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Recent developments in nonlinear theory have much to offer verse-prosody, and Russom's work (henceforth R.) can be seen as an attempt to explore the verse structure of OE using what is in part a nonlinear model.

R.'s presentation is attractively simple, and involves four central principles which, taken together, 'amount to a claim that many intricacies of Old English meter reduce to intricacies of language' (p. 2). As most theorists in this field have claimed, it seems worthwhile (and perhaps necessary) to take OE verse structure as being a selection from, and stylisation of, phonological patterning already present in the language, although one recent demurrer is Hoover, who claims that 'Old English meter is like modern free verse in the sense that there is no metrical regulation of the natural rhythms of prose' (Hoover (1985: 159)). This last position is one which R. would presumably, and I think rightly, reject. R.'s first two principles, for example, claim that foot patterns in OE correspond to native word patterns, and that each half-line or verse consists of two feet. Moving up the hierarchy, R.'s third and fourth principles then claim that alliterative patterns correspond to (are organised in terms of) OE stress patterns, and that the line consists of two adjacent verses with an acceptable alliterative pattern (p. 2). These last two principles are encoded in *s/w*-labelled trees familiar from metrical phonology (Liberman and Prince (1977)). R.'s chapters 1–5 detail foot- and verse-patterning, and look at issues arising therefrom (ambiguous material; frequency and complexity of patterns); chapter 6 deals with hypermetrical verses; chapters 7 and 8 treat higher level metrical structure, alliteration and metrical subordination; and the final two chapters look at, respectively, weakly-stressed and clitic syllables, and the status of rules and exceptions. R. has taken some short cuts to achieve this amount of coverage in a relatively short book (149 pp. excluding Appendix and Notes); where there is such brevity, one suspects that tacit assumptions have been made. As I shall argue below, there seem to be two conceptual difficulties with R.'s model, both of which stem directly from too-briefly-supported assumptions about the phonological criteria relevant to OE prosody; these conceptual difficulties

are also related to the circularity of R.'s central principles: if these principles follow from one another, then R.'s notion of well-formed line is only correct insofar as his theory of alliteration is correct, and his notion of well-formed verse is only correct insofar as his theory of foot-patterning is correct.

Before looking at the difficulties, let us ask how well R.'s theory succeeds in its own terms, beginning with the correspondence between foot- and verse-patterns. R.'s foot-patterns are composed of three entities, which may stand either alone or in combination: 'x', standing for unstressed or inflectional syllables, or unstressed monosyllabic function words; 's', standing for the secondary-stressed, second lexical elements of transparent compounds, and also for resolvable sequences in subordinated metrical constituents; and 'S', standing for long stressed syllables or their resolved equivalents (p. 12). Thus *dryhten*, 'lord', is scanned as Sx, *sǣ-mann*, 'sailor', as Ss, and *middan-geard*, 'middle earth', as Sxs. With certain conditions (on labelling or bracketing mismatches, see pp. 14–18), these foot-patterns are then translated into verse-patterns, where each verse is obligatorily composed of two feet as defined above. A brief array of the commonest and least complex verses will demonstrate the relationship (where '/' stands for the foot division):

(1) furþur fēran	Sx/ Sx	(Sievers' Type A)
Swā giōmor-mōd	x/ Sxs	(Type B)
bē ȳð-lāfe	x/ Ssx	(Type C)
fēond man-cynnes	S/ Ssx	(Type Da)
flet innanweard	S/ Sxs	(Type Db)
sinc-fāge sel	Ssx/ S	(Type E)

