Burns, Rachel A., and Rafael J. Pascual, eds. 2022. *Tradition and Innovation in Old English Metre*. Leeds: Arc Humanities Press. Pp. xii + 281. ISBN 1802700250.

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This collection of essays grew out of a workshop in 2019 at the University of Oxford sponsored by A Consolidated Library of Anglo-Saxon Poetry (CLASP), a project directed by Andy Orchard. The contributors are scholars at different career stages who take up a variety of topics touching upon Old English metre, and the publication, as noted in the book's Preface, "was largely compiled during the time of the coronavirus pandemic" (vii). Because the volume is dedicated to the memory of A. J. Bliss, whose book on *The Metre of "Beowulf"* ([1958] 1967) has been so influential on the field, most of the contributions approach their topics using the theory proposed by Eduard Sievers in *Altgermanische Metrik* (1893) and modified by Bliss, with the now-familiar five-part taxonomy of half-lines characterized by degrees of metrical stress on the constituent syllables. An introduction by Rafael Pascual, which makes a case for metre as a means of establishing reliable texts and guiding our interpretation as readers, is followed by thirteen essays, which will be discussed below. In an appendix Peter Lucas adds a brief biography of Bliss, who died in 1985, and a second appendix by Mark Griffith offers "Some Corrections to Alan Bliss's Indices to *The Metre of Beowulf*, Together with His Last Known Views on the Metre of the Poem." The volume is rounded off with a useful glossary of metrical terms (ensuring a uniformity of terminology among the various contributors), a select bibliography, and an index.

Reading through the essays brought back memories of my own acquaintance with Alan Bliss, who was my first teacher of Old English when I enrolled in the MPhil programme for Medieval Studies at University College Dublin in 1979. The principles of scansion he taught me became an essential part of my master's thesis and began my long-term interest in the way that metre and syntax interact. I carried this interest to the PhD programme at Yale University, where I completed a dissertation that became my first book: *Syntax and Style in Old English Poetry: The Test of the Auxiliary* (1987). At Yale I made the acquaintance of John C. Pope, whose book *The Rhythm of "Beowulf"* ([1942] 1964) was seen as the rival theory to Bliss's. Although he was retired at the time, Pope warmly welcomed me to discuss all things metrical. I will have more to say about our conversations near the end of this review, but for now let me observe that I may be the only student who had the opportunity to learn metre in person from both Bliss and Pope. If nothing else, the experience taught me to be open-minded and deepened my appreciation of the remarkable aesthetic achievements of Old English poems.

The collection opens with a short essay by R. D. Fulk that takes issue with the editorial policy adopted by George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie in the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records which eschewed the consideration of metre in establishing the texts. They did so in two ways: they were reluctant to introduce emendations to fix metrically deficient half-lines (if they otherwise made sense), and they admitted some

emendations that are metrically implausible. After reviewing several flawed emendations in the ASPR, Fulk turns his attention to a passage near the beginning of *Soul and Body II* in the Exeter Book, where Krapp and Dobbie emend the manuscript reading *sawl* to a two-syllable form: "līc ond sāwle" (l. 5). It seems to be an instance, contrary to the ASPR's usual editorial policy, of an intervention solely to fix the metre, in this case by adding a fourth syllable to the half-line that reads "lic 7 sawl" on folio 98r of the Exeter Book. Against this decision Fulk demonstrates that *sawl* is a scribal spelling of a disyllabic *sāwul*. Hence there is no reason to emend except to restore the underlying spelling. The discussion has the advantage of respecting the manuscript reading (if not restoring it), and in support of a disyllabic form Fulk gives a detailed account of the morphology and phonology leading from **sāwulu* to the nominative singular of the feminine noun *sāwul* in line 5 of *Soul and Body II*.

Most of the remaining essays can be grouped in pairs, beginning with two that offer detailed scansions of well-known poems. Jane Roberts examines the metre of *The Dream of the Rood* along with the inscription of the Ruthwell Cross and brief glances at the inscription of the Brussel's Cross and some allusions found in an anonymous Palm Sunday homily. The discussion gives special consideration to hypermetric lines and light A3 verses (in Sievers's notation). An appendix gives a scansion of each verse using Bliss's system and arranged by verse type. In a similar vein Peter Lucas gives a detailed analysis of the metre of *Exodus*, which concludes with an appendix containing detailed scansions; one list gives the scansion of each half-line of the poem in order from line 1 to 590, followed by a second list that breaks down the results into the main categories of metrical types, beginning with light verses. Lucas's preliminary discussion revisits portions of the introduction to his edition of *Exodus* first published in Methuen's Old English Library (London 1977; 3rd ed. Liverpool 2020), even to the point of reproducing some of the summaries in the edition's discussion of metre. For instance, much of the discussion on pages 40–42 of the edition is reproduced almost verbatim on pages 50–53 of the article, filled out with more statistical information.

