Ælfric and late Old English verse

THOMAS A. BREDEHOFT

In his discussion of the formal structures characteristic of Ælfric's 'rhythmical prose' style, John C. Pope prints the following passage from Ælfric's homily on Cuthbert, calling attention especially to the pointing, given as it appears in Cambridge, University Library, Gg. 3. 28 (?Cerne, s. x/xi):

> Ac an ðære fugela. eft fleogende com.
> ymbe ðry dagas. þearle dreorig.
> fleah to his foton. friðes biddende.
> þæt he on ðam lande. lybban moste.
> symle unscæððig. and his gefera samod.[1]

Although Pope's edition of the supplementary homilies was published in 1967, his comment on the remarkable nature of this passage's 'almost continuous half-line pointing' must call to more recent readers' minds the tradition of metrical pointing which Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe has so ably described in Old English poetic texts.[2] O'Brien O'Keeffe's study concludes that eleventh-century scribal practice involved the pointing of both a-lines and b-lines of verse (as here), while tenth-century scribes frequently pointed only the b-line.[3] Her further comment that 'it is to the late tenth century that we should look for the development of new visual information in the writing of Old English

[1] 'But one of the birds came flying about three days after, utterly sad; it flew to his feet, asking for peace, that he and his companion might always live innocent together in that land' (*Homilies of Ælfric: a Supplementary Collection*, ed. J. C. Pope, 2 vols., EETS os 259–60 (London, 1967–8) I, 114; low points substituted for Pope's medial points). All translations from Old English are my own.

[2] *Ibid.* I, 114. Cf. K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse*, CSASE 4 (Cambridge, 1990). Similar 'half-line' pointing occurs in other Ælfric manuscripts, as well as examples of b-line pointing. S. M. Kuhn, 'Was Ælfric a Poet?', *PQ* 52 (1973), 643–62, lists the following manuscripts as featuring full-line or half-line pointing with at least some regularity: London, British Library, Cotton Julius E. vii (s. xi^{in}; the base manuscript for *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat, 4 vols. in 2, EETS os 76, 82, 94 and 114 (London, 1881–1900, repr. 1966)); London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius C. v (s. x/xi); Cambridge, Trinity College B. 15. 34 (Canterbury CC, s. xi^{med}) and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 178 (s. xi^{1}). The metrical effect of such pointing was recognized by Skeat: 'I have divided the matter into lines as well as I could, usually following the guidance of the points introduced into the MS. itself; these usually occur at the end of what is meant to be a line, and frequently also at the pause in the middle' (*Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat, II, li).

[3] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, p. 137.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

verse' seems especially relevant in the current context.[4] CUL Gg. 3. 28 dates from just around 1000, and if we could expand the relevant search to include Ælfric, we would seem to have precisely the manuscript evidence that O'Brien O'Keeffe suggests that we seek.

Of course, in modern times, Ælfric's characteristic style has often and insistently been identified as a prose style, emphatically not verse, even though at least eight of the ten 'half-lines' in the passage quoted above would scan perfectly well according to most theories of Old English metre.[5] It will be my contention in this article that the common designation of Ælfric's style as 'rhythmical prose' is, in fact, essentially incorrect, and that his compositions in this style are better identified as verse. The difference in how we describe such texts is an important one, I think, for if we conclude that Ælfric was writing verse, our understanding of the corpus of Old English verse would necessarily be transformed. While our aesthetic appreciation of Ælfric's works might not be much altered by the change in how we identify his form,[6] our understanding of the breadth, scope and extent of the Old English verse tradition would demand extensive reconsideration. What we call Ælfric's compositions, then, clearly makes a difference, and it is important to make every effort to get it right.[7]

In formulating the question of the generic identity of Ælfric's rhythmical works as a choice between 'prose' and 'verse', I realize that I am running against the tide of a recent critical trend that prefers to identify Ælfric's rhyth-

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] The final half-line is metrically acceptable, but it has problematic alliteration on the final stress, and the second half-line might be interpreted either as a Sieversian E-verse with anacrusis (and thus probably unmetrical for most descriptions of Old English metre) or as a B-verse, in which case it would be formally acceptable to most metricists, although involving a violation of Kuhn's first law. If the manuscript point were after 'eft' (rather than before) we could relineate to eliminate the breach of Kuhn's law, but it seems best to follow the pointing here. The rest of the verses in this brief passage offer no metrical difficulties.

[6] That is, Ælfric's rhythmical prose is already appreciated for its rhythm (of course), and his use of alliteration in this style is widely recognized as contributory to the effect of these compositions. Since rhythm and alliteration are also commonly understood as the primary features of Old English verse, a change in how we identify the genre of Ælfric's works would not seem radically to alter the bases of our appreciation of his style. Nevertheless, I will suggest below that, at least on occasion, Ælfric uses secondary formal devices (such as cross alliteration) which seem to favour a reading of these texts as verse. Other formal features generally associated with Old English verse (such as diction, formulaic expression, and so on) will be further discussed below.

[7] What we call Ælfric's compositions, of course, is significant, but I believe our taxonomies ought to at least attempt to reflect Anglo-Saxon understandings of form. If Anglo-Saxons (including Ælfric) may have understood the 'rhythmical prose' form as a verse form, it would be both anachronistic and misleading to label it as prose of any variety. The question of what we call these texts, then, is intimately dependent upon an assessment of how Anglo-Saxons might have understood them.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

mical compositions as – quite literally – occupying some sort of middle ground between the two genres. 'Rhythmical prose', of course, is the most common term for this third entity, but Norman Blake's 'rhythmical alliteration' also has adherents, especially as it includes a somewhat broad spectrum of forms that seem to fall between unambiguous examples of verse and 'normal' prose. Faced with the problem of understanding the development of Layamon's verse form, in fact, a number of critics have found this middle ground to be a more plausible origin for Layamon's metre than 'classical' Old English verse.[8] The implied historical development – from classical Old English verse, to rhythmical prose or rhythmical alliteration, to rhyming and alliterating early Middle English verse – has nevertheless remained troublesome, both because of the suggested verse–prose–verse sequence and because of the difficulty of deriving Layamon's frequent use of rhyme from Ælfric's almost purely alliterative style.

By offering an argument for identifying Ælfric's rhythmical works as verse, however, I believe I can ameliorate both difficulties: a progression from classical Old English verse to late Old English verse (including Ælfric) to Layamon's form obviously allows us to see all of the relevant changes as evolutions in verse form. Further, if we see Ælfric as a late poet who happened to favour alliteration over rhyme (a stylistic choice that other late poets did not always make), we would be able to derive Layamon's use of rhyme from the practice of other late poets. Indeed, the possibility that Ælfric's vast preference for alliteration was idiosyncratic opens the door for a straightforward origin for Layamon's rhyme in the general use of rhyme in late Old English verse.[9]

[8] Perhaps the most cogent articulation of 'rhythmical alliteration' as the origin of Layamon's verse form is that of S. K. Brehe, '"Rhythmical Alliteration": Ælfric's Prose and the Origins of La3amon's Meter', *The Text and Traditions of La3amon's* Brut, ed. F. Le Saux, *Arthurian Studies* 33 (1994), 65–87. Brehe's detailed analysis of similarities between Ælfric and Layamon is telling; he suggests 'If we recognize Ælfric's rhythmical form as the source of the Middle English loose meter, we will find it easier to explain the enormous differences between the loose meter and Old English classical verse' (*ibid.* p. 78). Other scholars have also either noted such similarities or suggested the importance of Ælfric for understanding Layamon, notably T. Cable, *The English Alliterative Tradition* (Philadelphia, 1991) and A. McIntosh, 'Early Middle English Alliterative Verse', *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and its Literary Background*, ed. D. Lawton (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 20–33. Taking an opposing position, D. Moffat, 'The Intonational Basis of Layamon's Verse', *Prosody and Poetics in the Early Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of C. B. Hieatt*, ed. M. J. Toswell (Toronto, 1995), pp. 133–46, uses an argument based in intonation patterns, deciding 'I cannot agree with Norman Blake, who regards the *Brut* as a regularized, poeticized outgrowth of rhythmical prose of the Ælfrician sort' (*ibid.* p. 142).

[9] C. V. Friedlander, 'Early Middle English Accentual Verse', *MP* 76 (1979), 219–30, traces Layamon's use of rhyme to a tradition extending back at least to the *Chronicle*'s poetic entry in annal 1036CD, but appears to draw no clear distinction between the late Old English examples and the early Middle English texts. Nevertheless, Friedlander's essay finds some of the same vernacular sources for Layamon's rhyme as I propose here.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Traditionally, the single greatest obstacle to identifying Ælfric's rhythmical compositions as verse has been a scholarly inability to identify any clear metrical system that might describe them.[10] Other features (most frequently diction, syntax and tone) are sometimes invoked for distinguishing these works from classical Old English verse, but they seem to be subordinate to the metrical differences, in most accounts.[11] Certainly, however, despite the familiar feel of a passage such as that quoted above, it is quite clear that Ælfric's 'rhythmical prose' works in general cannot be accounted for within a Sieversian metrical system.[12] The conventional conclusion that Ælfric was not writing verse at all,

[10] One recent attempt at describing Ælfric's form concludes with the following descriptive comment: 'A half-line of rhythmical prose is a syntactic constituent containing at least five syllables and exactly two stresses' (Cable, *Alliterative Tradition*, p. 47). While there is an obvious degree of descriptive validity to such a formulation (if we accept in advance the limitation of two stresses in our scansions), it is equally obvious that such a formulation seems only poorly related to the operative principles behind Ælfric's forms. Yet Cable's formalism is perhaps the most precise description of Ælfric's 'rhythmical prose' yet offered, and it is easy to see how the lack of a clear metrical description has contributed to the continuing identification of Ælfric's style as a prose style.

