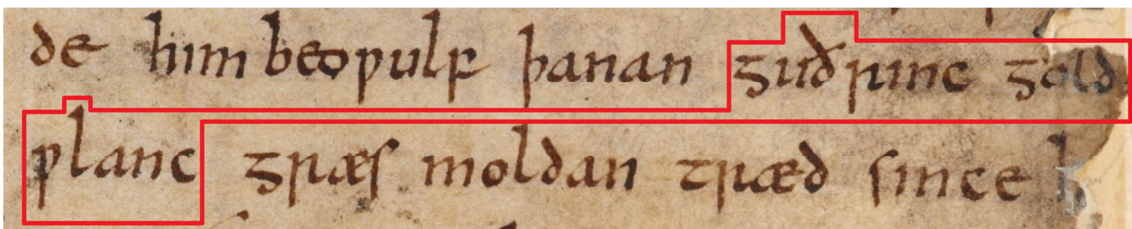
gūðrinċ goldwlanc 1881a

[proudly gold-adorned warrior]

Linguistic material	gūð-	-rinċ	gold-	-wlanc
Stress contour	S	s	S	s
Metrical position	Lift	Half-lift	Lift	Half-lift

§51. A3

Metrical configuration: drop, lift, drop.

Sievers analyzed type A3 verses as having two lifts, but nowadays they are generally considered to feature just one stress.[155] Since they contain just one stress, alliteration invariably falls upon it. This means that they are forbidden as off-verses. The minimum number of unstressed syllables in the first drop is two, but it usually contains more than three, as if to compensate for the absence of a lift.[156] The second drop, being verse-final, can only contain one unstressed syllable.
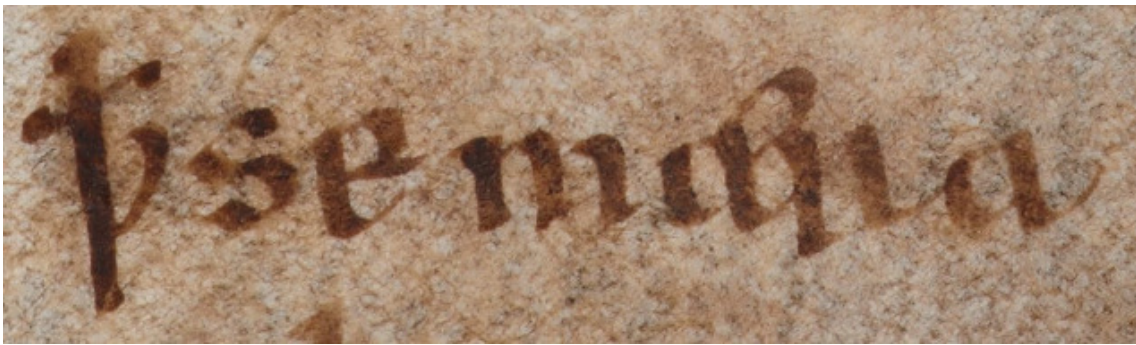
þæt se mǣra (2587a)

[which the renowned]

Linguistic material	þæt se	mǣ-	-ra
Stress contour	xx	S	x
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Drop

This type A3 verse features the minimum number of unstressed syllables in the first drop.

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[155] See Pope-Fulk 2001, 145.
[156] See Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 37.
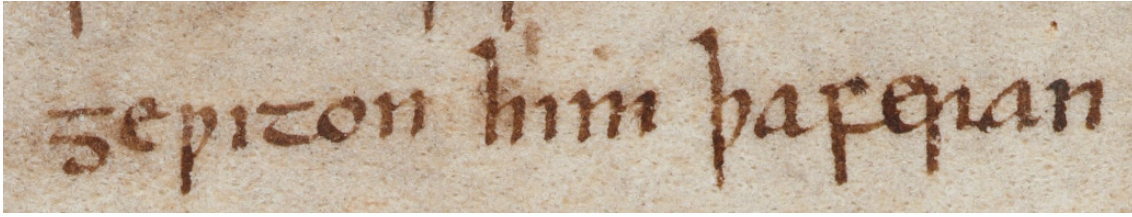
ġewiton him þā fēran (301a)

[then they departed going]

Linguistic material	ġewiton him þā	fē-	-ran
Stress contour	xxxxx	S	x
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Drop

§52. A3b

Metrical configuration: drop, lift, half-lift.

In this subtype, a half-lift substitutes for the verse-final drop, as in the following example:
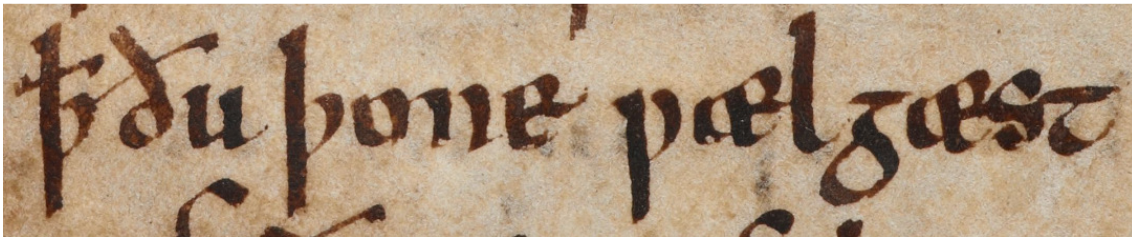
þæt þū þone wælgǣst (1995a)

[that you the murderous creature]

Linguistic material	þæt þū þone	wæl-	-gǣst
Stress contour	xxxx	S	s
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Drop

1.4.2. TYPE B

§53. B1

Its metrical configuration is drop, lift, drop, lift. Since the second lift is never preceded

by a lift or a half-lift, suspension of resolution is not possible in that metrical position.

The first drop can be expanded by adding up to four unstressed syllables to the

normative unstressed syllable. The second drop consists of a single unstressed syllable.

The example shown above as paradigmatic realization of type B, 42a, *on flōdes ǣht*, is a

type B1. The two following examples show an extremely expanded first drop (*Beowulf*

1718b) and a resolved second lift (*Beowulf* 384a).
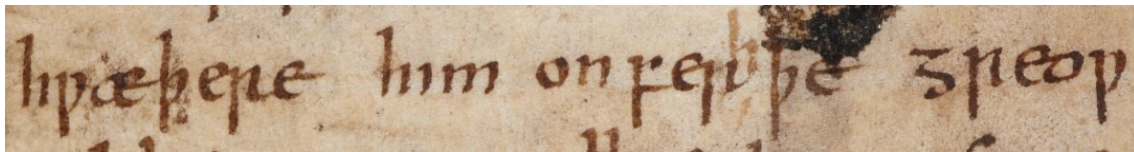
hwæþere him on ferhþe grēow (1718b)

[(a bloodthirsty heart), however, grew in his mind]

Linguistic material	hwæþere him on	ferh-	-þe	grēow
Stress contour	xxxxx	S	x	S
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift

The finite verb *grēow* receives sentence stress and occupies the metrical position of the

lift because it is displaced from the first drop of the verse clause.
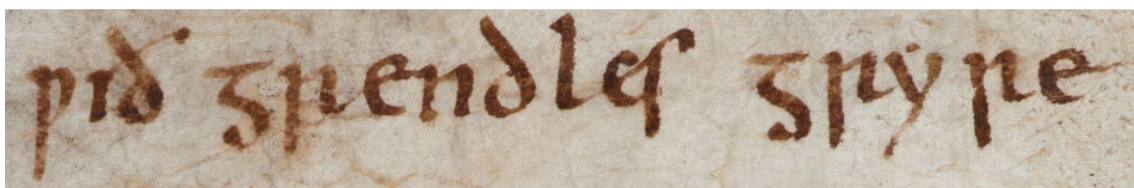
wið Grendles gryre (384a)

[against Grendel's terror]

Linguistic material	wið	Grend-	-les	gryre
Stress contour	x	S	x	[Sx]
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift

§54. B2

Metrical configuration: drop, lift, two-syllable drop, lift.

The second drop contains exactly two unstressed syllables. The first example below shows an extremely expanded first drop and the second example features a resolved first lift:
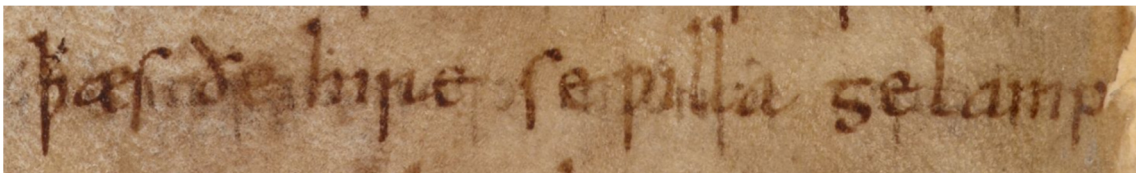
þæs ðe hire se willa ġelamp (626b)

[for the fact that her will was fulfilled]

Linguistic material	þæs ðe hire se	wil-	-la ġe-	-lamp
Stress contour	xxxxx	S	xx	S
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift
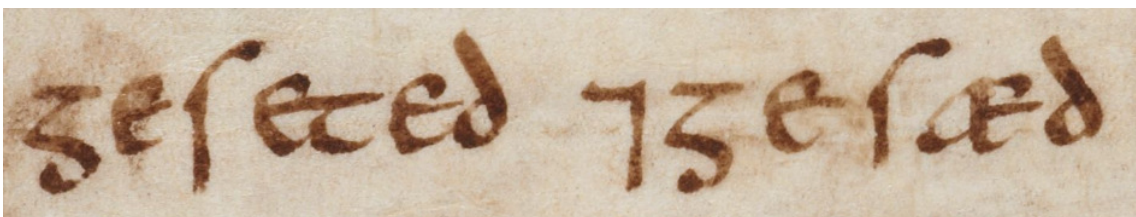
ġeseted ond ġesæd (1696a)

[set down and stated]

Linguistic material	ġe-	seted	ond ġe-	-sǣd
Stress contour	x	[Sx]	xx	S
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift

Both examples feature a two-syllable second drop, which marks them as type B1 verses.

1.4.3. TYPE C

§55. C1

Its basic structure is drop, lift, lift, drop. Neither lift is realized by a resolve

sequence. The first drop can be expanded. Expansion of the second drop, being verse-

final, is strictly forbidden. The following example shows an extremely expanded first
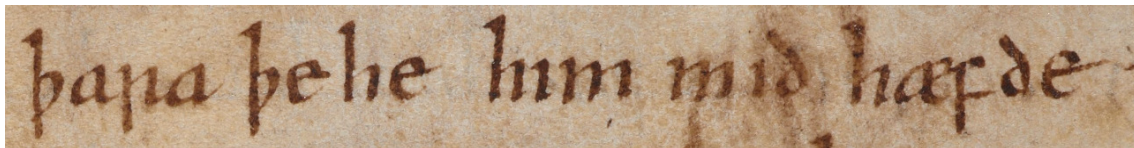
drop:

þāra þe hē him mid hæfde (1625b)

[of those things which he had with him]

Linguistic material	þāra þe hē him	mid	hæf-	-de
Stress contour	xxxxx	S	S	x
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Lift	Drop

In this instance, the preposition *mid*, a proclitic, receives sentence stress because it

follows the element upon which it depends, the dative singular form of the third person

personal pronoun, *him*—which is unstressed because of its in the first drop of the verse

clause.[157] The finite verb *hæfde*, a particle, is stressed because it is not in the first drop

of the verse clause, besides all the other particles.

§56. C2

The first lift is realized by a resolved disyllabic sequence.
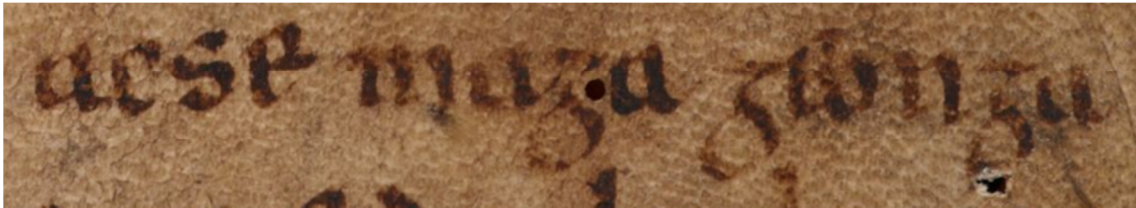
ac se maga ġeonga (2675a)

[but the young man]

Linguistic material	ac se	maga	ġeon-	-ga
Stress contour	xx	[Sx]	S	x
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Lift	Drop

§57. C3

This subtype features suspension of resolution in its second lift. The first lift must be

realized by a long stressed syllable, not by a resolved sequence.
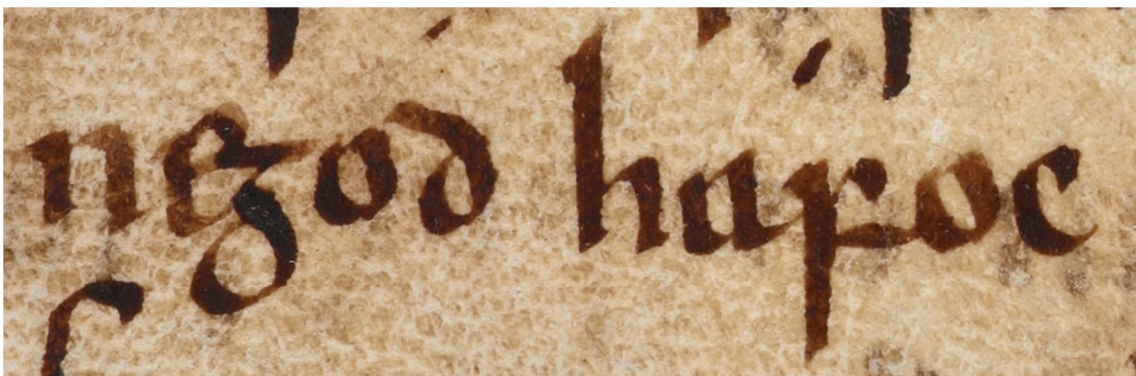
ne gōd hafoc (2263b)

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[157] As has been stated above, the relative verse clause that begins in 1625b counts as an independent
clause in terms of Kuhn's first law.

155

[no good hawk]

Linguistic material	ne	gōd	ha-	-foc
Stress contour	x	S	S	x
Metrical position	Drop	Lift	Lift	Drop

1.4.4. TYPE D

§58. Secondary Stress, Ictus at the Tertiary Level, and Alliteration

All subtypes of type D have a half-lift as part of their metrical configuratioons. The
half-lift is usually occupied by the root syllable of the second element of a compound
(i.e., by a syllable bearing secondary stress). Type D verses with secondary stress tend
to feature double alliteration (in which case they are restricted the on-verse). The long
middle syllable of trisyllabic simplex, however, may also occupy the position of the
half-lift. This does not mean that the long middle syllable of a simplex bears stress, but
that it bears ictus ar the tertiary level, whatever the linguistic realization of that ictus
may be. Variants with long middle syllable of trisyllabic simplexes in the position of the
half-lift can appear in either half of the line (if they appear in the second half, double
alliteration is strictly prohibited).

§59. D1

Its basic structure is lift, lift, half-lift, drop. The half-lift is realized by a long syllable.
Below follow a coupleof examples:
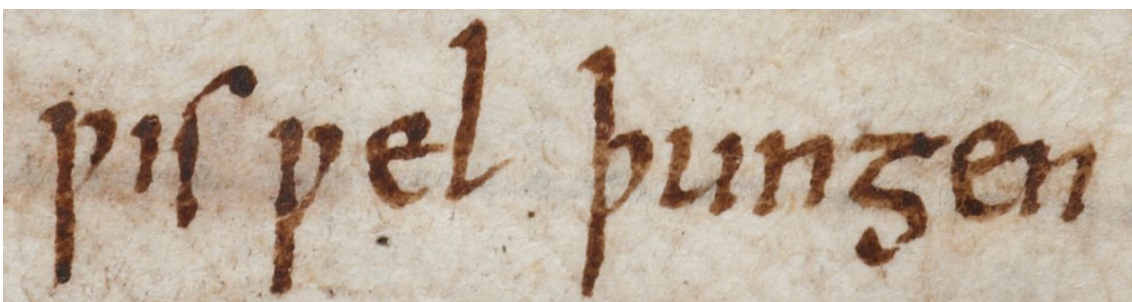
wīs welþungen (1927a)

[wise and accomplished]

Linguistic material	wīs	wel-	-þun-	-gen
Stress contour	S	S	s	x
Metrical position	Lift	Lift	Half-lift	Drop
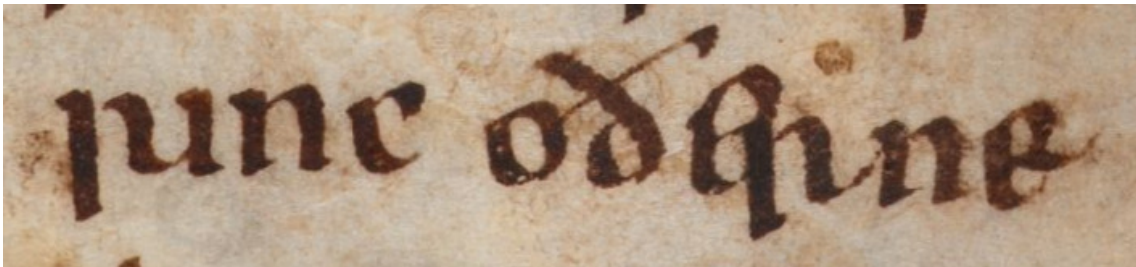
rinċ ōðerne (2985a)

[a warrior (plundered) the other]

Linguistic material	rinċ	ō-	-ðer-	-ne
Stress contour	S	S	s	x
Metrical position	Lift	Lift	Half-lift	Drop

In the first instance, the half-lift is the third metrical position of the verse and is occupied by the long root syllable of a secon compound element (*þun-*). In the second example, the half-lift is occupied by the middle syllable of the trisyllabic simplex *ōðerne*, which is long because its short vowel is closed by a consonant. Although the former verse features secondary stress and the latter contains a syllable with ictus at the tertiary level instead, both are type D1 verses because in both cases a long half-lift is the third metrical position of their metrical structures. The rest of subtypes is listed and analysed below.

§60. D2

The half-lift is the third metrical position and is a short, as in the following example:
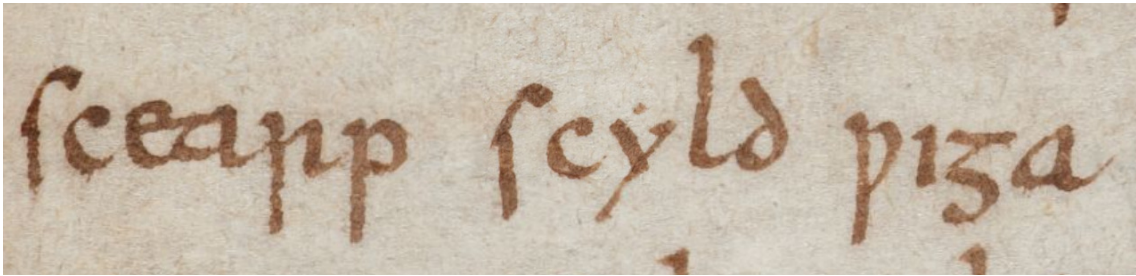
scearp scyldwiga (288a)

[keen-witted shield-warrior]

Linguistic material	scearp	scyld-	-wi-	-ga
Stress contour	S	S	s	x
Metrical position	Lift	Lift	Half-lift	Dip

The short syllable *-wi-* can suspend resolution because it is immediately preceded by a lift realized by a long stressed syllable (*scyld-*).

§61. D3

In this variant, the half-lift is in third position and is long, as in type D1. The second lift, being immediately preceded by another lift, is realized by a short syllable (the first lift cannot be realized by a resolved disyllabic sequence).

þēodcyninges (2694b)

[of the king of the people]

Linguistic material	þēod-	-cy-	-nin-	-ges
Stress contour	S	S	s	x
Metrical position	Lift	Lift	Half-lift	Drop

§62. D4

The drop is the penultimate position in the verse and the half-lift is last.
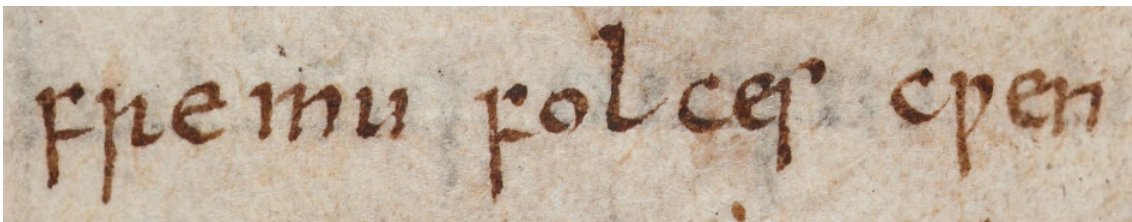
Fremu, folces cwēn (1932a)

[Fremu, queen of the people]

Linguistic material	Fremu	fol-	-ces	cwēn
Stress contour	S	S	x	s
Metrical position	Lift	Lift	Drop	Half-lift

The first lift is resolved. The alliteration (on *f*) indicates that stress on *cwēn* is subordinated to that on *fol-*.

§63. Expanded Variants of Type D

All the subtypes of type D can accommodate an unstressed syllable between the two lifts. Their metrical configurations would thus seem to consist of five, not four metrical positions. They are considered expanded variants of the basic subtypes. That a type D verse is expanded is indicated by inserting an asterisk between the letter D and the Arabic number that indicates its subtype. For example, below follows a type D*1 verse:
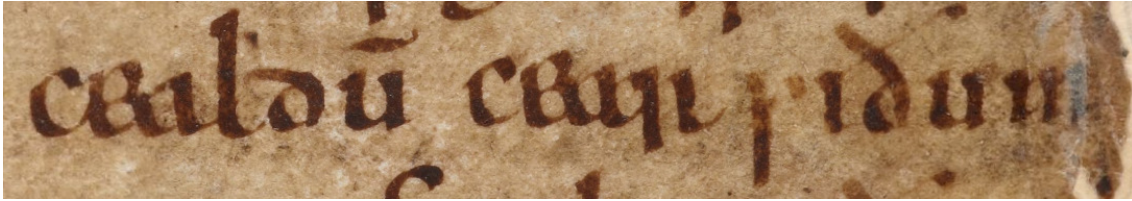
ċealdum cearsīðum [2396a]

[by means of painful, sorrowful expeditions]

Linguistic material	ċealdum	cear-	-sī-	-ðum
Stress contour	Sx	S	s	x
Metrical position	Lift	Lift	Drop	Half-lift

As can be appreciated in the scansion, the additional unstressed syllable is not considered to occupy a metrical position. As Cable and Suzuki have pointed out,[158] this pattern is an alternative realization of the basic four-position pattern.

1.4.5. TYPE E

Type E does not have metrical subtypes.

1.5. HYPERMETRICITY

§64. Variability and Hypermetricity

As has been pointed out elsewhere, most types of poetry usually consist of arbitrary abstract metrical patterns to which linguistic material is accommodated. Monotony is avoided by variations on the pattern. For example, an accentual metrical system consists of a series of metrical stresses or ictuses and of a series of linguistic stresses that realize those ictuses. But since linguistic and metrical stresses will not always coincide, the linguistic material will have to be accommodated to the arbitrary metrical pattern either

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[158] See case study "Three-Position verses and the Metrical Practice of the *Beowulf* Poet."

by displacement of one of the ictuses or by suppression of an ictus or a stress, or by the elevation of a stress.[159]

Unlike most types of poetry, however, Old English metre does not consist of an arbitrary metrical pattern. Rather, the metrical patterns allowed by the metre are a (strict) selection of some stress patterns that naturally occur in the language. Thus, it is the linguistic material that generates the metrical pattern.[160] Monotony in Old English verse is not avoided by variation on the metrical pattern (i.e., by varying the way in which the linguistic material is adapted to the abstract metrical pattern), but by variation in the metrical pattern itself.[161] For example, a type A verse may be followed by a type B, which may in turn be followed by a type C, among many other possible verse concatenations. All of them feature stress patterns that are natural in the Old English language. It is the alternation of the different natural stress patterns allowed by metre that produces a sense of variety.

There exists in Old English metre a further way of achieving variety: hypermetricity.[162] Hypermetric verses feature a more complex pattern than standard verses,[163] and their internal structures have been proved to be irreducible to those of standard verses.[164] The total number of hypermetric lines that remain to us is relatively sparse. As has been stated above, approximately 30,000 lines of Old English verse

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[159] See Bliss, "The Appreciation of Old English Metre," 28-9; see also Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 15.

[160] This lends support to Geoffrey Russom's word-foot theory.

[161] See, for example, Bliss, *An Introduction to Old English Metre*, 4.

[162] This elaborated variety of verse is endemic to West Germanic Verse. For instance, clusters of hypermetric verses, as well as isolated instances, also appear sporadically in Old Saxon poetry (see Pope, *The Rhythm of* Beowulf, 99). Also, some forms of skaldic verse are similar to Old English and Old Saxon hypermetrics, but they are an independent development of Old Icelandic metre (see Pope-Fulk 2001, 151, n. 40).

[163] The original German term to refer to these elaborated verse patterns is *Schwellvers*. "Hypermetric" is the most frequently used term in current literature. "Expanded" is used in the translation of Sievers's contribution to *Grundiss der germanischen Philologie* , II.2, in *Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry*, ed. Jess B. Bessinger Jr. and Stanley J. Kahrl (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1968), 267-88.

[164] See S. Suzuki, *The Metrical Organization of* Beowulf, 355.

survive (i.e., around 60,000 verses).[165] Of these, fewer than 500 lines are hypermetric.[166]

Their distribution throughout the corpus is uneven. In *Beowulf*, which amounts to over

6,300 verses, there are only twenty-three.[167] In other pieces of poetry, like *Judith* or the

gnomic poems, the proportion of hypermetric to standard verses is considerably

higher.[168]

§65. Clustering

There exists a tendency for hypermetric verses to occur in clusters,[169] although lone

hypermetric lines and even lone hypoermetric verses can also be found.[170] In *Beowulf*,

three clusters occur: 1163a-1168b, 1705a-1707b, and 2995a-2996b. Perhaps two lone

hypermetric verses show up in 2173a and 2297a, although their nature is open to

doubt.[171] What the function of the alternation between standard and hypermetric verses

is remains uncertain, but a propensity to be associated with dialogues and elevated tone

has been observed.[172] Since this chapter is exclusively concerned with classical Old

English metre as it appears in *Beowulf*, and since the few lines present in *Beowulf*

represent the vast majority of the types of hypermetric lines distributed throughout the

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[165] See p. __ above.

[166] According to Megan Hartman, 850 hypermetric verses survive, distributed throughout thirty-two poem. See M. Hartman, "The Syntax of Old English Hypermetrics," *English Studies* (2010) 91.5: 477. See also Pope, *The Rhythm of* Beowulf, 100.

[167] See Stockwell and Minkova, "Prosody," 76.

[168] See Bliss, *An Introduction to Old English Metre*, 27. See also Bliss, *The Metre of* Beowulf, 162-68, for an index of hypermetric lines in the Old English poetic corpus; see also Pope, *The Rhythm of* Beowulf, 100-104.

[169] Clustering is a strategy that facilitates the audience's recognition of the more complex underlying pattern; see Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 60-3.

[170] *The Dream of the Rood* 133 and *The Seafarer* 103 are instances of hypermetric lines that are not part of a hypermetric cluster.

[171] See *Klaeber IV*, clx.

[172] See, for example, Pope-Fulk 2001, 151; Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 47; *Klaeber IV*, clx; Hartman, "The Syntax of Old English Hypermetrics," 490. For example, in *Genesis A*, God's direct speeches are usually expressed in hypermetric verses (see Pope-Fulk 2001, 151). M. Griffith argues from an empirical study of *Genesis A* that hypermetricity—as well as other metrical, alliterative, and rhetorical features—is associated with the loftiness of God's speeches, as opposed to the more colloquial registers of human characters in the poem (see Griffith, "The Register of Divine Speech in *Genesis A*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 41 (2012): 63-78, especially 75-77.

rest of the Old English poetic corpus,[173] the following account will be based on examples from the heroic-elegiac poem. Also, since Michael Lapidge has suggested that the cluster 2995a-2996b might not be authorial but a scribal interpolation,[174] and since the two lone hypermetric verses might likewise be scribal in origin, this analysis will focus on the first two clusters.

§66. The Metrical Structure of Hypermetric Verses

As has been pointed out, some metricists dispense with the notion of the foot. Nevertheless, hypermetric lines cannot be persuasively accounted for in terms of Sievers's metrical stress patterns exclusively.[175] It is the notion of the foot that genuinely proves useful in explaining them. A hypermetric verse can be conceived of as a standard verse to which an additional foot has been prefixed.[176] In the on-verse, a falling foot is added to a standard verse, which involves double alliteration. The stressed syllables that participate in the alliterative pattern of the line are the stressed syllable of

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[173] See Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 59.

[174] See Lapidge, "The Archetype of *Beowulf*," 37-38.

[175] See Stockwell and Minkova, "Prosody," 76. Since hypermetrics are an integral part of Old English metre, and no theory of Old English metre can be complete without accounting for hypermetricity (see Pope, *The Rhythm* of Beowulf, 99), the notion of the foot is retained in this account of the Old English metrical system by virtue of its significant theoretical appropriateness (see p. __ above).

[176] This is Sievers's first explanation of hypermetric verses, offered in "Zur Rhythmik des germanischen Alliterationsverses. III. Der angelsächsische Schwellverse," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 12 (1887): 458. Later on, he altered his definition of hypermetric verses in order to make it conform with Karl Luick's notion, who conceived of a hypermetric verse not as a standard verse with an additional foot prefixed to it, but as the amalgamation of two standard verses, in which the second foot of the first verse is at the same time the first foot of the second verse; see Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1893), 139-40; K. Luick, "Zur Theorie der Entstehung der Schwellverse," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 13 (1888): 388-92. Bliss describes Sievers's second definition of hypermetric verses as an "ingenious idea" (see Bliss, *The Metre of* Beowulf, 88), but Fulk has convincingly explained that it is preferable to think of a hypermetric verse as a standard one with a prefixed foot for a number of reasons (see Pope- Fulk 2001, 151, n. 41). Sievers's first notion, which is adopted here, is also endorsed by Pope (see *The Rhythm of* Beowulf, 105), Russom (*Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*, 59-60), Fulk (Pope-Fulk 2001, 151), and Terasawa (*Old English Metre*, 47). Sievers's second definition is supported by Bliss, who thinks that Sievers was right in thinking of a hypermetric verse as the amalgamation of two standard verses, but that he was wrong about the form of the junction (see *The Metre of* Beowulf, 90); and also by Suzuki (see *The Metrical Organization of* Beowulf, 356-7). Max Kaluza considered the material prefixed to the standard verse as anacrustic (see Kaluza, *A Short History of English Versification*, 109-13), but this view entails a number of theoretical problems, as Bliss has demonstrated (see *The Metre of* Beowulf, 88-9).

the prefixed foot and the first stressed syllable of the standard verse—in other words, alliteration is shifted leftward. In the off-verse, on the contrary, the foot that is added at the beginning of the standard verse contains only unstressed proclitics and particles, and consequently it is the first stressed syllable of the standard verse that alliterates, as is customary.[177] These two lines from the first hypermetric cluster in *Beowulf* illustrate the inner structure of the hypermetric verse:
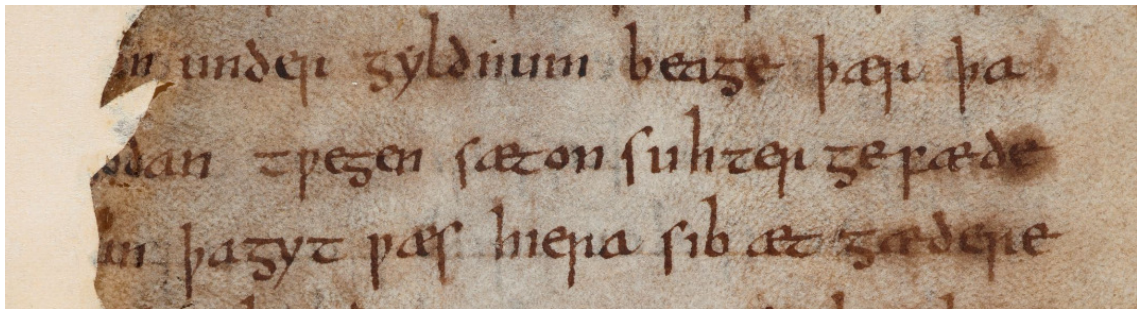
gān under gyldnum bēage   þǣr þā gōdan twēġen

sǣton suhterġefæderan;   þā ġȳt wæs hiera sib ætgædere (1163-64)

[(Then came Wealtheow) going with a golden diadem to the place where the two brave were sitting, uncle and nephew; they were still at peace]

The first verse, 1163a, scans as follows:

gān	under	gyld-	-num	bēa-	-ge
S	xx	S	x	S	x
Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop

As we can appreciate, this verse consists of six, not four positions. Its inner structure results from adding a falling foot of the type Sxx (*gān under*) to a standard type A metrical configuration (SxSx, *gyldnum bēage*).