The next two essays take different approaches to poetic and rhetorical features of *The Battle of Maldon*. Mark Griffith zeroes in on a particular passage that has generated such interpretative difficulties that John C. Pope and others have suspected a lacuna. The passage comes near the end of the poem, when Offa kills a Viking before receiving his own deathblow: "Þa æt guðe sloh/ Offa þone sælidan." Griffith asks who þone sælidan might be, because the demonstrative seems to identify a particular "sea-wanderer" among the otherwise unspecified foreigners. He breaks the question down to a syntactic problem, a problem of metrics, and what he calls the "aesthetic" (89) problem, which might be better described as rhetorical. In the end his discussion ties þone sælidan back to the *sælida* earlier addressed by Byrhtnoth (l. 45), who defiantly rejects the Vikings' duplicitous offer and invites them to fight. Offa's killing of the same *sælidan* completes the circle: "Byrhtnoð's right-hand man cuts down the frontman of the Vikings and avenges Byrhtnoð's death . . . Truth slays deception" (101). In "Rhyme and Reason in *The Battle of Maldon*" Mark Atherton offers a detailed examination of rhyme in the poem, from the exact rhyme of "æfre embe stunde he sealde sume wunde" (271), to assonance and consonance in pairs like *handum* and *healdum* (14) or *flotan* and *foldan* (227). Atherton initially adopts a conventional definition of rhyme that specifies "stressed syllables" (103), but prefers to extend its reach to unstressed syllables. It is an unfortunate decision, because inflected endings like -*an* and -*um* are everywhere, which means finding rhyme everywhere, which means rhyme loses its prosodic significance.

For example, the common verb *ongan* "rhymes" each of the six times it appears because it is always accompanied by an infinitive ending in *-an*. It can't help but rhyme.

The next two essays take up a feature that has until recently been the neglected stepchild of metrical studies: the hypermetric line. Such lines are well attested in a large number of Old English poems including *Beowulf*, *Judith*, and *The Dream of the Rood*. Megan Hartman, who has done as much as anyone to give these verses greater prominence, turns her attention to a strategically placed cluster of hypermetric lines in *Daniel*. The shift in metrical style goes hand in hand with a shift in narrative purpose. "This middle section works so effectively as a core of the poem, then, in part because of the way that the poet crafts the metre. For about one hundred lines, the poet switches back and forth between normal and hypermetric metre in a relatively short section, using hypermetric syntax to reiterate the events of the miracle itself, and ends in a normal verse with Nebuchadnezzar's final reaction and change of heart. . . [T]he hypermetric narrative illustrates the complete reversal that God was able to enact for his faithful, while the prayers in normal verse interpret it for the audience" (137). It's refreshing to see metrical analysis integrated so fully into the rhetorical and narratological designs of poems like *Daniel*. Like Hartman, Matthew Coker turns his attention to the larger narrative purpose of a crucial (pun intended) passage in *Elene* (ll. 582–89) where the hypermetric lines stand out from the surrounding lines. "This passage was clearly exceptional for the poet, crafted with care and purpose" (144). It comes at a dramatic moment marking the change from the concealment of the cross to its miraculous rediscovery. The final pages trace lexical correspondences, especially with *Guthlac A*, where the argument loses focus on its ostensible topic.

At this point let me digress on the representation of numerical results, which are used by more than a few of the essays in presenting metrical data. I begin with an example. If I went swimming on five days in the month of July, that would be 5 out of 31 days. Plug those numbers into a calculator, and you have 16.1 percent of the days of that month when I went swimming. If that calculation seems odd, it's because we don't normally think of days of the month in percentages. It's also because the final .1 of that result gives a false sense of precision. What can one-thousandth of a month possibly mean? In fact, the calculator's readout is even more absurd for my swimming days: 0.16129032. It's a basic principle of statistics that the numbers should correspond to something recognizable in the sample pool (pun not intended). In my swimming example, 16% is already more accurate than the task warrants because it calculates days to the hundredths, but we nevertheless accept percentages because they have become a convenient and familiar way to indicate the frequency of some occurrence. On the other hand, our calculators' readouts can easily mislead us if we fail to recognize how "0.16129032" does or does not correspond to the evidence under investigation. There are other ways of representing the proportion. The frequency of swimming in July could easily be conveyed by saying "roughly once a week" or "every six days on average." Neither would be quite as numerically impressive as 16.1%, but they are more appropriate for the phenomenon under discussion. They are not misleading. They are not inaccurate. In Old English metre, if a pattern appears in 27 out of 51 half-lines, our calculators read 0.52941176, which we might round off to 52.9% or (better) 53%. Even that 53% should be approached as more contingent than the bare number would suggest because of the vagaries of manuscript transmission and the modest sample size. In this case saying "approximately one out of two" or "a little more than half" is accurate enough for most purposes. If one objects that everyone reading "53%" in a metrical study would