[11] The comments of two scholars will have to serve as representative here. The first is S. K. Brehe, '"Rhythmical Alliteration"', p. 67: 'And what of other aspects of the classical Old English meter that vanished after the Conquest – strict alliterative patterning, enjambment, kennings, traditional themes like the beasts of battle, and others? Linguistic change cannot explain their disappearance'. Here, Brehe certainly begins with a consideration of meter (alliterative patterning), but the other poetic features he lists are not 'aspects of Old English meter' at all, having rather to do with style, diction, and content. While the classical Old English verse tradition did seem to share stylistic and other features, they are features of Old English poetics, not Old English metre; Brehe's line of reasoning here should be read as rhetorical, designed to discount the possibility of a direct metrical evolution by labelling all sorts of poetic differences as metrical differences. That is, by subsuming all sorts of poetic differences under the broader category of 'metrical differences' Brehe here attempts to strengthen his argument for metrical discontinuity. Likewise, Pope's comment about such other features is illuminating: the rhythmical style '[differs] markedly in the character and range of its rhythms as in strictness of alliterative practice, and [is] altogether distinct in diction, rhetoric, and tone' (*Homilies of Ælfric: a Supplementary Collection*, ed. J. C. Pope I, 105). Here, the 'metrical' differences of rhythm and alliteration are clearly foregrounded as the crucial differences, leaving the other differences as secondary; Pope's immediately following comment that 'It [that is, the rhythmical prose] is better regarded as a mildly ornamental, rhythmically ordered prose than as a debased, pedestrian poetry' (*ibid.* I, 105) certainly suggests that Pope's vision of the choice between labelling this style as poetry or prose is as deeply influenced by value judgements as by taxonomic precision. It seems likely that for Pope (as well as for others), the additional distinguishing criteria of diction, tone, rhetoric and so forth serve to support the conclusions drawn on the basis of metre, rather than standing as truly independent criteria; if the situation were reversed and Ælfric's metre were classical, I strongly doubt that these other criteria would be invoked to suggest that the works were prose.

[12] The 'Sieversian' perspective I have in mind is that which is based in the work of Eduard Sievers, especially as elaborated and refined in A. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1967). It might, therefore, be useful to describe it as a 'Sievers–Bliss' perspective, but I will use the simpler term here.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

however, does not necessarily follow, as he may have been composing within a different metrical tradition, employing different metrical rules. The failure to have identified any such rules does not preclude their existence.[13]

The key to understanding the basic principles of Ælfric's form lies in a transformation in Old English metrical practice which can probably be dated to the mid-tenth century. As I have argued in the context of the non-canonical *Chronicle* poems (those not included in the ASPR), at least some poets in the second half of the tenth century began composing verse that made no use of resolution, an essential feature both of Sieversian analysis and of the poems on which that analysis is based.[14] As I will discuss in more detail below, the tenth-century changes also included relaxation (or alteration) of rules regarding metrical stress-levels and anacrusis; it seems likely that all of these changes were interrelated, and when taken together, they can be used to define a variety of Old English metrical practice quite different from the 'classical' Old English verse that we see in *Beowulf*, for example. This later type of poetry is the 'late Old English verse' of my article's title.

Beyond the non-canonical *Chronicle* poetry, however, the corpus of late Old English verse is more extensive than critics and metricists have apparently realized, including the whole of *The Metrical Psalms*, many of the Metrical Charms, *The Judgment Day II,* and a number of other poems.[15] The inclusion of the

[13] P. Szarmach, 'Abbot Ælfric's Rhythmical Prose and the Computer Age', *New Approaches to Editing Old English Verse*, ed. S. L. Keefer and K. O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 95–108, has recently (and usefully) summarized the responses of textual editors and others to the problem of how to visually present Ælfric's texts in modern editions. He cites a telling opinion from Bruce Mitchell's *Old English Syntax* that may recall Pope's logic as quoted above in n. 11: 'To me, Ælfric's alliterative prose is good prose, not bad poetry . . . I do not agree with [Pope's] decision to print this prose in verse lines' (B. Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1985) II, 998), quoted in Szarmach, 'Abbot Ælfric's Rhythmical Prose', p. 103, with Szarmach's ellipsis). Again, underlying the comments of Mitchell and Pope is the unstated assumption that, since Ælfric's works do not match up well to Sieverisan metrics, the choice in identifying their form is one between 'bad poetry' and 'good prose'. An alternative to a Sievers-based formalism will allow a third choice: 'non-Sieversian poetry'.

[14] See my discussion of the *Chronicle* poems in T. A. Bredehoft, *Textual Histories: Readings in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto, 2001), esp. pp. 91–9. There, I outline some of the distinguishing features of late Old English verse, although without attempting as complete an account as in the present essay.

[15] Although it is not always easy to determine if a poem belongs to the late Old English verse system or not, I believe the following poems should be considered as late Old English verse: *The Metrical Psalms*; *Metrical Charms* 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12; the *Chronicle* poems in annals 959DE, 975DE, 975D, 979DE, 1011CDE, 1036CD, 1057D, 1067D, 1075D(1076E), 1086E and 1104E; *The Judgment Day II*; *The Battle of Maldon*; *Instructions for Christians*; *An Exhortation to Christian Living*; *A Summons to Prayer*; *Durham* and the Sutton Brooch inscription. Together, these poems total over 6,000 lines of verse; such a corpus is surely large enough to support the metrical analysis I undertake in this essay, especially since so much work on classical Old English metre uses a corpus of lines half this size: the poem of *Beowulf*. The general neglect

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Psalms, Charms, and many of these other poems in the ASPR attests to a widespread (and widely-accepted) recognition of their generic identity as verse, and it is to these poems that I will turn in identifying the basic features of the late Old English verse form. In itself, such a metrical account has long been a *desideratum* of Old English studies. But I shall also suggest that Ælfric's rhythmical compositions can be described in precisely the same terms, and that an insistence that Ælfric was working exclusively in prose can hardly be sustained in the face of evidence that he shared a metrical system with the poets responsible for these other works.

THE METRE OF LATE OLD ENGLISH VERSE

Any account of Old English metre must make use of some descriptive formalism, and it is my suspicion that late Old English verse has not been well understood (at least in part) because of a too-heavy scholarly reliance upon the formalism of Sievers and his followers. In this and following sections, I will base my own descriptive practice on that of Geoffrey Russom.[16] Russom's

of these poems by metricists can be indicated by the fact that, of these poems, B. R. Hutcheson, *Old English Poetic Metre* (Cambridge, 1995), includes only *Maldon* and *Durham* in his analytical corpus, which is thus almost exclusively a corpus of classical Old English verse. Unless otherwise indicated, verses and poetic passages are cited by line numbers only from G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, 6 vols. (New York, 1931–53); in citations of specific verses, abbreviated titles for poems will follow those set out in B. Mitchell, C. Ball and A. Cameron, 'Short Titles of Old English Texts', *ASE* 4 (1975), 207–22.

[16] Cf. G. Russom, *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory* (Cambridge, 1987). In brief, Russom argues that Old English verses were composed as combinations of two metrical feet, each of which followed the stress pattern of a single Old English word. Thus there were unstressed feet (symbolized as x, xx), singly-stressed feet (S, Sx, Sxx) and compound-stressed feet (Ss, Ssx, Sxs, Sxxs), which combined to form the following basic verse types:

Sieversian type and scansion		Corresponding Russom-type scansion
A3	xx/x	xx/Sx
A:	/x /x	Sx/Sx
B:	x/ x/	x/Sxs
C:	x/ /x	x/Ssx
D:	/ / \x	S/Ssx
D4:	/ / x \	S/Sxs
E:	/ \ x /	Ssx/S

For Russom, additional constraints apply, governing the placement of extrametrical (unstressed) words and elements (in general, allowed before either foot), allowing Russom's formalism to describe virtually all of the familiar specific verse-types of the classical Old English tradition, as well as accounting for much of what Bliss describes in his theory of the caesura. Russom's formalism thus offers a valuable insight into the underlying logic which results in the descriptive applicability of Sievers–Bliss formalism. In this respect, Russom's formalism seems more intuitively useful as a description of Old English metre than other formalisms.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

formalism, I have found, is flexible enough to accommodate the changes necessary for describing late Old English verse; further, it can in some cases more accurately predict non-metrical types than Sieversian formalism can, even in *Beowulf* and other poems in the same metre. To take just one example, Russom's system can explain why, in *Beowulf*, verses of the form *Sxxx/Sx are not allowed when the Sxxx portion is filled by a single word: this formalism excludes Sxxx as a normal foot.[17] Neither Sievers nor Bliss offers any compelling argument for the non-occurrence of such forms in *Beowulf*, and in this matter at least, the newer system is distinctly superior. As will be seen, precisely such forms are crucial in identifying the features of late Old English verse, and the use of a descriptive system derived from Russom's has benefits outweighing its comparative unfamiliarity.

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the major differences between what I will call 'classical' Old English verse (that is, verse which still makes use of resolution) and late Old English verse. Examples will generally be drawn from poems which are either clearly late in date (such as *Maldon*, the *Chronicle* poems and *Durham*) or from others which can clearly be shown to make use of late verse forms (such as *The Metrical Psalms*, the Metrical Charms and *The Judgment Day II*).

Lack of Resolution

Saying that resolution was not functional in late Old English verse is equivalent to saying that late verse made no meaningful distinctions between stressed syllables based on their length. Two types of evidence can immediately be brought forth to test the accuracy of a claim that resolution is non-functional in late verse: cases where short stressed syllables appear in positions where classical metre allowed only long syllables and (conversely) cases where long stressed syllables occur in positions previously open only to short syllables.

Examples of the first sort occur (although rarely) even in *Beowulf* (for example, line 262a: 'Wæs min fæder'), but with somewhat more frequency in late poems:

PPs 54.16 3a: and bodie
PPs 55.5 3a: and wiðer me
PPs 73.11 3b: efenmidre

Other, similar examples can also be found, but such verses might be explained (in classical terms) on the basis that resolution is blocked in them by a four-position rule. Such an explanation, however, cannot account for the following

[17] To be precise, 'Sxxx' words are excluded in *Beowulf*'s normal verses but four-position compounds like 'middangearde' are allowed, either as full-verse compounds or in hypermetric verses (but not, I believe, at the beginning of hypermetric verses; cf. *Beowulf* 2996a).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

verses, in which long stressed syllables appear in positions where resolved sequences would be required in 'classical' verse:

PPs 72.5 1b: ungemete swyþe	Sxxx/Sx
Dur 17b: and he his lara wel genom	xx/(x)Sxxxs
JDay II 102b: ungerydre sæ	Sxsx/S

I have placed tentative 'late Old English verse' scansions to the right of each verse here for clarity's sake.[18] All three of these verses, of course, would be unmetrical in classical Old English poetry. In each verse it is the long (four- or five-position) foot which would cause difficulty in the classical system; each of the long feet in these verses corresponds to an acceptable classical foot (Sxx, Sxxs and Ssx) where the initial S-position (in classical verse, optionally filled by a resolved sequence) has been replaced by Sx. In other words, such verses are, in fact, precisely what we should expect to see in a system in which resolution does not apply. Further examples will be given below, but these verses should be sufficient to suggest the plausibility of the succeeding analysis.