The off-verse, 1163b, scans as follows:

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[177] See Pope-Fulk 2001, 151; Terasawa, *Old English Metre*, 47; and Stockwell and Minkova, "Prosody," 76-77. Stockwell and Minkova conceive of a hypermetric off-verse as a standard verse to which a falling foot with a silent ictus has been added.

þǣr þā	gō-	-dan	twē-	-ġen
xx	S	x	S	x
Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop

In this instance, a drop has been prefixed to the standard type A patern SxSx. The result

is a hypermetric verse with the stress pattern xxSxSx, featuring five metrical positions.

The alliteration of this line falls on *g*. Thus, in the on-verse, where hypermetricity

involves double alliteration, the first alliterating syllable is not the first stressed syllable

of the standard pattern (*gyld-*), but the first stressed syllable of the prefixed foot

(*gān*).[178] The last stressed syllable of the on-verse (*bēa-*) does not participate in the

alliteration. The situation in the off-verse is different. Since the prefixed material

contains only unstressed elements (*þǣr þā*), alliteration falls on the first stressed

syllable of the original standard type A pattern (*gō-*). (Participation of the second

stressed syllable of an off-verse in the alliterative pattern of the line is as strictly

forbidden in hypermetric verses as it is in standard ones).

    As has been stated elsewhere, hypermetric verses, despite being syntactically

different from standard verses in several respects, conform to Kuhn's laws with the

same degree of fidelity as standard verses do.[179] *Beowulf* 1163b (*þǣr þā gōdan twēġen*)

initiates a new clause that stands in a relation of hypotaxis to that of which the linguistic

material in 1163a (*gān under gyldnum bēage*) is part. The main clause on which 1163b

depends is *Þā cwōm Wealhþēo forð / gān under gyldnum bēage*,[180] which occupies

1162b and 1163a.[181] The verb of the subordinate clause is the finite verb *sǣton*, in

1164a, here translated as "were sitting." Thus, according to Kuhn's law, *þǣr*, a

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[178] Notice that *gān* is an infinitive and as such it receives sentence stress.
[179] See, for example, Hartman, "The Syntax of Old English Hypermetrics," 478.
[180] "Then came Wealtheow going with a golden diadem".
[181] The presence of particles in the first drop of *Beowulf* 1162b (*þā* and *cwōm*) confirms that it is a metrico-syntactic type I, i.e., clause-initial.

monosyllabic adverb and hence a particle, must be unstressed, since it occupies the first

drop of its clause.[182] Since the particle *sǣton* does not occupy the first drop of its clause

in 1163b, besides *þǣr*, and must consequently be stressed. This leads us to the following

scansion for 1164a:

sǣ-	-ton	suh-	-terġe-	-fæde-	-ran
S	x	S	xx	[Sx]	x
Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop

As in 1163a, a falling foot of the type Sx (*sǣton*) has been prefixed to a standard type A

pattern with a resolved second lift, Sxx[Sx]x. The disyllabic sequence *fæde-* must be

resolved because it is not preceded by a lift realized by a long stressed syllable. That

alliteration falls on the first stressed syllable of the prefixed foot as well as in the first

stressed syllable of the original standard verse is confirmed by the scansion of its

corresponding off-verse, 1164b:

þā ġȳt wæs hiera	sib	æt-	-gæde-	-re
xxxxx	S	x	[Sx]	x
Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop

Like *Beowulf* 1163b, the structure of 1164b consists of a standard type A pattern with

alliteration on its first lift (*sib*) to which a foot containing unstressed particles (like *þā*

ġȳt and the finite verb *wæs*) and proclitics (the possessive adjective *hiera*) has been

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[182] The definite article *þā*, a proclitic, is unstressed because it precedes the element upon which it depends.

prefixed. The disyllabic sequence *-gæde-*, which is stressed on *-gæ-*,[183] is resolved

because it is not immediately preceded by a lift realized by a long stressed syllable.

Also, since there are particles in its first drop, this verse is a metrico-syntactic type I,

i.e., clause-initial (as the semicolon after *suhterġefæderan* at the end of 1164a in

Klaeber IV indicates).

The following verse pair from the second hypermetric cluster behaves similarly:
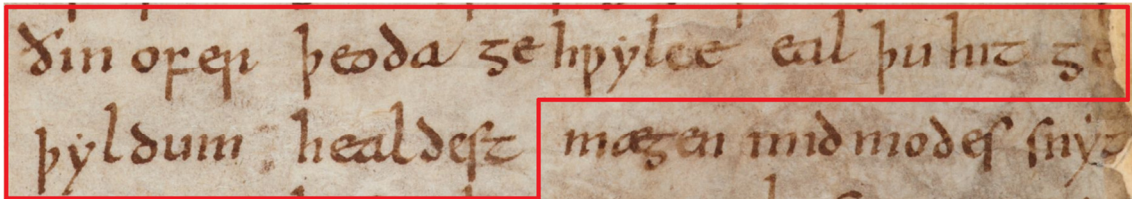
ðīn ofer þēoda ġehwylċe.   Eal þū hit ġeþyldum healdest (1705)

[your (fame) across every nation. You possess all of it steadily]

ðīn	ofer	þēo-	-da ġe-	-hwyl	-ċe
S	xx	S	xx	S	x
Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop

Eal þū hit ġe-	þyl-	-dum	heal-	-dest
xxxx	S	x	S	x
Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift	Drop

As we can see, alliteration falls on /þ/. The possessive adjective *ðīn* does not precede the

noun upon which it depends, the masculine *a*-stem *blǣd*, "reknown," which shows up

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two lines before.[184] Consequently, it receives sentence stress and occupies the position of the lift. Also, double alliteration, which is mandatory in hypermetric on-verses, is displaced leftward (*ðīn* and *þēo-* alliterate, not *þēo-* and *-hwyl-*). As is customary, the off-verse features a standard type A metrical structure with to which a foot containing unstressed elements has been prefixed.

Not all the hypermetric verses, however, can be analyzed this way. *Beowulf* 1166a, for example, exhibits a metrical configuration that cannot be accounted for in the abovementioned terms:
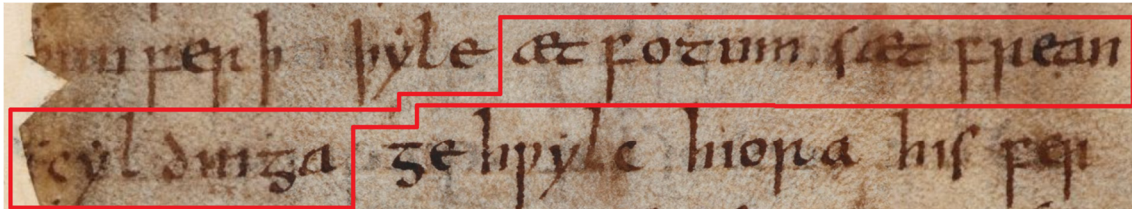
æt fōtum sæt frēan Scyldinga (1166a)

[sat a feet of the Lord of the Scyldings]

æt	fō-	-tum	sæt	frēan	Scyl-	-din-	-ga
x	S	x	S	S	S	s	x
Drop	Lift	Drop	Lift	Lift	Lift	Half-lift	Drop

As we can see, this exceptional hypermetric verse seems to be the result of prefixing a whole type B verse with the stress pattern xSxS (*æt fōtum sæt*) to an original standard type D with a stress pattern SSsx (*frēan Scyldinga*). This verse resembles a whole line (cf. *Beowulf* 500), but is not, since it is linked to 1166b by alliteration on *f*:

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[184] According to Michell, this separation of the possessive adjective from the *a*-stem *blǣd* upon which it depends in one of Hrothgar's speeches gives dramatic emphasis to the Danish king's words. See Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, vol. II, 989, §3959.
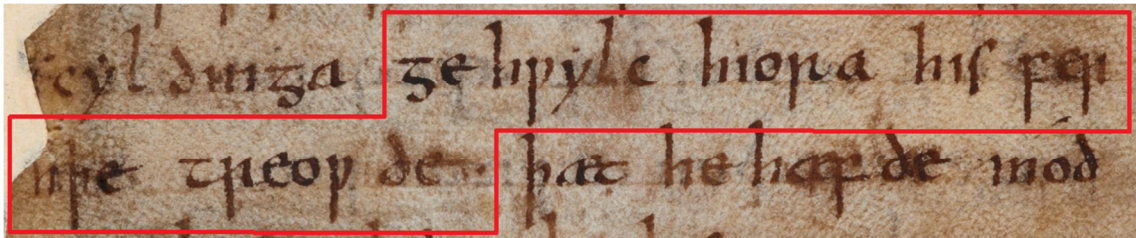
ġehwylċ hiora his ferhþe trēowde

[each of them trusted his spirit]

Thus, the abovementioned explanation of hypermetricity (i.e., that a hypermetric verse consists of a standard verse to which an additional foot has been prefixed) fails to account for this instance. It manages to account, however, for nearly all the instances of hypermetric verses and hence it remains a useful analysis.[185]

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[185] Pope-Fulk 2001. 152.

1.6. THE CHRONOMETRIC CONFLICT

J.R.R. Tolkien described Old English metre as "more like masonry than music." This simile was no doubt rooted in the belief that there is no such a thing in Old English poetry as a single basic rhythmic pattern according to which all the lines proceed. Rather, from Tolkien's point of view, which is essentially Sieversian, that each verse features a variable number of syllables means that each one is rhythmically independent from all the others, that is, that it has a rhythm of its own which is dictated by the stress patterns of the words of which it specifically consists. This view prevails nowadays among scholars of Old English metre, but it did not always meet general approval.

Some scholars, on the contrary, have wanted to hear music in Old English poetry, in the modern sense of the word. According to them, Old English verse compositions can be analyzed in terms of an overarching isochronous rhythmic pattern to which all the verses, regardless of their specific linguistic material and stress contours, must conform. Thus, the verses are not conceived of as independent units with different rhythmic patterns, but as equal segments of time or measures containing a number of regularly recurring beats. In other words, the stress-contours identified by Sievers are contained within strict temporal sequences. These two distinct conceptions of Old English metre have given rise to two rival schools of thought, paradigmatically represented by the work of Sievers, with his five-type verse taxonomy based on patterns of stress; and by the work John C. Pope,[186] who refined all previous isochronous readings of Old English poetry by adjusting Sievers's taxonomy to isochrony.[187]

Advocates of these two schools have traditionally been known as stressers and timers, respectively, and the dispute between them as to whether Old English metre

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[186] See Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942); and *Seven Old English Poems* (New York: Norton, 1981), 116-38.

[187] J.M. Luecke, *Measuring Old English Rhythm: an Application of the Principles of Gregorian Chant Rhythm to the Meter of Beowulf* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 11.

measures—along with alliteration, of course—stress patterns or temporal intervals has been defined by one commentator as "the chronometric conflict."[188] There is a third school, the linguistic, at first considered to be part of the school of Sievers because of its concern for language patterns. Its most important representative at present is Geoffrey Russom, who maintains that Old English metrical rules can be accounted for as transpositions of more basic and general linguistic rules. This theory has brought a great deal of explanatory power to Old English metrics.[189]

More than three centuries ago, George Hickes, in his celebrated *Linguarum veterum septentrionalium thesaurus grammatico-criticus et archeologicus* (1703-5), came up with the suggestion that, in the manner of Classical Greek and Latin prosodies, Old English metre was purely quantitative—which implies that what is measured in the metre is patterns of long and short syllables.[190] This idea struck Jon Josias Conybeare, the Rawlinsonian Professor of Anglo-Saxon (1808-1812) and subsequent Professor of Poetry at Oxford (1812-1821), as mistaken. It was, according to him, the result of the common eighteenth-century prejudice that the study of every single matter can be based on classical models.[191] Conybeare believed, *pace* Hickes, that the native poetry of the Anglo-Saxons—as well as that of all the other ancient Germanic people—had a peculiarly distinctive metre, the fundamental aspect of which was the rhythmic or

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[188] See Stockwell, "On Recent Theories," 73. A theory of Old English metre that does not belong to either of these schools is David L. Hoover's, which propounds that alliteration is the only element that is measured in the poetry; see Hoover, "Evidence for Primacy of Alliteration in Old English Metre," *Anglo-Saxon England* 14 (1985): 75-96; and his *New Theory of Old English Meter* (New York: Peter Lang, 1985). For a refutation of some of Hoover's views, see Fulk, "Early Middle English Evidence for Old English Metrics," 333-4; and Suzuki, "In Defence of Resolution."

[189] For a succinct historical overview of the main theories propounded within each school, see Luecke, *Measuring Old English Rhythm*, 4-30, to which my own survey is partly indebted. See also Cable, "Timers, Stressers, and Linguists: Contention and Compromise," *Modern Language Quarterly* 33 (1972): 227-39; and Bredehoft, "What Are Old English Metrical Studies For?"

[190] See Stockwell and Minkova, *Handbook*, 55.

[191] See Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. William D. Conybeare (London: Richard Taylor, 1826), v-vi.

regular occurrence beats.[192] It was the beginning of the isochronous school of Old

English metre.

The isochronous approach to Old English metre, predicated upon the periodic

recurrence of beats, preceded the non-isochronous school, which was initiated with the

seminal work of Sievers in 1885. There are, however, two distinct general trends within

the isochronous school, the four-beat and the two-beat theories. The differences

between the two have been blurred by the more general and starker contrast between

isochronous and non-isochronous readings.[193] According to the two-beat theory, the two

primary stresses begin the temporal measures. The main consequence of this is that

unstressed syllables preceding the first primary stress of the verse, as those in Sievers's

types B and C, are either part of the preceding measure or anacrustic. In four-beat

theories, on the contrary, these weakly stressed syllables that precede the first primary

stress of the verse can also bear primary accent by reason of their relation both in time

and intensity to neighbouring syllables.[194] Since four-beat theories do not require the

first measure to coincide with the primary stress, the two primary stresses can occur on

any two of the four measures, and hence they propose a more elastic view of the metre

than two-beat theories do.[195]

In 1833, the German philologist Karl Lachmann proposed a four-beat theory of

Old High German metre after studying the *Hildebrandslied*.[196] Lachmann, however,

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[192] See Conybeare, *Illustrations*, v-xv, xxvii-xxxv. These pages contain two distinct communications on the subject of Old English metre that John J. Conybeare read to the Society of Antiquaries in 1813. His younger brother, William D. Conybeare, who published his *Illustrations* posthumously, authored a recapitulation of the metrical rules as they appear in the two communications, which he appended to *Illustrations*, xxxvi-xxxviii. See also Stockwell and Minkova, *Handbook*, 55.

[193] See Luecke, *Measuring Old English Rhythm*, 5.

[194] See Pope, *Seven Old English Poems*, 119.

[195] For a summary of four- and two-beat theories of Old English verse, see J. Schipper, *A History of English Versification*, 16-24; and also Luecke, *Measuring Old English Rhythm*, 4-14. To these two my own account is indebted.

[196] Lachmann's four-beat theory was first proposed in the lecture "Über das *Hildebrandslied*," given to the Berlin *Akademie der Wissenchaften*. It is printed in *Kleinere Schriften zur Deutschen Philologie*, I (Berlin, 1876).

regarded the four accents per verse as a characteristic of Old High German exclusively.

Verses in Old Norse and Old English poetic traditions feature a considerably inferior

number of syllables, and this led Lachmann to think that the norm for these two, as

opposed to Old High German, was two accents per verse.[197] Nevertheless, the four-beat

theory was applied to *Beowulf* and *Genesis* by Hermannus Schubert by allowing verses

of just three, not four beats.[198]

       Four-beat theorists distinguished between primary or stronger beats, on the one

hand, and secondary or weaker beats, on the other. It was this distinction that led to the

development of two-beat theories, which dispensed with the latter kind of beat. In 1848,

Wilhelm Wackernagel, for example, proposed a two-beat theory in which a verse was

defined as consisting of two stressed syllables and an unlimited number of weakly

stressed ones.[199] Both lines of argumentation were subsequently augmented by

contributions from several scholars. Sievers's work, for example, was originally a

development within the two-beat approach to alliterative verse, since he based his

taxonomy on the notion that a verse contains two primary stresses. Nevertheless, he

rejected the possibility of isochrony out of hand: "The fundamental principle, therefore,

of the structure of the alliterative line, as we find it in historical times, is that of a free

change of rhythm which can only be understood if the verse was meant to be recited,

not to be sung."[200] Nevertheless, that each verse features an independent rhythmic

pattern does not necessarily mean that the poetry could not be sung, as it is explained

below.

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[197]See Schipper, *A History of English Versification*, 16. For a convenient explanation of how the different Germanic verse traditions ended up featuring distinct numbers of syllables per verse, see the pertinent sections in W. Lehmann, *The Development of Germanic Verse Form* (Austin: University Of Texas Press, 1956).

[198]Schubert, *De Anglosaxonum arte metrica* (Berlin: Typis A.W. Schadii, 1870).

[199]See Wackernagel, *Gesichte der deutschen Literatur* (Basel: Schweighäuserische Buchhandlung, 1848). For the negative consequences of statements such as this one, see above.

[200] This translation from the original German is by Schipper (see *A History of English Versification*, 23).

The descriptive power of Sievers's taxonomy of verses fundamentally transformed the history of Old English metrical studies, since his work provided—and still provides—the basis of most subsequent research. Advocates of an isochronous interpretation of Old English poetry, however, were deeply dissatisfied with the inability of Sieversian scansion to furnish any guidance as to how the verses are to be read.[201] It was this dissatisfaction with Sieversian metrics, as well as with some improvable elements of previous isochronous theories, such as William Ellery Leonard's and Andreas Heusler's,[202] that led Pope to formulate what was to become the most representative interpretation of Old English verse among those assuming isochrony. Because of its relevance for Old English metrical studies, a brief summary of Pope's interpretation is offered next.

According to Pope, Sievers's classification succeeds at reducing the baffling syllabic variability of Old English verse to just five basic verse types underpinned by five different stress patterns. But it is precisely the possibility of finding order in such a confusing corpus of texts that suggested to Pope that there must be a higher, more basic pattern capable of encompassing Sievers's five types.[203] Thus, Pope's stance is that each normal verse, regardless of its stress pattern, has the same rhythmic basis, consisting of a pair of four-beat measures with the following form:

$$[\text{♪♪♪♪}][\text{♪♪♪♪}]$$

Each quaver stands for the unitary beat governing the quantity of time which is necessary to utter a short stressed syllable. Variation on the pattern was achieved by

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[201] See Fulk, "The Textual Criticism of Frederick Klaeber's *Beowulf*," in *Constructing Nations, Reconstructing Myth: Essays in Honour of T.A. Shippey*, ed. A. Wawn with G. Johnson and J. Walter (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 137.

[202] See Leonard, "*Beowulf* and the Nibelungen Couplet," *University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature* 2 (1918): 99-152; and Heusler, *Deutsche Versgesichte mit Einschluss des altenglischen und altnordischen Stabreimverses*, in *Pauls Grundiss der germanischen Philologie*, vol. 8, ed. H. Paul (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1925-29).

[203] See Pope, *Seven Old English poems*, 117; and also *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, 3-15.

combining and subdividing beats, substituting rests or measured silences, and by replacing two beats by three proportionately equal in quantity.[204] But this theory, unlike Sieversian metrics, does not allow for variation in the metrical pattern.[205] Rather, the basic rhythm of all the normal verses is assumed to be essentially the same, a pair of two measures of 4/8 time.

Hence, in Pope's theory, it is not that the rhythm of the verse is dictated by the stress pattern generated by the linguistic material it comprises, but that the linguistic material, regardless of the stress pattern it features—and, consequently, regardless of its Sieversian type—must conform to the basic rhythm of two four-beat measures. Pope thus developed a theory capable of both reducing Sievers's five basic types into a single rhythmic pattern and providing an answer to the question "Wie sind die Verse zu lessen?" ("How are the lines to be read?)[206]

A particular aspect of Pope's theory, his treatment of type B and C verses, has merited special praise. These two verse types were already problematic in Sievers's original taxonomy. Indeed, according to Pope, it was precisely their existence that had made it difficult for scholars to discover the original basic rhythm of ancient Germanic poetry.[207] Their complexity lies in the fact that they begin with drops, or sequences of unstressed syllables, and that it was therefore difficult to adjust them to the four-beat rhythmic basis to which types A, D, and E so readily conformed—especially when the unstressed syllables were so few to fill the measure.

The solution to the problem came to Pope's mind as he was reading the initial verses of *Beowulf* and, even without noticing, substituted a rest for the first missing lift

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[204] To see the different possibilities of combination and subdivision of beats, the rhythmic values of different kind of rests, and the possible triplets that can substitute for two beats, see Pope, *Seven Old English Poems*, 117-8; and *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, 162.

[205] Forthe contrary view, see Bliss's Sieversian assertion in *An Introduction to Old English Metre*, 4.

[206] This question was first posed by Heusler (see Fulk, "The Textual Criticism of Frederick Klaeber's *Beowulf*," 137).

[207] See Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, 38.

of a type B verse.[208] In his theory, as opposed to previous two-beat theories such as

Heusler's, the initial drop of type B and C verses is part of the first measure of the

verse, which is now conceived of as having an empty beat or rest when the number of

unstressed syllables that constitutes the initial drop is not large enough to complete the

quadruple measure.[209] In cases like this, a person in the audience would not have been

able to identify the primary beat of the first measure from the linguistic material, so that

the bard would have struck the harp in order to supply it. The harp is therefore a

structural element in Pope's theory of Old English metre.[210]

That a non-linguistic element is necessary to complete type B and C verses,

which only in *Beowulf*, for example, amount to one-third of its 6,364 verses, has been

found problematic in Pope's theory, since it would make Old English metre very

different from most known metrical systems.[211] Yet the so-called rhythmical theories

such as Pope's, which propound isochrony as the essential element of the poetry, also

had some remarkable advocates—including Klaeber. The initial enthusiasm for

Sievers's five-type taxonomy as the basis for a number of manuscript emendations that

he showed in his first edition of *Beowulf* of 1922 had considerably decreased by the

time his third edition reached publication in 1936. What happened in between was the

publication of Heusler's isochronous two-beat theory of Old English metre, in 1925,

which Pope refined eighteen years later, as has been stated above.[212] Klaeber found the

notion appealing that the basic unit of the rhythm is the measure and that Old English

rhythm is isochronous. No doubt, the mitigation of Klaeber's trust in Sievers's

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[208] Pope himself vividly describes how that idea came to him in *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, 39.
[209] This empty beat or rest, which is so necessary to maintain the quadruple rhythm of *Beowulf*, has been defined by Pope himself as the "essential feature" of his theory (see *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, 88).
[210] See Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, 88-95.
[211] See Cable, *Meter and Melody*, 17.
[212] See Fulk, "The Textual Criticism of Frederick Klaeber's *Beowulf*," 135-6. Klaeber incorporated a brief summary of Heusler's system of versification in his third edition of the poem, along with a few sample scansions; see *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. Fr. Klaeber, 3rd edition with first and second supplements (Boston: Heath, 1950), 282.

taxonomy was reinforced by Sievers's later rejection of his own traditional system in favour of the rhythmically uniform *Schallanalyse*.[213] But because of its heavy reliance on implausible assumptions, *Schallanalyse* has been found problematic by most metrists, including such an ardent defender of isochronous interpretation as Pope.[214] In the next few paragraphs I will set out several reasons that explain why all other isochronous interpretations of Old English metre are likewise afflicted by serious implausibility.

For one, as Cable has pointed out, Pope's isochronous interpretation of Old English verse does not account for some metrical patterns that never occur. It is an open-ended list comprising 279 different metrical patterns that appear in *Beowulf*.[215] Thus, his system entirely lacks a rule to explain why only certain patterns are metrically acceptable while many others that are also possible never occur. A mere list of 279 patterns is too complex to be a real metre, which means that Pope's system is unsatisfactory as a theory of Old English metre, since it fails to explain its most basic rules. Sievers's and Bliss's descriptions also suffered from the same lack, but this was compensated by Cable's and Russom's refinements.

Pope's system is also afflicted by another serious weakness. The empty beat with which Pope completes the first measure of types B and C lead him to confine the two primary stresses of the verse to the second measure. As Stockwell has

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[213]See Fulk, "The Textual Criticism of Frederick Klaeber's *Beowulf*," 137. For clear application of *Schallanalyse* to Old English poetry, see Sievers, "Zum Widsith," in *Texte und Forschungen zur englischen Kulturgeschichte: Festgabe für Felix Liebermann zum 20. Juli 1921*, ed. H. Boehmer et al. (Halle: Niemeyer, 1921), 1-19; and *Metrische Studien*, 7 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1901-19), Part IV (vols VI-VII).

[214]See Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, 14-5; see also Bliss's review of J. Kuryłowicz's *Die sprachlichen Grundlagen der altgermanischen Metrik*, *Anglia* 90 (1972): 510-12; Donoghue, "Old English Meter," 69-70; and also Fulk, "The Textual Criticism of Frederick Klaeber's *Beowulf*," 138.

[215]See Cable, "Type D Verses as Evidence for the Rhythmic Basis of Old English Meter," in *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger Jr.*, ed. H. Damico and J. Leyerle (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Western Michigan University Press, 1993), 167.

demonstrated,[216] this forces Pope to accelerate the recitation of the linguistic material

that the second measure comprises so extraordinarily that its rhythm is in fact doubled.

By forcing two primary stresses or lifts into a single measure, isochrony, the most

fundamental tenet of Pope's system, can no longer be maintained. This structural flaw,

which Stockwell defines as a rhythmic fallacy, and which Pope or some of his most

recent adherents failed to recognize,[217] renders Pope's system highly implausible.

The existence of resolution as a genuine metrical device of Old English prosody

is demonstrated by the evidence furnished by the distribution of certain types of verses

in the poetry, Kaluza's law, and Icelandic and early Middle English poems.[218]

Resolution was in turn derived on the assumption that there must be four positions to

the verse. Consequently, that resolution is real means that the four-position principle—

on the assumption of which resolution was first deduced—must likewise be real. In

other words, that there are four positions to the verse is true only if resolution really

obtained in Old English metre. Since there is external evidence that proves that

resolution did in fact obtain in Old English metre, the four-position principle, for whose

sole integrity resolution was originally devised, can also be proved to be real.[219] One of

the main problems of all the isochronous theories of Old English metre so far

propounded is that, as opposed to Sieversian metrics, they are not constructed upon the

four-position principle. Since they ignore this demonstrably fundamental aspect of Old

English verse, they must be essentially wrong.[220]

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[216] See Stockwell, "On Recent Theories," 85-9; see also Fulk, "The Textual Criticism of Frederick Klaeber's *Beowulf*," 141n27.

[217] One of such recent adherents who commits the same error is R.P. Creed, in his *Reconstructing the Rhythm of Beowulf* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990). In fact, as Stockwell has pointed out, the grid system used by Creed not only replicates Pope's fallacy, but leads him to double the rhythm even in more instances than Pope does.

[218] See above; *HOEM* 26-7. For the evidence afforded by Icelandic and early Middle English, see *HOEM* 222, 238; and Fulk, "Early Middle English Evidence for Old English Metrics," 341-53.

[219] See *HOEM*, 55-6, 60; Fulk, "Inductive Methods," 6-7; and Pope-Fulk 2001, 148-9.

[220] See Fulk, "The Textual Criticism of Frederick Klaeber's *Beowulf*," 140-1.

Many commentators have pointed out the fact that all the so-called rhythmical interpretations of Old English metre are based on a preconceived belief, namely, that rhythm cannot exist outside equal temporal measures.[221] That this is a question of faith is made explicit even by Pope himself.[222] What is really remarkable, though, is that the statement that rhythm is isochronous by definition not only is a preconceived assumption, but also a historically implausible one. The rhythm of Gregorian chant, for example, which is contemporary with the composition *Beowulf*, consists of unequal measures.[223] Also, Josef Taglicht has called attention to the irregular rhythm of several English folksongs in order to substantiate the claim that rhythm is not necessarily synonymous with equal measures of time.[224] Thus, scholars who assume that Old English metre can be explained by means of an isochronous rhythmic pattern are in actuality imposing a feature of modern Western music upon older musical styles. In fact, as Luecke points out,[225] that the principle of equal durations was unknown to the Anglo-Saxons is evidenced in Bede's description of the native poetry as "compositio non metrica ratione sed numero syllabarum ad judicium aurium examinata."[226] As poetry composed in his native language, Bede could describe it as "ad judicium aurium examinata," but that does not mean that foreigners should have found it familiar.

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[221] See, for example, Bliss, *An Introduction to Old English Metre*, 2; Paull F. Baum, "The Meter of *Beowulf*," *Modern Philology* 46 (1948): 74-5;Cable, *Meter and Melody*, 15; Luecke, *Measuring Old English Rhythm*, 15; Barbara L. Silver-Beck, "The Case against the *Rhythm of Beowulf*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 77 (1976), 515; and Fulk, "The Textual Criticism of Frederick Klaeber's *Beowulf*," 141-2.

[222] See Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, 20-1, where he speaks of "the assumption that the normal half-line or verse contains two measures of quadruple time"; and *Seven Old English Poems*, 117, where he states that it is his "belief, founded on experimental readings, that the rhythmic basis of every normal verse, whether on-verse or off-verse, is a pair of dipodies, or four-beat measures."

[223] Luecke, in *Measuring Old English Rhythm*, has in fact applied the principles of Gregorian chant to the metre of *Beowulf*.

[224]See Taglicht, "*Beowulf* and Old English Verse Rhythm," *Review of English Studies*, New Series 12 (1961): 341-4.

[225] See *Measuring Old English Rhythm*, 14.

[226] Bede, "De arte Metrica," *The Complete Works of Venerable Bede in the Original Latin*, ed. A.J. Giles (London: Whittaker, 1843) vol. 6, 77. "The composition is not examined by the calculation of measures but by the number of syllables to the judgement of the ears."

Indeed, for a Roman like Julian, the recitation of Germanic poetry was unpleasant, probably because of its different rhythmic principles.[227]

This point can be illustrated by listening to the recitations of *Cædmon's Hymn* and Birhtwold's speech from *The Battle of Maldon* on the Norton Anthology website.[228] The former is recited by Jess B. Bessinger Jr., a defender of Pope's isochronous approach, and the latter by R.D. Fulk, who, as should be clear by now, belongs in the Sieversian tradition. A modern listener might at first find the musical recitation of Bessinger more pleasurable and appealing than Fulk's drier one, but that of course does not mean that Bessinger's is more plausible. As Fulk himself has remarked,[229] the early Germanic languages had phonemic vowel length, a feature completely absent in modern English and very limited in modern standard German. Since vowel length plays a fundamental role in Old English metre, it follows that the rhythm of the Anglo-Saxons' native poetry would strike modern ears as unfamiliar.

