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As one of the most widely read late Old English poems, *The Battle of Maldon* has been edited many times,[1] but the volume under review is the most thorough, definitive edition of the poem.[2] It is constituted of Introduction, the Text, Commentary, Appendix, Bibliography, Glossary, and Glossary of Proper Names. The "Introduction" consists of the following sections: "Text and Origins," "Language," "Prosody," "Style," and "Battle Narrative." As the editor himself explains in the preface, one of the characteristic features of this edition is that it focusses on the poem as poetry, not as a biographical, historical, or geographical record. Unlike most of the previous independent editions of the poem, it does not discuss historical backgrounds of the actual battle, but concentrates on the language, art, and meaning of the poem, trying "to illuminate its literary qualities, to assess its place in the OE poetic tradition and to characterise the ways in which it looks forward to later alliterative poetry" (ix–x).

The manuscript recording *The Battle of Maldon*, London, British Library, Cotton Otho A. xii, was largely destroyed by the fire at the Cotton Library in 1731, and the original text of the poem is lost completely. Yet the poem survives to date, thanks to a transcript made by David Casley, a deputy keeper of the Cotton collection, and a printed version based on it published by Thomas Hearne several years earlier than the fire.[3] The introduction begins with a detailed examination of the transcript. Griffith compares some texts copied by Casley with their originals in order to see his way of transcription, and shows that the transcript of *The Battle of Maldon* is more reliable than it has been considered, often reproducing the original layout, paragraphs, punctuations, accents, abbreviations, etc. Griffith also discusses the lost Price "transcript," on which Conybeare's (1826, lxxxvi–xcvi) translation of the poem is based. The Price transcript, fragmentarily surviving in quotations made by Price himself and in

[1] For the list of the editions of the poem, see the section "Editions of *Maldon*" in the bibliography of the volume under review (226–27). Sedgefield (1908) could be added to the list.
[2] At least the following four other independent editions have been published: Laborde (1936), Gordon (1937), Scragg (1981), and Griffiths (1991).
[3] The transcript is preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B. 203, fols. 7–12, whereas the printed version in Hearne (1726, 570–77).

those by Conybeare, sometimes differs from the text printed by Hearne. Griffith points out that some of the differences might be regarded as "representations of original readings miscopied by Casley" (14). Thus, not only readings from Casley's transcript but also those from quotations of Price's lost transcript are listed in textual notes attached to the text.

The second section in the introduction discusses the language of the poem. In this section, orthographic, phonological, morphological, syntactical, and lexical features are examined in detail. While the substantial use of non-West Saxon poetic spellings point to the poet's knowledge of traditional poetic forms, Griffith says, no firm conclusion about the dialect of the poet can be drawn from non-West Saxon features found in the poem. But at the same time, it is pointed out that "there is some evidence of a south-eastern colouring" and that "there are also some distinctive southern features" (26). Griffith finds an interesting correlation between dialectal forms and the speakers using them: south-eastern *gofol*, Mercian *gemunu*, and possibly the tenth-century Essex *iren*, are found in speeches of the ealdorman of the East Saxons, of a Mercian aristocrat, and of a man from northern Essex. Thus, these words could be used in order to lend a certain linguistic authenticity to these speakers. Griffith also explores alternative explanations of the use of these dialectal forms, but concludes that "unusual dialect forms and non-standard features appear disproportionately in the spoken words" (27).

The language of *The Battle of Maldon* has often been conceived as reflecting various features of late Old English such as degeneration and merging of grammatical endings and strong preference for SVO word order (e.g. Russom 2017). Griffith's detailed examination of the text shows that "the spellings of the poem's inflections are accurate and do not show confusion of 'all unstressed vowels', nor . . . have its scribes failed to distinguish the usual OE grammatical endings" (31). As regards the word order, Griffith finds that "the poem does not exhibit an SVO/C norm" in contrast with the prose orders of Ælfric (35). Yet at the same time, Griffith shows that the poem also contains non-traditional syntactical features such as the frequent use of pronoun subjects, nearly exclusive use of *þe* (alone) for the relative pronoun, the common use of a demonstrative, etc.