Metrical Stress and Subordination

Late Old English verse seems to have made use of only two levels of metrically-significant stress, not three, as were employed in classical verse. That is, where classical verse had feet with two stressed positions with differing stress-levels (in Russom's account: Ss, Ssx, Sxs and Sxxs), late Old English verse made distinctions only between stressed and unstressed metrical positions. In practice, this change in metrical stress-assignment rules amounted to a virtually complete dissociation of acceptable verse-feet from the stress-patterns of existing words and compounds. Such a dissociation, of course, represents a radical change, since (in Russom's formulation), a link between word-stress patterns and metrical patterns was the very basis of classical metre. But the evidence for the use of only two metrically-significant stress levels in late verse is twofold. First, there is a clear tenth-century decline in the use of verse-types with three stress levels. But further, it seems clear that the late verse system allowed alliteration to fall in positions where it was excluded in classical verse, including on the second elements of compounds. Each type of evidence, and its relation to the issue of stress levels in late verse, demands at least a brief discussion.

The dissociation of word-level stress patterns and patterns of metrical stress

[18] Below, I will offer more precise scansions for such verses, including there the probability that both 'ungemete' and 'ungerydre' should probably be scanned with two stressed positions; in both cases the relevant a-lines indicate vocalic alliteration, and thus I scan primary stress on the 'un-' prefix. Note, however, that regardless of how we scan these words, the four-position initial foot was disallowed by classical verse, as I indicated above.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

appears to be directly related to the frequently observed decline in the numbers of Sieversian C, D and E types found in datable late poems.[19] C, D and E verses are precisely those that (in Russom's formalism) have feet with both primary and secondary stresses; such feet are paradigmatically filled by compound words. The use of compounds in classical verse, then, both authorized and (in a sense) generated these types, but compounds no longer played any definitive role in metrical verse structures once the conceptual equation between two-stress feet and compound words failed to hold. To put it another way, there was no longer any metrical impetus for poetic compounding in late Old English verse, since the principles of the verse form made no reference to compound-like stress structures.[20]

While the decline in types C, D and E can be understood as the result of a dissociation of word-stress and metrical stress patterns, the most direct evidence for the claim that late verse made use of only two stress levels rests on changes in alliteration patterns, which had formerly relied upon subordination of all rightward elements within the verse.[21] Such subordination, in Russom's account, explains why left-most elements of verses and compounds take alliteration. In late verse, however, the 'subordinated' elements of compounds may alliterate, if only occasionally:

Mald 242a: scyldburh tobrocen	alliteration on 'b'
DAlf 18a: to Eligbyrig	alliteration on 'b'
PPs 88.29 1a: Gif hi mine rihtwisnessa	alliteration on 'w'

Such examples certainly suggest a shift in the rules for where primary alliteration can occur, but the simplest account of such verses seems to be to interpret these compounds as having two stressed positions of equal metrical weight. We should, perhaps, scan such verses as follows:

[19] Note Thomas Cable's comment on the decline in types C, D and E (all with secondary stress): 'After the mid-tenth century, there is a significant drop in the percentage of lines with three levels of ictus' (T. Cable, 'Metrical Style as Evidence for the Date of *Beowulf*', *The Dating of 'Beowulf'*, ed. C. Chase (Toronto1981), pp. 77–82, at 80). To this degree, Cable's analysis and my own are in complete agreement here, although I associate the decreased usage of 'compound-like' verse-types with the transition to 'late Old English verse'.

[20] The signficance of this shift is played out most compellingly in the realm of diction: classical Old English verse used (and, indeed, needed) a complex and traditional compound-oriented poetic diction, resulting in the familiar poetic register shared by most classical compositions. The metrical use of poetic compounds, of course, kept otherwise archaic words and forms current (within poetry) long past the time when they were otherwise being used. Late Old English verse, by contrast, needed no such archaic compounding techniques, resulting in its simpler diction, which is frequently interpreted by modern commentators as comparatively prosaic. Once again, the interpretative choice between 'verselike' and 'prosaic' is a false dichotomy, one which has had crucial consequences for the proper identification and appreciation of late Old English verse.

[21] See Russom, *Linguistic Theory*, esp. pp. 67–82.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Mald 242a: scyldburh tobrocen	SS/(x)Sx
DAlf 18a: to Eligbyrig	x/SxSx
PPs 88.29 1a: Gif hi mine rihtwisnessa	xx/(xx)SSxx

With such scansions, we can see that alliteration must still fall on a stressed syllable, but the position of that syllable is not determined by the rules of word- or compound-like subordination, which (in each case) would demand that the alliterating syllable should be the left-most S-position.

It is worth noting, of course, that alliteration is even more frequently delayed in verses without compounds; in the following examples the alliteration also fails to fall on the first stressed position:

PPs 118.71 3a: Þin soðfæst weorc[22]	alliteration on 'w'
PPs 88.29b: fracoðe gewemmað	alliteration on 'w'
Mald 298a: Þurstanes sunu	alliteration on 's'
MCharm2 31a: Wyrm com snican	alliteration on 's'

Russom's argument that the alliteration rules in classical verse were derived from the rules of stress assignment (where alliteration, like word stress, was attracted to the leftmost element of a structure, while rightward elements were subordinated) cannot be used to explain these sorts of alliteration. Rather, it seems likely that simply the presence or absence of stress was the key criterion for whether an element could alliterate; once all the stresses in a verse became conceptually equal, alliteration was allowed to fall on any stress, even the last stressed element in a line.[23] What both types of evidence suggest, I believe, is that metrical subordination no longer worked in late verse as it had in classical verse; rather than having metrical verses be patterned on the juxtaposition of two word-stress patterns, late verses were defined by patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables. In short, secondary elements of compounds (which, linguistically, had secondary stress) were treated in the metre as either stressed or unstressed, since there was no longer an intermediate position.

Given the reduction to two metrically-signficant stress levels (and the use of unresolved forms) we can see that the four relevant classical feet would result in late feet of the following forms:

[22] Note that this verse, which has the second element of a compound in the 'dip' of a verse corresponding to a classical B-type, also supports the notion that relevant stress levels were reduced to two. The secondary element of the compound must be scanned with either full stress or no stress, and the placement of the compound in this position thus causes no problems in late Old English verse, although it was somewhat unusual in classical verse. See Russom's account of a similar verse, *Beowulf* 501b (Russom, *Linguistic Theory*, p. 35). Similar verses with the second elements of compounds in the 'dip' of B-type verses are quite common in *The Metrical Psalms*.

[23] Note in particular the innovative alliteration patterns described below, p. 92, n. 39 and p. 93, n. 41.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Classical foot	Corresponding late feet
Ss	SS, SxS, SSx, SxSx
Ssx	SSx, SxSx, SSxx, SxSxx
Sxs	SxS, SxxS, SxSx, SxxSx
Sxxs	SxxS, SxxxS, SxxSx, SxxxSx

As this chart indicates, the number of available metrical feet has greatly increased in the late verse; six new foot-forms appear in the right-hand column (SxSx, SSxx, SxSxx, SxxSx, SxxxS and SxxxSx), and a seventh (Sxxx) was also authorized as a descendant of the classical Sxx foot. It is this increase in available feet that gives late Old English verse such a different feel from most classical Old English poems.

Relaxed Constraints on Anacrusis

Classical B and C verses gave rise to late verses which formally mirrored classical A verses with anacrusis, as seen in the following comparisons:

Classical form	Corresponding late form
xx/Sxs	xx/SxSx
xx/Ssx	xx/SxSx

The difference between (xx)Sx/Sx and xx/SxSx may have been difficult for late poets and audiences to attend to, and since three, four, or even five unstressed syllables were not unusual at the start of classical B and C verses, the constraint on anacrusis to two syllables no longer seems to have had any force in the late verse tradition. Presumably as a result of this sort of metrical overlap, we find syllables in anacrusis in late Old English verse in a variety of contexts not allowed in the classical tradition.[24] A rule for extrametrical elements in late verse that would include so-called anacrusis might be articulated as follows: unstressed (extrametrical) syllables may precede any foot.

The Form of Late Old English Verses

Taken together, these three metrical changes (regarding resolution, stress-levels and anacrusis) obviously amounted to a radical and extensive revision to the classical Old English metrical system. We can schematize the resulting metrical system as follows, where metrical late verses are still (as in the classical verse

[24] The 'frequent use of anacrusis' (*The Battle of Maldon*, ed. E. V. Gordon (London, 1937), p. 29) is often cited as one of the late features of *Maldon*; see also R. D. Fulk's comments on the frequency and variety of this feature in *Maldon* (R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia, 1992), p. 259), *Judgment Day II* (*ibid.* p. 263), *Durham* (*ibid.* p. 260) and other poems in his chapter on 'Late Developments'. The 'BA' types used by Cable (Cable, *English Alliterative Tradition*) in the analysis of works from late in the Old English period capture this feature, and their increasing prevalence is precisely the point Cable calls our attention to.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

described by Russom) made up of two juxtaposed metrical 'feet' and where (as noted above) extrametrical syllables can occur freely before either foot. Since inherited verses from the classical period allowed unstressed initial feet, there are two basic verse types in the late Old English verse tradition:

[x-foot]/[S-foot] and
[S-foot]/[S-foot].

Unstressed extrametrical elements are allowed before either foot, and the x-feet and S-feet are filled as follows:

x-feet	x, xx
S-feet (classically allowed)	S, Sx, Sxx, SxS, SxxS, SS, SSx
(newly authorized)	Sxxx, SxxxS, SxSx, SSxx, SxSxx, SxxSx, SxxxSx

Rules for stress assignment work generally as they do in classical verse: semantically important nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs are generally assigned to S positions, while prefixes, pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions are usually assigned to x-positions.[25] While the simplicity of this system obviously allows some verse types which cannot be directly derived from classically authorized ancestors, it has the dual advantages of ease of expression and great variety in the specific authorized types. While the number of possible feet has been greatly increased, the rules for combining feet into metrical verses have been correspondingly simplified, and the system itself remains useful in its flexibility and versatility.[26] Because late Old English verse evolved from classical verse, however, we ought to expect that the earliest examples of late verse should include the fewest numbers of such radically new types and that their numbers might well increase with time (see below).[27]

[25] In addition, there seems to be a rule (in both late verse and in classical Old English verse) that stresses the final word or element in any verse, regardless of its natural stress class. Note that the assignment of finite verbs to S-positions also stands as a simplification of the complex rules for stressing finite verbs in classical verse; it does continue to be the case that some finite verbs (especially those tending towards auxiliary function) may be scanned without stress even in late verse. Further, it seems likely that a general rule that a verse must have at least four syllables remained in effect (although it is important to note that some late poems may allow three-syllable verses; the status of such a rule perhaps ought to be treated as provisional until further work can be done).