For all of these reasons, isochronous interpretations of Old English metre are currently rejected, and Sieversian metrics is usually regarded as the most plausible approach to the native poetry of the Anglo-Saxons. Indeed, the sympathy towards isochrony that Klaeber showed in his last edition of *Beowulf*—no doubt fostered by Sievers's rejection of his original non-isochronous analysis—has been abandoned in *Klaeber IV*, where Sieversian metrics is the framework within which a number of emendations are proposed.[230]

In his classification of the Fine Arts, Jakob Schipper distinguished between plastic—including sculpture, architecture, and painting—and rhythmic—

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[227] See Luecke, *Measuring Old English Rhythm*, 14; and Baum, "The Meter of *Beowulf*," 75n6.
[228] They can be accessed on this URL: http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/noa/audio.htm
[229] See Fulk, "The Textual Criticism of Frederick Klaeber's *Beowulf*," 142.
[230] See *Klaeber IV*, 330-6.

comprehending dancing, music, and poetry.[231] If no modern preconceived assumptions are imposed on Old English metre, what is left to us is a kind of poetry whose verses do not progress melodically, according to a tune, as Tolkien stated—which makes his simile that Old English metre is "more like masonry than music," quoted at the beginning of this chapter, completely justified.

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[231] See Schipper, *A History of English Versification*, 1.

2. The Metre of *Beowulf*

2.1. Three-Position Verses and the Metrical Practice of the *Beowulf* Poet

Probabilistic reasoning governs the study of the metrical practice of the *Beowulf* poet. Considerations of relative probability enable editors and metrists to identify scribal corruptions, recover authorial readings, and understand the metrical regularities that the poet meticulously imposed upon his work.[232] The role of probability in these matters can readily be illustrated by the scholarly response to the words *hrēas blāc*, which appear in line 15 on folio 188r of the *Beowulf* manuscript. At this point, Beowulf is describing Ongentheow's death, and the transmitted text of the poem would have him state that the Swedish king *hrēas blāc*, "fell pale," after Eofor's blow. If the manuscript evidence were taken at face value, *hrēas blāc* should constitute a verse by itself and an apparent two-position verse pattern SS should then be regarded as the genuine outcome of the poet's metrical practice. Although the sense, syntax, and alliteration exhibited in *hrēas blāc* are sound, it is improbable that the *Beowulf* poet composed a verse of this sort. In the surviving corpus of approximately 30,000 lines of Old English poetry, verses unambiguously featuring the SS stress contour are virtually non-existent. If Old English poets considered the SS pattern an authentic verse type, we should expect to find more evidence for the authenticity of this type than a few dubious attestations. To regard *hrēas blāc* as an authentic verse generates a gross improbability: it forces one to believe that the systematic avoidance of a legitimate metrical pattern in so large a corpus of poetry is entirely due to accident. The most probable explanation for the apparent existence of a handful of verses exhibiting the SS pattern is that these verses are the products of scribal corruption, not authorial practice. Editors of *Beowulf*

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[232] For in-depth discussions of the role of probabilism in Old English philology, see Fulk 2003 and 1992: §§8-23; on the balancing of metrical probabilities in textual criticism, see Fulk 1996.

unanimously regard *hrēas blāc* as a corrupt verse requiring emendation; metrists rightly

conclude that this verse does not reflect the metrical practice of the *Beowulf* poet.

By the same token, verses exhibiting a rarely attested three-position SxS pattern

have traditionally been considered unmetrical and regarded as the consequences of

scribal error. According to the tenets of Sieversian formalism, the rationale behind the

unmetricality of the SxS pattern is its failure to comply with the most basic rule of Old

English metre, the four-position principle (Sievers 1885: 220-222, 270; 1893: §§8,

14.2).[233] In the word-foot theory, the SxS pattern corresponds to a foot, and hence it

cannot stand as a verse by itself (Russom 1987: 13, 28-29).[234] This traditional stance has

recently been questioned by Eric Weiskott in his essay "Three-Position Verses in

Beowulf" (2013). He gathers thirteen verses that purportedly feature the three-position

SxS pattern from the poem and contends that they furnish sufficient evidence for

metrists to accept it as a genuine metrical type. Of these thirteen verses, he focuses the

body of his essay exclusively on one of them, *Beowulf* 2150a, *lissa ġelong* (a

longstanding crux in Old English metrical studies), and relegates the remaining twelve

to a list in a footnote without detailed commentary. Further, he tries to overcome the

difficulty posed by the nonconformity of the SxS pattern to the four-position principle

by proposing an analogy with the expanded type D verse (i.e., type D*). Since

Sieversian metrics accepts type D* verses, whose metrical structure apparently fails to

comply with the four-position principle, the inability of the SxS pattern to conform to

that principle would not constitute sufficient grounds for being considered unmetrical.

Rather, he maintains, although the poets would have perceived the SxS pattern as

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[233] The four-position theory of Old English metre is laid out in Cable 1974: 84-93. For some qualifications to Cable's original analysis, see Cable 1991: 39. For a concise summary of the four-position principle, see Stockwell and Minkova 1997: 67-69; Fulk 2002: 337-340; 2012a: 558; and Pascual forthcoming.

[234] On the word-foot theory and the explanatory power it brings to Old English metre, see Russom 1987 and 1998.

anomalous when it was first developed, it would have been reinterpreted as a regular type over the course of the history of Old English metre.

The present essay subjects Weiskott's case for the authenticity of the three-position SxS pattern in *Beowulf* to critical scrutiny. The first part examines the metrical structure of the twelve verses that supposedly feature the SxS pattern, which Weiskott summarily consigned to a list in a footnote. Close analysis demonstrates that these verses either genuinely feature a four-position metrical configuration or that they are corrupt manuscript readings. Consequently, it becomes clear that Weiskott's case for the authenticity of the SxS type is predicated exclusively on the evidence afforded by a single verse, *lissa ġelong* — an untenable position, for reasons made clear below. The second part assesses his comparison of the SxS pattern with type D* and the supposed reinterpretation to which the catalectic SxS type would have been subjected over the course of Old English metrical history, along with other methodological issues raised by Weiskott's essay. The conclusion is that his argumentation fails to make a convincing case for the authenticity of the SxS pattern, which, judging by its virtually non-existent incidence in the surviving corpus of Old English poetry, must have been considered unmetrical throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.

<div align="center">MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE AND METRICAL STRUCTURE</div>

1. Syntactically Uncommon Four-Position Verses

Due to their syntactic complexity, the two parallel gnomic verses 183b and 186b, *Wā bi ð þǣm ð e sceal* and *wēl bi ð þǣm þe mōt*,[235] have presented certain difficulties to metrists, who have sometimes scanned them as instances of the three-position SxxxS pattern.[236] This scansion is at odds, however, with Hans Kuhn's first metrico-syntactic

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[235] "Wrong to one who must" and "well to one who is permitted".
[236] So, for example, Bliss (1967: §86), Momma (1989: 425), and Hutcheson (1995: 254). Sievers (1885: 267; 1893: §85, n. 10), Pope (1966: 371), and Getty (2002: 225), on the contrary, would scan them as atypical four-position verses with a half-stress on *þǣm*.

rule, the law of Germanic sentence particles (1933: 8),[237] the operation of which reveals

that these two verses have a standard four-position metrical configuration. The three-

position analysis must then be disallowed on that basis, since *Beowulf* faithfully

conforms to the regularities observed by Kuhn.[238]

Kuhn's first law states that all the unstressed sentence particles of a verse clause

must be placed together in the first drop of that clause, either directly before the first lift,

or between the first lift and the second;[239] the direct implication is that a sentence

particle not found in that clausal position is stressed. For example, in *Beowulf* 2134b, *hē*

mē mēde ġehēt,[240] which constitutes a clause by itself, the sentence particles *hē* and *mē*,

two personal pronouns, should be unstressed because they appear in the first drop of the

clause immediately preceding the first lift, the root syllable of the noun *mēde*. That the

root syllable of *mēde* is the first lift of the verse clause and that therefore *hē* and *mē* are

unstressed is confirmed by the participation of *mēde* in the alliterative scheme of the

line.[241] The remaining sentence particle, the finite verb *-hēt*, should then take stress,

since it is found outside its prescribed place in the clause besides *hē* and *mē*. This must

indeed be the case, since according to traditional Sieversian metrics no verse ends in

more than one unstressed syllable (see, for example, Pope 2001: 141; and Terasawa

2011: 35). Thus, the application of Kuhn's first law reveals that the stress contour of

this verse is xxSxxS, corresponding to a standard type B.

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[237] Summaries of Kuhn's first law can be found in Campbell (1970: 94), Lucas (1990: 294), Kendall (1991: 17-18), Hutcheson (1992: 129), Momma (1997: 56-64), Orton (1999: 289 n. 11), Fulk (see Pope 2001: 136-138; 2012a: 558-559; 2012b: 389), and Terasawa (2011: 95-96).

[238] On the regular compliance of *Beowulf* with Kuhn's first law, see for example Lucas (1990: 294), Orton (1999: 289), and Fulk (2012b: 389-390; and forthcoming).

[239] Sentence particles are semantically independent words that, unlike stress-words, usually fail to receive rhythmic stress. Particles include finite verbs, personal and demonstrative pronouns, demonstrative adverbs, and some conjunctions (see Pope 2001: 136-137; and Terasawa 2011: 27-28).

[240] "He promised me reward."

[241] The on-verse is *mǣrðo fremede*. In Old English poetry, the first lift of the off-verse must participate in the alliteration of the line, while the second must not.

The metrical contour of *hē mē mēde ġehēt* is transparent because that verse is syntactically simple. In *Wā bið þǣm ðe sceal* and *wēl bið þǣm þe mōt*, on the contrary, there is a verse-internal clause boundary, as is indicated by the presence of two verbs in each of them (*bið* and *sceal* in 183b, and *bið* and *mōt* in 186b). In both instances, the indirect object of the main clause, the dative pronoun *þǣm*, is modified by a dependent relative clause. The occurrence of a clause boundary within a verse is an infrequent syntactic feature in *Beowulf*, which has obscured how Kuhn's law of sentence particles applies in these two verses.[242] As a result of this syntactic complexity, the stress contour of these two parallel verses has not always been obvious to metrists. If the position of the clause boundary within the verse is correctly established, however, Kuhn's first law can be seen to operate regularly in these two verses, which leads to the recognition of their four-position metrical configuration. The establishment of the clause boundary can in turn be achieved by means of a comparison with, for example, *Beowulf* 2600b-2601b, *sibb' ǣfre ne mæġ / wiht onwendan / þām ðe wēl þenċeð.*[243]

These three verses accommodate a sentence that also consists of a main clause with its indirect object, *þām*, modified by a dependent relative clause, *ðe wēl þenċeð*. One might well suppose that the clause boundary falls between *þām* and the relative particle *ðe*. Nevertheless, the metre and the alliteration of these verses, in conjunction with Kuhn's first law, show that it falls between *onwendan* and *þām*, and that the *Beowulf* poet must have regarded the pronoun *þām* as part of the relative clause by which it is modified. The alliteration of l. 2061, which is on /w/, indicates that *wēl* is the first lift of the off-verse, so that *þām* and *ðe*, which immediately precede it, must be unstressed (like *hē* and *mē* in *hē mē mēde ġehēt*). This means that *þām* must be part of the clause-initial drop of the relative clause. If it were part of the main clause, it would

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[242] According to Kendall, there are forty one instances of verse-internal clause boundaries in *Beowulf* (1991: 89-90).
[243] "Nothing can ever change ties of kinship for one who thinks rightly."

receive stress for being outside its prescribed position in the first drop besides the unstressed syllables *-fre* and *ne*, thereby spoiling both the metre of the verse and the alliteration of the line. The lack of stress of *þām* thus indicates that it must have become associated with the relative particle *ðe*, both of which are treated by the *Beowulf* poet as an unstressed integral unit at the outset of the relative clause.[244]

The treatment of the particles *þām* and *þe* as a clause-initial unit in 2601b furnishes compelling evidence that the *Beowulf* poet must have also regarded them as such in both *Wā bið þǣm ðe sceal* and *wēl bið þǣm þe mōt*. If *þǣm þe* is a clause-initial unit, then the immediately preceding word, *bið*, must be clause-final. The verse-internal clause boundary between the main clause and its dependent relative clause can then be established between *bið* and *þǣm*, which allows us to observe how Kuhn's first law operates. In regular compliance with the law, the clause-initial unit *þǣm ðe* must be unstressed, since it is placed in the first drop of the relative clause, immediately before the first lift, which in both instances is occupied by a verse-final finite verb that has been promoted to a stressed position (*sceal* and *mōt*).[245] The finite verb *bið*, being at the end of the main clause, must then receive stress, since it fails to adhere to Kuhn's first law: it is not either directly before the first lift (*wā* and *wēl*), or between the first lift and the second, since there is no second lift besides *bið* itself. As we can see, then, the workings of Kuhn's first law suggest that the two gnomic verses 183b and 186b have the stress contour of a standard type E, SsxxS, and that therefore they regularly comply

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[244] The same situation can be appreciated, for example, in *Beowulf* 1838b-9b: *feorcȳþðe bēoð / sēlran ġesōhte / þǣm þe him selfa dēah*, where the alliteration of *selfa* indicates that *þǣm þe* must be unstressed and hence clause-initial.

[245] Kendall's transformational rule states that in a clause-initial segment which lacks stress-words (as in *þǣm ðe sceal* and *þǣm þe mōt*), sentence particles acquire metrical stress from right to left in accordance with the stress and phrase rules of Old English until the first valid metrical contour emerges (1991: 96; cf. Fulk's comment in Pope 2001: 138, n. 18).

with the four-position rule of Old English metre.[246] Given the demonstrable reality of

Kuhn's law of Germanic sentence particles (Donoghue 1997), the three-position

scansion of 183b and 186b is untenable. These two verses possess a four-position

metrical configuration and cannot be adduced as evidence for the existence of the SxS

pattern in *Beowulf*.

2.   Four-Position Verses with an Unresolved Lift in the Coda

Weiskott's SxS scansion of another three verses in *Beowulf* must also be rejected. The

verses in question are 845a, *nīða ofercumen*;[247] 954a, *dǣdum ġefremed*;[248] and 2430b,

Hrēðel cyning.[249] Metrists have traditionally held that these atypical verses feature an

unresolved second lift,[250] and that they are therefore type A verses that comply with the

four-position principle (see, for example, Pope 1966: 272; Russom 1987: 46, 51,

and117; and Fulk 1992: §§207-209).[251] The three-position analysis of these verses

requires us to assume that their second short stressed syllable and its unstressed

successor undergo resolution. Although these three verses are exceptional under any of

the two interpretations, the three-position analysis is demonstrably less probable for a

number of reasons. Most saliently, it demands credence in an improbable coincidence.

Verses with an unresolved lift in the coda can be found in other poems as well.[252] Some

examples are *tempel Gode* (*Exodus* 391b);[253] *on ġenimeð*;[254] *Loth wæs āhreded*;[255]

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[246] This explanation is endorsed by the editors of *Klaeber IV* (Fulk, Bjork, and Niles 2008: 129). Russom also scans these two verses as instances of the SsxS pattern (1987: 120).
[247] "Overcome by violence."
[248] "Performed with deeds."
[249] "King Hrethel."
[250] These verses are atypical because a short second lift is usually preceded by a monosyllabic lift or half-lift, not a drop. See, for example, Pascual forthcoming.
[251] Bliss scans 845a and 954a as instances of the SxxS pattern. Fulk has demonstrated, however, that Bliss's acceptance of three-position verses is misguided (see Fulk 1992: §210).
[252] The coda of the verse comprises the last full lift and all subsequent syllables. The linguistic material preceding the coda of a verse is its onset (Fulk 1992: 201, n. 60).
[253] "Temple for God."
[254] "Away takes."
[255] "Loth was liberated."

eorlum bedroren;[256] *Scēawa heofon* (*Genesis A* 1209a, 2085b, 2099a, and 2191a);[257]

bil(e)wit fæder (*Genesis A* 856a, *Metres of Boethius* 20.69b, 20.255b, 20.269b, etc.);[258]

scride and færelt (*Metres of Boethius* 28.11b);[259] *bǣlfȳr ġenimeð* (*Elene* 578b);[260]

wildne fugol (*Solomon and Saturn* 315a),[261] among several others.[262]

     As we can appreciate, it is the second stressed syllable that is systematically

short, never the first. This regular distributional pattern suggests that these verses have a

four-position metrical structure with an unresolved lift in the coda of the verse. If the

metrical configuration of all these verses were SxS with a resolved second lift, as the

three-position analysis requires, it would be remarkable that this verse type is never

realized with resolution occurring in the first lift. The three-position analysis of these

verses would thus compel one to believe that the absence of three-position SxS verses

with a resolved first lift, like the hypothetical *guma ġehēt* or *guma mē ġehēt*,[263] is

accidental. It seems far more probable that the non-occurrence of verses like *guma

ġehēt* is an indication of their unmetricality. And since the only possible scansion for the

non-occurring *guma ġehēt* is SxS,[264] it follows that SxS is not a valid metrical analysis

for attested verses like *nīða ofercumen*. Thus, unless one is ready to give credence to

extreme coincidences, it is necessary to regard these verses as relatively atypical

instances of a regular type A metrical configuration with a short second lift.

     Another reason to credit the traditional four-position analysis for verses like *nīða

ofercumen* is that it receives independent support from a well-known fact of all Indo-

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[256] "Bereft of warriors."

[257] "Behold the sky."

[258] "Mild father."

[259] "Course and orbit."

[260] "Funeral pyre consumes."

[261] "Wild bird."

[262] Sievers lists twelve such verses (1885: 458). For a few more examples, see Schabram 1960.

[263] "A man promised"; "a man promised me."

[264] Verse-initial resolvable sequences must necessarily undergo resolution (see Suzuki 1995: 26; Pascual forthcoming).

European metrical systems, namely that they tend to demand more fixed structures toward the end of the verse.[265] A clear expression of this tendency can be appreciated, for example, in the ability of non-verse-final drops to accommodate a variable number of syllables, while only one unstressed syllable is allowed to occupy a verse-final drop, as has been stated above. This characteristic feature of Indo-European metres manifests itself even more evidently in the application of Fulk's law, according to which the metrical value of disyllabic sequences with a short penultimate syllable under tertiary stress is determined by their position within the verse.[266] In the onset, they occupy a single metrical position; but if they are in the coda, then each of their two syllables must constitute a single metrical position on its own. Although an exhaustive explanation of exceptional verses like *nīða ofercumen* falls beyond the scope of the present study, the preceding discussion should have sufficed to make it clear that there are good metrical reasons to expect an unresolved lift in the coda of the verse. Thus, the SxS scansion is not tenable for verses like *nīða ofercumen*, and hence they cannot be offered in support of the authenticity of the SxS verse pattern in *Beowulf*.

3.   Miscellaneous Four-Position Verses

Weiskott's SxS scansion for 881a, *ēam his nefan*;[267] 1728a, *Hwīlum hē on lufan*;[268] 736a, *ðicgean ofer þā niht*;[269] and 940b, *dǣd ġefremede*,[270] must likewise be rejected. In the first instance, 881a, it is probable that the poet regarded *ēam* as a non-contracted disyllabic word with the stress contour Ss, reflecting prehistoric Old English **ēa-am*, descended in turn from the Proto-Germanic compound **awa-haim* (Holthausen 1963:

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[265] Foley refers to this phenomenon as "right justification" (1985: 12; see also Fulk 1992: §226).

[266] Fulk names his law "Rule of the Coda" (1992: §§221-245). Notice that although "tertiary stress" is here retained as a useful concept, the application of Fulk's law demonstrates that ictus at the tertiary level is exclusively predicated on syllable quantity (Fulk 1992: §268).

[267] "Uncle to his nephew."

[268] "Sometimes he in delight."

[269] "Consume beyond that night."

[270] "Deed accomplished."

84, s.v. *éam*).[271] The stress pattern of 881a would therefore be SsxS, corresponding to a rhythmical type E with resolution of its second lift. Indeed, the circumflex diacritic above *ēam* printed in *Klaeber IV* indicates that its editors endorse this scansion. Further, the traditional four-position interpretation for this verse is predicated upon compelling philological evidence that the three-position analysis neglects. In the prehistoric Old English form *ēa-am*, a hiatus separates a diphthong ending in a back vowel, *ēa-*, from an unstressed vowel, *-a*. Hiatuses of this kind underwent contraction at some point between the late seventh and the early eighth century (Campbell 1964: §235.2; Hogg 2011: §5.131). Since the composition of *Beowulf* can be reliably dated to the period 685-725,[272] it follows that the non-contracted form must still have been within easy reach for the poet at the time he composed *Beowulf*. Therefore, the four-position scansion for 881a not only is metrically regular, but also preferable on a philological basis.

	With respect to 1728a, *Hwīlum hē on lufan*, the three-position analysis is based on the assumption that the entire line features a transverse alliterative scheme of the type AB: BA, which would involve promotion of *hwīlum* to a stressed position.[273] This assumption is dubitable, however, not only because transverse alliteration is very infrequent in Old English poetry (Terasawa 2011: 18),[274] but also because it would entail a breach of Kuhn's first law, an extremely uncommon situation in *Beowulf*. Since *hwīlum* is a sentence particle that appears in the first drop of its clause, in complete

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[271] See also Fulk, Bjork, and Niles 2008: 330, n. 3.

[272] *Beowulf* is the only poem in the Old English corpus with regular and extensive adherence to both parts of Kaluza's law. This means that the poet was aware of the distinction between etymologically short and long desinences that became indistinct ca. 725 in Mercia and ca. 825 in Northumbria. Because the language of *Beowulf* is less conservative than that of the Épinal-Erfurt glossary (ca. 685) and because dialectal indications point to Mercian composition, Fulk has concluded that *Beowulf* was most likely composed between ca. 685 and ca. 725 (1992: §§406-421; 2007a: 268; 2007b: 317-323; see also Clark, forthcoming; and Neidorf and Pascual, forthcoming). The law originates in the observations of Max Kaluza (1896).

[273] The off-verse is *lǣteð hworfan*.

[274] R.B. Le Page considers that this line features transverse alliteration (1959: 435), but see the criticism raised by Terasawa (2011: 25).

obedience to Kuhn's first law, it must be unstressed. Accordingly, this verse scans as an

A3 type with its alliterating lift occupied by the short stressed syllable *lu-*.[275]

Remarkably, even in the improbable case that *ēam* scanned as a monosyllable and that

hwīlum bore a stress, verses 881a and 1728a would not unambiguously feature the SxS

pattern, since the SxSx pattern with an unresolved lift in the coda would still be a more

probable explanation for them, as has been argued in the previous section. Neither of

these two verses therefore carries any conviction as an authentic instance of the SxS

pattern.

   The stress pattern traditionally posited for *Beowulf* 736a, *ðicgean ofer þā niht*, is

the four-position SxxxSs, corresponding to a heavy A type with primary stress on *þā*,

secondary stress on *niht*, and featuring double alliteration. The three-position scansion

of this verse is based on the premise that *þā* is unstressed. This premise, however, is not

supported by the evidence. There is a similar verse elsewhere in Old English poetry,

Judith 306a, *þeġnas on ðā tīd*,[276] and in both instances the alliteration of the line is on

/þ/.[277] The three-position interpretation thus neglects the fact that in these two verses

promotion of *þā* to a stressed position results not only in a metrically regular verse, but

also in an acceptable alliterative scheme. Furthermore, the assignment of primary stress

to *þā* and secondary stress to *niht* in 736a is supported by the occurrence in *Beowulf* and

elsewhere of a significant number of parallel verses in which *niht* takes secondary stress

and is preceded by an alliterating monosyllable (Hutcheson 1995: 159, n. 3). This can

be transparently appreciated in verses like *Beowulf* 517a *seofonniht swuncon*;[278] *Exodus*

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[275] Type A3 verses with a short lift are occasionally found in *Beowulf* and elsewhere. (Fulk, Bjork, and Niles 2008: 330).

[276] "Warriors at that time." Griffith scans it as a regular four-position verse with alliteration on *þā* (1997: 141).

[277] *Beowulf* 736b and *Judith* 306b read *Þrȳðswȳð behēold* and *þearle ġelyste* respectively.

[278] Disyllabic *seofon-* is resolved and counts therefore as a single syllable.

63a, *Hēht þā ymb twā niht*; or *Andreas* 185a, *Nū bið fore þrēo niht*.[279] Thus, in the

absence of a substantial number of unambiguous instances of the SxS pattern, it is not

justifiable to adduce *Beowulf* 736a as authentic evidence of that pattern.

　　With regard to 940b, *dǣd ġefremede*, this verse as it stands in the manuscript

scans as a regular four-position type A verse with resolution of the second lift. In order

to make it conform to the SxS pattern, Weiskott assumes that the form *ġefremede* is a

scribal substitution of authorial *ġefremed*, which would in turn undergo resolution. The

emendation of *ġefremede* to *ġefremed*, which has never been proposed by any editor in

the history of *Beowulf* textual criticism, has no rational basis and cannot be accepted.

The manuscript reading *ġefremede* is grammatically unquestionable: it is a past

participle declined as an accusative singular feminine adjective, in perfect agreement

with the noun it modifies, the feminine *i*-stem *dǣd*, the direct object of its clause. The

single reason adduced by Weiskott in support of his emendation is that there is one

verse in the whole poem, 476a, in which the past participle of *ġefremman* is uninflected:

fǣrnīða ġefremed.[280] If this line of reasoning were accepted, we would be obliged to

change, for example, *Beowulf* 216b, *wudu bundenne*, to *wudu bunden*, since this is the

only occurrence in the whole poem in which the participle of *bindan* is inflected. But

we would then be altering a metrically regular verse to a verse with the unmetrical SSx

configuration. Indeed, the poet's choice of the inflected form of the participle of *bindan*

in this single instance is most probably motivated by the demands of metre: since

resolution of verse-initial *wudu* is unavoidable, the uninflected form *bunden* would

make the verse fall short of a syllable (cf. Mitchell 1985: §36; and Terasawa 2011: 80).

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[279] See also Fulk 1992: §199 for further commentary on verses of this sort.

[280] The past participle *ġefremed* in 476a must depend upon the accusative singular neuter pronoun *hwæt*
in 474b, since *fǣrnīða* is genitive plural. The uninflected form *ġefremed* is therefore the only
grammatically correct possibility. Weiskott's line of reasoning, however, seems to be based on the false
assumption that *ġefremed* ought to be inflected.

A similar metrical rationale is most likely behind the poet's use of the inflected participle of *ġefremman* in *dǣd ġefremede*: he inflected the participle in this instance precisely to avoid the unmetrical SxS pattern. Weiskott's emendation of *dǣd ġefremede* to *dǣd ġefremed* reflects an antiprobabilistic mode of reasoning: it gratuitously corrupts an authorial four-position verse, for no reason other than to increase the apparent evidence for the authenticity of the SxS contour.

4.   Corrupt Manuscript Readings

The previous three sections have accounted for the four-position metrical configuration of nine out of the thirteen instances that Weiskott adduced as evidence for the SxS pattern. The present section considers the remaining four items, which are in actuality corrupt manuscript readings. One of them is *rǣhte ongēan*, at the beginning of line 7 on folio 149r (corresponding to l. 747b). Taken at face value, it should constitute a verse featuring the three-position SxxS stress contour. But this reading is suspect on text-critical grounds, since it is immediately preceded by an erasure of five letters at the end of line 6 (Zupitza 1959: 36). Since the first of the damaged letters is an *h*, Weiskott argues that the scribe copied the word *handa* by eye-skip to 746a, and that he then erased it intentionally to achieve the purportedly correct three-position reading (2013: 483, n. 4). Several problems present themselves. First, if *rǣhte ongēan* were an authentic verse by itself, the verbal form *rǣhte* would lack an object (Robinson 1996: 56). Consequently, it would have to be assumed that the noun phrase *hiġeþīhtiġne rinċ* is used ἀπὸ κοινοῦ by the *Beowulf* poet as the grammatical object of two distinct verbs, the preceding *nam* and the following *rǣhte*. This interpretation must be rejected, since ἀπὸ κοινοῦ constructions are not a genuine feature of Old English verse (Fulk 2003: 3-9). Second, and even more important, the three-position analysis neglects the well-known fact that the erasure preceding *rǣhte* coincides with an erasure at exactly the

same place on the following leaf (Zupitza 1959: 37).[281] This clearly suggests that it was

something spilt on the vellum that obscured the words preceding *ræhte*, not the

deliberate hand of the scribe. The reading *ræhte ongean* can then be reliably considered

defective. Indeed, this is the stance adopted by the editors of *Klaeber IV*, who fill the

five-letter gap in the manuscript by adding *hē him*, two sentence particles that not only

restore the syntax and sense of the passage, but also make a standard four-position type

B verse.

Another two readings that Weiskott presented as authorial SxS verses in *Beowulf*

are *grētte þā*,[282] (corresponding to l. 652a) and *ġeġnum fōr*[283] (corresponding to 1404b).

But surely these two readings are corrupt, since trisyllabic verses of any kind are

virtually non-existent in the Old English poetic corpus. The evidential force of their

absence is so compelling that the stricture against verses with less than four syllables is

regarded by practically all metrists as "the most basic and universal of the metrical

rules," (Amos 1980: 15)[284] and even the most conservative editors of Old English

poetry emend trisyllabic verses on that single basis. Further, plausible sources of scribal

confusion for these two readings have been readily identified. In regard to 652a, the

source of error suggests itself clearly after comparison with 2516a, *Ġegrētte þā*: the

similarity between *ge-* and *gre-* likely led the scribe to overlook *ge-* as he copied from

his exemplar (Andrew 1948: 141). This is in fact the position uniformly endorsed by

editors of *Beowulf*, who emend the text at this point by adding the prefix *ġe-*. With

regard to *ġeġnum fōr*, to consider it authentic would neglect the fact that trisyllabic

sequences with an SxS stress contour and with an alliterating first lift occurring within

the second half of the line are invariably either preceded by a minimum of one

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[281] See also Pope (1966: 372), and Fulk (1992: §209).
[282] "Addressed then."
[283] "Had gone forward."
[284] See also Sievers 1885: 268ff., 312; Bliss 1962: §15; Pope 1966: 318-320; 371-372; Fulk 1996: 5; 1997: 39; Terasawa 2009; 2011: 49-52.

unstressed syllable or followed by exactly one unstressed syllable both in *Beowulf* and

elsewhere in Old English poetry. Since *ġeġnum fōr* does not admit any other element

after *fōr*, at least one unstressed element seems to have been dropped accidentally by the

scribe immediately before *ġeġnum*. The editors of *Klaeber IV* supply *þǣr*, a relative

conjunction that not only makes for a regular type B verse, but also improves the syntax

of the passage.

There remains only one supposed instance of the SxS pattern in *Beowulf* to be

considered: 2150a, *lissa ġelong*. Although its source of error is debatable, the three-

position analysis for this verse has been nonetheless repeatedly questioned. Geoffrey

Russom, for example, has proposed an attractive four-position interpretation, according

to which the letter *a* should be construed not as the inflectional ending for genitive

plural, but as the lexically prominent adverb *ā*, "always" (1987: 117-118). That way, the

verse would read *liss ā ġelong*, with the stress contour of a rhythmical type E.

Additionally, the editors of *Klaeber IV* have suggested that *ġelong* is perhaps a scribal

substitute for an authorial dialect form that would have resulted in an original four-

position verse (Fulk, Bjork, and Niles 2008: 234). Nevertheless, this verse is clearly

unique in that none of the plausible sources of error has achieved clear consensus

among metrists. The difficulty that *lissa ġelong* has traditionally posed to experts in Old

English metre is used by Weiskott as a lever for his argument in support of the

metricality of the SxS verse type. He focuses the entire body of his essay exclusively on

the resistance shown by *lissa ġelong* to consensual emendation, while relegating the

other supposed instances of the SxS pattern to a list in a footnote, as if the mere lack of

a universally accepted source of error for *lissa ġelong* somehow validated the dubious

three-position interpretation of the other twelve verses.