The section on vocabulary discusses Saxon dialect vocabulary (*ætforan*, *derian*, *gehende*, *ofermod*), Old Norse vocabulary, terms denoting social status (*ceorl*, *cniht*, *eorl*, *geneat*, *þegn*), and terms for heroic qualities (words for anger, boastfulness, pride). The poem includes the aforementioned four Saxon or southern words, while it contains no Anglian words, which Griffith says could be regarded as "slight lexical evidence for a southern origin for the poem" (39). As regards Old Norse vocabulary, it is pointed out that "[t]he extent of Scandinavian influence on the vocabulary of the poem is difficult to assess" (40). The possibility

of the poet's use of Scandinavianisms to colour his representation of the Vikings is explored by Robinson (1993), yet Griffith argues that pieces of evidence on which Robinson is based are not strong enough. He also points out that "appearance of possible ON word order in the most nationalistic part of Byrhtnoð's reply to the messenger" (41) is inconvenient for the argument that Scandinavianisms are utilised as a means to mark the Vikings.

Examining the semantic range and development of those terms denoting social status, Griffith argues that those words with poetic senses are used to place the Anglo-Saxon warriors in the great tradition of Old English poetry. Thus, Byrhtnoð is called *se eorl*, not *se ealdormann*, at the crucial moment when he allows the Vikings to cross the river in order for us to assess him not in terms of his social rank, but as a hero. Among the terms for heroic qualities used in the poem, *ofermod* is the most debated. Together with its Anglian equivalent, *oferhygd*, it is used for a very negative concept in Christian contexts, referring to *superbia* or the worst of the seven or eight cardinal sins. This often leads scholars to view the poet as being critical of Byrhtnoð. Arguing that the kind of pride referred to by *ofermod* in religious contexts is irrelevant to the sense in the poem, Griffith explores possibilities of taking it in a positive way. He discusses its use as a gloss for *coturnus* "dignity, pride" in Isidore's *Etymologies*. The Latin term carries an abstract meaning that "can be found with positive connotation in historical writing" (51). He also points out that its Anglian equivalent *oferhygd* is attested once in a positive sense in the Old English *Boethius*. His discussion on the word, as well as the interpretation of the poem, continues in a later section.

The section on prosody discusses alliteration, metre and metrical-grammar. It features some aspects of new prosodic developments in the late Old English period. For instance, it is pointed out that in *Maldon* "no line displays the alliteration of *s + vowel* with *s + consonant* . . ., or *s + consonant* with *s + a different consonant*" (55), which may represent a new alliterative tradition, whereas lack of alliteration caused by the substitution of rhyme for alliteration is compared with similar cases in Layamon's *Brut*. Abnormal positioning of alliterating words is also examined in detail. Many of those taking an abnormal position may well represent, according to Griffith, a technique developed by the poet or belonging to a newly-developed tradition of Old English prosody, rather than a textual defect caused by incompetence of the poet or scribes. For instance, half of the cases showing some alliterative abnormality, which can often be improved by reversal of stressed elements, involves a reference to a personal name, which is interpreted as reflecting "an attempt to highlight the names of the men in a surprising and memorable way" (57). Griffith also discusses the occasional use of "two lines forming a single narrative unit and a single alliterative complex" (59), which involve alliterative abnormalities unparalleled in the traditional Old English poetry (see also Griffith 1995). The frequent use of

supererogatory alliteration is also discussed. Griffith finds that supererogatory alliteration is used especially of Byrhtnoð as a mark of respect, whereas his men are characterised differently by means of other alliterative abnormalities (such as briefly mentioned above). In the discussions on phonaesthemes, Griffith argues that the repeated and concentrated use of *s*-alliteration for the Vikings "signified danger and deceit, wordlessly characterising the Vikings" (64). Thus, Byrhtnoð the hero, his men, and the enemy are characterised by a different alliterative *tour de force*, which "shows that alliterative poetry was alive and well at the end of the tenth century" (64).

In the subsection on metre and metrical-grammar, various changes from the traditional metrical and metrical-grammatical systems are examined in detail. Among the changes listed, increased use of anacrusis, the alliteration of undisplaced finites, second elements of compounds in the dip, lengthened dips, and unstressed infinitives are also found in *Genesis B*, the so-called Vatican *Genesis*, and *Heliand*, and it is claimed that "[s]ome affinity between East-Saxon and Old-Saxon poetics is evident" (69). It is also shown that "[t]he rule of suspension of resolution . . . is disappearing and this marks a significant step in the history of OE metre" (70). There are two lines in which rhyme substitutes for alliteration (as mentioned above), and it is pointed out that they bear resemblances to rhyming verses in Layamon's *Brut* and *King Horn*, which suggests that "the development of English prosody in the lOE period was more complex than its surviving alliterative poetry attests to" (74).