[26] Although the system described here may seem to be so general that virtually any potential half-line can be accommodated within it, it is worth noting that no verse described by this system may have three stressed tri-syllabic words (since no single foot has two Sxx sequences). Although many verses have SxxSxx sequences, it appears that such sequences are always scanned in separate feet. In my reading of late Old English verse (and Ælfric) I have found no verses with three trisyllables or with three metrical Sxx sequences (three such sequences, of course, would demand that two of them be scanned in the same foot).

[27] In other words, we should expect that the consequences of these changes were evolutionary in nature. The verse system adapted slowly to these metrical changes, and (in general) poems

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Note, of course, that this new descriptive system does little to support any notion that the late Old English verse system features two-stress verses. Since foot-forms are no longer closely associated with word-level stress patterns, any and all stressed positions within these verses are conceptualized as having full metrical stress. Verses, then, have from one to four full stresses, and while they continue to be made from two metrical feet, they cannot be said to feature two stresses with any truly descriptive validity.[28]

In the metrical transformation that led to late Old English verse, a number of verse-forms were authorized that had previously been excluded from the classical Old English verse tradition, and the most frequently-occurring sorts of these newly-authorized types can stand as diagnostic types for late Old English verse, in the sense that a cluster of diagnostic types occurring in a single poem provides strong evidence that that poem belongs to the late tradition. A sampling of such diagnostic types (by no means exhaustive) is given in fig. 3.

Clusters of these diagnostic verses in poems such as *The Metrical Psalms*, *The Judgment Day II*, *Durham* and *The Death of Alfred*, I believe, confirm that each of these poems belongs to the late Old English poetic tradition.[29] Further, such evidence also suggests that my analysis of this tradition as having descended from 'classical' Old English verse must be substantially correct. Such a conclusion, of course, is buttressed by the fact that each of these poems also includes numbers (sometimes large numbers) of verses which would be metrical in classical Old English metre as well. Of course, the continuing existence (and even composition) of classically metrical verses should be far from surprising: in a conservative verse tradition such as that of Anglo-Saxon England, the survival of older forms should always be expected.[30] In a poem like *The Battle of Maldon*,

early in the late period retained much more of the feel of classical poems than later, more innovative poems did.

[28] It seems worthwhile to note that the existence of three-stress verses in the late tradition accounts for the loss of hypermetric lines and clusters in late Old English verse. Classical Old English verse and its use of hypermetric verses depended upon a clear distinction between two-foot and three-foot verses, but in late verse, two-, three- and even four-stress verses could be derived from classical two-foot verses and the normal/hypermetric distinction could not be maintained. Note that four-stress verses have been identified in Layamon's *Brut*: cf. J. Noble, 'The Four-Stress Hemistich in Layamon's *Brut*', *NM* 87 (1986), 545–9. Once again, it seems likely that late Old English verse may stand as a clear antecedent of Layamon's verse.

[29] Examples from *The Battle of Maldon* are also included on the basis of this poem's date; its sporadic use of typical late verse-types, however, does serve to confirm the currency of these types even in an otherwise relatively classical poem.

[30] For a familiar example of Old English poetry's tolerance for the maintenance of metrically early forms alongside newer forms, compare the survival of uncontracted and non-parasited forms in the classical verse tradition; see the fine discussion of these issues in Fulk, *History of Old English Meter*, pp. 92–121.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Type	Classical Ancestors/Examples	Specific Scansions
xx/SxSx	xx/Ssx, xx/Sxs	
	PPs 61.9 4b: on þam ilcan fremmað	xx/SxSx
	Mald 75b: se wæs haten Wulfstan	xx/SxSx
	PPs 64.4 3a: and on his eardungstowum	xx/(x)SxSx
	MCharm2 10b: ofer þe fearras fnærdon	xx/(x)SxSx
	Dur 20a: ðær monia wundrum gewurðað	(x)xx/SxxSx[31]
xx/SSxx	xx/Ssx	
	PPs 71.4 1a: on his soðfæstnesse	xx/SSxx
	DAlf 25a: on þæm suðportice	xx/SSxx
Sx/SxSx	Sx/Ss, S/Ssx, S/Sxs	
	JDay II 81a: lifes læcedomas	Sx/SxSx
	PPs 66.1 1a: Miltsa us, mihtig drihten	Sx/(x)SxSx
	Dur 15a: and breoma bocera Beda	(x)Sx/SxxSx[32]
xx/SxxxS	xx/Sxxs	
	JDay II 18a: and synfulra gehwam	x/SxxxS
	PPs 57.7 3a: hi sunnan ne geseoð	x/SxxxS
	PPs 74.5 1a: Ne ahebbað ge to hea	xx/SxxxS
	DAlf 7a: and his geferan he todraf	xx/(x)SxxxS
	Dur 17b: and he his lara wel genom	xx/(x)SxxxS
SSx/Sx	Ssx/S, Ss/Sx	
	Mald 282a: Sibyrhtes broðor	SSx/Sx
	PPs 145.7 7a: soðfæste drihten	SSx/Sx
	Dur 4a: ea yðum stronge	SSx/Sx[33]
SSxx/S	Ssx/S	
	PPs 84.9 2a: mildheortnesse mod	SSxx/S
SxSx/Sx	SS/Sx, Ssx/S	
	PPs 98.1 2b: ungemete swiðe	SxSx/Sx
	JDay II 194b: ungemetum wepað	SxSx/Sx
SxSx/S	Ssx/S	
	PPs 67.1 1b: ungeleafe menn	SxSx/S
	JDay II 102b: ungerydre sæ	SxSx/S

Fig. 3 Diagnostic late Old English verse forms

[31] Note that all of the cited xx/SxSx verses would be unmetrical in classical verse, since anacrusis there is limited to two syllables in the a-verse and one syllable in the b-verse. The b-verse examples might be taken as hypermetric (if hypermetric verses were, in fact, acceptable in late verse), but in the context of the other items in the table, such an interpretation seems improbable.

[32] Sx/SxSx verses appear to be indistinguishable from one variety of classical hypermetric verse, but once again, such an explanation does not seem very compelling for these verses, which do not appear in hypermetric clusters. It is probable that hypermetric verses never appear in the late Old English verse under discussion; see above, p. 89, n. 28.

[33] This verse might better be scanned as S/SxSx, but it nevertheless stands as a diagnostic late type; note also that the *Chronicle*'s 1065 poem, *The Death of Edward*, contains a verse of the SSx/Sx type (28a: 'soþfæste sawle').

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

where classical forms greatly outnumber the late forms, we see such conservatism in its most powerful mode. Of the poems considered so far, only in *Durham* and *The Death of Alfred* do we really see late forms outnumbering classically metrical forms; the notably late date of these two poems offers strong evidence for the evolutionary development of late Old English verse away from classical norms.

What is most surprising (and most important) about my analysis so far, of course, is that all of the poems I have considered to this point are already included in the ASPR. Certainly, many of these late poems are labelled by Krapp and Dobbie as featuring metrical problems and difficulties, but to a very great degree these supposed metrical lapses are cleared up by interpreting these poems as having been composed in the late verse tradition, rather than the classical one. It is not the metre of these poems that is deficient, but rather our previous understandings of their metre.

Linking Late Old English Verses into Lines

Up to this point, my discussion of late Old English verse has been concerned primarily with changes in the forms of individual verses. It is clear, however, that there were also changes at the level of the full line. Further, the late poetic tradition itself evolved over time. The remainder of this section will examine three of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'s poems (those preserved in annals 975DE, 1036CD and 1086E), allowing us to explore how late Old English verse negotiated the necessary linkages between half-lines as well as other developments.

The brief poem from 975DE is one of the earliest datable pieces of late Old English verse, called *The Death of Edgar II* in Robinson and Stanley's facsimile volume.[34] The D version reads as follows:

Her Eadgar gefor,	Angla reccend,	x/SxxS[35]	Sx/Sx
Wesseaxena wine,	7 Myrcna mundbora.	SSxx/Sx	(x)Sx/SSx
Cuð wæs þæt wide	geond feola þeoda,	Sxx/Sx	x/SxSx
þæt afaren Eadmundes	ofer <ganetes> beð	(x)Sxx/SSx	xx/SxxS
cynegas hine wide	wurðodon swiðe,	Sxx/(xx)Sx	Sxx/Sx

[34] *Old English Verse Texts from Many Sources*, ed. F. C. Robinson and E. G. Stanley, EEMF 23 (Copenhagen, 1991).

[35] Note that I scan 'Her' as part of the poem here, although metricists have traditionally excluded this word from the *Chronicle* verse. The reasons for doing so, however, seem dubious to me, as they are either based on an assumption that the poems were not written for the *Chronicle* or based in Sieversian metrics. In my work on the *Chronicle*, I have argued that even *The Battle of Brunanburh* (the *Chronicle*'s first poem) was probably explicitly composed for the *Chronicle* (Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 72–3 and 99–102). The argument from Sieversian metrics, of course, is not strictly relevant for this poem, which is in the late verse tradition, and it is possible that, even in *Brunanburh* 1a, we might see a mid-tenth-century example of a late Old English verse form.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

bugon to þam cyninge	swa him wæs gecynde.	Sx/(xx)Sxx	xx/(xx)Sx
Næs <se> flota swa rang,	ne se here swa strang,	xx/SxxS	xx/SxxS
þæt on Angelcynne	æs him gefætte,	xx/SxSx	Sx/(x)Sx
þa hwile þe se æþela cyning	cynestol gerehte.[36]	xxx/(xx)SxxSx	SxS/(x)Sx

All of these verses, of course, can be derived quite straightforwardly from classical ancestors: a number are themselves classically acceptable (1a, 1b, 4b, 5a, 5b, 6a, 6b, 7a, 7b and 8b), although sometimes with alliteration or placement that would be unacceptable. Verse 2a (and possibly 9b as well) descends from a classical E verse and thus might be the most difficult to identify, but the remainder are fairly clear descendants of other classical forms.[37]

Note that the classical restriction against A3 verses in the b-line no longer seems to apply, as verse 6b indicates.[38] Alliteration, as noted above, can link any two stresses across the caesura, and rhyme is allowed as an occasional substitute for such linking alliteration (line 7, but also possibly line 3). Line 2 has AABB alliteration, and line 4 seems only to have AA alliteration: double alliteration in only one half-line does seem to be an acceptable, if somewhat unusual, practice of late poets.[39] Just as the forms of individual verses described above could serve as diagnostic types for late Old English verse, these innovative forms of linking and alliteration also characterize this variety of verse.