The strategy followed by Weiskott might be rhetorically effective, but it is unwarranted in proper metrical argumentation, where, as has been argued at the beginning of this study, the authenticity of a verse type is established not on the basis of an isolated and relatively ambiguous manuscript reading, like *hrēas blāc* or *lissa ġelong*, but on the strength of a statistically significant incidence of unambiguous instances in the surviving corpus of Old English poetry. This and other related methodological issues are treated more extensively in the next part of the present article.

<div align="center">INCIDENCE AND AUTHENTICY</div>

When Weiskott's ambiguous corpus of thirteen verses is taken from its marginal location in the footnotes and is examined carefully, it becomes noticed that only two of the supposed instances of the SxS pattern are trisyllabic. Such an insignificant incidence in an already insignificant corpus indicates that the SxS type is inauthentic, since the occurrences of ideal realizations of a genuine metrical pattern ought to outnumber those of marked realizations. For example, four-syllable type A verses like *hringa fenġel*,[285] in which each syllable constitutes a single metrical position, were regarded by poets as ideal realizations of the four-position SxSx pattern, as is indicated by their outstanding incidence in Old English poetry. On the other hand, five-syllable type A verses like *monegum mǣġþum*[286] or *swǣse ġesīþas*[287] were perceived as acceptable, marked variants of the same metrical type. Consequently, their incidences, though substantial, are not as high as those of the four-syllable realization. The situation is exactly the opposite with regard to Weiskott's corpus: it consists of only a handful of verses, the majority of which could not count as ideal realizations. According to his scansion, five verses would show protracted drops (183b, 186b, 736a, 747b, and 2150a); another six

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[285] "Prince of rings."
[286] "To many nations."
[287] "Dear comrades."

would have a resolved second lift (845a, 881a, 940b, 954a, 1728a, and 2430b); and only the remaining two would be ideal trisyllabic realizations of the three-position pattern (652a and 1404b). Had the SxS pattern been an authentic metrical type at the disposal of Old English poets, the body of verses that could have been gathered would be much larger, and the proportion between ideal and marked realizations would be the converse. Thus, it is precisely the character of Weiskott's own corpus of evidence that betrays the inauthenticity of the pattern it aims to validate.

Trisyllabic verses featuring an SxS pattern are vanishingly rare in the surviving corpus of Old English poetry. In fact, some syllabic sequences with the SxS stress contour for which there are good linguistic reasons to be expected are never found as independent verses. Such absence is indicative of the unmetricality of the SxS pattern, because an authentic verse type would inevitably have resulted in a significant number of linguistically probable ideal realizations. For example, trisyllabic verses like **swǣs ġesīþ*,[288] which consists of a monosyllable followed by an iambic disyllable, are systematically absent from the records. Words with the stress contour of *swǣs*, however, are extremely common in both Old English language and verse; and words with the stress contour of *ġesīþ*, though not as frequent, are also common in the language and easily found in other metrical contexts. Clearly, the nature of the stricture against the occurrence of the sequence **swǣs ġesīþ* in verse must be other than linguistic. The recursive incidence of similar verses like *swǣse ġesīþas* (*Beowulf* 29a, 2040a, 2518a; cf. 1934a) suggests that the restriction is purely metrical: verses like **swǣs ġesīþ* do not occur because they are prohibited by the metrical system. That the ideal realization of the SxS pattern is unmetrical is perhaps the clearest indication that the entire pattern must be inauthentic. To argue that the SxS type is authentic in *Beowulf*

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[288] "Dear comrade."

is thus to fight an inevitable defeat against the virtually non-existent incidence of its ideal trisyllabic realizations both in *Beowulf* and in the rest of Old English poetic monuments.

The problems with Weiskott's argument do not end here. He states that the traditional prohibition of Sieversian metrics against three-position verses is unwarranted, given the legitimacy accorded to type D* verses like *Beowulf* 770a, *rēþe renweardas*,[289] whose metrical configuration (SxSsx) apparently consists of five positions (2013 *passim*). Or, to put it another way, Weiskott maintains that since an apparently non-four-position pattern like type D* is regarded as authentic by Sieversian metrics, then the restriction traditionally held by metrists against another non-four-position pattern like SxS must be arbitrary. But, to the contrary, it is Weiskott's charge against Sieversian metrics that is demonstrably baseless. The foundation on which the edifice of Sieversian metrics is constructed is essentially empirical. Thus, an apparently problematic verse type like D* is nonetheless considered authentic in Sieversian formalism on account of its statistically significant incidence. According to A.J. Bliss's scansion, there are 146 unambiguous instances of that type in *Beowulf*.[290] Since the appearance of that type is restricted to the on-verse, its incidence in the whole poem is of approximately 4.6%. The regularity indicated by such a substantial figure cannot be ascribed to scribal corruption. The presence of 146 verses unambiguously featuring the same metrical structure must necessarily reflect the metrical practice of the *Beowulf* poet. The authenticity that Sieversian metrics accords to type D* is therefore supported by strong empirical evidence.

This point can be further illustrated by reference to another well-known verse pattern that also seems not to comply with the four-position principle: type A3, as in

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[289] "Fierce guardians of the house."
[290] This figure has been calculated using Vickman 1990.

Beowulf 106a, *siþðan him scyppen*,[291] which apparently comprises three metrical positions. Its statistical incidence is once again the reason why it is accepted as an authentic verse type by Sieversian metrics. Calvin B. Kendall counts 315 unambiguous instances of type A3 in *Beowulf* (1983: 14). Since instances of type A3 can occur only in the on-verse, its incidence in the whole poem amounts to approximately 10%. It cannot reasonably be doubted that this figure results from the application of the principles governing the metrical practice of the poet. The authenticity of this verse type, like that of type D*, is therefore founded on its statistically substantial number of occurrences. The genuine existence of types D* and A3, however, does not compromise the authenticity of the four-position principle, which is still able to account for the metricality of more than 85% of the remaining verses in the poem. It is on the basis of the empirically demonstrable reality of types D* and A3, on the one hand, and of the four-position principle, on the other, that the Sieversian theory of Old English metre is constructed. Thus, although type A3 has sometimes been analysed as a three-position pattern, traditional metrists categorize it as an acceptable variant of the basic four-position metrical configuration (Cable 1974: 20-31; Fulk 2002: 339, n. 10). The theoretical harmonization between type D* and the four-position principle has been provided by both Tom Cable and Seiichi Suzuki, who convincingly account for type D* as a surface manifestation of an underlying four-position pattern (Cable 1991: 37, 138-139, 143; Suzuki 1992; 1995: 21-22).

The case for the authenticity of the SxS pattern, on the contrary, lacks empirical justification. A cursory glance at the incidences of types D* and A3, on the one hand, and at the incidence of verses that according to Weiskott feature the SxS pattern, on the other, suffices to substantiate this claim. Since according to him there is no metrical

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[291] "After him the lord."

restriction on SxS verses preventing them from occurring in the off-verse, the incidence of his thirteen verses in *Beowulf* amounts to 0.2%, a figure that starkly contrasts with the 4.6% and 10% incidences of types D* and A3. These figures demonstrate that the incidences of the three verse types are not comparable. If the SxS type had been considered authentic by the poet, it is improbable that he would have produced such an insignificant quantity of three-position verses. As we can see, then, the mere calculation of the pertinent statistics confirms that the allegation of arbitrariness levelled by Weiskott against Sieversian metrics is frivolous. The Sieversian acknowledgement of the authenticity of types D* and A3 is as empirically justified as its rejection of the genuineness of the SxS pattern, since the two positions are determined exclusively by their differential incidences in the corpus of Old English verse. With an incidence slightly above 0%, the plea for the authenticity of the SxS pattern seems to be based on nothing but wishful thinking.

Yet Weiskott's argument is faulty in a more fundamental way. If the results of metrical research are to be trusted, the incidence of a certain verse type can be calculated only according to the number of unambiguous instances that occur in the corpus under study. As has been argued in the first part of the present article, however, at least twelve out of Weiskott's thirteen instances do not unambiguously feature the SxS pattern. Weiskott himself seems to be aware of this fact when he states that the verses he gathers "are always differently explained or emended." (2013: 483). That the traditional explanations of these verses are summarily dismissed by Weiskott is unsurprising, given his belief that the restriction of Sieversian metrics against the SxS pattern is arbitrary. But genuine metrical studies do not proceed that way. The authenticity of a verse type can be gauged only by the number of its unambiguous instances, since an authentic verse type would have resulted in a significant number of

verses of that type for which no coherent alternative explanations could be proposed. Since the only instance that could be unambiguously adduced in support of the authenticity of the SxS pattern in *Beowulf* is *lissa ġelong*, the actual incidence of unambiguous occurrences in the poem is 0.01%. Thus, the SxS pattern is far too infrequent in *Beowulf* to admit its metricality. As Fulk has put it, "scribal transmission is too uncertain to permit a single example of a metrical type to carry much weight" (1992: §209).

Another argument advanced by Weiskott in support of the authenticity of the SxS type in *Beowulf* is that the pattern in question is authentic in Old Norse verse (2013: 484, n. 4). Yet once again, his argument is contradicted by the evidence. The SxS pattern has traditionally been considered a genuine metrical type in *fornyrðislag* due to its statistically significant presence in Eddic poetry, especially in some poems. For example, according to Suzuki's count, the heroic *Sigurðarqviða in scamma*, at 568 verses, contains 29 instances of the SxS pattern; and the mythological poems *Hyndlolióð* and *Rígsþula*, at 294 and 296 verses respectively, contain 21 and 59 occurrences (2009: 31).[292] Therefore, the respective incidences of the SxS verse type in these Eddic poems are 5.1%, 7.14%, and 20%. Faced with statistics such as these, Eduard Sievers naturally accepted the type as formally legitimate in *fornyrðislag*, since such substantial incidences cannot have accidentally resulted from the scribes' unstable practice (1893: §45.2). These figures starkly contrast with the trivial 0.2% incidence to which Weiskott's corpus of thirteen instances would amount if they unambiguously featured the SxS pattern. Indeed, Weiskott seems not to have calculated these statistics before advancing his argument: it is difficult to see how he could have ever proposed

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[292] On the development of the SxS type in Old Norse verse, see also Suzuki 2011.

the purported parallel between the presence of the SxS type in Old Norse and in

Beowulf had he reckoned them.

Weiskott also argues that the SxS pattern would have been subjected to a gradual

process of regularization over the history of Old English metre. Although this is

certainly the case with the SxS pattern in Old Norse, Weiskott's argument runs counter

to the course of Old English metrical history, which is inextricably linked to the history

of the Old English language. In Old Norse, the unstressed short vowels of many words

had been dropped by the beginning of the ninth century, as a result of which many four-

syllable verses became trisyllabic (Gordon 1957: 276; Russom 1998: 34). For example,

a trisyllabic verse like *Þrymsquiða* 17/2, *þrúðugr áss*,[293] whose stress contour is SxS,

might conceivably have originated in a regular four-position type A verse with the

Proto-Norse disyllabic *u*-stem **ansuʀ* in the place of monosyllabic *áss*. After the loss of

unstressed short vowels, the poets would have reinterpreted these trisyllabic verses as

regular, thereby composing new verses with a three-position metrical configuration, like

Rígsþula 43/5, *meirr kunni hann*,[294] a four-syllable verse featuring the three-position

SxxS pattern.[295] This interpretation is substantiated by the abovementioned incidences

of the SxS type in some Eddic poems composed in *fornyrðislag*. Many of the changes

that took place in the Old English language, however, were conducive to the converse

tendency (Lehman 1956: 88-93). For one, the development of epenthetic vowels

produced an increase in the number of syllables of a significant amount of words.

Further, as a consequence of the reduction in the number of compounds that came about

with the decline of the poetic tradition, the language of poetry was patterned on that of

prose, which substantially increased the number of unstressed function words in the

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[293] "Mighty god."

[294] "He knew more."

[295] Winfred P. Lehman lists a series of phonological and morphological changes in the Old Norse language that contributed to the appearance of the catalectic SxS type in *fornyrðislag* metre (1956: 80-84). See also Russom 2004: 292-297.

line. Hence, contrary to Weiskott's argument, non-early Old English poetry was an unlikely context for the regularization of the catalectic SxS metrical type to occur.[296]

The incidence of the SxS pattern in a larger corpus of Old English poetry also contradicts the notion that it became regularized later in the period. In his monumental *A History of Old English Meter*, Fulk endeavoured to determine the chronological significance of a set of metrical and linguistic archaisms by studying their distribution throughout a corpus of more than fourteen thousand lines, containing poems that can be externally dated to both the early period, like *Cædmon's Hymn*, and the late period, like *The Battle of Maldon* or *Durham*. Excluding *Beowulf* from this corpus, the number of verses with an unambiguous SxS stress contour is three: *Genesis A* 2217b, *ǣniġ ne wearð*;[297] 2695, *lāre ġebearh*;[298] and *Elene* 534a, *frīġneð ymb ðæt trēo*[299] (Fulk 1992: §§210-211). Or, to put it another way, the incidence of unambiguous occurrences of the SxS type in such an enormous body of verse is of approximately 0.01%, exactly the same as the incidence in *Beowulf*. This figure unequivocally indicates that the poets perceived the three-position SxS pattern as unmetrical throughout the history of Old English metre, and that therefore the three unambiguous instances found in the large corpus of verse analysed by Fulk are not authorial. As Fulk has put it, "the underlying four-position pattern remains unchanged over the history of Old English verse, from *Cædmon's Hymn* to *Durham*. Even poems like *Maldon* that differ widely from the standard of *Beowulf* in numerous details do not violate the four-position pattern" (1992: §208).

<div align="center">CONCLUSION</div>

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[296] The increase in the number of unstressed function words in late Old English verse has long been recognized. See, for example, Russom 2002b, where the expansion of the line is treated as an indication of late composition. See also Cable 1991: 41-65; Fulk 1992: §§290-317; Russom 2012; and Hartman forthcoming.
[297] "No [son] was."
[298] "By cunning protected."
[299] "Asks about that tree."

At the beginning of his essay, Weiskott asserts that "verses of the form SxS occur in *Beowulf*" (2013: 483). Of course, SxS verses occur in the transmitted text of the poem, alongside many corrupt forms requiring emendation.[300] Their occurrence in *Beowulf*, however, is a hypothesis to be tested, not an indisputable fact upon which an argument can be constructed. The present study has demonstrated that the SxS metrical type fails to pass the test of authenticity. As we have seen, there are three unambiguous occurrences in a corpus of approximately 28,364 verses. This means that its overall incidence in such a substantial body of poetry, at 0.01%, is almost non-existent. To regard it as authentic, therefore, would compel us to believe that the poets' systematic avoidance of that type is an accident—an extremely improbable coincidence. It is far more probable that the reason why the poets systematically avoided the SxS pattern is that they considered it unmetrical on account of its three-positions, and that consequently the few unambiguous instances of the SxS type that have happened to be recorded are the products of scribal error. This hypothesis has the complementary virtue of accounting for the metricality of the vast majority of verses found in the surviving poetic manuscripts. Weiskott's claim (2013: 485) that treating SxS verses as authentic would be a gain for textual criticism and metrical study is plainly mistaken. In actuality, crediting his untenable hypothesis would cause textual critics to regard scribal errors as authorial readings and lead metrists to misapprehend the principles that govern the metrical practice of the *Beowulf* poet.

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[300] See, for example, the errors surveyed in Lapidge 2000 and Neidorf 2013c.

2. The Metre of *Beowulf*

2.2. The Dating of *Beowulf* and the Conditioning of Kaluza's Law

In *A History of Old English Meter* (henceforth *HOEM*), R.D. Fulk endeavored to determine the chronological significance of a set of metrical and linguistic archaisms by studying their distribution throughout the corpus of longer Old English poems. Focusing on various criteria including parasiting, contraction, compensatory lengthening upon loss of *h*, and analogical lengthening in diphthongal stems, Fulk observed that verses requiring archaic phonology for scansion occur with the highest incidence and greatest lexical variety in *Beowulf*, *Genesis A*, *Exodus*, and *Daniel*. The incidence of metrical archaisms generally declines in the Cynewulfian poems, regresses further in the Alfredian poems, and then reaches its nadir in poems externally datable to the tenth and eleventh centuries (Fulk 1992: 348-51). The broad consistency of this distribution suggests that the linguistic tests under scrutiny offer reliable methods for establishing a relative chronology of Old English poetry.[301] *Beowulf*, which places first in most of these tests, is also the only poem with regular and extensive adherence to Kaluza's law. What this means is that the poem exhibits a consistent distinction between historically long and short desinences that became indistinct ca. 725 in Mercia and ca. 825 in Northumbria. Because the language of *Beowulf* is less conservative than that of the Épinal-Erfurt glossary (ca. 685) and because dialectal indications point to Mercian composition, Fulk concluded that *Beowulf* was most likely composed between ca. 685 and ca. 725 (1992: §§406-421).

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[301] Consequently, the arguments of Amos (1980: 167-70), who held that these tests were largely unreliable, can no longer be credited.

Since the publication of *HOEM*, there has been no serious dispute concerning the validity of most of Fulk's dating criteria. The one feature that has engendered considerable comment is Kaluza's law, which has been queried in isolation from the other linguistic evidence. Such isolated consideration is problematic, since arguments about Kaluza's law cannot reasonably be disentangled from arguments about the archaic nature of the language of *Beowulf*. We suspect that contention has surrounded Kaluza's law rather than a criterion such as contraction due to the differing levels of ease with which observers can comprehend these phenomena. Unlike Kaluza's law, the rationale for regarding contraction as a valid dating criterion can be simply expressed through two observations. (1) In verses such as *on flett gæð* (*Beowulf* 2034b), a word that underwent contraction in the seventh century must assume its pre-contracted form for the verse to contain four syllables; the meter reveals that the *Beowulf* poet treated *gæð* as if it were the earlier disyllabic form, **ga-iþ.* (2) Verses where scansion requires non-contraction occur with the highest frequency and greatest lexical variety in *Beowulf* and *Genesis A*, poems characterized by a suite of archaic features, whereas such verses rarely appear in Cynewulfian, Alfredian, and tenth- or eleventh-century poems (Fulk 1992: §§99-130). The chronological significance is crystal clear. No one has queried Fulk's conclusion that contraction is a valid criterion for relative dating and it is doubtful that a convincing alternative explanation for such a straightforward distribution can reasonably be proposed.

Kaluza's law, on the other hand, is more complicated. The literature on this topic is often abstruse and the waters have certainly been muddied. We believe, however, that if the issues involved are presented clearly, they can be rendered intelligible to any patient observer. In brief, Kaluza's law refers to a linguistic regularity observed in two types of verses, wherein syllabic sequences under secondary stress are treated as

resolvable or unresolvable according to whether the desinence involved was historically long or short.[302] *Beowulf* contains sixty-two Kaluza Type I verses, such as *goldwine gumena* (1171a, 1476a, 1602a), in which a historically short desinence is subjected to resolution. It also contains forty-four Kaluza Type II verses, such as *eald æscwiga* (2042a), in which a historically long desinence suspends resolution. The meter reveals that in a verse like *goldwine gumena*, resolution must occur on -*wine*, since the absence of resolution would result in a verse with five metrical positions (*SsxSx); whereas in a verse like *eald æscwiga*, resolution must be suspended on -*wiga*, since the conflation of two syllables would result in a verse containing only three metrical positions (*SSs).[303] In the poem's 106 verses adhering to Kaluza's law, second compound elements are unambiguously distributed into positions of resolution or non-resolution according to distinctions of length that became phonologically indistinct early in the Anglo-Saxon period. This linguistic regularity is not open to serious dispute, but is accepted *a priori* by all scholars who purport to offer an explanation for Kaluza's law. What is in dispute is the conditioning responsible for the *Beowulf* poet's apparent awareness of so many archaic length distinctions.

Fulk argued that the regular and extensive adherence to Kaluza's law in *Beowulf* must have been phonologically conditioned: the poet consistently distinguished between historically long and short desinences because he composed before they became

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[302] The law originates in the observations of Kaluza 1896 and 1909: 57-9. Fulk, building on Kaluza, restricted the law's application to syllabic sequences subject to secondary stress, and we follow this definition of the law, for reasons that will become clear below. Regarding etymological length, we should note here: a historically short vowel is a vowel that either was short in Proto-Germanic or was shortened before the Old English period; a historically long vowel is a vowel that had circumflex intonation in Proto-Germanic and was shortened later than regular long vowels. For paradigms of the Proto-Germanic declensions, see Fulk 1992: 419-25. For a list of verses in *Beowulf* adhering to Kaluza's law, see Bliss 1967: §§35-6 and Fulk 1992:160-2. For an exposition of Kaluza's law in terms of grid theory, see Cable 1994. On the reciprocal relationship between Kaluza's law and Sieversian metrics, see Pascual 2014 and Fulk 1992: §§26, 65, 69.

[303] For a discussion of the four-position principle of Old English metrics, which addresses both the genuine and artificial deviations therefrom, see Pascual 2013; see also the foundational analysis in Cable 1974: 84-93.

phonologically indistinct (1992: §§406-21). The high incidence and unparalleled lexical

variety of the poem's Kaluza verses are thus explained in one stroke as straightforward

reflections of the phonological realities that obtained at the time of composition. Seiichi

Suzuki, refining the interpretation of A.J. Bliss, argued that the *Beowulf* poet was able

to recognize archaic length distinctions on the basis of a morphological analogy.[304]

Suzuki's argument dates the composition of *Beowulf* prior to ca. 750 (see 1996b: 305-

6), since it establishes a *terminus* based on distinctions of vocalic quality rather than

quantity. B.R. Hutcheson (2004), on the other hand, argued that adherence to Kaluza's

law must be attributed to oral tradition and should not be regarded as a dating criterion.

Although he would deprive the Kaluza verses of chronological significance, Hutcheson

affirmed on the basis of other dating criteria that *Beowulf* is most likely an eighth-

century poem.[305] The only scholar in the literature on Kaluza's law to doubt its

significance and suggest that *Beowulf* is a late composition is Roberta Frank (2007),

who argued that the narrative distribution of the relevant verses indicates that they are

deliberate archaizing gestures. Most recently, Eric Weiskott (2012) has argued that the

Beowulf poet was guided by a semantic principle (coupled with a morphological and

phonological principle) to divine without fail the etymologically correct length

distinctions. Weiskott contends that his explanation voids the Kaluza verses of

chronological significance.

        The purpose of this paper is to gauge the relative probability of these competing

hypotheses and, in doing so, to reintegrate interpretation of Kaluza's law with

interpretation of the language of *Beowulf*. Since Weiskott's argument has not yet elicited

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[304] See Suzuki 1996a and 1996b: 281-306; for Bliss's views on Kaluza's law, see 1958: 27-35, 118-21.
[305] Hutcheson (2004: 299) writes: "I myself believe *Beowulf* is probably an eighth-century poem, and that
the weight of all of the evidence Fulk presents in his book tells strongly in favor of an eighth-century
date. This weight is considerable. In the now over ten years since *A History of Old English Meter*
appeared, I have yet to see a scholarly argument that succeeds in meeting or even attempts to meet his
arguments head-on, never mind refute them."

a detailed response in print, the first section of the present study subjects his claims to critical scrutiny.[306] We argue that his hypothesis is not only untenable, but that it is predicated upon a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of probabilistic reasoning in philological argumentation. In the course of our analysis of Weiskott's argument, numerous methodological considerations emerge, which we extend in the second section of this paper to the arguments of Hutcheson, Suzuki, and Frank. We argue that the evidence pertaining to Kaluza's law is not as malleable as the recent proliferation of *ad hoc* treatments might suggest. The hypotheses in competition with Fulk's possess none of the internal coherence and explanatory power of that which they were intended to displace. By elucidating the issues involved, we hope to make the chronological implications of Kaluza's law as transparent and unmistakable as the implications of contraction. We conclude by urging scholars to abandon the antiprobabilistic notion that the composition of *Beowulf* cannot be dated to a relatively narrow period of time.

The Conditioning of Kaluza's Law

Three tasks confront the scholar who wishes to understand the chronological significance of the regular and extensive adherence to Kaluza's law in *Beowulf*. The first task is to develop a hypothesis that can explain how the poet distinguished between so many etymologically long and short desinences. The second is to test that hypothesis by determining how much linguistic data in *Beowulf* it can accommodate. The third is to test that hypothesis by determining how much linguistic data outside of *Beowulf* it can accommodate, i.e., determining whether it is capable of explaining why other poets

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[306] Detailed rebuttals of the other non-phonological explanations of Kaluza's law are available elsewhere: Suzuki (1996a, 1996b) is refuted in Fulk 1998; Hutcheson (2004) is refuted in Fulk 2007; Frank (2007) is refuted in Clark 2014. For a brief and penetrating overview of the objections facing non-phonological explanations of Kaluza's law, see Fulk 2014: 28-32.

were less aware of the multitude of archaic length distinctions known to the *Beowulf*

poet. In his attempt to posit a semantic replacement for Kaluza's law, Weiskott

attempted to perform only the first of these three tasks. Had he endeavored to gauge the

explanatory power of his hypothesis in a broader context, the improbability of his

claims would have become obvious. Since Weiskott neglected to perform the second

and third tasks, we perform them for him below. First, though, it is necessary to observe

that even without being tested, Weiskott's hypothesis can be demonstrated to be

improbable, internally inconsistent, and essentially nothing more than an

epiphenomenal description.

As noted above, there are two types of verses subject to Kaluza's law, where the

resolvability of syllabic sequences under secondary stress corresponds to etymological

length distinctions: (KI) Type A2a verses like *goldwine gumena*, where a historically

short ending undergoes resolution; (KII) Type D2 (and D*2) verses like *eald æscwiga*,

where a historically long ending suspends resolution. Weiskott contends that the

division of these verses according to etymological length "is almost exactly paralleled

by a simple semantic distinction: elements ending in historically short vowels are nouns

denoting objects or abstractions, while elements ending in consonants or historically

circumflex vowels are nouns or adjectives denoting humans or monsters" (2012: 891).

As this statement makes clear, Weiskott accepts the observation that the elements

appearing in the Kaluza verses are indeed distributed according to etymological length

distinctions. His hypothesis, however, is that the poet was not guided by an awareness

of these length distinctions, but was instead following a semantic principle, which

nevertheless resulted in an unambiguous distribution of elements according to

etymological length. To account for an unambiguous distribution, a scholar must posit

that an unambiguous principle is at work, such as the phonological principle advanced

by Fulk. Weiskott's semantic principle, on the other hand, is far from unambiguous, and would be extraordinarily difficult for a poet to learn, since it requires support from a number of contradictory rules that he posits to account for exceptions. It is interesting that many of the KI verses contain objects or abstractions (such as *-bealo, -wudu, -sele*, and *-gripe*), whereas many of the KII verses contain animate entities (such as *-wiga, -freca, -fruma*, and *-scaða*). There is a simple reason for this apparent division, as we will see, but the exceptions to this division are the first signs that it is illusory.

The most salient exception to Weiskott's semantic principle is *-wine*, which invariably refers to an animate being, but appears eight times in KI verses; it is actually the most common word in these verses besides *-bealo* and *-wudu*. Weiskott's attempt to explain why his semantic principle makes the incorrect prediction in eight of the sixty-eight cases is revealing: "It may be that the *Beowulf* poet used *-wine* in A2a verses by morphological analogy with the many masculine *i*-stem elements denoting objects or abstractions (*-sele, -cwide*, etc.)" (2012: 893). In this *ad hoc* invocation of morphological analogy, Weiskott cuts off his arm to save his hand: to explain the presence of *-wine*, he admits that the poet was not guided by semantic considerations when forming A2a verses. Weiskott elsewhere imagines that the *Beowulf* poet was consciously aware of the discrete metrical entity known as Bliss A2a, which he supposedly took care to fill with semantically appropriate words: "the *Beowulf* poet had only to remember that compounds naming objects or abstractions should begin A2a verses...A2a verses were for describing halls (*folcstede frætwan*), weaponry (*gūðsearo ġeatoliċ*), ships (*sundwudu sōhte*), turmoil (*sweordbealo slīðen*) and so forth" (2012: 895). The elaborate consciousness of Bliss's metrical classifications that the *Beowulf* poet is imagined here to have possessed seems fanciful. If the *Beowulf* poet conceived of the A2a verse as a special pattern to be used only for objects and abstractions, why

would he place -*wine* in eight of them? The reality is that A2a verses simply contain compounds where the second element has an etymologically short ending. The *Beowulf* poet knew that -*wine* had such an ending; the construction of the A2a verse was phonologically conditioned.

A graver problem with the hypothesis of semantic conditioning for Kaluza's law is the fact that morphologically distinct forms of -*wracu* and -*cwide* appear as second compound elements in both KI and KII verses. In the KI verses *ġilpcwide Ġēates* (640a) and *nȳdwracu nīþgrim* (193a), the *Beowulf* poet treats the etymologically short endings in the nominative singular as resolvable syllables. In the KII verses *wīs wordcwida* (1845a) and *ġearo gyrnwræce* (2118a), the *Beowulf* poet treats the etymologically long endings of the masculine *i*-stem genitive plural and the feminine *ō*-stem genitive singular as unresolvable syllables.[307] Two major problems for Weiskott's hypothesis present themselves. First, the claim that the *Beowulf* poet conceived of D2 and D*2 verses as special patterns "home to kings (*lēof landfruma*), queens (*grētte goldhroden*), warriors (*frome fyrdhwate*), monsters (*deorc dēaþscua*) and so forth" (2012: 895) appears untenable in light of the fact that -*cwida* and -*wræce* are abstract nouns, and thus subject to resolution under Weiskott's semantic hypothesis. Second, Weiskott must explain how the *Beowulf* poet accurately divined the etymological length distinctions between the (short) nominative and the (long) genitive endings of these words. Semantic conditioning here fails utterly, whereas phonological conditioning readily explains the poet's knowledge. Weiskott accounts for the poet's knowledge by alleging he knew a rule that all genitive endings are long: "the poet's practical understanding

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[307] To represent orthographically the phonological distinction observed by the *Beowulf* poet, the relevant desinences could be printed as *wracŭ*, *cwidĕ*, *wræcē*, and *cwidā*. It is worth noting that even though the desinences of -*cwidĕ* and -*wræcē* would come to be realized in Old English as an -*e*, these desinences were etymologically distinct, and the *Beowulf* poet recognized the distinction. For the etymological derivation of these desinences, see Fulk 1992: 420-3.

need not have been more sophisticated than 'genitives are long'" (2012: 894). In this *ad hoc* invocation of etymological length distinction, Weiskott cuts off his leg to save his foot: by claiming that the poet was guided at all by considerations of etymological length, Weiskott has destroyed the basic precondition for his semanticization of phonological distinctions.

Before explaining what is meant by the previous sentence, we must first observe that a process of semanticization – in which the original conditioning for a phonological alternation is lost and semantically reconditioned – is not a process attested in any natural language.[308] This sort of semanticization, which Weiskott presents as if it were a standard concept recognized by linguists, is actually his own *ad hoc* invention. It seems that he invented this process of semanticization on the model of the well-known process of morphologization. A morphological replacement for the conditioning of a phonological alternation can emerge once the reason for the alternation is no longer apparent to speakers (Wurzel 2000-4). For example, the voicing alternation of OE *wulf ~ wulfas* underwent morphologization and is preserved in ModE *wolf ~ wolves*. As this example illustrates, when a phonological alternation is morphologized, the older phonological articulation is preserved in the language in recast form. Weiskott argues, however, that when etymological length distinctions were refashioned into a semantic rule, the original phonological articulation of those distinctions was not preserved. Yet if the older phonology were not preserved, there would be no plausible motivation for the development and maintenance of a semantic (or morphological) replacement for the

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[308] The absence of such a process from the world's natural languages vitiates the plausibility of Weiskott's claim not only because it strains credibility to believe that this process should be evident exclusively in *Beowulf* (and in no other manifestation of human language), but also because constraints on the composition of Old English poetry are rooted in processes that have a basis in natural language. As Russom (2002a: 327) writes: "I find it quite difficult...to imagine how constraints with no basis in natural language could be learned under realistic early medieval conditions or used to appreciate verse form at the speed of recitation." On the theoretical perspective informing this remark, see Russom 1987 and Kuryłowicz 1970.

original phonological conditioning. His claim is tantamount to arguing that although *wulf ~ wulfas* was morphologized as *wolf ~ wolves*, the articulation of the voicing was not preserved. That makes no sense. It is plain that Weiskott does not understand the mechanics of the authentic linguistic processes upon which his invented linguistic process is modeled.