already know the contingencies behind that number and make mental adjustments, I would point out the figures have a cumulative effect of false precision no matter how savvy the reader is. Let me appeal to number-crunching colleagues to think carefully about how to represent quantitative results. At the very least, if you use percentages, lose the decimal.

In "Single Half-lines and Heavy Hypermetric Verses in *Maxims I* Reconsidered," Kazumoto Karasawa argues "in vindication of the basic idea underlying Bliss's hypothesis, that the poem may preserve vestiges from various stages of the development of a prehistoric metre" (155). The single half-lines preserved in *Maxims I* from the Exeter Book vary between hypermetric and normal. Karasawa even identifies a line from the poem that Krapp and Dobbie print as hypermetric that might be better divided into two single half-lines: "fela bið fæsthydigra, fela bið fyrwetgeornra" (l. 101). The article's main goal is to find support for the hypothesis that the *lióðaháttr*-like constructions in Old English hypermetric lines developed from an early Germanic metre with a heavy hypermetric half-line in the on-verse, which shifted to two half-lines followed by a single half-line. Over time the resulting single half-lines were used independently as isolated verses.

Caroline R. Batten examines the intersection of rhetoric and metre in the performative medical texts preserved in various manuscripts and called *Metrical Charms* by Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie in the ASPR. As examples of verbal art from early Medieval England, the charms may show a cavalier attitude toward classical metre, but as speech acts they are full of rhetorical and prosodic devices. Even in passages with "inventive metre," as Batten points out:

> the charms' irregular lines also almost always contain a significant number of ornamental features, including extra alliteration, assonance, and rhyme. The high level of stylistic complexity apparent in these texts argues against the view that they are unsophisticated or corrupt. (174)

The particular feature under investigation is anaphoric repetition, in which a word or phrase is repeated in several successive clauses, as for example in Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech. The passages examined move from Old English charms to other languages like Old High German, which add evidence that single half-lines used in anaphoric constructions are a generic feature. The category of anaphora is expanded to include conjunctions, as in a passage from Charm 7: "ne burston, ne fundian, ne feologan, ne hoppettan, ne wund waxsian, ne dolh diopian." In this case the repetition of *ne* is better identified as polysyndeton, but the effect of insistent repetition is the same. Batten speculates that when such verses "violate" (186) conventions like regular alliteration, they draw attention. Yet in this genre it can be hard to pin down what is exceptional and what is expected, a tension that comes up in the characterization that "The insistent repetition . . . is allowed to be exceptional or non-normative" (186). If it's "allowed," is it still exceptional? Although the phrasing suggests a norm from which the *Metrical Charms* deviate, the article makes a vigorous case to accept them as a genre that follows its own rules.

The next pair of articles direct attention to scribes and early readers of Old English poetic manuscripts. S. C. Thomson examines, as the subtitle puts it, "The Scratched Metrical Pointing of *Guthlac A* in the Exeter Book" (189). The folios of the Exeter Book contain many drypoint marks, such as a portrait of an angel in the margin of folio 78r.