The Death of Alfred, from the *Chronicle*'s annal 1036 (manuscripts C and D), shows even more radical departures from the familiar forms of classical Old English verse. I quote the verse portions of annal 1036 as they appear in the ASPR (6–25):

Ac Godwine hine þa gelette	and hine on hæft sette,	(x)SSx/(xxxx)Sx	(xxx)x/SSx
and his geferan he todraf,	and sume mislice ofsloh,	(xx)x/SxxxS	(x)xx/SxxxS
sume hi man wið feo sealde,	sume hreowlice acwealde,	xx/(xxx)SSx	x/SxxxSx

[36] 'Her Eadgar passed forth, ruler of the Angles, friend of the West Saxons, and protector of the Mercians. It was widely known among many nations over the gannet's bath that kings widely and greatly honoured the offspring of Edmund, bowed to the king as was appropriate to him. There was no fleet so proud, nor an army so strong, that it fetched carrion to it amongst the English while the noble king ruled the throne' (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS D*, ed. G. P. Cubbin, The AS Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition 6 (Cambridge, 1996), 46; my lineation).

[37] I have scanned 9b above as SxS/(x)Sx. That is, I scan it as a descendant of an A-type verse, such as Ss/(x)Sx. But it could just as likley be a descendant of an E-verse: SxSx/Sx. Such ambiguities of scansion are common in late Old English verse, but the metricality of such verses is not in doubt.

[38] Classically, xx/Sxx verses are allowed in the b-line; when resolution no longer applied, both xx/Sx and xx/Sxx verses were seemingly allowed in that position.

[39] Consider the following examples: *PPs* 54.8 2 (BB-alliteration); *JDay II* 28 (AA); *JDay II* 152 (BB); *MCharm2* 10 (AABB); *MCharm5* 3 (AABB); *MCharm7* 11 (BB); *MCharm10* 5 (BB).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

sume hi man bende, sume hi man blende,		xx/(xx)Sx	xx/(xx)Sx
sume hamelode, sume hættode.	10	xx/Sxxx	xx/Sxx
Ne wearð dreorlicre dæd gedon on þison earde,		xx/SxxS	x/SxxxSx
syþþan Dene comon and her frið namon.		xx/SxSx	xx/SSx
Nu is to gelyfenne to ðan leofan gode,		xx/(xx)Sxx	xx/SxSx
þæt hi blission bliðe mid Criste		xx/Sxx	Sx/(x)Sx
þe wæron buton scylde swa earmlice acwealde.	15	(x)xx/(xx)Sx	x/SxxxSx
Se æþeling lyfode þa gyt; ælc yfel man him gehet,		(x)Sxx/SxxxS	SSx/SxxS
oðþæt man gerædde þæt man hine lædde		xx/(xx)Sx	xx/(xx)Sx
to Eligbyrig swa gebundenne.		x/SxSx	xx/Sxx
Sona swa he lende, on scype man hine blende,		xx/(xx)Sx	(x)Sx/(xxx)Sx
and hine swa blindne brohte to ðam munecon,	20	(x)xx/(x)Sx	Sx/(xx)Sxx
and he þar wunode ða hwile þe he lyfode.		xx/(x)Sxx	(x)Sx/(xx)Sxx[40]
Syððan hine man byrigde, swa him wel gebyrede,		xx/(xxx)Sxx	xx/SxSxx
ful wurðlice, swa he wyrðe wæs,[41]		x/Sxx	xx/SxS
æt þam westende, þam styple ful gehende,		xx/SSx	x/SxxxSx
on þam suðportice; seo saul is mid Criste.[42]	25	xx/SSxx	x/SxxSx

Verse 16b here, for example, cannot readily be derived from a specific classical verse type (classically, Ss/Sxs is probably unmetrical, and certainly very rare at best). But 16b and the rest of the verses from this poem easily fit within the late Old English verse system described here.

The Death of Alfred, we should note, obviously relies upon rhyme to a much greater degree than most Old English poems, and rhyme and alliteration are both used on occasion (lines 9, 16, 19 and 22). It is also worth pointing out at least one other feature of the half-line linkages in *The Death of Alfred*: the degree to which this poet seems to intentionally balance paired verses. Verses

[40] I have scanned this verse with stress on 'hwile' and understand alliteration between 'w' and 'hw'; it may be possible that 'hwile' is unstressed and that the two verses in this line are linked only by inflexional rhyme; see the discussion of 1086E below.

[41] Notice the double alliteration in the b-line, here linked to an alliterating syllable in the a-line. Alliterating syllables on the fourth (or final) stress are fairly common in late verse; consider the following examples: *Maldon* 29, 75 and 288; *CEdg* 19; *JDay II* 169; *Pr* 18 and 41; *Seasons* 86 and *MCharm2* 34.

[42] 'But Godwine then hindered him and set him in captivity, and drove off his companions. Variously he slew some, some were given to people for money, some killed roughly, some bound, and some blinded, some hamstrung and some scalped. There was no more miserable deed done in this land since the Danes came and made peace here. It is now that we should believe in the dear God that they rejoice happily with Christ, who were, innocent, so horribly killed. The prince yet lived, each kind of wickedness promised to him, until they counselled that he be led to Ely, bound as he was. As soon as he arrived, they blinded him upon the ship, and brought him thus blind to the monks, and he dwelt there the time that he lived. Afterwards they buried him as was fitting, full honourably, as he was worthy, at the west end, right near the steeple, in the south porch; his soul is with Christ.'

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

with single S-positions are paired in lines 9, 10 and 17; those with two S-positions are paired in lines 7–8, 11–12 and 24–5. The two heaviest verses of the entire poem are paired with one another in line 16. With some frequency, a verse with one stress in the a-line is paired with a two-stress verse in the b-line, but this seems clearly preferable (7 examples) to having the single-stress verse in the b-line (1 example).[43] Note also that in lines 9 and 17, the parallelism and the balance involves b-verses which would have been disallowed in classical Old English verse. The implication of these observations, I believe, is that for this poet, at least, the proliferation of forms allowed in the late poetic tradition is brought under a degree of control by a general principle of balance within the full line. The formal innovations of the late tradition were accompanied by changes in the aesthetic values applied to Old English verse, and these values too have been little understood as a result of our failure to understand the basic principles of the late verse form.

Finally, it is worthwhile to turn our attention to the *Chronicle*'s poem for 1086, entitled *William the Conqueror*, preserved only in the twelfth-century Peterborough manuscript, although almost certainly composed before 1100:

castelas he let wyrcean. 7 earme men swiðe swencean.		Sxx/(x)SSx	(x)SxS/SxSx
Se cyng wæs swa swiðe stearc. 7 bena*m* of his underþeoddan man		(x)Sxx)SxS	(xx)S/(xx)SxxxS
manig marc goldes. 7 ma hundred punda seolfres.		Sx/SSx	(x)SSx/SxSx
Ðet he na*m* be wihte. 7 mid mycelan unrihte		(xx)Sx/Sx	(xx)Sxx/SSx
of his landleode, for litte[l]re neode.	5	xx/SSx	x/SxxSx
he wæs on gitsunge befeallan. 7 grædinesse he lufode mid ealle.		xx/(x)SxxxSx	(x)Sxxx/ (x)SxxxSx
he sætte mycel deorfrið. 7 he lægde laga þær wið.		(x)SxSx/SS	(xx)SxSx/SS
þæt swa hwa swa sloge heort oððe hinde. þæt hine man sceolde blendian.		(xxxx)Sx/SxxSx	(xxxx)Sx/Sxx
he forbead þa heortas. swylce eac þa baras.		xx/SxSx	xx/(xx)Sx
swa swiðe \he/ lufode þa headeor. swilce he wære heora fæder.[44]		(xxxx)Sxx/(x)Sx	(xxx)xx/(xx)Sx
Eac he sætte be þa*m* haran. þæt heo mosten freo faran.	11	(xx)Sx/(xx)Sx	(xx)Sx/SSx
his rice men hit mændon. 7 þa earme men hit beceorodan.		(x)SxS/(x)Sx	

[43] Recall, of course, the fact that single-stress A3 verses are allowed only in the a-line in classical verse, while b-lines generally have two stressed positions. *The Death of Alfred*'s use of single-stress a-lines (balanced with two-stress b-lines) may be inherited from this feature of the classical Old English verse system.

[44] The rhymes in this line and in line 7 are of particular importance. In line 7, *William the Conqueror* rhymes 'deorfrið' and 'þær wið', with the compound word necessarily scanned as SS. In line10, the 'headeor'/'fæder' rhyme indicates that the compound must be scanned as Sx. These rhymes, then, support the claim made above that there was no intermediate stress-level in late verse, and that compounds that would have been scanned Ss in classical verse were now scanned as either SS or Sx.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(xx)SxS/(xx)Sxx			
Ac he [wæs] swa stið.	*Þæt* he ne rohte heora eallra nið.	xx/(x)SS	(xxx)Sx/(xx)SxS
ac hi moston mid ealle	Þes cynges wille folgian	(xx)Sx/(x)Sx	(x)SxSx/Sxx
gif hi woldon libban.	oððe land habban.	xx/SxSx	xx/SSx
land oððe eahta.	oððe wel his sehta.	Sxx/Sx	xx/SxSx
Wala wa.	*Þæt* ænig man sceolde modigan swa.	SxS	(xxxx)Sx/SxxS[45]
hine sylf upp ahebban.	7 ofer ealle men tellan.	xx/SxxSx	(x)xx/(xx)SSx[46]
Se ælmihtiga God	cyþæ his saule mildheortnisse.	(x)SSxx/S	SxxSx/SxSx
7 do hi*m* his synna	forgifenesse.[47]	(x)Sx/(x)Sx	SSx/Sx

In *William the Conqueror*, we see the ultimate reflexes of the changes brought about in the tenth century. Here, rhyme almost entirely supplants alliteration as the key linking device, although such extensive use of rhyme should probably be seen as idiosyncratic rather than typical.[48] Rhyme, it should be noted, sometimes appears to link full lines, rather than half-lines (19–20). Verses with three or even four stressed units are common (1b, 3b, 6b, 7a, 7b and so on). Likewise, verses that look like classical A-verses with anacrusis are also common. But, in

[45] The scansion of line 18 given here reflects manuscript pointing and rhyme; it might be possible to lineate the line as:

Wala wa. *Þæt* ænig man sceolde modigan swa. SxS/(x)SxS Sx/SxxS

Such a relineation would give the line alliteration as the primary linkage, rather than rhyme, and it would also prevent the a-line from having only three syllables. As noted above, the status of three-syllable verses remains uncertain in late Old English verse, although the pointing of the present line suggests the possibility that three-syllable verses were acceptable.