In his attempt to explain the contradictory distribution of -*wracu* and -*cwide*, Weiskott proposed that in these cases the poet was still guided by considerations of etymological length. Yet if length remains the operative factor in the poet's distribution of resolvable -*wracu* and -*cwide* versus unresolvable -*wræce* and -*cwida*, how could a semantic principle for the composition of Kaluza verses ever have emerged in the first place? The premise of Weiskott's argument is that the semanticization of etymological length distinctions voided those distinctions of phonological articulation. If that were the case, and if the original phonological articulation were anywhere retained, we should expect the posited semantic replacement to provide conditioning that would facilitate its retention. In the two places, however, where Weiskott concedes that there is retention of length – *wræce* and *cwida* – his semantic rule does not condition its retention. To the contrary, if the poet knew the semantic rule, he would have been led to the wrong conclusion about the resolvability of these desinences. Kaluza's law cannot be conditioned simultaneously by semantic and phonological principles that contradict each other. The hypothesis of a semantic replacement for the original phonological conditioning is plainly untenable.

There is a simple reason for the apparent (and inexact) semantic division of KI and KII verses along the lines of animate versus inanimate entities: the majority of the eligible second compound elements in the poet's repertoire that could fit into KI verses are inanimate, while the majority that could fit into KII verses are animate. Weiskott

claims that "it is not at all obvious" that there should be a semantic division between these verses, since there are some elements whose use would violate the semantic principle (2012: 891). For KI verses, Weiskott observes that there are four eligible elements whose presence would contravene the semantic principle: *-here* (army), *-scolu* (troop), *-wine* (friend), and *-waru* (people). Of these four, of course, *-wine* appears eight times in KI verses. Consequently, for KI verses, all that the semantic principle amounts to is an observation that the poet did not use *-here*, *-scolu*, and *-waru* in the construction of these verses. Considering the relative infrequency of these elements in *Beowulf*, their absence from KI verses hardly demands an explanation. Regarding KII verses, Weiskott observes that there are nine eligible elements whose presence would contravene the semantic principle: *-boga* (bow), *-flota* in *wegflota* (ship), *-lida* in *ȳðlida* (ship), *-loca* in *burhloca* (stronghold), *-naca* (ship), *-plega* in *lindplega* (battle), *-sefa* (mind), *-wela* (wealth), and *-wriða* in *bēahwriða* (circlet). Of these elements, *-boga* appears in the KII verse *stondan stānbogan* (2545a). Weiskott accounts for the presence of *-boga* and a host of other exceptions with yet another *ad hoc* rule. He writes:

> Of the seventy-nine long-ending elements, eleven name objects or abstractions and end in a consonant: *-bogan*, *-dagas* (twice), *-fatum*, *-locen* (twice), *-lufan* (twice), *- reced*, *-scofen* and *-wered*. The consonantal ending distinguishes them, morphologically and phonologically, from the short-ending elements. The semantic principle that long-ending elements denote animate beings is thus superseded by a morphological (or phonological) principle that elements ending in consonants count long (2012: 893).

To discount the exceptional *-bogan* (*inter alia*), Weiskott adds another level of complexity to an already complex semantic rule: he "restrict[s] the semantic principle to elements ending in vowels" (2012: 894). This arbitrary restriction is inconsistent with

his claim that the *Beowulf* poet conceived of the D2/D*2 verse as a special verse contour to be filled on an exclusively semantic basis. It is now a verse contour semantically reserved only for elements with vocalic endings. But by reformulating the semantic principle in this manner, Weiskott's earlier remark that "it is not at all obvious that [a semantic division between KI and KII verses] should be so" becomes even less true. In order for the restricted semantic principle to be contravened, the poet would need to fill KII verses with inanimate entities like *-boga*, *-sefa*, and *-wela* in the nominative case, since this is the only case where a vocalic ending would be subject to resolution. Confined to vocalic endings, a partial and apparent semantic division between KI and KII verses is inevitable.

In the end, all that Weiskott's semantic replacement amounts to is a description of an epiphenomenon: most of the poet's available short-ending elements are inanimate, while most of the long-ending elements are animate. There is a perfect distribution of second compound elements according to the etymological length of their desinences; accompanying this phonological distribution is an imperfect and accidental semantic distribution. The illogicality of explaining perfectly distributed phenomena as the effect, rather than the cause, of imperfectly distributed epiphenomena, can be illustrated with the following example:

> A child's toys are perfectly distributed into red and blue piles. Many, but not all, of the red toys are cylindrical. Many, but not all, of the blue toys are rectangular. A few of the red toys are rectangular and a few of the blue toys are cylindrical.

To argue that Kaluza's law is conditioned by semantics rather than phonology is tantamount to arguing that the child's toys are organized on the imperfect and contradictory basis of shape rather than the unambiguous basis of color. It would be

perverse to allege that a child who consistently and unerringly distributed his toys on the basis of color was actually colorblind. An equally perverse allegation is at the heart of any attempt to reject phonological conditioning for Kaluza's law in *Beowulf*. To deny that the poet was guided by living phonological distinctions (that became indistinct in Mercia ca. 725), one must maintain that although the poet consistently recognized these distinctions, he did so inadvertently and was guided by a non-phonological principle. In a sense, because a phonological principle accounts for all the evidence, any attempt to reject Kaluza's law as a dating criterion is doomed to prioritize an epiphenomenon over the phenomenon itself. Regarding our hypothetical example, the perversity of accusing the child of being colorblind stems not only from the fact that he evidently can distinguish between colors, but also from the fact that there is nothing in the evidence to lead one to suspect colorblindness. The same holds true with *Beowulf*: the basic premise of Weiskott (and others) that the poet should be composing after the loss of length distinctions is an unnatural starting point. Put this way, it should be apparent that there is an unsubstantiated and counterintuitive premise inherent in any non-phonological explanation of Kaluza's law. Scrutinized at the level of detail, Weiskott's hypothesis can be seen to be untenable. Yet as our objections illustrate, there are deeper methodological problems involved. The methodological considerations that undermine the credibility of Weiskott's argument can be extended to those of Hutcheson, Suzuki, and Frank.

Methodological Considerations

In philological argumentation, competing hypotheses must not simply be propounded, but must be gauged in terms of their relative probability. Philological argumentation aims to demonstrate that one hypothesis possesses greater coherence and explanatory

power than competing hypotheses. When a single hypothesis persuasively explains an

array of disparate phenomena, it is not rendered absolutely certain, but it is rendered

virtually certain, insofar as it becomes unreasonable for scholars to doubt this

hypothesis without finding a simpler and more powerful hypothesis. Weiskott appears

to have been unaware of the role of relative probability in philological argumentation.

For him, the mere ability of an observer to concoct a less probable competing

hypothesis constituted sufficient grounds for rejecting a more probable hypothesis. In

actuality, it is incumbent upon the scholar who develops a competing hypothesis to

demonstrate that it possesses greater simplicity and explanatory power than the

hypothesis it is intended to displace. Weiskott neglected to perform such a

demonstration, presumably because the act of comparison would have exposed the

relative improbability of his hypothesis. All that Weiskott demonstrated is that it is

possible to replace a single coherent hypothesis with a combination of five incoherent

hypotheses. Yet it is plainly illogical to prefer the latter to the former. As Occam's

Razor holds: *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*. A single coherent

hypothesis must be preferred over five incoherent hypotheses.

There are two fundamental reasons why Fulk's hypothesis regarding Kaluza's

law must be preferred over competing hypotheses. The first is that it exhibits holistic

rather than *ad hoc* reasoning and thereby obviates the need for the multiplication of

hypotheses in the larger enterprise of understanding the language of *Beowulf*. The

hypothesis that *Beowulf* was composed before the loss of length distinctions (ca. 725)

explains many forms of linguistic evidence besides the poet's regular and extensive

adherence to Kaluza's law. Although scholars have queried Kaluza's law in isolation,

Fulk propounded his hypothesis in the broader context of *HOEM*, where it was seen to

account not merely for Kaluza's law, but also for numerous independent dating criteria

indicative of early composition (1992: §§376-378, 420-1). Fulk's hypothesis collaterally

explains, for example, why there is such a high incidence in *Beowulf* of verses requiring

non-contracted and non-parasited forms for scansion. Since the publication of *HOEM*,

the hypothesis of composition prior to 725 has been shown to have further holistic

value: it accounts well for the presence in *Beowulf* of lexical items such as *missere* and

suhtriga that became obsolete early in the Anglo-Saxon period;[309] it also accommodates

the paleographical indications that the extant manuscript is a copy of a centuries-old

poem, not of a recent composition.[310] Much more can be said to this effect.[311] By

comparison, the hypotheses in competition with Fulk's exhibit entirely *ad hoc*

reasoning, in that they were formulated for the narrow purpose of explaining Kaluza's

law in isolation. These hypotheses possess no collateral explanatory power. There is no

holistic sense in doubting a chronological explanation for Kaluza's law, when so many

varieties of linguistic evidence independently demand a similar chronological

explanation.

The second fundamental reason why Fulk's hypothesis must be preferred over

competing hypotheses is that it explains the differential application of Kaluza's law in

Beowulf and in later Old English poems. If the regular and extensive adherence to

Kaluza's law in *Beowulf* is explained as a reflection of the poet's awareness of living

phonological distinctions, then the irregular and diminished adherence to Kaluza's law

in later Old English poems is collaterally explained as a reflection of the fact that the

relevant phonological distinctions were lost prior to their composition. If one ventures

to explain how the *Beowulf* poet accurately divined etymological length distinctions by

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[309] See Cronan 2004 and Neidorf 2013b.
[310] See Lapidge 2000 and Neidorf 2013c.
[311] A hypothesis of early composition accommodates many independent forms of chronologically significant evidence; see the essays brought together in Neidorf 2014.

recourse to some mechanism other than phonology, then one must explain why this mechanism was unavailable to later poets, who are less aware of these distinctions. Phonology is an inherently more plausible mechanism than morphology or semantics, since relevant phonological changes undoubtedly intervened between the composition of early and late Old English poetry. Weiskott, in explaining why his semantic replacement would void Kaluza's law of chronological significance, actually highlights one reason why his argument is untenable: "Because the meanings and morphology of the relevant simplexes changed very little during the Old English period, such a scheme could have survived for several centuries after the leveling of circumflex intonation" (2012: 894). Yet if etymological length distinctions had been recast into a semantic rule that persisted for centuries, why would only the *Beowulf* poet be aware of this rule? When they violated Kaluza's law, were the poets of *Andreas* and *Judith* unable to make a simple semantic distinction between animate and inanimate entities?[312] Considering the manifest intelligence of these authors, a phonological explanation for their ignorance of etymological length is much more credible.

The differential application of Kaluza's law in *Beowulf* and later Old English poems is the central reason why Hutcheson's arguments cannot be credited. Hutcheson (2004) contended that the presence of Kaluza verses in *Beowulf* must be due to oral tradition, and therefore devoid of chronological significance, on the grounds that "there is absolutely no statistically significant difference between the rate of adherence to Kaluza's law in *Beowulf* and the rate of adherence to Kaluza's law in the later poetry" (2004: 298).[313] Hutcheson's emphasis on the purely numerical "rate of adherence," however, is misguided and misleading. His statistics cover up the qualitative differences

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[312] For a list of verses violating and adhering to Kaluza's law in the corpus of longer Old English poems, see Fulk 1992: 159-63.

[313] For a detailed rebuttal of Hutcheson's argument, see Fulk 2007b.

that separate *Beowulf* from later poetry and constitute the actual linguistic basis for

regarding it as an early composition. In Hutcheson's corpus of late poetry, there are

indeed a handful of Kaluza Type II verses, such as *beorna bēahgifa* (*Brunanburh* 2a,

DEdg 10a) and *dȳre dǣdfruma* (*Capture of the Five Boroughs* 3a). Yet in this corpus of

1046 verses, there is only a single Kaluza Type I verse: *wælspere windan* (*Maldon*

322a). Hutcheson obscures this discrepancy by conflating the incidence of the two types

of Kaluza verses into a single numerical "rate of adherence." Consequently, Hutcheson's

calculations are meaningless, because without adherence to the first half of Kaluza's

law, "it cannot be said that any distinction is maintained between long and short

endings, and thus that there is any conformity to the law" (Fulk 1998: 299). An appeal

to oral tradition cannot explain why *Beowulf* contains sixty-two KI verses like *goldwine*

gumena, whereas Hutcheson's late corpus contains just one verse of this sort.

Phonological change is the only credible explanation for this stark discrepancy.

Statements that conceptualize Kaluza's law as a purely numerical dating

criterion reflect a misunderstanding of the linguistic rationale for regarding the regular

and extensive adherence to Kaluza's law in *Beowulf* as evidence of early composition.

Beowulf is dated prior to 725 not because of the number of verses adhering to Kaluza's

law, but because of the complexity and variety of etymologically long and short

desinences distributed in these verses. It is the poet's ability to observe length

distinctions in such a diverse range of desinences that is the compelling indicator that he

was composing before the blurring of etymological length distinctions. The *Beowulf*

poet recognized, for example, that the feminine *ō*-stem nominative singular (*nȳdwracu*

nīþgrim, l. 193a) is resolvable, whereas the feminine *ō*-stem genitive singular (*ġearo*

gyrnwræce, l. 2118a) is unresolvable. He recognized, moreover, that the masculine *i*-

stem nominative singular (*frēowine folca*, ll. 430a, 2357a, 2429a) is resolvable, whereas

the masculine adjective nominative plural (*frome fyrdhwate*, ll. 1641a, 2476a) is unresolvable. Even though the two endings would both come to be realized as -*e*, they were etymologically distinct, and the *Beowulf* poet recognized the distinction. The complexity and variety of length distinctions observed constitute the strongest evidence for dating the composition of *Beowulf* prior to the loss of length distinctions. As Fulk writes:

> It is one thing for a poet to know that *wǣpen* may be monosyllabic in traditional verse, while *morgen* should not be. It is another for the *Beowulf* poet to have known the resolvability of fifteen different etymologically short endings (and the irresolvability of ten etymologically long ones), distributed randomly in the paradigms of several different stem classes, without the aid of phonological or morphological clues. How could he have learned such rules once the

phonological   conditioning was eliminated? (2007b: 321)

The number of verses adhering to Kaluza's law in *Beowulf* is much less significant than the number of desinences involved in these verses. If an Old English poem were discovered that contained the same number of Kaluza verses as *Beowulf*, but all of these verses merely treated masculine *n*-stem endings as unresolvable, this feature would not suggest early composition, and the poem could not be said to exhibit adherence to Kaluza's law: all that could properly be said is that the poet, for whatever reason, treated masculine *n*-stem endings as unresolvable. The emergence of this hypothetical poem would have no bearing on the dating implications of Kaluza's law in *Beowulf*.

In fact, the sporadic presence of verses adhering to Kaluza's law in other extant Old English poems is largely irrelevant when gauging the dating implications of Kaluza's law in *Beowulf*. To think that it is relevant, one must misconstrue Kaluza's law

as a relative rather than an absolute dating criterion. After citing and affirming

Hutcheson's meaningless statistics, Frank asks: "What did it mean that *Genesis A*, which

Fulk put before c. 725, contained in its 2,319 lines the same number of undisputed

Kaluza type I verses as the 325 lines of *The Battle of Maldon*, composed after 991?"

(2007: 856).[314] The answer to this question, which should be obvious, is that these

numbers have no real significance. A poet is either aware or unaware of distinctions of

etymological length. Once those distinctions were blurred, poets could still compose

verses adhering to Kaluza's law, but no poet could regularly and extensively distinguish

between long and short desinences like the *Beowulf* poet. The scattered presence of

Kaluza verses elsewhere has no bearing on our assessment of the real linguistic

evidence in *Beowulf*, which is not Kaluza's law *per se*, but is rather the poet's awareness

of archaic length distinctions in twenty-five different desinences.

Numerical conceptualization of Kaluza's law is absent from the writings of A.J.

Bliss and Seiichi Suzuki, both of whom clearly understood that the law's implications

for dating *Beowulf* inhered primarily in the linguistic knowledge that the poet exhibited.

Bliss felt it necessary to devise a non-phonological explanation for this knowledge,

because he incorrectly believed that etymological length distinctions had been lost

before the seventh century, well before it was possible for *Beowulf* to have been

composed.[315] Bliss therefore proposed that the length distinctions had been

morphologized and that the *Beowulf* poet distinguished long and short endings either on

the basis of analogy with high vowel deletion or on the basis of qualitative distinctions

between high vowels and non-high vowels (1967: §§37-40). Bliss knew that these

explanations could not satisfactorily explain verses like *mōdċeare mǣndon* (l. 3149a),

but his incorrect dating of the relevant sound changes compelled him to credit a non-

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[314] The rhetoric masks an underwhelming reality: each of these two poems contains a single KI verse.
[315] See Bliss 1958: 118; the mistake is discussed in Fulk 1992: 385-6.

phonological explanation. Although aware of the correct dating of the sound changes

and of Fulk's refutation of Bliss (1992: §§§406-421), Suzuki nevertheless resurrected,

refined, and combined Bliss's morphological arguments (1996b). In all five cases where

the Suzuki-Bliss hypothesis of morphological conditioning can be tested against Fulk's

hypothesis of phonological conditioning, the morphological hypothesis makes the

incorrect prediction (see Fulk 1998: 290-4). Because its explanatory power is

measurably inferior to that of the hypothesis it was intended to displace, there is no

rational basis for crediting Suzuki's hypothesis over Fulk's. It is worth noting, however,

that if one were to credit Suzuki's argument, this would date the composition of

Beowulf prior to ca. 750, since the distinctions of vocalic quality upon which it depends

were lost by the middle of the eighth century, not significantly later than the distinctions

of vocalic quantity upon which Fulk's hypothesis depends (see Suzuki 1996a: 305-6).

In an incoherent attempt to bring together non-phonological explanations of

Kaluza's law, Frank combined the discredited hypothesis of morphological

conditioning[316] with an altogether unrelated argument: she contended that the narrative

distribution of Kaluza verses in *Beowulf* indicated that they were conscious archaisms.

According to Frank, KI verses are found mostly "in dark, martial passages, haunts

heavy with weapons and armor, with hall retainers, ships, battles, and smoke, the

furnishings of a warrior society" (2007: 858). This observation is then imagined to

undermine the dating implications of Kaluza's law, because "the hypothesis that the

poem was of great age did not by itself explain such a distribution" (2007: 859). In

Frank's view, a verse adhering to Kaluza's law is not an authentic sign of archaic

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[316] Frank (2007: 860-1) paraphrases one of Bliss's morphological explanations for Kaluza's law without directly attributing the view to Bliss and without mentioning that this argument had already been shown to be untenable in Fulk 1992: §§406-11. It is surprising that Frank adopted this hypothesis of morphological conditioning, moreover, since crediting such a hypothesis effectively dates the composition of *Beowulf* to the seventh century; see Fulk 2014: 29-32.

composition, but must rather be a "semiobsolete linguistic marker" or a "'ye olde' sign" that reminded audiences of a bygone era (2007: 859). There are numerous problems with this line of reasoning, perhaps the most significant of which is its dependence upon the belief that the Anglo-Saxons would have perceived a KI verse as aurally special. Whenever such a notion has been entertained, it has been summarily rejected. As Hutcheson wrote of Kaluza's law: "it is not an archaism that is aurally apprehendable" (2004: 319). The resolution of two light syllables is a mundane and regular feature of Old English verse – it is not phonological fireworks. The only special feature of the poem's KI verses is that all of the compound elements resolved under secondary stress possessed short endings in Proto-Germanic (or long endings that shortened in prehistoric Old English). Unless poets and audiences consulted grammars of Proto-Germanic before a recitation of *Beowulf*, they would have no basis for associating KI verses with deep antiquity.[317]

Frank supported her claim that KI verses were located primarily in martial or heroic passages by pointing out the context of sixteen of these verses. The remaining verses received no consideration. George Clark (2014) has recently examined the context of all sixty-two KI verses and found that the evidence contradicts Frank's claim in many places. For example, three KI verses occur in Hrothgar's homily, which is arguably the least heroic passage in *Beowulf*. Clark concluded from his assessment that the distribution of KI verses in the poem is essentially random. It should be noted, however, that even if the evidence were in perfect conformity to Frank's observation,

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[317] Pertinent to this discussion are the following remarks of Donka Minkova and Robert P. Stockwell from their review of *HOEM*, in which they explain why Fulk's arguments about Kaluza's law persuade them: "The arguments he adduces are based deeply in the phonological regularities of the language, the kinds of regularities that speakers are not conscious of but unfailingly obey. For that reason alone, his book will generally carry conviction among philologists and linguists, and it may quite commonly fail to carry equal conviction among literary scholars and historians who do not have the strong sense of the absolute reality and subliminal existence of, say, the syntactic rule of modern English which disallows contraction before a gap (* I don't know where the concert's)" (1995: 361).

the distribution of Kaluza verses is irrelevant to the dating implications of Kaluza's law, since no distribution would be capable of explaining the *Beowulf* poet's awareness of archaic length distinctions. If anything, the elaborate linguistic knowledge required by Frank's theory of conscious archaism should demand a poet and audience within living memory of the loss of length distinctions, since the archaic nature of these verses would not otherwise be apparent. Regardless, observations about the narrative distribution of archaic features in *Beowulf* do not constitute explanations of their genesis. Much like Weiskott's semantic replacement, Frank's argument amounts to nothing more than an inexact epiphenomenal description. *Beowulf* is a poem rich in scenes of heroic life; the presence of many Kaluza verses in such scenes hardly demands an explanation.

A final feature of Frank's argumentation that deserves attention is her decision to refer to Kaluza's law as Kaluza's 'law,' a usage subsequently adopted by Weiskott. Frank notes with suspicion that Fulk was the first to label Kaluza's observations a 'law' (2007: 850, 855) and Weiskott wonders if the presence of possible exceptions "might mean instead that Kaluza's 'law' is only a tendency" (2012: 894). These remarks, reinforced by repeated reference to Kaluza's 'law' in inverted commas, are plainly intended to cast doubt upon the evidential basis of Fulk's argument. This doubting gesture might have made sense to Frank and Weiskott as part of a rhetorical strategy, but its deployment is logically inconsistent with the hypotheses they propound. By offering alternative explanations of the poet's adherence to Kaluza's law – i.e., the hypotheses of conscious archaism and semantic replacement – both Frank and Weiskott implicitly affirm that there are regularities in the data that they are endeavoring to explain. One cannot logically purport to offer an explanation of regularities and simultaneously doubt the existence of those regularities. If they doubt the existence of the evidence they endeavor to explain, then Frank and Weiskott must doubt the

credibility of their own hypotheses. The presence of such contradictory impulses in their writing is an indication that Frank and Weiskott are more interested in casting doubt on Fulk's hypothesis, whatever the cost, than in developing probable and coherent explanations of linguistic phenomena.

By offering an explanation of regularities and simultaneously doubting the existence of those regularities, Frank and Weiskott engage in the form of fallacious reasoning that has come to be known as "kettle logic." The term refers to a joke that Sigmund Freud cited (1999: 95), in which a man accused his neighbor of returning a kettle to him in damaged condition and the neighbor responded with three arguments:

1. That the kettle is not damaged at all.

2. That the kettle already had a hole in it when he borrowed it.

3. That he never borrowed a kettle from his neighbor in the first place.

Obviously, the neighbor's reasoning is illogical, since the arguments cancel each other out. Frank's entire discourse on Kaluza's law is characterized by this kind of reasoning. She first affirms Hutcheson's oral-formulaic argument, then propounds her theory of conscious archaism, and then endorses the hypothesis of morphological conditioning – all the while doubting the existence of the regularities these hypotheses explain (2007: 858-61). The trifecta of hypotheses she endorses, moreover, cannot simultaneously be correct, since they effectively cancel each other out: if Kaluza verses were fossilized oral formulae, there would be no need for morphological conditioning; and if archaic length distinctions were morphologized, then verses exhibiting awareness of those distinctions could not be "semiobsolete linguistic markers," since morphologization would entail the regular preservation of older phonological distinctions in the language.

These three arguments are as illogical in combination as the arguments of the man attempting to exonerate himself from damaging the kettle.

Conclusion

The linguistic conditioning and dating implications of the *Beowulf* poet's regular and extensive adherence to Kaluza's law are not as rationally debatable as the proliferation of debate might lead one to think. The presence in the poem of 106 verses, involving twenty-five different desinences, where resolution is governed by length distinctions that became indistinct in Mercia ca. 725, possesses unambiguous chronological significance. The most probable explanation of this linguistic regularity is that it was phonologically conditioned: the *Beowulf* poet knew the resolvability of so many desinences because he was composing before the relevant length distinctions became phonologically indistinct. The alternative hypotheses that have been formulated in efforts to discover a less obvious principle for the conditioning of this regularity are demonstrably untenable. The hypotheses of semantic conditioning, morphological conditioning, oral-formulaic regurgitation, and conscious archaism exhibit *ad hoc* reasoning, fail to account for the linguistic evidence in *Beowulf*, and fail to account for the differential application of Kaluza's law in *Beowulf* and later poems. These hypotheses should not be imagined to provide a rational basis for doubting the validity of Fulk's hypothesis. To prefer any of these explanations to Fulk's is to abandon a reasonable and coherent hypothesis in exchange for an unreasonable and incoherent one. To believe that the combined force of these alternative hypotheses is somehow sufficient to constitute a refutation of Fulk's hypothesis is to deploy reasoning as faulty as that of the neighbor in Freud's kettle joke. Unless a hypothesis with greater

simplicity and explanatory power materializes – a development that appears improbable

– reasonable scholars must credit the hypothesis of phonological conditioning and

regard *Beowulf* as a Mercian poem composed before 725.[318]

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[318] This case study is the result of my collaboration with Leonard Neidorf, to whom thanks are due.

3. Material Monsters and Semantic Shifts

In *Linguistic Means of Determining the Dates of Old English Literary Texts*, Ashley Crandell Amos expressed doubt about the vast majority of proposed linguistic dating criteria (1980). The book's pessimistic conclusions are generally not credible, since Amos evaluated criteria in terms of absolute certainty rather than relative probability; her positivistic disregard for probability resulted in negative conclusions that were both inevitable and meaningless.[319] Yet for all that she unreasonably doubted, Amos took a more sanguine view of semantic evidence, affirming that semantic change could be instrumental "in providing evidence for the date of composition of various Old English texts" (1980: 155). Many native Old English words gradually changed their meanings after the advent of Christianity, losing older connotations and assuming new ones in order to adapt to novel concepts and ideas. The semantic history of Old English words originally referring to monsters of Germanic folklore, in particular, may shed light upon the dating of *Beowulf*. Over time, some of these words lost their ability to refer to a wider range of (physical) monsters and began exclusively to mean (spiritual) "demon" or "devil." It is clear that some of these words cannot have had such a narrow range of meaning in *Beowulf*, however, where they are uttered by pagan characters ignorant of the Christian revelation and never by the poem's scripturizing narrator.[320] In this study, I first argue that two words—*scucca* and *þyrs*—possess only their pre-conversion meanings in *Beowulf*, for if they had acquired a Christian meaning by the time of composition, the poet would have violated his own design. I then track the semantic development of *scucca* and *þyrs*, following them through their appearances in glossaries and other texts, in an effort to determine when they acquired their Christian meanings.

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[319] See Fulk 1992: §§1-75.

[320] On the scripturizing narrator of *Beowulf*, see Osborn 1978.

The composition of *Beowulf*, we may conclude, probably antedates the semantic Christianization of *scucca* and *þyrs*.

The process whereby words originally used to denote folkloric monsters changed their meanings is the semantic correlate of a broader cultural process whereby the material monsters of the pagan era became the purely spiritual devils of orthodox Christianity. J.R.R. Tolkien acknowledged these processes in his classic study of the monsters in *Beowulf*, in which he remarked of the poem's date: "I accept without argument throughout the attribution of *Beowulf* to the 'age of Bede'" (1936: 262). Tolkien's statement about the date, announced in such bold terms, has naturally been taken out of context; Roberta Frank, for example, uses it to make the ascription of *Beowulf* to the eighth century look like the product of a "faith-based initiative" (2007: 844). Although Tolkien says he accepts an early date "without argument," this does not mean that his reading of the poem as a product of the eighth century lacks a chronological argument. Tolkien observed that the monsters in *Beowulf* are not immaterial demonic entities, but "mortal denizens of the material world, in it and of it" (1936: 262). Grendel and his mother are given a Christian scriptural pedigree, but they are still the corporeal creatures of pagan times; they are not yet the spiritual demons one finds in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, for example. Tolkien claimed, in effect, that the representation of monsters as both Christianized and corporeal did not span the entire Anglo-Saxon period (1936: 264-5, 278). As we shall see, the evidence for such representation of monsters is reliably dated to the early Anglo-Saxon period, and it includes Aldhelm of Malmesbury's *De Virginitate*, Felix of Crowland's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, the Repton Stone, and various glossaries. Broad literary-historical considerations would suggest, then, that *Beowulf* was composed in a milieu closer to this early material—where we can find material monsters—than to late homiletic

literature like Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, which feature purely spiritual devils as the saints' main antagonists. The semantic history of *scucca* and *þyrs* lends strong philological support to this conclusion and enables us to formulate it rather more precisely.

<div align="center">SEMANTIC SHIFT</div>

Arguments that attempt to date *Beowulf* solely on cultural grounds are unlikely to be persuasive today, especially if these arguments are propounded without, or in opposition to, philological evidence. The argument that *Beowulf* must be a post-Viking poem because it features Scandinavian characters would be more persuasive if any credible philological evidence could be brought forward in support of it. The absence of such evidence makes the theory that *Beowulf* was composed to unify the English and the Vikings difficult to credit.[321] An attempt to date *Beowulf* according to a literary criterion, such as its particular representation of monsters, would similarly fall flat if it did not accord with philological evidence and if some of the pertinent evidence could not be assessed probabilistically. For my purposes, such evidence is furnished by the semantic history of the masculine *n*-stem noun *scucca*. This word appears just once in *Beowulf*, in its dative plural form, and is uttered by Hrothgar, not by the narrator. After *Beowulf* cleanses Heorot of Grendel, Hrothgar says to him:

> Ðæt wæs unġeāra   þæt iċ ǣniġra mē
>
> wēana ne wēnde   tō wīdan feore
>
> bōte ġebīdan,   þonne blōde fāh
>
> hūsa sēlest   heorodrēoriġ stōd,
>
> wēa wīdscofen   witena ġehwylc*um*,
>
> ðāra þe ne wēndon   þæt hīe wīde ferhð
>
> lēoda landġeweorc   lāþum beweredon

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[321] See, for example, Niles 1993.

scuccum ond scinnum.[322] (ll. 932a-9b)

Hrothgar here refers to Grendel and his mother as *scuccan*. Editions of *Beowulf*

consistently define the word *scucca* as "demon, devil" in its unique occurrence in the

poem.[323] "Demon" or "devil" is, without question, the word's invariable meaning when

it is used by late Old English authors like Ælfric or Wulfstan.[324] But if the word has

such a meaning in *Beowulf*, its appearance in the mouth of Hrothgar would imply that a

pagan character is aware of Grendel's diabolical nature. The narrator refers to Grendel

frequently as a devil, but the poet systematically avoids placing diabolical terminology

into the mouths of his pagan characters. In fact, the characters are unaware of the

motivation and genealogy of Grendel, as the following statement from Hrothgar makes

explicit:

> Nō hīe fæder cunnon,
>
> hwæþer him ǣniġ wæs   ǣr ācenned
>
> dyrnra gāsta[325] (ll. 1355b-57a)

These lines remind us that although the narrator and the audience are aware of the

genealogy of the monsters' descent from Cain, the Danes and the Geats are deprived of

this knowledge. The pagan knowledge of the poem's characters and the Christian

knowledge of the poet and his audience are contrasted in this passage. For Hrothgar,

Grendel's nature and origin are a mystery, as is the reason for his attacks on Heorot. The

Christian audience, on the contrary, understands Beowulf's fights as part of the Great

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[322] "Until not long ago, I did not expect ever to experience consolation for my afflictions, when the best of halls stood sword-gory, blood-stained; a far-reaching woe for all the counselors, who did not expect to protect the people's hall against hostile *scuccum* and sprites." All translations from Old English are mine. The text of *Beowulf* cited throughout is *Klaeber's Beowulf: Fourth Edition* (Fulk, Bjork, and Niles 2008) [henceforth *Klaeber IV*].