Thomson is interested in scratches that mark off boundaries of half-lines in *Guthlac A* beginning on folio 32v. When the meter is undemanding, the boundaries are indicated with good success, but hypermetric lines and light verses cause erroneous marks, some of which are corrected and others not. I agree with Thomson's judgement that they seem to indicate a reader from the twelfth-century or later (193), because some of the errors reveal unfamiliarity with the principles of verse syntax, which explains at least in part the confusion noted in lines 515–516 and 657–658 (204) and difficulty with light verses in general. The reader responsible for the scratches also seems willing to place alliteration on the last stressed word of a line, which is characteristic of (for example) the verse line of Lawman's *Brut* from the late twelfth century. To eyes unfamiliar with the older verse syntax the light verse "ðær eow næfre" may seem incomplete with one stressed-and-alliterating syllable, which may have induced the reader to a mark before the preceding *wuldre*. The erroneous mark is a sign of desperation, which made the problem worse. Sometimes Thomson's scansions also veer into errors. In *Juliana* the proper name *Iuliana* consistently alliterates with either [g] (*gæste*, l. 28) or [j] (*geaþe,* l. 96), but the discussion wants to see it alliterate with a vowel, which leads to a garbled scansion on page 198 because of the unwarranted metrical stress on *Hio* (l. 28). (In addition, the typesetting should include a space separating each pair of quoted excerpts on pages 198 and 204). Following Thomson's investigation of a medieval reader's traces in a manuscript, Rachel Burns turns her attention to the scribe responsible for the copying of *Beowulf*; specifically to the interword spaces across six folios from *Beowulf* as copied by Scribe A in London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.xv. Expanding on the results of her dissertation (2018), Burns finds that the scribe was attentive to half-line units, with an increased gap at the end of the on-verse and an even larger gap at the end of the off-verse (on average), as if the scribe recognized the integrity of verse units in a way not entirely unlike the gap our editions leave at the caesura and the line break at the end. An attentive eye accustomed to verse syntax would be influenced by them. The manuscript spacing (measured in pixels) is not absolutely consistent in this regard, and Burns is careful not to press the evidence too far in her conclusions, when she speculates that the spacing practices may reflect the scribe's inner voice responding to metrical rhythm. The results raise the question whether one might detect locations when a scribe moves the pen away and back in replenishing it with ink. Does this movement coincide with breaks between metrical units?

In the final chapter, Geoffrey Russom takes up "The Mystery of Old English Type A2k," illustrated by half-lines such as *hlēoburh wera* "shelter-fort of men" (*Beo.* 1731b), which is distinctive among most type A verses because of the secondary stress in the second syllable. An additional feature of Sievers type A2k is the non-resolution in the second full stress—in this case, *wera* has a short root vowel and the word would undergo resolution under other conditions, but not here. The non-resolution in type A2k is the mystery that Russom seeks to demystify. Russom turns to his "universalist theory of OE metre" (241) with six principles of poetic form and six rules of Old English metre, beginning with the now widely-accepted concept of word-foot, in which the metrical foot corresponds to the syllabic pattern of actual words. The mystery of the unresolved *wera* is revealed in a crucial paragraph spanning pages 245–46, which itemizes the rules and principles that apply. An important consequence of the universalist theory is to identify analogues that move among conventional Sieversian metrical categories, so that A2k verses, for example, have features in common with certain type C and type D verses, which in turn raises questions about the integrity of the five Sieversian types.

I close with more personal reminiscences. Arriving at Yale as a disciple of Bliss, I didn't know what kind of reception to expect from Professor Pope. Should I avoid him altogether? As the opening pages of Bliss's *Metre of "Beowulf"* informed me, Pope followed Andreas Heusler in advocating isochronous scansion, which means that shorter half-lines are articulated for the same duration of time as longer half-lines. Indulging in anxieties for which first-year grad students seem to have a special talent, I half-dreaded meeting Professor Pope, whom I knew as a formidable scholar from his publications. I was also suspicious of him as a metrical heretic for presuming to advocate isochronous scansion. Of course, my apprehensions were misplaced. John Pope was welcoming and encouraging, and in the end he had an important influence on my research. I recall walking up Prospect Street in New Haven on Friday afternoons to his home, where over tea we discussed puzzling passages that my research turned up. This is the John Pope that came to mind when reading Haruko Momma's "Metre vs. Rhythm: John C. Pope Reads Sievers," the basic premise of which is that Pope was far more open to and influenced by Sievers's *Altgermanische Metrik* than many have assumed. In our conversations during the 1980s I spoke the language of Sieversian scansion as we discussed things like secondary stress, resolution, and half-line boundaries, and Pope was perfectly supportive. As Momma demonstrates, Pope acknowledged the value of Sievers in establishing readings in Old English editions, but the aesthetic pleasure of the text would be lost without a sense of the rhythm, which is "half their glory" (225). The two systems are related in the sense that "Pope used Sievers's metrical theory as a starting point for his own theory of rhythm" (228). Momma's careful reading of Pope's papers in the Yale archive reminds us that the lasting benefit from the study of metre is not limited to theory or practical scansion, but expands from there. It is an ideal that Alan Bliss espoused, too, as do the best essays in this collection in shedding light on the remarkable aesthetic accomplishments of Old English poems.

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