[46] The scansion of this line is also somewhat uncertain; as I have scanned it, the verses have their primary linkage through inflexional rhyme (and, possibly, through assonance); it might, however, be the case that 'upp' and 'ealle' should be scanned on S positions to show vocalic alliteration.

[47] 'He ordered castles to be wrought and wretched men to work greatly. The king was very harsh, and demanded of his underlings many marks of gold and more hundreds of pounds of silver that he seized by weight and with great injustice from the people of the land – and for little need. He was fallen in avarice and loved greed above all; he established a great deer park and made a law for it that whoseoever should slay hart or hind would be blinded. He forbid the killing of harts and likewise boars; he loved the stags as greatly as if he were their father. And he ruled that the hares might roam freely. Powerful men complained and the poor lamented, but he was so rigid that he cared not for the enmity of them all; but they must entirely follow the king's will, if they would live, or have land, land or possessions, or even the king's favour. Alas – that any man should so proudly raise himself up and consider himself above all men. May the almighty God make mercy known to his soul and give him forgiveness of his sins' (*Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ed. J. Earle and C. Plummer, 2 vols. (Oxford 1892–9) I, 220–1; my lineation). Note that I use '*þæ*' for Plummer's crossed thorn, the common manuscript abbreviation for 'þæt'.

[48] Note that the roughly contemporary *Durham* does not use rhyme so extensively, and that, when Layamon uses an early Middle English descendant of the late Old English verse form, rhyme and alliteration function as complementary systems of half-line linkage. The *William the Conqueror* poet's extensive use of rhyme therefore would have probably stood out as unusual even in the late eleventh century.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

general, verses directly patterned on classically-authorized verse forms are comparatively rare: here the system described above has become almost entirely independent from the classical forms which gave rise to it, and the composition of verses relies only remotely upon the standards of classical verse. The large range of sizes for individual verses (from five to twelve syllables, if we exclude 17a) exemplifies the tendency in late verse towards larger verses; such a range would have been unusual at best in classical verse.[49]

In these three *Chronicle* poems, then, spanning from the late tenth to the late eleventh centuries, we can see a progression away from verses rooted closely in classical exemplars and towards a more general employment of those forms authorized in the late Old English verse system. Changes in metrical subordination that had formerly governed alliteration patterns seem to allow rhyme to begin functioning as a primary poetic link; the use of rhyme as such a link increases steadily in these three poems. The metrical differences in these poems can easily be accounted for in an evolutionary model, in which later poems use fewer classical verse-forms; the applicability of such an explanation (especially when coupled with the observation that these poems also conform to the metrical system described above) provides compelling evidence that Old English verse must have developed in just the ways under discussion in this article.

The changes involved in the shift from classical Old English verse to late Old English verse were radical indeed. The loss of secondary stress as a metrically signficant stress-level has been addressed above. But, simultaneously, the dissociation of metrical verse forms from the stress patterns of word pairs also necessitated (or at least accompanied) a break from the classical tradition of formulaic composition. That is, late Old English verses (especially those that would have been unmetrical in the classical tradition) would not (and perhaps could not) have been composed formulaically, and the transition to late Old English verse involved not only a loss of compound-based types, but the development of a composition method that was, at its heart, non-formulaic.

One hesitates to make too much of the connection, but it is difficult not to associate the development of late Old English verse with the increasing textualization (and decreasing 'orality') of classical verse in the manuscript record of the tenth century. We might recall O'Brien O'Keeffe's conclusion that 'the appearance, in the late tenth century, of a trend toward apparently metrical punctuation at the b-line coincides with the diminishing of "formulaic" reading in these records'.[50] It is at least possible that the development of met-

[49] Compare Cable's comments about Layamon's avoidance of four-syllable verses (Cable, *Alliterative Tradition* pp. 61–2); if *William the Conqueror* can be taken as typical of late Old English practice, the metrical impetus away from four-syllable verses was apparently already in force by the late eleventh century. [50] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, p. 192.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

rical pointing in the latter tenth century might have arisen as a need to visually indicate verse boundaries after the metrical changes described in this essay had taken place. That is, new verse forms were less easily identifiable to readers (both because they were new and unfamiliar and because they were more varied and variable), and the pointing tradition may have developed as a way of marking such newly-confusing boundaries. Certainly the simultaneity of the metrical change and the change in pointing practice is striking, and the development of late Old English verse has important implications for our understanding of the process of textualization in this period. Certainly, it seems clear that late Old English verse was an essentially literary form, its basic forms descended from classical verse types, but otherwise radically separated from the formulaic, compound-filled, orally-derived standards of classical verse.[51] Late Old English verse differed from its classical ancestor not only in the specifics of verse forms, but in ways that are at the very heart of how we currently think about Old English poetry.

ÆLFRIC AND LATE OLD ENGLISH VERSE

At the beginning of the nineteenth homily of Ælfric's second series, we read the following passage, as it appears in Godden's edition:

Læwede menn behófiað. þæt him lareowas secgon. ða godspellican lare. ðe hí on bocum leornodon. þæt men for nytennysse misfaran ne sceolon; Ure drihten sæde. to sumum lareowe. ða ða he hine axode. be ðam hehstan bebode. Lufa ðinne drihten mid ealre ðinre heortan. and mid eallum móde. þis is þæt mæste bebod; Is eft oðer bebod. ðisum swiðe gelic. Lufa ðinne nextan. swa swa ðe sylfne. þæs twa bebodu. belucað ealle bec;[52]

As Godden notes, 'The punctuation and capitalization are those of the manuscript [CUL Gg. 3. 28]'[53] and, as in the passage from the homily on Cuthbert cited at the beginning of my essay, we see once again what might well be described as metrical pointing. We can relineate and scan the passage in order to clarify the metrical structure:

[51] It is worth pointing out that the changes were even more extensive than I have described here: virtually the whole machinery of oral-formulaic composition is no longer relevant during the late Old English verse period. Formulaic themes, kennings, and poetic compounding (things which have often been seen as basic to the distinction between Old English verse and prose) turn out to be relevant to only the classical verse tradition. Late Old English verse, it appears, was distinguished from prose primarily through formal criteria alone.

[52] 'It behooves unlearned men that teachers tell them the lore of the gospel that they have learned in books so that men shall not err on account of ignorance. Our Lord said to some teacher when he asked him about the highest command: "Love thy Lord with all thy heart and with all [thy] mind. That is the greatest command. There is afterwards a second command much like this one: Love thy neighbour just as thyself". All books embody these two commands' (*Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the Second Series. Text*, ed. M. Godden, EETS ss 5 (London, 1979), 180). [53] *Ibid.* p. xciv.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Læwede menn behófiað.	Þæt him lareowas secgon.		SxxS/(x)Sxx	xx/SxxSx
ða godspellican lare.	ðe hí on bocum leornodon.		(x)SSxx/Sx	xx/(x)SxSxx
Þæt men for nytennysse	misfaran ne sceolon;		(x)S/(x)Sxxx	SSx/(x)Sx[54]
Ure drihten sæde.	to sumum lareowe.		xx/SxSx	x/SxSxx
ða ða he hine axode.	be ðam hehstan bebode.	5	xx/(xxx)Sxx	xx/SxxSx
Lufa ðinne drihten			Sx/(xx)Sx	
mid ealre ðinre heortan.	and mid eallum móde.		x/SxxxSx	xx/SxSx
Þis is Þæt mæste bebod;	Is eft oðer bebod.		xx/(x)SxxS	xx/SxxS
ðisum swiðe gelic.	Lufa ðinne nextan.		xx/SxxS	Sx/(xx)Sx
swa swa ðe sylfne.		10	xx/(x)Sx	
Þæs twa bebodu.	belucað ealle bec;		x/SxSx	(x)Sx/SxS

As we can see, eighteen of twenty verses in this passage are pointed. As Godden notes, it is well recognized that such pointing constitutes 'a system clearly distinct from the normal punctuation'.[55] And although he does not say it explicitly, the implication seems to be that the punctuation seen in a passage such as this one marks out structural units, rather than syntactic ones. In this respect, it seems (again) most like the metrical pointing sometimes found in classical poetic texts.

Unlike the passage from the Cuthbert homily cited at the beginning of this essay, however, the verses here would not be mistaken for classical verses. They do, as the scansions I have provided suggest, fit well within the scheme of late Old English verse outlined above; from such a perspective all of these verses are perfectly well-formed. Likewise, the linking strategies used by Ælfric would often have been unacceptable in classical poems, but they certainly call to mind those used some forty years later by the poet of *The Death of Alfred*: Ælfric uses alliteration in ways not sanctioned in the classical tradition (lines 2, 4a, 8b, 9a and 11b), and he also may use rhyme as a primary linking device (lines 5–8; line 5 may alliterate as well, but this sequence of lines seems significant).[56] The use of single half-lines has precedents in other late poems, as well as in classical

[54] Note that I scan 'misfaran' with stress on the prefix, in order to provide alliteration for the line; cf. Brehe, "'Rhythmical Alliteration'", p. 70, who writes, 'Ælfric sometimes alliterated on "minor syllables", including . . . prefixes' (ellipsis mine).

[55] M. Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary* EETS ss 18 (London, 2000), xxxvii.

[56] Line 5 might alliterate either if 'he' were scanned on an S position or if 'hehstan' were considered to alliterate with a vowel; such h/vowel alliteration might be possible in Ælfric. The 'drihten'/'heortan' rhyme may link the lines numbered here as 6 and 7a (the lineation given may not be the only lineation possible here); this rhyme is not particularly close, but it may well have been close enough to suit Old English conceptions of rhyme; recall that inflectional rhymes appear to serve in *The Death of Alfred* 21. For similar, though later, rhymes see also those in the *Chronicle*'s 1086E poem. Note that the rhyme in line 5 is also really an off-rhyme, as the syllables in question differ in stress.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

poems.[57] It seems safe to say that if we had run into such a passage in the *Chronicle*, it would be implicitly accepted as verse, and my argument in this essay, of course, is that we should accept such compositions as verse.