[323] See, for instance, the glossary in *Klaeber IV*, s.v. *scucca*, p. 428. Given Fred C. Robinson's strong emphasis on the poem's two levels of knowledge (cf. infra), the definition "demon" for *scucca* in the glossary of Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson's edition of *Beowulf* will turn out to be highly ironic, as will be demonstrated below.

[324] For Wulfstan's usage, see, for example, Napier 1883: 249, where the word is used in its nominative plural form as a synonym for *dēofol*. For Ælfric's usage, see further below.

[325] "They know of no father, whether any of such mysterious creatures had been born before him."

Feud between God and His evil enemies—even though Beowulf himself and the other characters in the poem do not know it.[326]

There is an artistic purpose behind these two levels of knowledge. As Marijane Osborn and Fred C. Robinson, among others, have observed,[327] the *Beowulf* poet maintains a double perspective throughout the poem. He differentiates consistently between what he and his Christian audience know as opposed to the limited knowledge of the pagan characters of the story. Thus, while the audience is aware that the hostility of Grendel and Grendel's mother toward God reflects their descent from Cain, the pagan characters are ignorant of their descent and motivations. As the editors of *Klaeber IV* put the matter: "the pagan Danes and Ġēatas may think of him [Grendel] as no more than a kind of man-monster; but we in the audience are privileged to recognize him as a descendant of Cain and an embodiment of Satanic evil."[328] The poet is surprisingly meticulous in his handling of monster lore. As Ruth Melinkoff has pointed out (1980: 184), he even differentiated between the terms used to refer to antediluvian monsters and those used to refer to monsters that survived the Flood.[329]

Consequently, Hrothgar's ignorance of Grendel's origin and true nature is hardly reconcilable with the translation generally assigned to the word *scucca* as pronounced by the Danish king: "demon, devil". Even Homer nods, but did the *Beowulf* poet err in this instance? The pagan characters consistently refer to monsters in spiritually neutral terms, such as *eoten*, *fēond*, or *sceaþa*, while the narrator uses spiritually charged terms such as *dēofol*, *hellegāst*, or *helrune*. This distinction is maintained throughout the poem: is *scucca* a rare exception? As Tolkien has observed, "Any theory that will at

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[326] See *Klaeber IV*, lxxvii.

[327] See Osborn 1978; Robinson 1991: 149. See also Irving 1997: 188. Irving expresses strong skepticism about Robinson's approach to *Beowulf*, but he recognizes the existence of the two different levels of knowledge present in the poem.

[328] *Klaeber IV*, lxxvii.

[329] For more on this matter, see Peltola 1972; Bandy 1973: 240; Clemoes 1981: 182; and Orchard 2003: 58, 69.

least allow us to believe that what [the poet] did was of design, and that for that design there is a defence that may still have force, would seem more probable" (1936: 255). As has been stated above, many words of pagan origin underwent semantic change as Christian discourse saturated Anglo-Saxon culture; words lost their original meanings and took on new ones. One important reason why the word *scucca* in *Beowulf* is routinely glossed as "devil, demon" is surely that the two most important complete dictionaries of Old English, Bosworth-Toller and Clark Hall, give these words as the only meaning of *scucca*. This is not surprising, given that in the majority of its occurrences, the word *scucca* is used unambiguously as a synonym for "devil, demon." The list provided by Richard Jente in his study of Anglo-Saxon mythology confirms the regularity of this meaning.[330] The high incidence of *scucca* meaning "devil" in Old English religious texts has naturally led translators and editors to interpret its occurrence in *Beowulf* in similar terms. But as Herbert D. Meritt has pointed out, "Once a word enters a dictionary, the very fact of its niche there tends to induce its inclusion in later dictionaries and to give it a usually quite fitting garb of authenticity; not all of them deserve it" (1954: viii). In all probability, *scucca* does not mean "devil" in *Beowulf*, and this deviation from the norm has significant implications for the dating of the poem.

In order to assess the probable pre-conversion meaning(s) of *scucca*, a consideration of its relatively obscure etymology is necessary. In his unpublished 1961 Wisconsin dissertation, Stanley M. Wiersma analyzed the different etymological theories for *scucca* (1961: 323-30), which I shall briefly summarize here.

Jacob Grimm related the Old English word to Gothic *skōhsl*, "evil spirit", and this to Old Norse *skōgr*, "forest" (1883: 1003), thus interpreting the word to have served as a designation for a forest spirit in Anglo-Saxon paganism. Grimm also proposed that

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[330] Jente 1921: 150-53.

the original Indo-European root would have been *skaka*, "to shake". This derivation of *scucca*, however, is philologically unlikely, as Wiersma has pointed out.

The Dietrich-Kauffmann theory is interesting (Wiersma 1961: 324-25). They relate *scucca* to the reconstructed Old English verb *scyccan*, "to lead astray," of which only a preterit form, *scyhte*, survives. According to them, all of these words would be related to Old High German *scuwo* and Old English *scuwa*, "shadows"; and these, in turn, to Old High German *schusel*, Old English *sceoh*, and Middle High German *schiech*, "fright" (Wiersma 1961: 324-25). On the basis of these meanings, Kauffmann believes that, out of fear of shadows, prehistoric Anglo-Saxons imagined shadowy, deceiving beings that they would have originally called *scuccan*.

The most plausible etymological explanation for *scucca* in philological terms, however, is the one suggested by the Holthausen-Wissmann theory.[331] The word would be the Old English variant of the Old Saxon word *scocga*, "see-saw, swing," and Old High German *scocc*, "a swaying movement," all of them related to Old Norse *skopa*, "to walk," ultimately related to the Indo-European stem *skeu-b*. The original pre-Christian meaning then seems to refer to a swaying or, as Grimm first suggested (cf. *supra*), shaking creature—even if Grimm's phonetic reconstruction was unlikely. The word as applied to Grendel and his mother by Hrothgar would thus emphasize their elusive nature in the eyes of the Danes as wandering, stalking inhabitants of homeless fens and moors.

Some indication of the early semantics of *scucca* may be evident in the toponym *Scuccanhlau*, i.e., *Scuccan hlāw*, "the mound of the *scucca*," which is recorded in a charter of King Offa of Mercia to the Church of St. Alban's, dated A.D. 792.[332] That the word antedates Christianization and that consequently it did not always mean "demon,

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[331] See Holthausen 1963: 280: s.v. *scocca*. See also Wissmann, 1932: 178.
[332] The charter is only available in a thirteenth-century manuscript by Matthew Paris, MS Cotton Nero D. i, f.148. See De Gray Birch1885: 367-9; see also Wiersma 1961: 345, n. 178.

devil" is indicated by the fact that in this and in other toponyms, *scucca* tends to be associated with amiable places, such as paths, roads, knolls, and bridges (Wiersma 1961: 328-29). On the contrary, when the word *dēofol* is used in topographical compounds, it is systematically associated with strange places or phenomena (Wiersma 1961: 329). As Wiersma remarks, the nature beings of Anglo-Saxon paganism did not have exclusively negative connotations, and he interprets the word's pejorative use in *Beowulf* as a symptom indicating that *scucca* had already begun to be reinterpreted as a devil (Wiersma 1961: 330).

In doing so, Wiersma missed the most important chronological implication of his superb etymological analysis. There was indeed, as he points out, a process of transfer whereby the morally ambiguous beings of Germanic folklore became identified with the purely evil spirits of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England (see Tolkien 1936: 263-5). But the process did not consist of a single transition, as *Beowulf* crucially demonstrates. In *Beowulf*, a mid-point is presented where the creatures of Germanic popular belief, such as the *ylfe*, the *eotenas*, and the *orcnēas*, are "scripturized" and made the evil descendants of Cain—but not yet completely transformed into the fallen angels of orthodox Christian religion. As Tolkien puts it, by "scripturizing" them, the monsters began to "symbolize (and ultimately to become identified with) the powers of evil, even while they remain, as they do still remain in *Beowulf*, mortal denizens of the material world, in it and of it" (Tolkien 1936: 262). There is thus a curious mix of correct and incorrect analysis in John D. Niles' statement that the *Beowulf* monsters "recall [on the one hand] the night-striders of Germanic folk-belief: the poet identifies them with *scuccum ond scinnum*, 'demons and specters'. On the other, they are the devils of Christian belief" (1991: 138). Niles is correct in thinking that *scucca* recalls monsters of Germanic folklore, but incorrect in glossing the word as "demon." Only the

poem's narrator and his Christian audience are aware of the demonic nature of the

monsters. To the pagan characters, the diabolical and scriptural qualities of these

monsters are unknown. Accordingly, to define *scucca* as "demon" or "devil" is to

accuse the *Beowulf* poet of a stylistic inconsistency.[333] It is more probable that scholars

have erred in defining this word than that the poet has erred in using it.

The *Beowulf* poet is surprisingly precise in his creation of two levels of

knowledge about the monsters in his poem.[334] While the Christian narrator refers to the

poem's monsters as *dēofla*,[335] *helrūnan*,[336] *hellegāst*,[337] *helle hæfton*,[338] *fēond on*

helle,[339] *Godes andsacan/andsaca*,[340] and *hǣþen*,[341] the poem's characters never use

such language; they are unaware of the diabolical nature of the monsters against whom

they must struggle. Consequently, the word *scucca* in *Beowulf* cannot be the

unambiguous synonym for *dēofol* that it is in (later) religious texts. As Robinson put it,

to the characters "the monsters have meaning only in terms of the pagan's dark

mythology of evil" (1985: 32). On these grounds, two conclusions appear justified. The

first is that the word *scuccum* in *Beowulf* retains its original meaning and refers to a

particular kind of deceptive, swaying creature of Germanic folklore. The second is that

Beowulf probably was composed before *scucca* acquired the invariable meaning

"devil."[342]

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[333] The words *scin/scinna*, "specter, sprite," also acquired the Christian meaning "devil." Nevertheless, editors and scholars accept the pre-conversion meaning for this instance in *Beowulf*, and consequently it has no bearing on the present argument. See Wiersma 1961: 319-23. See also Orchard 2003: 36, where he translates it as "sprite."

[334] See, for example, Orchard 2003: 39.

[335] "Devils, demons," genitive plural. See, for example, lines 756a and 1680a.

[336] "One skilled in the mysteries of Hell," nominative plural, line 163a.

[337] "Hellish creature," accusative singular, line 1274a.

[338] "Captive of Hell," accusative singular, line 788a.

[339] "Hellish enemy," nominative singular, 101b.

[340] "God's adversaries," accusative singular and nominative singular, lines 786b and 1682b.

[341] "Heathen", in line 986a, genitive singular, referring to Grendel.

[342] In view of what he said, Tolkien seemed to be conscious that this word did not refer to Christian demons: "Where it [*gāst, gǣst*] is genuine it applies to Grendel probably in virtue of his relationship or similarity to bogies (*scinnum ond scuccum*), physical enough in form and power, but vaguely felt as belonging to a different order of being, one allied to the malevolent 'ghosts' of the dead." 1936: 279).

Early Anglo-Saxon glossaries furnish compelling evidence for dating this word's semantic shift. As Meritt observes, the word *scocha* as it appears in the Épinal and Erfurt Glossaries is simply a spelling variant of *scocca/scucca* (1968: 94-5). In the former, which is dated to the early eighth century,[343] *scocha* is given as a synonym for *thyctin* (i.e., *tyhtend*, "inciter, instigator"), which glosses Latin *lenocinium*, "enticement, allurement."[344] Quite remarkably, in the Corpus Glossary, which is dated to the late eighth century (see below), the same Latin word is glossed exclusively by *tyhten*.[345] That *scucca* or its variants are not provided as synonyms for *tyhtend* in the Corpus Glossary might well be due to the fact that *scucca*, originally used to refer to a deceiving and instigating creature of Germanic folklore, had already changed its meaning to "devil" by the end of the eighth century.[346] This possibility is in accord with the copious evidence of *scucca* meaning "devil" in texts composed for certain after the eighth century.

Of all the instances of *scucca* indubitably meaning "devil,"[347] the earliest in a reliably dated work occurs in Wærferth's translation of Gregory's *Dialogues*, which was produced at the behest of King Alfred sometime between his ascension in 871 and

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Thus, according to Tolkien, the reason why Grendel is called a *gāst* or his kin is referred to as *scuccum* is because they were all associated with specters of Germanic folklore—which is not to say that they were demons from a Christian point of view. Niles (1991: 138) recognizes *scuccum* as a word referring to creatures of Germanic folk-belief, despite his translation.

[343] See Pheifer 1974: xxiii, lxxxix-xc; see also Lowe 1935: vi; Sweet 1883: xi-xii; 1885: 3; Lindsay 1915: 456; Brunner 1951: §2. a. 3.

[344] See Pheifer 1974: 31, L579. The gloss erroneously reads *lenocium*. This gloss, it should be noted, enhances the credibility of the Dietrich-Kauffmann etymology of *scucca* (cf. supra). Its assessment is, nevertheless, beyond the scope of the present essay.

[345] See Meritt 1968: 95. See also Lindsay 1921: 105, L117.

[346] The word *scocha* also appears as a synonym for *tyctin*, glossing Latin *lenotium*, in the first of the three glossaries of the late eighth- and early ninth-century Erfurt manuscript. See Goetz 1893: 368, L47; see also Pheifer 1974: 31, L579; for the date of the glossary, see Pheifer 1974: xxvi. This glossary, however, is a direct copy of the Épinal made by a continental scribe (see Pheifer 1974: xxv). As Wiersma points out (1961: 323), the *n*-stem noun *scucca* only exists in Old English, which means that the continental scribe probably did not understand it and therefore copied the word mechanically. The appearance of *scucca* there is accordingly not relevant.

[347] See the list provided by Jente (1921: 150-51).

the early 890s.[348] In chapter XVIII of Book IV of this work, which deals with the doom

of blasphemous young people, Gregory describes how a party of evil spirits came in

search of a blasphemous young man's soul at the moment of his death. Although the

Old English translation tends to render the Latin text rigorously,[349] Wærferth introduces

the prepositional phrase *fram þām scuccum* when he describes how the young man tried

to hide himself from these evil spirits.[350] It is clear that in this context the word *scucca*

refers to the purely spiritual demons of Christianity, since their purpose is to punish the

young man's soul and they cannot even be seen by the man's father, who is with him at

the moment of his death. Thus, like the authors who post-date him, Wærferth uses the

word *scucca* unambiguously to refer to the spiritual demons or devils of Christian

belief. Because *Beowulf* was in all likelihood composed before the meaning of *scucca*

became fixed as "devil" in the Christian sense of the word, Wærferth's work may

provide us with a rather firm *terminus ad quem* for the poem's composition: the mid-to-

late ninth century. The Corpus glossary, however, encourages us to move this *terminus*

closer to the beginning of the ninth century, since it might express awareness that the

semantic change of *scucca* had already taken place.

It appears that Amos was correct when she predicted that historical semantics

might be instrumental in helping us to date the composition of vernacular poems. If the

semantic trail left by Old English words originally referring to pagan monsters is further

pursued, we may find additional reasons to move the *terminus ad quem* for *Beowulf*

toward the beginning of the ninth century. When Beowulf arrives at Hrothgar's court,

he states that he will fight against Grendel by himself. The word he uses to refer to

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[348] See Hecht 1900. For the date of composition, see Yerkes 1982: 9; and 1985. See also Greenfield and Calder 1986: 42; and Fulk and Cain 2003: 66, 242 n. 17.
[349] See, for example, Fulk and Cain 2003: 66.
[350] See Hecht 1900: 289.

Grendel is *þyrse* (l. 426a),[351] the dative singular form of the masculine *i*-stem noun *þyrs*,

which is usually translated as both "giant, ogre" and "demon."[352] Beowulf's utterance of

this word is its only appearance in the poem. The etymology of *þyrs*, as Nora Chadwick

and Wiersma have noted, is very complex, and its precise original meaning is not

clear.[353] The evidence of *Maxims II*,[354] place-names,[355] and etymology,[356] nevertheless

indicate that the word was used to refer to some kind of pre-Christian fen-inhabiting

monster of the Grendel type. Although *þyrs* came to be associated with Christian

demons and devils, it is doubtful that this word possessed spiritual connotations by the

time *Beowulf* was composed. The poem's hero, a pagan ignorant of Revelation, is

unaware of Grendel's diabolical nature. In fact, after landing in Denmark, Beowulf says

to Hrothgar's coastguard:

> þū wāst, ġif hit is
>
> swā wē sōðlīċe   secgan hȳrdon,
>
> þæt mid Scyldingum   sceaðona iċ nāt hwylċ,
>
> dēogol dǣdhata   deorcum nihtum
>
> ēaweð þurh eġsan   uncūðne nīð,
>
> hȳnðu ond hrāfyl.[357] (ll. 272b-277a)

Beowulf states explicitly that he does not know the nature of Grendel (*sceaðona iċ nāt*

hwylċ) and calls him a "mysterious" (*dēogol*) persecutor. The poet here provides an

artful reminder of the ignorance of the pagan characters concerning Grendel's origins.

The phrase *uncūðne nīð* likewise implies that, unlike the poem's narrator and the

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[351] For an informed discussion of the term *þyrs* as applied to Grendel, see Cardew 2005: 200-205.
[352] See Bosworth-Toller and Clark Hall, s.v. *þyrs*. The meaning "enchanter" is a late Old English development. See Wiersma 1961: 39; see also Orchard 2003: 36.
[353] Nora Chadwick 1959: 179-74; Wiersma 1961: 34-8.
[354] See Dobbie 1942: 56.
[355] Whitelock 1951; 72-3.
[356] Holthausen 1963: 375, s.v. *ðyrs*.
[357] "You are aware, if it is as we have truly heard said, that among the Scyldings a criminal, I do not know of what kind, a mysterious persecutor terrifyingly effects in the dark nights unprecedented enmity, humiliation, and slaughter."

audience, Beowulf and the pagans do not know the ultimate reason for Grendel's

attacks.[358] Beowulf is unaware of Grendel's descent from Cain, his feud with God, and

his diabolical nature. In fact, in 959b-960a, after he has killed Grendel, Beowulf says to

Hrothgar *frēcne ġenēðdon / eafoð uncūþes*, "we daringly tested the power of an

unknown creature." Because it is repeatedly stressed that Beowulf is unaware of the

theological context of Grendel's attacks, it is improbable that *þyrs* should mean "demon"

or "devil" when it comes out of his mouth.

In her paper on the nature of the *Beowulf* monsters, Nora Chadwick discusses a

gloss for Latin *Orcus* found in the late eighth-century Corpus glossary.[359] As she points

out, both H. M. Chadwick and Paul Grosjean agree to the range 770-800 as the *terminus

a quo* for the compilation of this glossary. The terms this glossary gives as the nearest

Old English equivalents for Latin *Orcus* are *þyrs* and *heldiobul* (i.e., *helldēofol*, "hellish

devil").[360] This gloss indicates, then, that by the end of the eighth century, *þyrs* had

developed the Christian meaning of "demon" or "devil." Because the pagan characters

in *Beowulf* do not use diabolical terminology, it is unlikely that *þyrs* could possess such

connotations when Beowulf utters it in reference to Grendel. For the *Beowulf* poet, an

author attentive to theological nuance, the word *þyrs* must have been a straightforward

term for an ogre or a giant. It is a term appropriate for speech that articulates the limited

perspective of the pagan characters, but not for the theologically sophisticated narrator.

The restricted semantic range of *þyrs* suggests that the composition of *Beowulf* probably

antedated the compilation of the Corpus glossary, which took place at the end of the

eighth century.

<div align="center">MATERIAL MONSTERS</div>

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[358] See Lapidge 1993: 382-83.
[359] For the date of the Corpus Glossary, see Chadwick 1959: 173, n. 3; see also Lindsay 1921: xiii;
Chadwick 1889: §xxi.5; and Grosjean 1955: 177.
[360] See Hessels 1890: 86, O231; see also Lindsay 1921: 127, O231.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this essay, the changes of meaning evident in words like *scucca* and *þyrs* were the semantic aftermath of a broader process of cultural change whereby material pagan monsters ended up giving way to purely spiritual Christian devils in the Anglo-Saxon imagination. A glance at other eighth-century Anglo-Saxon texts representing monsters sheds further light on these processes of semantic and cultural change. These texts provide weighty substantiation for the claim that words originally used to refer to pagan monsters still denoted material monsters rather than purely spiritual devils during the eighth century. They also enable us to get a better sense of the syncretic literary milieu in which *Beowulf* was composed.

As R.D. Fulk and Christopher M. Cain observed, "Anglo-Latin literature is the most narrowly datable of all, and in constructing a history of OE literature, it is Anglo-Latin texts that must provide the framework into which undated vernacular works may be tentatively inserted" (2003: 35). I begin, therefore, with Aldhelm of Malmesbury's *opus geminatum*, *De Virginitate*, which was composed around the year 700.[361] Because of the outstanding presence of dragons in *De Virginitate*, this Aldhelmian work has lent itself readily to comparison with *Beowulf*.[362] Although interest in dragons pervades medieval literature, certain features render the case of Aldhelm particularly pertinent to the study of monster lore in Anglo-Saxon England. For one, no Anglo-Saxon author is more enthusiastic about dragons than Aldhelm. In *De Virginitate*, Aldhelm enhances the prominence of his saints' struggles with dragons, sometimes altering his sources and reducing a saint's obstacles to focus our attention on the dragon fight.[363] The disparities between Aldhelm's treatment of dragons and those found in his sources may be due to

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[361] On the dating of Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*, see Lapidge and Herren 1979: 14-5.
[362] For such comparisons, see, for example, Goldsmith 1970: 133-34; Lapidge 1982: 160-2; Sorrell 1994; Rauer 2000: 57.
[363] See Lapidge 1982: 160.

Aldhelm's familiarity with representations of dragons in Old English verse.[364] Aldhelm's dragons are different from those in his sources, but similar to the dragon in *Beowulf*, in that they are characterized by their super-destructiveness, i.e., their hostility extends to an entire people or nation. It might well be that super-destructive dragons were a current motif in Old English verse tradition at the time Aldhelm was composing, and that both Aldhelm and the *Beowulf* poet modeled their dragons upon it. That there was an exclusively insular dragon motif, and that it was in circulation in England only temporarily, is substantiated by the transitory custom of engraving dragon-like figures on the obverse of coins, as fourteen silver *sceattas* (600-750?) in Reary's list attest.[365] Such a custom is concomitant, as Clemoes has pointed out,[366] with a short period of predominance of insular motifs over continental sources in Anglo-Saxon art.

Closely related to the dragons' super-destructiveness is the issue of their materiality. In his introductory chapters to the prose *De Virginitate*, Aldhelm speaks in an almost allegorical manner of the "serpent of gluttony" and of the "ferocious adder of pride" (chapter XII).[367] Yet he does not forgo the materiality of his dragons for the sake of spiritual instruction. Their material presence means a real, physical menace for the entire populations they harass. Like the dragon in *Beowulf*, Aldhelmian dragons are "mortal denizens of the material world." Sylvester needs to use a collar in order to constrict the dragon he faces.[368] Hilarion burns up another dragon's scaly body.[369] Thus, even though the quasi-allegorical references in the introduction associate the dragons with pure evil, their physicality prevents them from becoming completely allegorical.

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[364] Lapidge 1982: 157-8; 1979.
[365] See Clemoes 1995: 17-8.
[366] Clemoes 1995: 18.
[367] Lapidge and Herren 1979: 69.
[368] Lapidge and Herren 1979: 82-4.
[369] Lapidge and Herren 1979: 88-9.

This is exactly what Tolkien thought of the monsters in *Beowulf*,[370] and he argued that this mid-point between materiality and allegory was a sign of the poem's early composition.[371] That the same fusion is evident in *De Virginitate*, an Anglo-Latin work composed c. 700, supports the idea that a literary milieu conducive to the composition of *Beowulf* obtained in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period.

This early Anglo-Saxon fondness for material monsters appears to be corroborated in both the *Liber Monstrorum* (c. 650-750) and the Repton Stone (c. 750).[372] The author of the former (probably a colleague of Aldhelm) reimagined Vergil's Report (*Fama*, in *Aeneid* IV.181) by transforming it from a metaphorical monster into a real, material one.[373] The sculptor of the Repton Stone, on the other hand, depicted a warrior fighting a large serpentine monster biting the heads off of two other warriors. The materiality of this creature—who calls to mind Grendel's cannibalistic tendencies—is apparent. As Clemoes has remarked, the inspirational force behind such representation probably was the image of hell as a devouring mouth.[374] Like the author of the *Liber Monstrorum*, the stone carver went a step further by transforming a non-living entity (the mouth of hell) into a living, material one.

This image of hell as a devouring mouth is present in another eighth-century Anglo-Latin work which, like *De Virginitate*, has traditionally been compared to *Beowulf*: *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, written by Felix of Crowland and commissioned by King

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[370] See, for example, Tolkien 1936: 259, where he states that "the balance is nice, but it is preserved. The large symbolism is near the surface, but it does not break through, nor become allegory." For more on this matter, see Lee 1997.

[371] See Tolkien 1936: 265-6, where he observes: "Yet this theme plainly would not be so treated, but for the nearness of a pagan time. […] He [the *Beowulf* poet] was still dealing with the great temporal tragedy, and not yet writing an allegorical homily in verse. Grendel inhabits the visible world and eats the flesh and blood of men; he enters their houses by the doors. The dragon wields a physical fire, and covets gold, not souls; he is slain iron in his belly."

[372] For the date of composition of the *Liber Monstrorum*, see Lapidge 1982: 164-5; see also Orchard 2003: 86. For the Repton Stone, see Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1985: 289-90; Karkov 2011: 102-3; and Clemoes 1995: 58-64.

[373] Lapidge 1982: 168.

[374] Clemoes 1995: 65

Ælfwald of East Anglia (r. 713-49). The horde of fen-haunting demons which assails

the saint is said to carry him *ad nefandas tartari fauces* (chapter XXXI).[375] Remarkably,

these demons are addressed by St. Guthlac as *semen Cain*, i.e., "the seed of Cain."[376] As

has been noted,[377] *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* is the only other Anglo-Saxon text where such

identification between demons and the kin of Cain is established. The identification is

based in part on an interpretation of Genesis, but more particularly on a tradition

articulated in the Book of Enoch and other apocryphal texts.[378] Felix's antagonists are

of a more immaterial nature than Aldhelm's, but they retain a material dimension. For

one, the mere fact of having a human ancestor implies some element of corporeality.

That Felix conceived of these monsters as having a physical existence is likewise

suggested in an interesting detail: the monsters are said to inhabit haunted barrows

excavated by greedy people in search of treasure.[379] Details such as these might have

struck sober readers as superfluous, but they likely crept into the representation of the

demons in Felix's work due to their circulation in contemporary vernacular poetry.

Quite a distinct situation is found when we get to Ælfric of Eynsham's late

tenth-century hagiographical texts. His choice of antagonist tends to be either a

completely evil Roman governor of the time of the persecutions or a purely immaterial

devil whose goal is to bring about the spiritual failure of the saint. Remarkably, these

purely spiritual devils are often referred to as *scuccan*. The word is particularly

recurrent in Ælfric's homily on Job, where it is used to refer to the devil that tempts

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[375] See Colgrave 1956: 104.

[376] Colgrave, *Felix's Life*, 106.

[377] See Whitelock 1951: 80-1; Clemoes 1981: 183; 1995: 19; Orchard 2003: 85. See also Newton 1993: 143. Newton emphasizes the most important parallels between Guthlac's demonic opponents and the Grendel kin, observing "that some early eighth-century East Anglians, like the audience of *Beowulf*, believed that fens and marshes were haunted by the evil seed of Cain." He also calls attention to the East Anglian dialect word *Shuck*, a term derived from Old English *scucca* used to refer to a diabolic black dog of folklore (1993: 142-43).

[378] See Colgrave 1956: 85; Clemoes 1981: 182-3; Kaske 1971; Mellinkoff 1979; Mellinkoff 1980; Orchard 2003: 64-6, 76.

[379] Colgrave 1956: 92-94.

him.[380] How are we to explain the immense difference between the *scuccan* of Ælfric's

work and the monsters found in several reliably dated products of the eighth century,

which are remarkably similar to the *scuccum* found in *Beowulf*? The answer is simple:

Anglo-Saxon England did not exist in stasis for three centuries. The literary culture of

the eighth century differed substantially from the literary culture of the tenth century,

and *Beowulf* clearly gravitates toward the eighth rather than the tenth. There are

countless reasons for the cultural changes separating the earlier and later Anglo-Saxon

period, but two have bearing here. One is that the Christianization of pagan language

and phenomena—including monsters—did not occur overnight. The Anglo-Saxons of

the eighth century were still relatively recent converts. A second factor is that the

Benedictine reform brought Anglo-Saxon England more in line with mainstream

continental Christianity. The idiosyncrasies of the earlier period fall away in the

orthodox world of Ælfric. *Beowulf* is better understood as a product of the same cultural

context as *De Virginitate*, *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, the *Liber Monstrorum*, and the Repton

Stone—a context where the change from pagan material monsters to Christian spiritual

devils was not yet complete.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of material monsters into spiritual devils necessitated a semantic

shift in the Old English words that were originally used to refer to material monsters.

The semantic history of such words has important implications for the dating of

Beowulf. If words such as *scucca* or *þyrs* are to be taken as referring exclusively to

material monsters in *Beowulf*—which must be the case, given their context—then the

dates when those words changed their meanings become plausible *termini ad quem* for

the composition of the poem. It is worth noting that these are not the only words that

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[380] See Godden 1979: 260-67.

have been said to retain their pre-conversion meanings in *Beowulf*. Tom Shippey has noted that the ō-stem noun *hrēow* must be understood as retaining its pre-conversion meaning, "sorrow," rather than the meaning it normally carries in later religious prose, "penitence."[381]

As Tom Shippey has also observed, the semantic history of certain words provides "absolute proof of nothing" (1993: 175). Such evidence merely contributes incrementally to the probability that *Beowulf* is an early composition, but its contribution is not negligible. Scholars desiring a post-eighth-century *Beowulf* may still cling to the claim that the language of heroic poetry is not the language of religious prose, and may "retreat to the safe haven of a *Mischsprache*" (Shippey 1993: 165), arguing for the possibility that in the so-called "poetic dialect" *scucca* and *þyrs* always retained their pre-conversion meanings irrespective of time. This is theoretically possible, but the evidence gives little reason to invest credence in such a counterintuitive and *ad hoc* explanation. Far less credence is required to accept the simple conclusion the semantic evidence suggests: namely, that the *Beowulf* poet used the words *scucca* and *þyrs* in the way he did because they still referred to material monsters exclusively—and that *Beowulf*, therefore, was composed at a time in the eighth century before those two words acquired their restricted, spiritual meanings.