The section on the style of the poem deals chiefly with the poet's stylistic inheritance and his deployment of it, of which critics' opinions have often been quite diverse; some regard the poet as using traditional and elaborate poetic diction and imagery including various traditional poetic compounds and formulae (e.g. Scragg 1981, 32–33; Pearsall 1977, 61), whereas others consider that his style is simpler, more austere, and less ornate (e.g. Gordon 1937, 27; Wrenn 1967, 186). Griffith shows that the proportion of poetic words used in *The Battle of Maldon* is nearly the same as that in *Beowulf*, although the rate of poetic compounds in the former is considerably lower than that in the latter. Many of the poetic simplexes used in the poem belong to one of the following semantic fields: "man, warrior," "weapons," and "battle." Griffith finds that these poetic simplexes nearly always alliterate, while non-poetic synonyms do not alliterate so frequently. He shows that this tendency is much closer to the situation in Middle English alliterative poetry than to that in Old English poetry in general. Thus, as regards the use of poetic terms, it is concluded, "*Maldon* is evolving towards the ME alliterative model: the poetic simplexes have been retained from the past but are now organised in a way not seen in *Beowulf*" (80). Griffith also shows that the use of compounds in *Maldon* is also quite different from that in traditional Old English poems. Comparing the use of compounds in Old English battle poems

and poetic battle scenes, he reveals that compounds are used less frequently in *Maldon* than in other works, and that especially the rate of occurrence of unique compounds is much lower. In this respect, "*Maldon* begins a change in poetic fashion, for compounding declines further in eME poetry" (82). Yet it is also shown that the poet does use established compounds and kennings effectively, and it is concluded that "[t]he poet can . . . be seen to use compounds variously, knowledgeably, purposefully and skillfully, but neither prolifically nor with the degree of creativity typical of OE heroic poetry" (84).

There is also an interesting discussion in this section of the poetic use of prosaic words. While poetic words are used for heroes, it is pointed out, non-poetic, prosaic words are often used for cowards and their dishonourable actions. This kind of rhetorical use of prosaism is not found in Old English poems other than *Judith*, whereas it is also pointed out that it is characteristic of Catullus, Horace, and Vergil. Thus, the evidence in *Maldon* and *Judith* "may show classical stylistic influence on late OE poetry" (92).

The poet's preference for the use of consonance and assonance is another interesting topic dealt with in this section. The frequent use of them is not traditional and accordingly it must reflect an innovation introduced by the poet himself, or, more generally, by late Old English poets. While repetition of the same stressed and alliterating word-initial vowel is rare in traditional Old English poems and may well have even been avoided, the *Maldon* poet often introduces it. Assonance and consonance are introduced not only across the a-verse or across the verses of the line (occasionally supplemented by other sound effects), but also across lines (sometimes in the absence of continued alliteration), reflecting the preference for this kind of technique. Griffith also points out that the poet's effort to achieve these sound effects may well have much to do with his occasional use of less usual words or word-forms such as *ceallian* (for *clypian*) and *hremm* (for *hrefn*). The consonance of *b* + *vowel* + *r* is mentioned as most conspicuous of these kinds of sound effects. Byrhtnoð's name, mentioned seven times in total, is involved in the consonance five times. In *The Battle of Maldon*, moreover, there are six examples of this type of consonance across the three alliterating positions in the line, which is otherwise attested only ten times in poetry. Based on these observations, Griffith says that "[p]losive *b*- suits onomatopoeic effect; there can be little doubt that the poet is impressing on the audience the sound of the first element of the hero's name" (97).

The last section of the introduction is devoted to discussions on battle narrative, discussing how conventional or innovative *Maldon* is in comparison with other Old English battle narratives. The first subsection discusses the following five features that are shared with other Old English battle scenes: reference to the beasts of battle; the use of the first-person singular, authenticating voice; description of battle as a game or a sport; personification of

weaponry; and violation of the Rule of Precedence. In the second subsection, scenes of mass combat and those of individual action in *Maldon* and other Old English poems are compared. As regards scenes of mass combat, *Maldon* follows Old English poetic tradition to a considerable degree, including many close verbal parallels with other Old English poems. On the other hand, its scenes of individual action engage less closely with the poetic tradition, containing comparatively few parallels with other poems. Scenes of individual action also tend to include formal abnormalities, non-poetic terms, and unusual meanings of words, while showing a predominance of SV word order over VS order which is frequently employed in traditional scenes of mass combat. It is pointed out that these abnormal, non-poetic, and/or unusual features often have parallels in Middle English alliterative poetry; the *Maldon* poet combines conventional OE with proto-ME poetic features, the latter representing his creativity (105–6).