In places, it seems clear, Ælfric moves beyond merely competent versifying into the realm of powerful and effective poetry, where the formal features of his compositions become a contributing factor to both their meaning and their effect. One such passage can be found at the end of Ælfric's *The Life of Oswald*:

Eft se halga Cuðberht,	þa þa he git cnapa wæs,	xx/SxSx	xx/(xx)SxS
geseah hu Godes ænglas	feredon Aidanes sawle,	(x)Sx/SxSx	Sxx/SxxSx[58]
þæs halgan bisceopes,	bliðe to heofenum	x/SxSxx	Sx/(x)Sxx
to þan ecan wuldre	þe he on worulde geearnode.	xx/SxSx	(xxx)Sxx/(x)Sxx
Þæs halgan Oswoldes	wurdon eft gebroht	(x)Sx/SxxS	xx/SxS
æfter manegum gearum	to ban Myrcena lande	xx/SxxSx	x/SxxSx
into Gleawceastre,	and God þær geswutelode	xx/SSx	(x)Sx/(x)Sxxx
oft fela wundra	þurh þone halgan wer.	S/SxSx	x/(xx)SxS
Sy þæs wuldor þam Ælmihtigan	a to worulde.	(xx)Sx/(x)SSxx	Sx/Sxx
Amen.[59]			

Of these nine lines, it is remarkable to note that no fewer than five feature 'cross alliteration' (lines 280–3 and 287), including a remarkable stretch of four consecutive lines.[60] Such a dense use of secondary alliteration is exceptional,

[57] Cf. A. J. Bliss, 'Single Half-Lines in Old English Poetry', *N&Q* ns 18 (1971), 442–9. But note also that the alliterative link which connects a lone half-line with a preceding line (as in lines 7–8 here) can also be found in the *Chronicle*'s 1011 poem, which provides a particularly close chronological and formal parallel.

[58] It may be more accurate to scan 'Aidanes sawle' as SxxxSx, if the two initial vowels are treated as separate syllables, rather than as a diphthong; in either case, the verse remains within the scope of late Old English verse forms.

[59] 'Afterwards, the holy Cuthbert, when he was still a youth, saw how God's angels carried the soul of Aidan, the holy bishop, happily to heaven, to the eternal glory that he earned in this world. The holy Oswald's bones were later brought after many years to the land of the Mercians, into Gloucester, and there God often made many wonders manifest through the holy man. May there be glory to the Almighty always and ever. Amen.' This relineated passage is cited from *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. G. I. Needham (Exeter, 1976), p. 42, rather than *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat, as *Three English Saints*, ed. Needham, p. 42, indicates that a reviser has added five words in the last line. I use Skeat's line numbers for reference only, since Needham's edition uses a 'proselike' layout.

[60] The count of lines with cross alliteration might even be expanded here if 'h' alliterates with vowels (line 286; as I noted above, I believe there may be evidence for optional h/vowel alliteration in other Ælfrician texts), or if 'he' in 279b receives stress (which would be unusual in classical verse but is perhaps a possibility for Ælfric, who sometimes has functional alliteration on words which would be unstressed in classical verse). Here I consider ABBA alliteration as a variety of cross alliteration, rather than transverse alliteration, because this type of late Old English verse does not exhibit the metrical subordination which makes the distinction between the two types of secondary alliteration meaningful.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

even in the classical verse tradition, although (as I have argued elsewhere) classical verse does sometimes make use of such ornamental effects. [61]

Godden, of course, has suggested that 'one of the functions of [Ælfric's alliterative] style was evidently to produce a concluding flourish'[62] citing the final paragraphs and doxologies from a handful of the *Catholic Homilies*. In *The Life of Oswald*, where the alliterative 'style' is used throughout, a similar concluding rhetorical flourish is here provided by the use of ornamental secondary alliteration. A comparable use of secondary poetic effects occurs, I believe, at the end of the classical poem *The Order of the World*: Ælfric's use of poetic effects here corresponds to that found within the classical tradition.[63] Here, then, we see Ælfric employing the possibilities of the form for literary effect, in a manner paralleled within the classical poetic tradition. It seems plausible to suggest, in fact, that Ælfric was drawing on that tradition.

Because Ælfric (and other late Old English verse) makes less use of poetic compounding than classical verse, the *Lives of Saints* feature fewer of the sorts of figurative and imaginative effects we associate with classical compounds. Of course, this should not be taken as evidence that Ælfric's works are comparatively prosaic: in the passage from the end of *The Life of Oswald* quoted above, the 'rhetorical flourish' resulting from the extensive use of cross alliteration does have a powerful poetic effect.[64] Not only does the density of the alliteration itself insist on a series of powerful imaginative links (epsecially in lines 281–2), but the 'interlace' effect of cross alliteration, which involves two alliterative links across the caesura, suggests a formal wholeness or completeness, a tidying up of loose ends, that is eminently appropriate for both concluding doxologies and for the final movement of a poem.

In other passages, Ælfric sometimes seems to use alliteration for a different kind of poetic effect, as in the following passage from the second homily in Pope's *Supplementary Collection*:

(God ge)sceop his gesceafta	on syx dagum ealle,	SxS/(xx)Sx	(x)SSx/Sx
and geswac (on þone) seofoþan,	swa þæt he syþþan ne gesceop	(xx)S/(xxx)Sxx	xx/(x)SxxxS
nane oþre gesceafta,	ac þa sylfan geedniwað	xx/SxxSx	(xx)Sx/(x)SSx
on mannum and on nytenum	mihtiglice oþ þis.	(x)Sx/(xx)Sxx	Sxxx/(x)S

[61] See T. A. Bredehoft, 'Estimating Probabilities and Alliteration Frequencies in Old English Verse', *OEN* 34.1 (2001), 19–23, for an argument that cross alliteration is sometimes used for effect in classical verse, including an example of four consecutive lines with cross alliteration.

[62] *Ælfric's Catholic Homiles: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, ed. Godden, p. xxxvi.

[63] Bredehoft, 'Estimating Probabilities', p. 22.

[64] Further evidence that Ælfric's works should not necessarily be considered prosaic can be found in the observation made in *Ælfric's Catholic Homiles: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, ed. Godden, p. xxxvii, where it is noted that Ælfric's rhythmical works are 'accompanied at times by a sprinkling of poetic vocabulary', including words such as 'metod', 'rodor' and 'folme'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

He gesceop þa twegen men,	and (ealle tida gesette,)		(xx)Sx/SxS	(x)xx/SxxSx
ac he ne gesceop na syþþan	seldcuþe (gesceafta,	225	xx/(xx)SxSx	SSx/(x)Sx
of þam ealdan) dihte	þe he æt fruman gesette;		xx/SxSx	xx/(x)SxxSx
ac he gescipð ælce dæge	edniwe sawla		(xxx)S/SxSx	SSx/Sx
and on lichaman geliffæst,	(swa swa we leorniað) on bocum,		(xx)SSx/(x)SS	xx/(x)SxxxSx
and þa sawla ne beoð	na(hwær gesceapene	229	xx/SxxS	Sx/(x)Sxx
æ)r þan þe God hi asent	to þam gesceape(nan lichama[n]		xx/(x)SxxS	(xxx)Sxx/SSx
on he)ora moddra innoþum,	and hi swa men (wurþað.)[65]		x/(xx)SxSxx	xx/(x)SSx

As this passage makes clear, Ælfric allows 's-' and 'sc-' to alliterate with one another, an alliterative peculiarity that is shared with the author of *The Metrical Psalms*.[66] But further, Ælfric shares with the *Psalms*-poet a tendency to use the same alliterating sound in a sequence of lines: eight of Ælfric's twelve lines in this passage have primary alliteration on the 's' sound.[67] In three lines (220, 221 and 225) there are four syllables alliterating on this sound, and three lines (222, 224 and 227) have cross alliteration. The only line in the passage without alliteration linking its verses (226) has 'gesette' on its final stressed position, and both the preceding and following lines have s-alliteration (the preceding with four 's-' words; the following with cross alliteration).

Such an extensive use of alliteration on a single sound, combined with 'quadruple' alliteration and cross alliteration is, from a purely statistical perspective, most probably intentional. Ælfric here uses alliteration to lend poetic and rhetorical power to this narrative of the Creation. The fact that similar extended passages using a single alliterating sound were used in *The Metrical Psalms* may suggest a source for Ælfric's alliterative usage here; once again, however, such a circumstance (as with the co-alliteration of 's-' and 'sc-') suggests that Ælfric does indeed use late Old English poetic models (as exemplified in *The Metrical Psalms*) for his own practice.[68]

[65] 'God shaped his creation all in six days, and ceased on the seventh so that afterwards he shaped no other creation, but mightily renews that selfsame one among men and beasts until today. He shaped then two humans, and established all the hours, but he has never since shaped novel creations from the old arrangement that he set at first. But he shapes each day new souls and fastens them in bodies (as we learn in books) and those souls are not created anywhere before God sends them to their appointed bodies in their mothers' insides, and so they become men' (*Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, ed. Pope I, 240; spaces added to mark the caesura).

[66] Cf. *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, ed. Pope I, 128: 'Ælfric allows *sc*, *sp*, and *st* to alliterate with one another and with *s* followed by a vowel or any other consonant, though with *st* especially he seems to prefer exact correspondence.'

[67] For brief discussions of 'consecutive alliteration', see Bredehoft, 'Estimating Probabilities', pp. 19–20 and K. Grinda, 'Pigeonholing Old English Poetry: Some Criteria of Metrical Style', *Anglia* 102 (1984), 305–22.