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[381] See Shippey 1993: 173-75. Other words which have been said to preserve their pre-Christian meaning in *Beowulf* are the *jō*-stem noun *synn*, "hostility," the ō-stem noun *fyren*, "pain, violence," and the neuter *wa*-stem noun *bealu*, "aggression"; see *Klaeber IV*, clii. See also Robinson 1985: 56-7; Cronan 2003: 400-405; and Fulk 2007: 629.

4. *Ælfric's* Rhythmical Prose and Old English Metrics

Although pedagogically straightforward, Ælfric's writings have proven to be formally

enigmatic. A longstanding source of contention amongst scholars of Ælfric is the proper

classification of his rhythmical-alliterative style: is it verse, prose, or "rhythmical

alliteration," a sort of middle ground between the two?[382] The question is unresolved at

present, though scholarly opinion has predominantly inclined towards the view that

Ælfric's peculiar style is best conceptualized as rhythmical prose or as a hybrid form

between prose and verse.[383] A decade ago, however, Thomas A. Bredehoft argued on

the basis of a new metrical system he devised that Ælfric's rhythmical-alliterative style

should be classified as verse. This judgment led Bredehoft to reach the controversial

conclusion that Ælfric is "Anglo-Saxon England's most prolific poet" (2004: 107).[384]

Bredehoft's claim about Ælfric's rhythmical style is a logical consequence of his

innovative views about late or post-classical Old English verse. Bredehoft postulates

that a series of metrical changes occurring around the time of Æthelred the Unready's

reign made the classical system of versification develop a new set of principles,

according to which post-classical poetry was composed. Along these lines, Bredehoft

argues that the reason why late poetry has usually been considered a debased form of

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[382] For a survey of the history of the debate up to 1973, see Kuhn 1973. The most detailed study of Ælfric's rhythmical style is carried out by John C. Pope, who argues that it must be regarded as rhythmical prose; see Pope 1967: 105-36. For the case for "rhythmical alliteration," see Blake 1969. A more recent articulation of this view, which has been endorsed by a considerable number of scholars, is offered in Brehe 1994. Momma also discusses the so-called "hierarchy of verse-likeness"; see Momma 1997: 7-27. The reasons that make Ælfric an ideally suited case for stylistic studies within the field of Old English are emphasized by Momma 2006: 253-5. For a concise summary of the different editorial responses to Ælfric's rhythmical style, see Szarmach 1998.

[383] This issue seemed already settled in 1995, when Andy Orchard stated that the question of whether Ælfric composed verse was "no longer seriously posed by scholars"; see Orchard 995: 458, n. 96. In the 2000s, however, it was revived by Geoffrey Russom (2004), R.D. Fulk (2004), Thomas A. Bredehoft (2004, 2005), Bruce Mitchell (2005), and Haruko Momma (2006). Russom excludes Ælfric's rhythmical texts from the classical tradition of Old English poetry; Fulk and Mitchell argue that it should be considered prose; Momma advocates that Ælfric's rhythmical style is a mid-form between prose and verse. For Bredehoft's view, see below.

[384] For a more detailed exposition of his argument, see Bredehoft 2005.

verse is that traditional Sieversian metrics is overly rigid and unable to account for actual changes in the metrical tradition.[385] According to Bredehoft, then, Sieversian metrics should be abandoned, along with the opinion that late poetry is degenerate. He advocates for the adoption of a new metrical formalism of his own development, which purportedly offers a more authentic view of the metrical principles underlying classical poetry, as well as a reliable means for understanding post-classical poetry on its own terms. Concomitant with the formal accommodation of late verse is the recognition of Ælfric's style as part of the same poetic movement. Since his rhythmical texts can be scanned according to the principles of Bredehoft's theory, it would appear reasonable to conclude: those texts must have resulted from the application of the new set of metrical rules and must therefore be classified as a genuine manifestation of late Old English verse (2005: 3-12).

Bredehoft's theory for late Old English verse is predicated upon a series of structural changes in the classical metrical system. The classical system of versification to which Bredehoft refers is an artefact of his own design, constructed upon two fundamental assumptions: (1) that a metrical formalism has to be characterized by descriptive simplicity, since the actual poets surely composed in a simple, intuitive manner; and (2) that it has to be flexible enough to account for the great metrical diversity that separates one poet from another, and early from late versification. Bredehoft believes that an interpretation of a metrical feature is correct only if it is formulated in terms that actual Anglo-Saxon poets would have consciously understood. From his point of view, the complexity of current metrical studies is diagnostic of its unreliability. As he puts it:

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[385] The basics of traditional Sieversian metrics are laid out in Sievers 1885 and 1893. General introductions to Sieversian metrics are offered by Bliss 1962; Cassidy and Ringler 1971: 274-88; Stockwell and Minkova 1997; Pope 2001: 129-58; McCully and Hilles 2005: 143-85; Terasawa 2011; and Baker 2012: 123-55.

Modern critical analysis of Old English metre is usually carried out at a level of linguistic and technical complexity that, as all observers must agree, can have little to do with the intuitive, traditional (and hence transmissible, susceptible to being passed from poet to poet), and largely formulaic system which allowed actual Anglo-Saxon poets to compose. The degree of mismatch between current descriptions of Old English metre and our own intuitive sense of how Anglo-Saxon poets operated is simply too great to bear (2005: 5).

Thus, Bredehoft's supposition is that since Anglo-Saxon poets must have composed in an intuitively simple manner, a modern metrical theory is reliable only if it is predicated upon a simple set of purely metrical rules.[386] Related to the question of simplicity is the issue of flexibility. Besides being simple, Bredehoft maintains, the actual rules according to which Anglo-Saxon poets composed have to be formulated so as to allow the linear progression from classical to post-classical poetry that he postulates and that Sieversian metrics purportedly obscures (2005: 9).

The present essay endeavours to examine Bredehoft's arguments by means of three sections. As has been noted, Bredehoft calls for a simplification of the linguistic argumentation involved in contemporary metrics. The first section argues, however, that it is precisely the relatively complex linguistic methodology attached to modern metrical research that permits the detection of many regular features of Old English poetry that would otherwise pass unnoticed. The second section study contends that the explanatory power of the four-position principle, which is discarded in Bredehoft's system, constitutes unambiguous evidence for the reliability and descriptive superiority of Sieversian metrics. The third section, on Ælfric and late Old English verse, argues that Bredehoft's attempt to formulate a simple set of flexible rules governing the

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[386] On the problems raised by purely metrical formulations of the rules of Old English metre, see Donoghue 1997: 70-1.

composition of late Old English verse results in a system that is unable to differentiate prose and verse. This failure is perhaps the clearest indication that Bredehoft's system is incorrect. The chief point that will emerge in the conclusion is that Bredehoft's claim that Ælfric composed verse cannot be detached from the authenticity of the assumptions upon which his study is based. Since Bredehoft's description of classical and post-classical metre is erroneous and hence unreliable, the conclusion about Ælfric's style to which it leads is meaningless.

<center>SECTION ONE</center>

One fundamental tenet of Bredehoft's argumentation is that the heavy dependence of current metrical research on linguistics is a clear indication of its unreliability. If a metrical theory is to be authentic, Bredehoft maintains, the formulation and explanation of its principles should not be immersed in supposedly abstruse linguistic discussion conducted in terms incomprehensible to actual Anglo-Saxon poets. Bredehoft's challenge to the role of linguistic inquiry in metrical argumentation comes, however, at an untenable cost of probability. One revealing example of the gross improbability that it generates is furnished by his account of the workings of resolution,[387] which is contradicted by the compelling evidence that linguistic research is able to detect, and which has in fact the potential to throw the very core of his theory into question. In his attempt to provide the supposedly original set of simple rules by which actual Anglo-Saxon poets were guided, he describes resolution as a purely metrical device whose "only function in surviving texts seems to be in making syllable counts of metrical verses come out right" (2005: 15). Contrary to traditional Sieversian metrics, where each verse is assumed to comprise exactly four metrical positions,[388] Bredehoft's

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[387] For a detailed study of resolution, see Suzuki 1995.

[388] See Sievers 1893: §8.1. Sievers states that some verses rarely consist of five positions. These are the expanded counterparts of type D verses like *Beowulf* 223a, *sīde sǣnæssas*, "broad headlands." Cable, however, has demonstrated that in expanded type D verses the pause between the two verse-initial lifts of

formalism conceives of the classical system of versification as a syllable-counting metre in which the verse unit consists of a minimum of four syllables. According to his theory, resolution applies by default unless the conflation of the two resolvable syllables reduces the total number of syllables in the verse to less than four, in which case resolution is suspended (Bredehoft 2005: 27).[389] The difficulties facing Bredehoft's rejection of the four-position principle are discussed more extensively in the second section below. The present section is primarily concerned with the impulse behind Bredehoft's re-definition of resolution, namely his endeavour to simplify maximally the enunciation of the rules of Old English metre.

Within the parameters of Bredehoft's formalism, a Type D2 verse like *Beowulf* 2118a, *ġearo gyrnwræce*, "ready for the revenge for injury,"[390] scans S/Ssx because resolution of -*wræce* would result in a three-syllable verse, S/Ss. On the other hand, a Type A2a verse like *Beowulf* 2357a (2429a), *frēawine folca*, "friend and lord of the people," is scanned Ss/Sx. The reason Bredehoft gives for the latter scansion is that the sequence Ssx is prohibited in the first foot of normal verses—i.e., the sequence Ssx can occupy only the first foot of an inverted verse, whose second foot must then be monosyllabic.[391] Several problems present themselves here. First, the only logical reason to exclude the pattern Ssx/Sx as unmetrical is the assumption made by traditional Sieversian metrics that a verse must contain no less and no more than four metrical positions. Since Bredehoft rejects the four-position principle, his exclusion of the

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a standard type D verse is filled with an unstressed syllable, but that the internal four-position structure of the verse remains unaltered. See Cable 1991: 37, 138-9, 143. See also Suzuki, 1992; 1995: 21-2.

[389] Bredehoft also states that resolution is suspended if it changes the type of verse. This condition for suspension of resolution is problematic. For example, in *The Wanderer* 97b, *lēofre duguþe*, "for the beloved company," resolution of *dugu-* would change an SC into an SA type and hence, according to Bredehoft, it must be suspended. In Sieversian metrics, on the contrary, suspension of resolution of the sequence *dugu-* is prohibited because it is not immediately preceded by a monosyllabic lift or a half-lift. As it is argued further below, the Sieversian condition for suspension of resolution is supported by compelling evidence, and so this feature of Bredehoft's metrical theory must be erroneous.

[390] *Beowulf* is cited from Fulk, Bjork, and Niles.

[391] Bredehoft and Russom use the expression "inverted" or "reversed" verse to refer to Sieversian type E verses. See Bredehoft 2005: 28-9; Russom 1987: 29-31.

pattern Ssx/Sx when the s-position is long, which seems necessary in light of its virtual

non-occurrence, is theoretically unjustified. Second, the fact that Bredehoft purports to

offer the genuine rules which allowed Anglo-Saxon poets to compose implies that the

rule that the *Beowulf* poet had in mind when applying or suspending resolution was the

purely metrical rule that Bredehoft formulated. Yet resolution in verses such as *ġearo*

gyrnwræce and *frēawine folca* cannot be governed by purely metrical considerations,

for reasons first stated by Max Kaluza and subsequently elaborated by R.D. Fulk. [392]

Kaluza's law refers to a linguistic regularity observed in the metre of *Beowulf*

according to which the application or suspension of resolution of disyllabic sequences

under secondary stress is systematically determined by the etymological length of the

desinences involved. Consequently, disyllabic sequences under secondary stress ending

in vowels that are etymologically short undergo resolution. Thus, in Type A2a verses

like *frēawine folca*, whose disyllabic sequence under secondary stress must be resolved,

the disyllabic sequence in question ends in a vowel that was short in Proto-Germanic or

else had shortened by the Pre-Old English period. In the particular instance of *frēawine*

folca, the historically attested final *-e* of *-wine*, a nominative singular masculine *i*-stem,

descends from Proto-Germanic *-iz*, which became Pre-Old English *-i*. [393] In

complementary fashion, in Type D2 (and D*2) verses like *ġearo gyrnwræce*, in which

the verse-final disyllabic sequence must occupy two positions, the disyllable ends either

in a consonant or a vowel that remained long in Pre-Old English. For example, the

recorded final *-e* of *-wræce*, the genitive singular form of the *ō*-stem noun *wracu*,

originates in Proto-Germanic *-ôi*, where the circumflex indicates that the ending

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[392] See Kaluza 1896; 1909: 57-9; Fulk 1992: §§170-83. The law originates in the observations of Kaluza, who first noticed the correspondence between the application or suspension of resolution and etymological length. Fulk restricted the application of the law to disyllabic sequences under secondary stress exclusively. An apt summary of the discovery of the law and its subsequent refinements is offered by Suzuki 1996: 281-4. See also Cable 1994 and 2003; and Fulk 2007b: 317-23.

[393] For paradigms of Proto-Germanic declensions, see Fulk 1992: 419-25.

remained long in Pre-Old English.[394] The rationale behind this complementary

distribution, which has generated heated scholarly debate, has a direct bearing on the

reliability of Bredehoft's explanation of resolution in particular, and on his assumption

about linguistic complexity in general.

In his monumental 1992 study, Fulk argued that on account of the complexity

and diversity of the etymological length distinctions observed, the *Beowulf* poet must

have been aware of their existence. In other words, the poet must have lived at a time

when these length distinctions were still phonologically realized in the language he

spoke.[395] Several alternative hypotheses have been propounded, but none of them

possesses the coherence and explanatory power of Fulk's explanation for the motivation

of the law.[396] Besides furnishing a reliable *terminus ad quem* for the composition of

Beowulf, the demonstrable reality of the poet's awareness of archaic length distinctions

provides revealing insights into the workings of resolution in the early period that flatly

contradict Bredehoft's account. In *Beowulf*, the application or suspension of resolution

under secondary stress is not determined by metrical context. If this were so, one would

expect to find the same disyllabic sequence behaving differently depending on the type

of verse in which it appears. But a disyllabic sequence ending in an etymologically short

vowel is never found occupying the last two positions of a D2 (or D*2) verse.

Complementarily, a disyllable ending in a consonant or an etymologically long vowel is

never found in the first drop of an A2a verse. The resolvability of disyllabic sequences

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[394] For a list of verses complying with Kaluza's law, see Bliss 1967: §§35-6.

[395] The compliance of *Beowulf* with Kaluza's law thus sets a precise *terminus ad quem* for the composition of the poem, which, as Fulk has pointed out, is either ca. 725 if the poem is Mercian in origin or ca. 825 if Northumbrian. See Fulk 1992: §§406-21. For a reaffirmation of the dating implications of Kaluza's law for *Beowulf*, see Neidorf and Pascual forthcoming. For an extensive discussion of the bearing of philological evidence on the dating of Old English poetry, see Neidorf 2013a.

[396] Doubts have been raised against Fulk's argument by several scholars: see Suzuki 1996a: 205-38; 1996b; Hutcheson 2004; and Frank 2007. All their arguments, however, have been convincingly refuted; see Fulk 1998; 2007b; Clark forthcoming; and Neidorf and Pascual forthcoming.

in *Beowulf* must be conditioned by some characteristic inherent in the disyllabic sequences themselves.

The regularities governed by Kaluza's law demonstrate that the intrinsic feature that dictates the resolvability of disyllabic sequences under secondary stress in *Beowulf* is phonology. Thus, the reason why the sequence -*wræce* in *ġearo gyrnwræce* does not resolve is not that it is placed in a position where resolution would produce unmetricality, as Bredehoft would have it. Resolution of -*wræce* is rather prevented by the etymological length of its ending, which, as the *Beowulf* poet knew, makes the sequence -*wræce* suitable to occupy two metrical positions under secondary stress exclusively. Or, to put it in other words, -*wræce* is invariably perceived by the *Beowulf* poet as a non-resolvable disyllabic sequence because its ending is etymologically long. The *Beowulf* poet's faithful adherence to Kaluza's law indicates that he recognized the etymological length distinctions of the endings involved, which in turn demonstrates that resolvability under secondary stress, at least in *Beowulf*, depends on specific phonological properties of those endings, not on purely metrical requirements. Surely, then, Bredehoft's purely metrical account of resolution is incorrect. It is devised to account for the functioning of resolution in surviving texts, but it does not invoke the workings of phonology to explain resolvability under secondary stress in *Beowulf*. If the *Beowulf* poet had been guided by Bredehoft's rule of resolution rather than by awareness of etymological length distinctions, as his theory implies, the complementary distribution of etymologically short and long vocalic endings in the poem's 106 Kaluza verses would have to be ascribed to coincidence. Acceptance of Bredehoft's account of resolution would thus generate an improbability of such a magnitude that it must be discarded as totally unreliable.

Kaluza's law furnishes an illustrative example of the kind of complex linguistic argumentation that pervades current metrical studies conducted within the framework of Sieversian metrics, and which Bredehoft criticizes. A great deal of analytical effort and technical knowledge on behalf of contemporary observers is necessary for the regularities governed by Kaluza's law to be detected; and yet the existence of these regularities cannot rationally be doubted on the grounds that specialized knowledge is required for their detection. Familiarity with other Indo-European (especially Germanic) languages and their philologies is a *sine qua non* in this respect. For example, the existence of the distinction between short and long vocalic endings in Proto-Germanic, which is crucial to the proper formulation of the law, is postulated in order to account for dissimilar developments in the Gothic language of vowels whose hypothesized reconstructions in Proto-Germanic are apparently identical.[397] But this is not to say, however, that the *Beowulf* poet possessed such technical knowledge, as Bredehoft's position about descriptive simplicity implies. As a native speaker of a language in which etymological length distinctions of vocalic endings had not yet become indistinct, the procedure by which he placed disyllabic sequences in resolvable or non-resolvable positions under secondary stress depending on the etymological length of their endings must have been based on linguistic intuition, not on virtually impossible philological training.

Bredehoft's position about descriptive simplicity, together with the challenge to the role of complex linguistic argumentation in metrical research with which it is

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[397] For example, the Proto-Germanic nominative singular ending of *ō*-stems, *-o*, becomes *-a* in Gothic, as in *giba*, "gift." The Proto-Germanic ending of *a*-stems for ablative singular is also *-o*, but it gives Gothic *-ō*, as in the adverb *jainþrō*, "thence," not *-a*. This means that a difference between the two vocalic endings must have existed in Proto-Germanic, since otherwise they would have produced the same outcome in Gothic. This distinction is predicated in terms of length. The ending of *a*-stems for ablative singular is reconstructed as *-ô*, while the ending of *ō*-stems for nominative singular is reconstructed as *-ō*. See Fulk 1992: §170. For more information on the discovery of this distinction and for a comprehensive list of more phonological oppositions, see Lane 1963.

coupled, is tantamount to saying that contemporary grammars of Old English, with their detailed inventories of phonological changes, their diachronic and synchronic classifications of nouns, and their multiple subdivisions of strong, weak, and preterite-present verbs, must be false because it would have been impossible for Anglo-Saxons to understand them. As all sensible observers must agree, complexity from our perspective is not complexity from the Anglo-Saxons' perspective.[398] Bredehoft's approach to Old English metre is based on a fundamental misapprehension of the most basic workings of language. The demonstrable existence of the regularities described by Kaluza's law, whose detection is possible only through the application of the protocols of philology, is a reliable indication not only that the purely metrical account of resolution must be erroneous, but also that Bredehoft's call for a simplification of linguistic complexity in metrical argumentation must be misguided.[399] If scholars followed his exhortation, significant patterns that occur in the metre would be left undetected, and thus the enterprise of descriptive metrical scholarship would be retarded.

Ultimately, the greatest deficiency of Bredehoft's study of Old English metre is that the effect that his formalism produces is exactly the opposite of what it originally intended. Bredehoft states:

> At its centre, my formalism attempts to allow a diachronic perspective on Old English verse. Rather than imagining the formulaic system of composition as essentially static and unchanging, I begin with the expectation that poets and poems differ in their metrical practices, and that these differences might arise

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[398] As Fulk states, "Whatever metrical rules Anglo-Saxon poets employed when they composed verse, those rules must have been fairly simple and easily intuited by someone to whom the Old English phonological system, with its phonemic distinctions and lexical and phrasal stress rules, was natural." See Pope 2001: 149. It is, then, completely understandable that the simple principles by which Anglo-Saxon poets operated seem unfamiliar and complex to speakers of modern Germanic languages, where the phonemic distinction between long and short vowels—which is crucial to the workings of Old English metre—has been lost. See Fulk 1992: §267.

[399] The regularities described by Kaluza's law also imply the correctness of Sievers's four-position analysis, since their detection ultimately relies on that principle. This important point is elaborated by Fulk elsewhere; see Fulk 1992: §§26, 65, 69; 1996: 6;1997: 140 2002: 337-40.

from differences in authorship, time of composition, or even subject matter and

tone (2005: 9).

Bredehoft's ironically static description of resolution can hardly satisfy his own

expectations about the identification of metrical diversity. *Beowulf* profoundly differs

from all the other poems in the surviving corpus with regard to its conformity to

Kaluza's law and the incidence of relevant verses,[400] but this prominent feature of its

metre is obscured by Bredehoft's loose definition of resolution as a metrical wild card.

Given the enormous chronological significance of Kaluza's law, the inability of

Bredehoft's formalism to recognize it is a sign of its unreliability. Bredehoft's simple

account of resolution may smooth the path to his theory for late Old English metre, but

it would come at an untenable cost: it would preclude the detection of crucial

differences between poems whose recognition would otherwise allow a truly insightful

diachronic perspective on Old English verse, thus compromising the very core of his

theory.

<div align="center">SECTION TWO</div>

The most widely attested verse type in Old English poetry is the four-syllable trochaic

pattern paradigmatically represented by verses like *Beowulf* 146a, *hūsa sēlest*, "best of

houses."[401] Its widespread occurrence indicates that the composition of that pattern was

strongly favoured by Anglo-Saxon poets. Old English verses, however, usually feature a

larger number of syllables, ranging from five to a maximum of nine and sometimes

even more.[402] In order to postulate the inherent structure of the Old English verse unit,

Sieversian metrics reconciles the apparently random fluctuations in the number of

syllables per verse with the preponderance of four-syllable verses by arranging all the

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[400] Fulk 1992: §179.

[401] Sievers 1893: §84. See also Pope 2001: 144; Terasawa 2011: 34.

[402] As Russom puts it with regard to *Beowulf*, "In *Beowulf*, the meter changes unpredictably from verse to verse, and the underlying pattern must be recovered in each case from linguistic material" (1987: 25).

syllables in each verse, whatever their number, into exactly four sequences, traditionally

known as "positions." Ideally, each metrical position contains a single syllable and must

contain at least one syllable, according to whose degree of stress Sieversian metrics

distinguishes three types of positions: the lift, which accommodates a long syllable with

primary stress; the half-lift, which comprises a long syllable bearing a half-stress; and

the drop, occupied by an unstressed syllable, irrespective of its length. Thus, the

standard four-position verse is represented precisely by four-syllable verses like *hūsa*

sēlest, in which each metrical position is realized by the archetypal linguistic material.

Verses with a larger number of syllables are conceived of as permissible variants of the

standard type.

The circumstances under which this variability is allowed are not arbitrary but

strictly regulated.[403] First, drops can contain more than one unstressed syllable as long

as they are all adjacent to each other. For example, in *Beowulf* 1230a, *þeġnas syndon*

ġeþwǣre, "the retainers are united," the first drop is occupied by four adjacent

unstressed syllables (-*nas syndon ġe-*).[404] Second, lifts and half-lifts can accommodate a

disyllable provided that the disyllable is resolvable, i.e., it is formed by a stressed short

syllable and its unstressed successor.[405] For instance, the first lift in *Beowulf* 3b,

sceaþena þrēatum, "from bands of enemies," is realized by the resolved disyllable

sceaþe-. Regardless of their different numbers of syllables, both verses, *þeġnas syndon*

ġeþwǣre and *sceaþena þrēatum*, have the same underlying four-position structure as

hūsa sēlest. Thus, the variations in the number of syllables displayed by Old English

verses do not compromise the integrity of their inner four-position structure, which is

preserved by (1) the potential of drops for protraction; and (2) the ability of resolution to

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[403] Fulk 2002: 338, n. 8.
[404] Sievers 1893: §10. As has been pointed out elsewhere, type A verses with protracted drops, like *Beowulf* 1230a, are more likely to feature double alliteration. See Suzuki 1996a: 149-58; and Terasawa 2011: 60.
[405] Sievers 1893: §9.1.

abstract a lift or a half-lift from a disyllabic sequence formed by a short stressed syllable and its immediate unstressed successor. Irrespective of how many syllables the positions of a verse contain, Sieversian metrics regards that verse as metrical provided that it comprises no more and no less than four positions.[406]

Bredehoft considers that the hypothesis that a verse must contain exactly four positions is an unnecessarily complicated feature of Sieversian metrics (2005: 130, n. 20). He replaces it with a four-syllable rule according to which any verse with four syllables or more is metrical (2005: 27). Bredehoft's re-definition of resolution is a direct consequence of his four-syllable rule. As has been stated, the function of resolution in Sieversian metrics is to enable the four-position principle by abstracting a single metrical position from a disyllabic sequence. Since Bredehoft's formalism dispenses with the four-position principle, resolution is re-defined in order to preserve the integrity of his four-syllable rule. Accordingly, in his formalism, resolution is conceived of as applying by default unless its application reduces the number of syllables to less than four, in which case it is suspended. This section of the present essay contends that there is no rational basis for discarding the four-position principle in favour of Bredehoft's four-syllable rule, since the four-position principle has the ability to account for some distributional verse patterns for which Bredehoft's four-syllable rule, together with the re-definition of resolution with which it is concomitant, can offer no explanation. Bredehoft tries to compensate partially for the absence of the four-position principle by developing an arbitrary rule, which should suffice to cast doubt on his formalism. His hypothesis, however, ultimately leads to an untenable position for which he does not even provide an unjustified explanation, namely that the non-

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[406] Cable 1974: 84-93.

occurrence of a verse pattern for which there are good reasons to be expected is the result of coincidence.

In Bredehoft's formalism, there is a rule that excludes the pattern Ssx/Sx as unmetrical when the s-position is occupied by the long root syllable of a second compound element (2005: 27-8). This rule is illustrative of the *ad hoc* quality of his reasoning, since the unmetricality of the pattern can be explained only on the assumption, denied by Bredehoft, that a verse contains exactly four positions. In the poetic manuscripts, the pattern Ssx/Sx does not occur when the first foot is a compound whose second element has a long root syllable, as in *hæftmēċe hearde*, "by means of a hard hilted sword." The same pattern is relatively frequent, however, if the root syllable of the second compound element is short, as in *frēawine folca*.[407] This distributional pattern is explained in one stroke by the Sieversian hypothesis that (1) a verse must contain exactly four positions; and (2) resolution can abstract a single metrical position from the disyllabic sequence formed by a short stressed syllable and its unstressed successor. Thus, in verses like *frēawine folca*, with a short s-position, the two-syllable sx sequence -*wine* undergoes resolution, and the resulting verse pattern, Ss/Sx, is metrical on account of its four positions. Complementarily, this hypothesis is able to explain the non-occurrence of verses like *hæftmēċe hearde*, in which the s-position is long: the long syllable -*mē*- precludes resolution of the sx sequence -*mēċe*, so that the resulting verse pattern, Ssx/Sx, is unmetrical because of its five positions. Probably due to the virtual non-existence of verses with the same pattern as *hæftmēċe hearde*, Bredehoft admits that that pattern must be unmetrical. But since Bredehoft dispenses with the four-position principle, his formalism is unable to account logically for the unmetricality of a verse pattern that manifestly complies with his four-syllable rule.

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[407] Sievers 1893: §80.3.

Thus, Bredehoft's formalism is incoherent, since it explicitly denies the four-position principle, while implicitly relying on it for the exclusion of the long variant of the Ssx/Sx pattern.

The most serious problem of his theory, however, is posed by Bredehoft's attempt to enable his four-syllable principle by re-defining resolution, which inadvertently leads his formalism to an insuperable dead end. According to Bredehoft, poets were allowed to suspend resolution *ad libitum* if its application reduced the number of syllables in a verse to less than four. This re-definition does not preclude Bredehoft's explanation of the metricality of verses like *Beowulf* 629a, *wælrēow wiga*, "battle-fierce warrior": the poet would have suspended resolution of *wiga* to make the verse comply with the four-syllable rule. Nevertheless, Bredehoft's re-definition of resolution is unable to provide the logic behind the non-occurrence of the mirror image of *Beowulf* 629a, **wiga wælrēow*. There is nothing in Bredehoft's account of the workings of resolution to exclude a four-syllable verse like this, since Bredehoft maintains that the poets could have suspended resolution at will to prevent the verse from falling short of a syllable. And yet this verse pattern is exceedingly rare in the surviving corpus of Old English poetry, which amounts to some 60,000 verses,[408] and almost certainly corrupt if it occurs. The same holds true for its light equivalent: verses like **wiga mǣre*, "glorious warrior," with a verse-final drop, are virtually absent from the records.[409] The non-occurrence of four-syllable verses beginning with unresolved disyllabic lifts is all the more problematic for Bredehoft because poets favoured the composition of four-syllable verses like *hūsa sēlest*, which were regarded as the metrical archetype. If resolution had really been a wild card which the poets could have freely suspended to make syllable counts come out right, as Bredehoft suggests, then

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[408] Sievers 1893: §74.
[409] See Fulk 1996: 21-2, n. 23. As Suzuki points out, the only possible instances of this pattern are those in which the length of the first syllable is not known with certainty. See Suzuki 1995: 26.

why would they have never produced so convenient a verse as *wiga mǣre*? The demonstrable inability of resolution as defined by Bredehoft to account for this compelling absence reveals the implausibility of the four-syllable analysis, since Bredehoft re-defines resolution for the sole purpose of enabling that principle.

The aforementioned distributional pattern demands a coherent explanation, and Sieversian metrics is able to furnish it. This explanation comes again as a logical consequence of the four-position principle. In order to preserve the integrity of that principle, Sieversian metrics assumes that resolution of a lift can be suspended if that lift is immediately preceded by a monosyllabic lift or half-lift.[410] That way, in verses like *wælrēow wiga*, where the condition for suspension of resolution applies, *wiga* can occupy two metrical positions, and hence the verse features the four positions demanded by the metre. This assumption also has the virtue of providing a complimentary explanation for the non-occurrence of verses like *wiga wælrēow* or *wiga mǣre*. Since the first lift in a verse cannot be preceded by another lift for obvious reasons, the only condition for suspension of resolution does not obtain. Resolution of verse-initial lifts is thus unavoidable, so that *wiga wælrēow* and *wiga mǣre* are unmetrical on account of their resulting three-position patterns. The Sieversian hypothesis that resolution of verse-initial lifts is invariably compulsory is confirmed by the frequent occurrence of verses like the above-mentioned *sceaþena þrēatum*, where the third syllable of a verse-initial trisyllabic word compensates for the resolved first two syllables by furnishing an additional drop. Moreover, a verse like *Beowulf* 1872b, *hruron him tēaras*, "tears fell from him," lends further support to the assumption that verse-initial lifts must be resolved, since the dative pronoun *him* seems to have been introduced for the sole purpose of rendering the verse metrical. The word occupying the following verse,

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[410] Sievers 1893: §9.2. See also Pope 2001: 142; Bliss 1962: §27.a.

blondenfeaxum, "from the grey-haired," to which *him* stands in variation, is the strong dative masculine singular form of an adjective that would have satisfied the demands of grammar and sense by itself, without the assistance of the dative pronoun.[411]

Because of its arbitrariness and lack of explanatory power, Bredehoft's formalism does not furnish a satisfactory alternative to Sieversian metrics. The Ssx/Sx pattern, regardless of whether the second compound element has a short or long root syllable, features more syllables than the minimum of four established by Bredehoft. The non-occurrence of the long variant, however, compels him to posit a theoretically unmotivated rule that excludes it as unmetrical. Since Bredehoft's formalism purportedly offers the set of simple rules by which actual Anglo-Saxon poets were guided, his unmotivated rule implies that the reason why the long variant of the Ssx/Sx pattern is virtually non-existent is that the poets avoided it on an arbitrary basis. Furthermore, the failure of Bredehoft's hypothesis about resolution to exclude four-syllable verses beginning with resolvable disyllabic words generates the improbable notion that the non-occurrence of these verses, which the poets might have found particularly useful, is the result of coincidence. There is no reason to prefer a formalism that demands credence in such implausible coincidences over its competing alternative, which is able to provide a rationale for the distributional patterns involved. Far from being the improved version of Sieversian metrics that it purports to be (Bredehoft 2005: 20), Bredehoft's rejection of the four-position principle results in an incoherent system which cannot compete against traditional Sieversian scansion. As a result, Bredehoft's formalism cannot be trusted with regard to metrical matters, and cannot be used when constructing a history of early English versification or gauging the nature of Ælfric's rhythmical style.