Thus far, the treatment works well – if one assumes that an entity such as 'x' is a 'foot' and that Ssx or Sxs foot-patterns may be treated as in some sense unary constituents. The approach is reminiscent of Kaluza (1909), who classified verses according to the placement and distribution of one-, two-, and three-member feet, with the requirement that each verse consists of four positions. R. differs from Kaluza, however, in that whereas the latter assumed that each verse was composed of strictly four positions, R.'s theory assumes that the verse is composed of minimally four positions so long as the two-foot requirement is met. The two theories share a problem, however, in their treatment of long strings of function words, specifically where these precede the first lift of the verse (Sievers' Types A3, B and C). R.'s innovatory solution is to claim that 'Extrametrical words may appear before either foot...' (p. 20). The motivation behind this is that '[a] string of three or more unstressed verse-initial syllables will always signal the presence of an x or xx foot' (p. 33). Thus, a verse which disobeys the strict four-position constraint in Kaluza's theory, say, *þæt him his winemāgas* (Beo. 165b), can be accommodated into R.'s theory by claiming that the first two function words are extrametrical, giving the allowable pattern (xx)x/Ssx (where resolution of *wine-* yields one S position). This sort of extrametricality at the left edge of a metrical domain is especially interesting because it

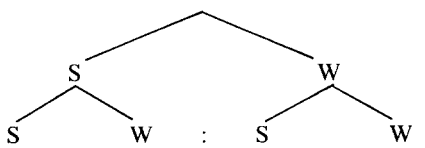
has a correlate in OE word-stress rules, where certain word-initial morphemes are skipped by the OE stress rule (see Hogg and McCully (1987b)); there is thus a consistency in R.'s treatment, since he explicitly claims that the higher-level metrical structure of each verse is cast in terms of, indeed mimics, the OE Compound rule – a word-stress rule working within a lexical domain. Where R.'s treatment works less well is on strings of verse-internal function words: theoretically, extrametricality in OE is a left-edge phenomenon; if foot- and verse-construction rules are truly analogues of word stress rules we should expect to find extrametrical syllables just at the left edge of half-lines. Yet in R.'s theory such syllables may occur before either foot. Although this allows R. to scan verses which cause problems for Sievers (see pp. 37–38), it is difficult to see how domain-internal extrametricality of this kind can be phonologically motivated (see also Hayes (1982)).

Another feature of R.'s theory is that it allows a persuasive treatment of hypermetrical verses. Most metrists have assumed that hypermetrical verses are composed of three feet; in R.'s conception, though, such verses (or at least, a great number of them) can be seen to consist of an embedded large foot in the pattern Sxsx preceded by the paradigm Sx foot (or Sxx). Thus Beo. 12996a, *mon on middangearde* is scanned as Sx/Sxsx, where the second foot overlaps the normative Type A pattern Sx/Sx. With this approach, however, the status of the 'foot' is compromised: whereas a hypothetical half-line such as *gyldnum bēage* would be unproblematically scanned as a normative A Type verse (Sx/Sx) consisting of two feet, the expanded half-line *gān under gyldnum bēage* (Beo. 11163a) would entail the scansion Sxx/ Sxsx, where *gyldnum bēage* is analysed as one foot. Whether the concept of overlapping feet (see pp. 60 ff.) should be licensed to blur the status of the foot (as monopodic or dipodic) is an open question. Yet this treatment usefully pinpoints the fact the Sx and Sxsx constituents are in some sense paradigmatic; they are the cornerstones of the theory and, notably, it is just these type of (truly phonological) feet that the iterative and cyclic version of the OE stress rules produce: binarity and left-headedness are the staple features of stress-assignment in OE just as in present-day English (Hogg and McCully (1987a: chapter 3; 1987b)).

R.'s treatment of alliterative patterning is again innovative. The central claim is that the half-line and line are organised hierarchically, and in a uniformly falling (S W) pattern within each (sub)constituent. There is some evidence to support such a 'compound stress' hypothesis (see also Hollowell (1982)). R. (p. 71) cites the metrical ambiguity of certain present-day English (PE) compounds, such as *second-floor balcony*. These items (and cf. Bauer (1983)) are syntactically compounds, but nevertheless display a phrasal stress pattern inherited from the Nuclear Stress Rule. PE is unlike OE in this respect, since multiply concatenated OE compounds, such as *woruldwīsdōm*, display a uniformly falling stress contour. If there was some form of Nuclear Stress Rule in OE, we might expect such long compound strings to conform, rather as in PE, to a right-strong, phrasal pattern. But this does not – evidently – happen (but see further Cable (1974); McCully (1984)). The assumption of a 'compound stress' analysis also has consequences beyond the half-line. R.'s higher-

level rule of metre – a rule for metrical subordination that 'mimics the behavior of the compound rule' (p. 71) – runs as follows: 'When two constituents containing S positions appear within the same metrical domain, label the first constituent strong and the second ... weak' (p. 71). This yields a representation for the line and half-line as in (2), where ':' indicates the half-line division:

(2)



This representation is able to predict why the final lift of the b-verse should never alliterate: 'A weak constituent of a weak constituent may not contain an alliterating syllable' (p. 73). It also predicts why it is the first lifts of the respective half-lines that alliterate obligatorily (they are the strongest staves in their respective domains). There are some fairly serious problems, however, in R.'s approach here. The most telling relates to the relationship between such higher-level patterning and the direction in which alliterative matching takes place. It has been widely assumed, for example, that it is the first lift of the b-verse which controls the alliteration of the whole line (Sievers (1893: 37–38); Suzuki (1985)). If this is so, then we might independently expect the first lift of the b-verse to be most strong (uniquely dominated by S's). Yet in R., the first lift of the b-verse is ultimately dominated by W. It looks suspiciously as if R. predicts nonalliteration on the line-final lift at the expense of the *hauptstab*; and if an altogether separate and more plausible set of principles govern alliteration, as they seem to in Suzuki's elegant proposals (1985), then it is difficult to see how alliterative patterning can be motivated in terms of higher-level *labelling*. And while it is true that 'tree structures play a crucial role in the study of poetic meter' (p. 82; cf. also Kiparsky (1977)), R. (chapter 7) is compromised by the fact that in linking alliteration to labelling that role is obscured (and cf. McCully (forthcoming)). A further problem arises in R.'s acceptance and treatment of so-called light verses (Type A3), which are governed by a separate template to that seen in (2) (in A3 verses, the subconstituents of the (first) half-line are labelled W S, see p. 80). Whether or not A3 verses have any discrete existence (see the discussion in Cable (1974)), in R. they are treated as 'requiring ... analytical effort' (p. 50), and are excluded from occurring in b-verses by a metarule which states 'Minimize complexity in the second half-line' (p. 50). R. shares a problem here with Bliss (1958), who likewise assumes – without much discussion – that b-verses are lighter and less complex. But Bliss's own findings are controversial. As Hoover notes, 'A count of the stresses in the a-verses and b-verses of *Beowulf* based on [Bliss's] own Table I ... shows that the b-verse actually has a greater average number of stresses ... than the a-verse ... Second, Bliss's argument that a poet's preference for a specific type in either the a-verse or b-verse suggests a rhythmic difference is unacceptable because of the fact that the lightest and least complex verses

(his types *a, d,* and *e*), all occur much more frequently in the supposedly heavier and more complex a-verse' (1985: 17). If Hoover is correct, then R.'s approach is still further compromised. We might even ask, given the fact that OE metre is conceptually different from later English metres (see Strang (1970: 323–324)), whether 'complexity' is indeed a useful constraint in this context.

In conclusion let me return to the problem of the 'foot'. In R., 'feet' are notional entities, not phonological constituents. In stress-based languages, feet are left-headed and left-strong; thus, a monosyllabic function word in OE is not (under normal syntactic conditions) stressed; the OE stress rule, which works within lexical domains, cannot apply to it. What is missing in R. is a discussion of the nonlinear principles which might govern the assignment of 'S' and 's'; and even if R.'s theory is correct, it seems clear that work still needs to be done on the relationship between phonological constituents and constituents of the metre. If 'S' and 's', for instance, are phonologically the heads of feet, how can the poet use a pattern such as Ssx as a unary entity? If 'x' is not phonologically the head of a foot, how can such a unit stand as a 'foot' in the metre? In sum, one must conclude that while R.'s treatment is in places sound and persuasive, it works at the expense of the important questions nonlinear theory poses about metrical structure in general and metre in particular. Still, R. brings the synthesis that is yet to be made between OE phonology and OE versecraft tantalisingly close.

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