In the subsection dealing with the structure and ethos of *Maldon*, Griffith discusses the much-debated issue regarding the interpretation of the passage including the words *ofermod* and *landes to fela*. Byrhtnoð's duty to protect his men and to be true to his word against the Vikings placed himself in a dilemma, and in this situation, he chose not to break his word. "Had he chosen . . . to break his promise, he would then have been indistinguishable from the cowards who spoke boldly in the meeting-place but failed to keep their *beot* in the action, of whom both the poet and Offa are unambiguously critical" (118). Therefore, Griffith concludes, "*[o]fermod* means 'pride' in the sense 'a consciousness or feeling of what is befitting . . . which prevents a person from doing what he considers to be . . . unworthy of him . . . self-respect'" (118). As regards the phrase *landes to fela*, Griffith interprets it as "an understated way of confirming to us that there were too many Vikings"; "the area of land granted is metonymic of the size of the force that fills it" (118).

The ideal of men dying with their lord is also discussed. The ideal is utilised as a way convincingly to interpret the defeat as heroic, whereas the shame is shifted onto the cowards who ran away from the battlefield. Not all the named men are the members of comitatus, but both members and non-members equally "speak and act as heroically as anyone" (120). The explicit expression of the ideal of men dying with their lord is reserved until near the end of the extant text, where Leofsunu, Offa, and Byrhtwold are clearly associated with the ideal. These men "(and by implication the others) are presented ultimately as heroes of the same ilk as their lord: all rank their verbal commitment finally above life itself" (121).

As in the case of the ideal of men dying with their lord, it is pointed out, "[i]mportant information about the process of the action is postponed in its appearance" (123). In this pattern of story-telling, the poet first gives partial information and reserves the whole truth until a later stage in order for the audience to reevaluate their initial understanding of the situation. This technique

is effectively introduced to awake an enhanced sympathy for the hero and his men, while showing that not only Byrhtnoð, who had to make decisions based on limited information, but we audience, who are asked to reevaluate everything when the whole truth is revealed, "are the victims of ignorance" (126). Griffith concludes that "[i]n his 'concern for the limits and limitations of human knowledge', the poet resembles the *Beowulf*-poet more than any other OE poet does" (126).

After the introduction, the critical edition of the poem is presented with a brief note on editorial conventions. The text is based on Casley's transcript, in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B.203, 7–12. Wherever the edited text departs from the transcript, textual notes are provided. Readings from the quotations from Price's lost transcript are also noted. Not only page numbers of the transcript but also folio numbers of the original manuscript recorded by Casley, are also indicated in the margin. The text is followed by an exhaustive commentary, in which almost every half-line of the poem is commented on, mainly from the interpretational, literary, lexical, syntactical, and metrical viewpoints.

The Appendix includes the texts of the following analogues: *Liber Eliensis*, Book II, chapter 62; *Vita Sancti Oswaldi, Archiepiscopi Eboracensis*, Part V; and *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Annal 755, Cynewulf and Cyneheard. The first two texts are in Latin and deal with Byrhtnoð and the Battle of Maldon, whereas the third one, written in Old English, is a record of the battle taking place in 755, and is included here because, as discussed in the introduction, its fictional accounts include numerous features that are shared with *The Battle of Maldon*.

The Glossary lists all words used in the poem and gives a complete list of forms and line references. *Hapax legomena*, poetic and prosaic words and senses are marked. Metrical, metrical-grammatical and rhetorical information is occasionally provided. The Glossary of Proper Names lists all proper names in the poem and provides information about them. Names of individuals for whom there is historical evidence is marked.

As Griffith says in the preface, this volume is a product of his forty years of teaching the poem. Gathering the best of his decades of research and examination into the poem, it is an absolutely thorough, first-rate edition of *The Battle of Maldon* filled with perceptive insights which are provided in a very well-organised manner. The volume may be a bit reader-unfriendly in that the text of the poem itself, Old English quotations in the introduction, and the texts in the appendix are not provided with English translations. Typographical errors I have noticed: *cwom* and *com* in footnote 165 on page 26 should be inverted; and (C316b) under (ix) on page 33 should be (C316a).

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