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[411] It seems clear, then, that resolution of verse-initial lifts is obligatory, as Sievers originally pointed out. See Sievers 1885: 452.

SECTION THREE

As has been stated in the introduction, Bredehoft argues that reliance on the rigid

principles of traditional Sieversian metrics has precluded the detection and formulation

of the rules of late Old English versification. Bredehoft postulates that a series of

metrical changes took place over the course of the tenth century, which ultimately led to

a new metrical system according to whose flexible principles late poets composed.

Since Ælfric's rhythmical texts scan according to such principles, Bredehoft claims that

these texts must be regarded as genuine manifestations of late Old English verse. This

section contends, however, that the compliance of Ælfric's texts with Bredehoft's rules

of late versification is irrelevant, because the system of late versification that emerges

from Bredehoft's historical account is so loose that it is unable to exclude as unmetrical

virtually any syntactically integral unit in the Old English language, and is thus

incapable of accounting for the difference between prose and verse. Consequently, it is

not only that Bredehoft's position on Ælfric's rhythmical texts is incorrect, but that his

account of the history of Old English metre is unreliable: alliterative poetry continued to

be composed after the Old English period, but his formalism for post-classical metre

would be unable to identify and describe its distinctive features.

Bredehoft bases his description of classical metre upon Geoffrey Russom's

word-foot model.[412] The word-foot theory relies upon two fundamental principles: (1)

the location of alliteration depends on the hierarchy of metrical prominence established

by the rule of metrical subordination, which is modelled on linguistic compounding;[413]

and (2) foot patterns are projected from the stress contours of native Old English words.

Principle (1) is responsible for the strict alliterative pattern of the Old English line: just

as linguistic compounding assigns a higher level of stress to the first element of a

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[412] On the word-foot theory of Old English metre, see Russom 1987 and 1998.
[413] For the original idea, see Kuryłowicz 1970: 19.

compound than to its second element, the rule of metrical subordination gives more

prominence to the first stressed syllable in a verse and to the first verse in a line. The

probability of alliteration for a given syllable is in direct proportion to its degree of

metrical prominence. Thus, the first stressed syllable in the on-verse must alliterate with

the first stressed syllable in the off-verse; the second stressed syllable in the on-verse

may participate in the alliterative pattern; and alliteration of the second stressed syllable

in the off-verse is prohibited.[414] According to principle (2), the stress contours of

phonologically significant Old English word units furnish the source from which the

metrical inventory of feet is supplied. Since Russom distinguishes nine such

phonologically significant word units in Old English, he postulates a supply of nine

distinct feet for Old English metre: x, xx, S, Sx, Sxx, Ss, Ssx, Sxs, and Sxxs,

respectively projected from the stress contours of native words like *ond*, *oððe*, *hūs*,

sēlest, *þancode*, *wæl-rēow*, *wæl-rēowe*, *eormen-grund*, and *sibbe-ġe-driht*.[415] A verse is

conceived of as the combination of two feet, and it may admit up to four unstressed

extrametrical syllables before the second foot.[416] Thus, the total of theoretically possible

foot combinations, or verses, is 9 x 9, or 81. In actuality, however, the number of foot

pairings that occur in the surviving manuscripts is 25. There are, therefore, 56 possible

foot pairings that do not occur. 18 of them can be accounted for syntactically: because

x-feet correspond to proclitics and Old English verses have syntactic integrity,[417] a

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[414] For a tree diagram representation of the hierarchy of metrical prominence within the long line, see Russom 1987: 71; and Terasawa 2011: 20. Donoghue has criticized Russom's tree-based analysis of alliteration because the first stressed syllable of the off-verse, which has traditionally been considered the most prominent in the line, is conceptualized as weaker than the first stressed syllable of the on-verse. As Terasawa and Fujiwara have pointed out, however, it is natural that the first stressed syllable of the on-verse should be the most prominent from the point of view of verse composition. See Donoghue 1990: 71; Terasawa 2011: 20, n. 6; and Fujiwara 1990: 231.

[415] Feet with S- and s-positions may occasionally have them realized by resolved disyllabic sequences.

[416] Unstressed extrametrical syllables before the first foot are called anacrusis, and are limited to a maximum of two in the on-verse and to one in the off-verse.

[417] The Old English language has a few enclitics, but these are usually appended to small function words. Consequently, a verse-final enclitic will never occupy a foot by itself. See Campbell 1964: §§83-6;

proclitic may never be separated from the lexical word on which it depends by one or several succeeding verse boundaries.[418] That way, x-feet are systematically eliminated from the second position of verses. The remaining 38 are excluded by a series of five metrical constraints that constitute the basis of the classical system of versification (Russom 1987: 26-32).

Bredehoft accepts Russom's fundamental principles for classical Old English metre and argues that the late system of versification can be understood as the result of a series of three changes that took place in the classical metre over the course of the tenth century: (1) loss of resolution; (2) loss of secondary stress; and (3) re-analysis of anacrusis (2005: 71-4). In order to postulate that resolution became metrically ineffective in the tenth-century, Bredehoft has ignored Fulk's important discovery that resolution was still fully operative in the Middle English *Poema morale*, a twelfth-century composition in septenary metre in which the last metrical position of the first hemistich is characterized by admitting a resolved disyllabic sequence.[419] If the first two changes had taken place, however, they would have had a profound effect upon the inventory of metrical feet, since classical feet would have been re-interpreted and seven new feet would have been added to the classical inventory. Without secondary stress, for example, the classical feet Ss, Ssx, Sxs, and Sxxs would have been re-analyzed as SS, SSx, SxS, and SxxS. Moreover, without resolution and secondary stress, a word like *gŏmenwŭdu*, "harp," which a classical poet interpreted as a two-position Ss foot, would have been re-interpreted by a late poet as a new SxSx foot. For the same reasons, six

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Russom 1987: 112, 159, n. 2. On the syntactic integrity of the Old English verse, see Pope 2011: 131; and Mitchell 1985: §3959.

[418] A proclitic may appear in verse-final position if the lexical element on which it depends precedes it. When this happens, the proclitic is said to be displaced from its standard position immediately before its governing lexical element and receives phrasal stress, thus occupying a stressed position.

[419] Fulk 2002. In this article, Fulk argues that the demonstrable existence of resolution lends solid support to Sievers's four-position analysis, because resolution was originally devised with the sole purpose of enabling that principle. See also Fulk 1996: 6; 1997: 140; and Pope 2011: 148-9.

other brand-new foot patterns would have been added to the inventory of classical feet

in late metre: Sxxx, SxxSx, SxxxS, SxxxSx, SSx, SxSxx, derived from the classical foot

patterns Sxx, Sxs, Sxxs, and Ssx. Since Bredehoft also posits the existence of xxx feet

in classical metre, supposedly derived from unstressed trisyllabic words like *hwæðere*

(2005: 24),[420] the total number of feet available to a post-classical poet would have been

17. The number of theoretically possible verses, therefore, is 17 x 17, or 289. If the

changes postulated by Bredehoft were correct and the inventory of feet would have

really been increased so substantially, one would expect that the metrical system would

have tightened its constraints in order to compensate for this bewildering array of

theoretically possible verses. But, contrary to common sense, Bredehoft states that late

Old English metre removed all the constraints that classical metre imposed on foot

pairings. Consequently, the only constraint that remains in Bredehoft's system of late

versification is not even metrical, but syntactic: an x-foot cannot appear in verse-final

position (2005: 76). Since Bredehoft posits three x-feet, this syntactic constraint

excludes a total of 3 x 17, or 51 foot pairings. Thus, according to Bredehoft, the number

of verses allowed by late metre is 238, as opposed to the 25 verse patterns accepted by

classical metre.

The essential function of a metrical system is to impose constraints on the

versifier's linguistic choice. Bredehoft, therefore, deprives his formalism of late verse of

the essence of metre, and hence it can hardly be called metrical. There is virtually no

sequence of words in the Old English language that is not one of the 238 foot pairings

allowed by Bredehoft's formulation of late feet and foot pairings rules. That Bredehoft's

proposal is not a metrical system becomes even more apparent in his discussion of verse

combination rules. According to him, secondary stress was lost because linguistic

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[420] Russom assumes that syncopation is mandatory in all unstressed trisyllabic words. See Russom 1987: 14, 157, n. 8.

compounding ceased to be operative in late metre. Since the metrical function of compounding was to furnish linguistic support for the rule of metrical subordination, metrical subordination and the hierarchy of metrical prominence it establishes would have been disrupted, as a result of which alliteration may link any stressed syllable in the on-verse to any stressed syllable in the off-verse. He even states that in late metre a line might occasionally show no linkage at all (2005: 78-9). Further, he maintains, loss of resolution and of secondary stress would have ultimately led to the re-analysis of anacrusis as unstressed extrametrical syllables before the first foot. The classical verse patterns xx/Ssx and xx/Sxs would have converged with classical type A verses with anacrusis, since they would have been re-interpreted as xx/SxSx. Since xx/Ssx and xx/Sxs verses usually had three, four, and even five unstressed syllables before the first stressed syllable, the limitation on anacrusis to two syllables would have made no sense to late poets, who would have allowed up to four and sometimes even five unstressed syllables before the first S-position in the verse (2005: 74).

Bredehoft claims that Ælfric's texts written in the rhythmical-alliterative style are verse because they scan according to the rules of his formalism for late versification. To put in his own words, "Surprisingly… the rules for late Old English verse… appear also to describe the most regular of the 'rhythmical' texts of Ælfric, although the latter have long been called prose" (2005: 81). That Bredehoft's formalism for late verse is able to describe Ælfric's rhythmical texts, however, is not surprising. It is in fact so loose that it is able to accommodate virtually every possible word combination in the Old English language, including all texts by Ælfric, regardless of whether they are rhythmical. This point can be easily illustrated with an analysis of Ælfric's ordinary prose introduction to his alliterative *Life of St. Edmund*. Bredehoft explicitly states that this passage is prose rather than verse. As he puts it, "*The Life of Edmund*… begins with

a (non-rhythmical) prose account of the textual transmission of the Edmund material,

first to Abbo of Fleury and thence to Ælfric" (2005: 85). If Bredehoft had attempted to

scan this passage according to his own system, however, he would have either had to

change his mind and consider it verse or—more sensibly—to reject his own formalism

for late verse as meaningless:

Sum swyðe gelæred munuc	com suþan ofer sæ	(x)Sx/(x)SxSx	x/SxxxS
fram Sancte Benedictes stowe	on Æþelredes cyninges dæge	(x)Sx/SxxxSx	(x)SxSx/SxxSx
to Dunstane ærcebisceope	þrim gearum ær [þam þe] he forðferde,	(x)SSx/SxSxx	SSx/(xxxxx)Sx
and se munuc hatte Abbo;	þa wurdon hi æt spræce	(xx)Sx/SxSx	xxx/(xx)Sx
oþ þæt Dunstan rehte	be sancte Eadmunde,	xx/SxSx	(x)Sx/SSx
swa swa Eadmundes swurdbora	hit rehte Æþelstane cynincge,	(xx)SSx/SSx	(xxx)SxSx/Sxx
þa þa Dunstan iung man wæs	and se swurdbora wæs forealdod man.	(xx)SxS/SS	(xx)SSx/(x)SxxS
Þa gesette se munuc	ealle þa gereccednysse	xx/SxxSx	Sx/(xx)Sxxx
on anre bec and eft,	þa þa seo boc com to us	(x)Sx/SxS	(xxx)S/SxS
binnan feawum gearum,	þa awende we hit on Englisc,	xx/SxSx	(xx)Sx/(xxx)Sx
swa swa hit heræfter stent.	Se munuc þa, Abbo,	(xxx)SSx/S	x/SxxSx
binnan twam gearum	gewende ham to his mynstre	xx/SSx	(x)Sx/SxxSx
and wearð sona to abode geset	on þam ylcan mynstre.	(xx)Sx/(x)SxxxS	xx/SxSx

The above text follows G.I. Needham's edition (1972: 43), but it has been lineated

according to Bredehoft's system of scansion. As can be appreciated, this text complies

with Bredehoft's rules for late verse: the stress contours of all the words used

correspond to foot patterns allowed by Bredehoft, and the number of unstressed

extrametrical syllables that occur between either or both feet falls within the limits that

he establishes.

With regard to alliteration, underlined letters in the above passage stand for

stresses that furnish an alliterative linkage across the verse boundary. Ælfric's

alliterative practices are very different from those found in Old English poetry, but they

are, Bredehoft maintains, innovative and completely permissible alliterative features of

late Old English verse. For example, in lines 3 and 4, an unstressed syllable in the off-

verse provides the alliterative link; in line 4, as in line 11, a word-initial *h* is ignored for

purposes of alliteration; and in line 5, the cluster *st-* alliterates with *s-*. Lines 2, 8, and 10

feature verse-internal alliteration only, indicated by double underlining. Only line 12

seems to lack an alliterative link, i.e., about 8%, a figure not arrestingly different from

the 5% Bredehoft arrives at for the rhythmical *Life of St. Sebastian* (2005: 89). All of

the features exhibited in the preface that Bredehoft regards as ordinary prose are typical

practices of late poets, according to his own account (2005: 86-90). And in fact, lines 6,

7, and 9, with their respective AB-AB, AB-BA, and ABA-BA patterns of alliteration,

may be said to be particularly artful poetic achievements. As we can see, then, if

Bredehoft's loose formalism for late verse were relied upon, its application to a passage

so conspicuously written in utilitarian, non-rhythmical prose would lead us to the

bizarre conclusion that that passage was composed not by a writer of mundane prose but

by a highly sophisticated poet. In short, then, Bredehoft's formalism for late Old

English verse is so loose that it fails to distinguish prose from verse, and hence it offers

no meaningful criteria either for determining whether Ælfric was a poet or for revising

early English literary history.

<div align="center">CONCLUSION</div>

Ironically, the inability of Bredehoft's system of late versification to distinguish prose

from verse ultimately promotes the position that Bredehoft originally intended to refute,

namely that Ælfric's rhythmical texts are composed in so-called "rhythmical

alliteration," a third style occupying a middle ground between prose and verse. Whether

a text is verse, prose, or "rhythmical alliteration" is in the end a subjective distinction,

and hence Ælfric himself, not Bredehoft, should have the last word in the matter. As

Fulk has pointed out,[421] Ælfric clearly differentiated between verse and prose, and so

there is no reason to suppose that he would not have regarded his style either as one or

the other. In a short note in the second series of *Catholic Homilies*, Ælfric refers to a

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[421] Fulk 2004: 309.

now lost life of St. Thomas as having been composed *on leoðwison*, "in verse".[422] In his letter to Sigeweard, however, Ælfric refers to his rhythmical-alliterative renderings of the books of Esther and Judith as having being composed *on ure wisan*, "after our manner".[423] If Ælfric had thought of his alliterative style as verse, probably he would have used the prepositional phrase *on leoðwison* to describe it. That he did not consider his texts to be composed in verse is lent additional support by the Latin preface to the rhythmical-alliterative *Lives of Saints*, where Ælfric states that he has rendered the Latin texts *simplici et apperta locutione*, "with simple and unembellished phrases".[424] The evidence of Ælfric's prefaces, therefore, does not suggest that he regarded his rhythmical-alliterative style as verse, but as a particular manner of prose composition.[425]

This essay has demonstrated that since Bredehoft's study of Old English metre proceeds from erroneous premises, his claim that Ælfric's rhythmical-alliterative style is verse possesses no meaningful rationale. Bredehoft contends that Sieversian metrics is too complex and rigid to furnish a reliable description of how Anglo-Saxon poets operated. He advocates for a theory of Old English metre with greater simplicity and flexibility, but these supposed virtues prove to be vices, since they result in a system that leaves significant regularities undetected and demands credence in improbable coincidences, as the first two case studies show. The misguided desire for a simplified metrical system results in rules for late versification, which, as the third section has demonstrated, are so loose that they can accommodate virtually any text written in the Old English language. It is therefore not remarkable that Ælfrician rhythmical-alliterative texts scan according to these principles, since even a passage of ordinary Ælfrician prose can be shown to conform to their dictates. A metrical formalism that

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[422] Wilcox 1994: 113.
[423] Crawford 1922: 48.
[424] Wilcox 1994: 120.
[425] Fulk 2004: 310.

conflates prose and verse must be erroneous. Bredehoft's claim that Ælfric's rhythmical

texts furnish the intermediate link of an unbroken chain that joins Old English poetry to

early Middle English verse is consequently untenable. The evidence of Ælfric's prefaces

rather suggests that the rhythmical-alliterative style is a personal form of prose

developed for the sole purpose of making Christian devotions intelligible to Ælfric's lay

audience[426]—and, in that respect, it can be understood as a paradigmatic expression of

the didactic temper of the Benedictine Reform, which pervaded the literary culture of

Æthelred's reign.

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[426] For a concise account of the main purpose of Ælfric's writings, see Lapidge 1996: 115.

CONCLUSIONES GENERALES

1. **Sobre los versos catalécticos de tres posiciones métricas SxS en *Beowulf* y en el resto de la poesía inglesa antigua**

Como se ha demostrado, la posición de Weiskott con respecto a la autenticidad de este tipo de verso es incorrecta. De los trece versos de *Beowulf* que Weiskott presenta como instancias del tipo SxS, sólo uno en realidad presenta dicha configuración métrica de manera inequívoca. Los otros doce tienen demostrablemente una estructura métrica convencional de cuatro posiciones métricas. Como he defendido en la segunda parte del primer estudio de caso del capítulo segundo de la presente tesis doctoral, la prohibición de la métrica tradicional sieversiana contra este tipo de medidas catalécticas está empíricamente justificada; la posición de Weiskott, por el contrario, carece de justificación empírica. La práctica de los escribas es demasiado inestable como para validar la autenticidad de un patrón métrico sobre una incidencia de un 0,01% (un verso, *lissa ġelong*, en 6.364 versos; y cuatro versos en 28.364 versos).

Uno de los argumentos que Weiskott esgrime en favor de la legitimidad formal del verso cataléctico SxS es la autenticidad del mismo en poesía islandesa antigua. Pero como he demostrado, la aparición de dicha medida cataléctica es esperable en *fornyrðislag*, dada la síncopa de vocales átonas que ya se había producido en islandés antiguo en el siglo IX. Así pues, un verso como *Þrymsquiða* 17/2 *þrúðugr áss*, "dios poderoso," cuya configuración métrica inequívocamente es SxS, tendría su origen en un verso tetrasilábico con el tema en *u* *ansuʀ en el lugar de *áss*, antes de que se produjera la síncopa de la vocal temática *-u*. La reinterpretación de este nuevo tipo de versos trisilábicos

como regulares por parte de los poetas habría dado lugar a su vez a versos de
más de tres sílabas pero con una configuración métrica de sólo tres posiciones,
como *Rígsþula* 43/5 *meirr kunni han*, "él sabía más." Sin embargo, los cambios
lingüísticos que se produjeron en la segunda parte del período anglosajón, como
el desarrollo de vocales epentéticas en numerosas palabras inglesas antiguas,
aumentaron el número de sílabas por verso, lo que hace extremadamente
improbable la regularización del patrón cataléctico SxS por la que Weiskott
aboga. Concluimos, por tanto, que la posición de Weiskott es completamente
incorrecta. Proponer la legitimidad formal de un tipo de verso sobre la base de
una incidencia de un 0,01%, en contra, además, de lo que la evidencia filológica
sugiere, es quizá la mayor improbabilidad jamás generada en la historia de
nuestra disciplina.

2. **Sobre la motivación de la ley de Kaluza y la fecha de composición de**
    Beowulf

Como se ha demostrado, el condicionamiento semántico que Weiskott propone
como alternativa al condicionamiento fonológico de la ley de Kaluza es
insostenible. De manera inequívoca, en 106 versos de *Beowulf* las secuencias
bisilábicas resolubles bajo acento secundario terminadas en vocales
etimológicamente breves han sido colocadas en posiciones métricas resolubles;
y las secuencias bisilábicas resolubles bajo acento secundario terminadas en
consonantes o en vocales etimológicamente largas han sido colocadas en
posiciones métricas que demandan la suspensión de la resolución. Esta perfecta
distribución, notada originalmente por el filólogo alemán Max Kaluza, llevó a
R.D. Fulk a datar *Beowulf* aproximadamente antes del año 725, que es cuando la

distinción fonológica entre vocales etimológicamente largas y breves se perdió en Mercia. Difícilmente podría el poeta de *Beowulf* haber generado esa perfecta distribución de terminaciones vocálicas si no hubiese sido capaz de distinguirlas. Consecuentemente, Fulk arguye, el poeta ha de haber compuesto *Beowulf* antes de que la distinción fonológica se perdiese (es decir, antes del año 725).

Weiskott, por el contrario, sostiene que la distinción fonológica entre vocales etimológicamente breves y largas se convirtió, respectivamente, en una distinción semántica entre palabras para referirse a cosas y abstracciones, por un lado, y palabras para referirse a personas y monstruos, por otro. Como dicha distinción semántica permaneció operativa a lo largo de todo el período anglosajón, *Beowulf* no necesariamente ha de haber sido compuesto antes del año 725, sino que podría haber sido compuesto en cualquier otro momento del período, según Weiskott. Como se ha indicado en el segundo estudio de caso, la posición de Weiskott presenta problemas insuperables. En primer lugar, el proceso de semantización que Weiskott postula no sucede en ninguna lengua natural, sino que es un fenómeno ad hoc desarrollado expresamente para su argumento. En segundo lugar, si la distribución de terminaciones vocálicas puede explicarse como el resultado de una sencilla distinción semántica que permaneció operativa a lo largo de todo el período anglosajón, habríamos de esperar que dicha distribución también se diese en otros poemas anglosajones, y no sólo en *Beowulf*, como es de hecho el caso. En tercer lugar, la regla semántica que Weiskott propone predice incorrectamente el comportamiento métrico del tema en *i -wine*; del genitivo plural del tema en *i cwide*, *cwida*; y del genitivo singular del tema en *ō wracu*, *wræce*.

Según Weiskott, -*wine*, "amigo," que claramente se refiere a una persona, no debería sufrir resolución, y sin embargo esta secuencia silábica aparece resuelta bajo acento secundario en *Beowulf* sistemáticamente (por ejemplo, 430a *frēawine folca*, "amigo y señor de la gente," cuya configuración métrica es SsSx, no *SsxSx). También según Weiskott, las secuencias -*cwida*, "palabras," y -*wræce*, "del daño," deberían sufrir resolución, puesto que no se refieren a personas ni monstruos, sino a abstracciones. Sin embargo, aparecen no resueltas bajo acento secundario en *Beowulf*: 1845a *wīs wordcwida*, "sabio en palabras" (SSsx, no *SSs); y 2118a *ġearo gyrnwræce*, "preparado para la venganza por el daño" (SSsx, no *SSs). En estos tres casos, la regla fonológica hace la predicción correcta: la terminación -*e* del nominativo singular del tema en *i wine* es etimológicamente breve (-*e* < *-*iz*); y las terminaciones del genitivo plural del tema en *i cwide* (-*a* < *-*ijôm*) y del genitivo singular del tema en *ō wracu* (-*e* < *-*ôi*) son etimológicamente largas. Weiskott intenta superar estas dificultades diciendo que (1) el poeta trató -*wine* como resoluble por analogía con el resto de temas en *i* que se refieren a cosas y abstracciones; y (2) que el motivo por el que -*cwida* y -*wræce* no sufren resolución es que el poeta conocía la longitud etimológica de esas terminaciones. Por supuesto, esto es una gran contradicción interna: Weiskott desarrolla su regla semántica sobre la asunción de que el conocimiento de la distinción fonológica por parte del poeta no es necesario para generar la distribución de terminaciones vocálicas en secuencias resolubles bajo acento secundario que se aprecia en *Beowulf*, pero sin embargo recurre al conocimiento de dicha distinción fonológica por parte del poeta para salvar su regla semántica. Esto significa que, de ser cierta la hipótesis de Weiskott, y de tener por tanto validez su regla semántica, *Beowulf* no podría haber sido

compuesto después de que la distinción fonológica se perdiese en torno al año 725, puesto que dicha distinción fonológica es necesaria para que la regla semántica funcione. De todos modos, no es necesario aceptar la regla semántica de Weiskott, puesto que la regla fonológica es capaz de explicar los mismos hechos de una manera mucho más eficiente y sencilla. *Entia non sunt multiplanda praeter necessitatem*. La datación de *Beowulf* en función del condicionamiento fonológico de la ley de Kaluza sigue siendo totalmente válida.

3. **Sobre la historia semántica de *scucca* y *þyrs* y la fecha de composición de *Beowulf***

El estudio diacrónico de los significados del tema en *n scucca* y del tema en *i þyrs* aporta evidencia independiente a la de naturaleza métrico-fonológica, y a su vez confirma los resultados de ésta. En *Beowulf* hay dos niveles de conocimiento. Por un lado, está el narrador de los hechos, un cristiano que es consciente de la ascendencia diabólica de los monstruos y de la enemistad de éstos con Dios; por otro lado, están los personajes, para los cuales los monstruos tienen sólo un significado exclusivamente pagano. Para Hrothgar o Beowulf, Grendel, por ejemplo, es un trol a abatir, no el descendiente de Caín y el enemigo diabólico de Dios. El origen de los monstruos es un misterio para ellos, como he apuntado en el estudio de caso.

Muchas palabras nativas inglesas antiguas cambiaron de significado tras la conversión de los anglosajones al cristianismo. Las dos palabras en cuestión que analizo en el tercer estudio de caso, *scucca* y *þyrs*, estaban en la lengua inglesa antigua mucho antes de la conversión, pero tras ella estas palabras adquirieron un significado cristiano, "demonio." Así pues, los seres monstruosos

de la antigua mitología pagana fueron cristianizados, y con ellos las palabras que

se utilizaban para designarlos. En *Beowulf*, el dativo plural de *scucca* es usado

por Hrothgar para referirse a Grendel y a su madre; y el dativo singular de *þyrs*

es usado por Beowulf para referirse a Grendel. Mi tesis es que, dado que

Hrothgar y Beowulf son paganos desconocedores de la revelación cristiana, y en

consecuencia no pueden ser conscientes de la existencia del diablo, estas

palabras en *Beowulf* han de tener el significado previo a la conversión al

cristiano. Esto a su vez implica que *Beowulf* ha de haber sido compuesto antes

de que dichas palabras cambiaran su significado. Como hemos visto, el estudio

de los glosarios Épinal-Erfurt y Corpus, y de la traducción inglesa antigua de

Diálogos de Gregorio Magno, apunta a que la cristianización de *scucca* y *þyrs* se

produjo aproximadamente a finales del siglo VIII, con lo que *Beowulf* debe de

haber sido compuesto con anterioridad. Como vemos, los resultados de este

estudio léxico confirman los resultados del estudio métrico-fonológico tratado

en el anterior estudio de caso.

4. Sobre la teoría métrica de Bredehoft y la prosa rítmica de Ælfric

Bredehoft ha propuesto un modelo teórico métrico alternativo a la métrica

tradicional sieversiana. Las principales virtudes de este nuevo modelo teórico

son, según Bredehoft, su simplicidad y su flexibilidad. Bredehoft sostiene que

como los poetas anglosajones componían versos sin ser especialistas en teoría

métrica o en fonología, las reglas que seguían a la hora de componer han de ser

formuladas a día de hoy por los estudiosos de métrica con la simplicidad

suficiente como para que los poetas anglosajones las hubieran podido entender.

Como hemos visto, esto resulta en un sistema métrico que es incapaz de dar

razón de los principales fenómenos métricos que se aprecian, por ejemplo, en *Beowulf*. Como hemos mencionado en el segundo estudio de caso del capítulo uno, en 106 versos del poema se observa una regularidad lingüística conocida como la ley de Kaluza: las secuencias bisilábicas resolubles bajo acento secundario terminadas en vocales etimológicamente breves aparecen en posiciones métricas que demandan la operación de la resolución, mientras que el mismo tipo de secuencias silábicas aparece en posiciones que demandan la suspensión de la resolución si terminan en consonantes etimológicamente largas. Lo que esto significa es que la resolución en *Beowulf* está fonológicamente determinada. Sin embargo, en la teoría métrica de Bredehoft la resolución es definida como una regla puramente métrica: se aplicaría por definición excepto cuando el número de sílabas del verso quedara reducido a menos de cuatro por su aplicación, en cuyo caso sería suspendida. A todas luces, esta definición no puede ser la que, por ejemplo, el poeta de *Beowulf* siguió, puesto que en *Beowulf* la aplicación de la resolución bajo acento secundario está completamente determinada por cuestiones fonológicas, y no exclusivamente métricas. Por tanto, si aceptáramos como válida la teoría métrica de Bredehoft, estaríamos obligados a creer que la distribución perfecta de secuencias bisilábicas resolubles bajo acento secundario en posiciones métricas que demandan o suspenden la operación de la resolución en función de la longitud etimológica de la terminación vocálica de dicha secuencia es producto de la casualidad—a todas luces, una posibilidad tan improbable que es virtualmente imposible.

Como hemos visto, tampoco hay nada en la teoría métrica de Bredehoft que explique la ausencia de versos tetrasilábicos con una palabra inicial de contorno acentual trocaico y con sílaba radical breve, como *wiga mǣre,

"guerrero famoso." Este tipo de verso es virtualmente inexistente en el corpus de poesía inglesa antigua, consistente en aproximadamente 60.000 versos, por lo que parece claro que existió una regla métrica que lo excluía como irregular. Sin embargo, de acuerdo a la formulación de la resolución que propone Bredehoft, este tipo de versos habría de darse en el corpus poético con una relativamente alta incidencia, ya que se trata de una combinación de palabras lingüísticamente probable. Así pues, la ausencia de versos como *wiga mǣre* evidencia que la teoría métrica de Bredehoft no puede ser válida, puesto que nos obligaría a creer que la ausencia de un verso para cuya aparición existen buenos motivos lingüísticos ha de ser producto de la casualidad.

También hemos visto que la transición de la métrica clásica a la métrica tardía que describe Bredehoft, según la cual la resolución habría dejado de ser un fenómeno operativo en el siglo X, obvia el importante estudio de R.D. Fulk, donde éste descubre que la resolución seguía funcionando incluso a principios del siglo XII. Además, como he demostrado, el sistema métrico para inglés antiguo tardío que propone Bredehoft carece en realidad de restricciones métricas, y consiste únicamente en restricciones de naturaleza sintáctica. De ese modo, apenas hay combinaciones lingüísticas en inglés antiguo que sean excluidas por dicho sistema. Es, por tanto, poco sorprendente que los textos rítmicos de Ælfric puedan ser analizados según el sistema métrico de Bredehoft, puesto que incluso textos que según el propio Bredehoft están escritos en prosa utilitaria, como el prefacio a la vida de San Edmundo, también pueden ser analizados según sus reglas métricas para la poesía inglesa antigua tardía. La afirmación de que los textos de Ælfric son en verdad poesía porque pueden ser

analizados según las reglas del sistema métrico que él ha diseñado es, por tanto,

irrelevante.

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