[68] It should probably be noted, of course, that not all of Ælfric's lines seem to alliterate as clearly as most of my cited examples (although lingering uncertainties about what sorts of syllables Ælfric allows to alliterate make estimating the frequency of such lines difficult). A

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

It is worthwhile, finally, to consider two passages in which Ælfric shifts from prose to verse, after the introductory remarks preceding both the Cuthbert homily and *The Life of Edmund*. At the beginning of the Cuthbert homily (which seems to have been, we should recall, Ælfric's first extended composition in the rhythmical style), we read about Bede's treatment of the Cuthbert material in a passage of regular prose: 'Beda se snotera engla ðeoda lareow þises halgan lif. endebyrdlice mid wulderfullum herungum. ægðer ge æfter anfealdre gereccednysse. ge æfter leoðlicere gyddunge awrat.'[69] The distinction Ælfric draws here is an intriguing one: in Latin, at least, verse is contrasted to an 'anfealdre gereccednysse': a simple narrative. Of course, immediately after his comment that Bede wrote his second version of the *Life of Cuthbert* in the form of a song or poem, Ælfric shifts from the unornamented prose of this introductory matter to his rhythmical style. In this context, it seems difficult not to associate the conspicuous rhythmical and alliterative ornamentation of this style with verse; further, the fact that Bede's verse *Life* is more of a direct source for Ælfric than the prose *Life* may well suggest that Ælfric's first explorations in the rhythmical style were associated with Bede's own poem.[70]

The Life of Edmund, of course, also begins with a (non-rhythmical) prose account of the textual transmission of the Edmund material, first to Abbo of Fleury and thence to Ælfric, followed by the beginning of the 'rhythmical' remainder of the text. On folio 203r of London, British Library, Cotton Julius E. vii (Skeat's base manuscript), we see that the scribe has included a large (three-line) initial 'E' to mark the beginning of the rhythmical portion, which is also set off from the preceding 'plain' prose by nearly a full line of unused text-space.[71]

fuller consideration of Ælfric's practice is much needed to understand, for example, how he often seems to allow alliteration of prepositions (especially disyllabic ones). Likewise, it sometimes seems as if, in translations of scripture, Ælfric maintains his rhythm but does not employ alliteration, while in explanantory or narrative passages he does use alliteration. My purpose in this article is to address the formal identity of his works; but much remains to be done in exploring Ælfric's own ideas about the uses and purposes of his alliterative passages.

[69] 'Bede, the wise teacher of the English nation, wrote the life of this saint in order, with glorious praise, both in the manner of a simple narrative and in the manner of poetical singing' *(Ælfric's Catholic Homiles: the Second Series*, ed. Godden, p. 81).

[70] Cf. *Ælfric's Catholic Homiles: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, ed. Godden, p. xxxvii, who writes, 'The account of St Cuthbert, II.10, seems to be an early and experimental version of this [rhythmical] style, with very marked rhythms and a more extravagant use of poetic and colourful language; since one of its main sources was Bede's metrical life of the saint, and it is indeed the first and perhaps only work by Ælfric that used a poem as its main source, it seems likely that the inspiration and model for the use of this style *in extenso* was the use of Latin verse for hagiographical narrative.'

[71] In addition, the scribe writes the first line of the alliterative portion in capitals, as he does the very beginning of *The Life of Edmund* itself. The beginning of the alliterative passage, then, is visually marked almost as insistently as the beginning of the entire text.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As I have argued elsewhere, such blank space and *litterae notabiliores* often seem to mark boundary points between prose and verse.[72] While the shift from prologue to *vita* may be sufficient to result in such a heavily-marked textual boundary, the similarity of the treatment of the boundary point here to some prose-verse boundaries seems important as well.

But note also the particular form and effect of Ælfric's first alliterative paragraph from *The Life of Edmund:*

Eadmund se eadiga	Eastengla cyningc		SS/(x)Sxx	SSx/Sx
wæs snotor and wurðful.	and wurðode symble		x/SxxSx	x/SxxSx
mid æþelum þeawum	þone ælmihtigan god.	15	x/SxxSx	(xx)SSxx/S
He wæs ead-mod. and geþungen.	and swá an-ræde þurh-wunode		(xx)SS/(xx)Sx	(xx)SSx/(x)Sxx[73]
þæt he nolde abugan	to bysmorfullu*m* leahtrum.		xx/SxxSx	x/SxxxSx
ne on naþre healfe	he ne ahylde his þeawas.		xx/SxSx	xx/(x)SxxSx
ac wæs symble gemyndig	þære soþan lare		xx/SxxSx	xx/SxSx
[gif] þu eart to heafod-men ge-set.	ne ahefe þu ðe.	20	xx/(xx)SxxxS	xx/SxxS
ac beo betwux mannum	swa swa an man of him.		xx/(xx)Sx	xx/(x)SxS
He wæs cystig wædlum	and widewum swa swa fæder.		xx/SxSx	(x)Sxx/(xx)Sx
and mid wel-willendnysse	gewissode his folc		(xx)S/SxSx	x/SxxxS
symle to riht-wisnysse	and þam reþum styrde.		Sx/(x)SSxx	xx/SxSx
and gesæliglice leofode	on soþan geleafan.[74]	25	(xx)Sxxx/Sxx	x/SxxSx

[72] See T. A. Bredehoft, 'The Boundaries Between Verse and Prose in Old English Manuscripts', an essay written for the 1997 NEH Summer Seminar held at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; this essay is forthcoming as part of a collection of papers from that seminar. For an especially close analogue to the treatment of the 'prose'/'rhythmical prose' boundary at this point in Julius E. vii, see the treatment of the Alfredian Boethius in London, British Library, Cotton Otho A. vi (s. $x^{med.}$), where heavy punctuation, blank space and display letters (or space left for such letters) generally mark the transitions between prose and verse portions of the text. Plate I of O'Brien O'Keeffe's *Visible Song* is a photograph of 87v of the Otho manuscript, perhaps the best-preserved relevant page of this manuscript.

[73] Note the manuscript point in the middle of 16a. This point may appear because points had become conventional before the Tironian '7', or it may be that this point signals a mistake on the scribe's part about the verse boundary (note that no point appears in the middle of 14a). It seems worth noting that this line is the heaviest line of the passage under consideration and thus perhaps the most likely to be mis-scanned by the scribe. Further study of mid-verse points may well offer additional insight into scribal perceptions of the structural units of late Old Engish verse.

[74] 'Edmund the blessed, king of the East Angles, was wise and worthy and contantly honoured the Almighty God with noble customs. He was blessed-minded and distinguished and remained so resolute that he would not stoop to shameful vices, nor on either side did he lay down his practices, but was always mindful of true learning. If you are made a chief-man, do not lift yourself up, but be among men just as a man of them. He was generous to the poor and to widows just as a father, and with benevolence he led his folk and steered the violent always to righteousness and happily lived in true belief' (*Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat II, 314–16, lines 13–25; space added to mark caesura).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Here, an intense concentration of various sorts of wordplay and alliterative emphasis combine for a powerful rhetorical effect, precisely at the beginning of the alliterative passage. Twice (lines 13 and 16) Ælfric reuses the morpheme 'ead-' from Edmund's name, and three of the first four lines share vocalic alliteration, the first line having four alliterating syllables. The second line (the only one of the first four without vocalic alliteration) has cross alliteration, as do the two final lines of the paragraph (as 's-'/'st-' alliteration is probably functional here). Consecutive alliteration also appears twice in the final four lines, and three consecutive verses (23a–24a) may be linked by rhyme (on the syllables '-nysse', '-wissode' and '-nysse'). Paronomasia is probably to be understood in lines 14, 20 and 25; a further paronomastic linkage probably connects the words 'geþungen' and 'þeawas' in lines 15, 16 and 18.[75] The attention to formal features and wordplay here, I believe, powerfully suggests that we are in the realm of verse; when such a passage is also marked by the graphical means described above, it is clear that the scribe here perceived a major break in the contents of his text: to identify that break as a shift between prose and verse is not only plausible but attractive.

What I have tried to indicate in the preceding examples and discussion, of course, is that the evidence for considering Ælfric's rhythmical compositions as verse is too powerful to ignore. The taxonomic label we attach to these compositions is indeed meaningful, as it deeply affects our understanding of these works, their genres, and their literary effects; we should keep the conventional label 'rhythmical prose' only if it is truly the most accurate label we can find. As the direction of my argument should make clear, however, I believe that 'rhythmical prose' is not a sufficiently accurate label and that we should identify these works as verse. A brief summation of the arguments in favour of doing so may be of value here.

In the first place, I have shown here that we can identify a separate tradition of 'late Old English verse' that follows rules identifiably different from the rules encoded by Sieversian metrics. This late verse tradition is exemplified in *The Metrical Psalms*, many of the *Chronicle* poems, *The Judgment Day II*, *Durham* and a number of other works. The identification of the metrical principles behind these poems (and the relationship of those principles to those of Sieversian metrics) has two important consequences. On the one hand, we can now see late Old English verse developing in clear evolutionary ways from the earlier classical metrics described by Sievers and Bliss. But also, a useful metri-

[75] See R. Frank, 'Some Uses of Paronomasia in Old English Scriptural Verse', *Speculum* 47 (1972), 207–26; note that the *OED* entry for 'thew' cites passages from the Blickling Homilies and Layamon which feature collocations of 'þeawas' and 'geþeon', suggesting an enduring perception of a relationship between these words.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

cal description of the late verse tradition removes a key obstacle to seeing Ælfric's rhythmical works as verse: readers can no longer simplistically suggest that since Ælfric's works do not agree with Sieversian metrics, they must be prose. To the contrary, as I have argued here, Ælfric's rhythmical works are, in fact, accurately described by the rules for late Old English verse.

Further, some aspects of Ælfric's practice seem to be modelled closely on the practices of at least some late Old English poets. Ælfric, for example, allows 'sc-' to alliterate with 's-', as does the poet of *The Metrical Psalms*. Likewise, Ælfric's occasional use of consecutive alliteration (where two or more lines in sequence alliterate on the same sound) is a feature also shared with the *Psalms*-poet. His use of cross alliteration, paronomasia, and other poetic effects (as at the end of *The Life of Oswald* or the beginning of *The Life of Edmund*) can be paralleled in acknowledged poems and should rightly be understood as representative of the elevated use of language and linguistic effects characteristic of poetry.

But the case does not rest on formal analysis alone. Anglo-Saxon scribes seem to have regularly treated Ælfric's rhythmical compositions in ways similar to how they treated Old English poems in general. Where normal prose abuts Ælfric's rhythmical compositions (as after the preface to *The Life of Edmund*), scribes at least sometimes used boundary-marking devices (such as blank space and *litterae notabiliores*) to indicate the shift, just as classical prose–verse boundaries were often marked (as in *The Metres of Boethius* from London, British Library, Cotton Otho A. vi). Further, the scribal habit of pointing the 'half-lines' of Ælfric's rhythmical works can be easily paralleled in the Old English verse tradition, but not in the tradition of Old English prose.[76] The simplest explanation for both practices lies in a conclusion that Anglo-Saxon scribes understood these rhythmical texts to be verse.

In some ways, it may be the case that Ælfric was even more conservative in his versifying than other late Old English poets, as in Ælfric's general avoidance of rhyme as a linking strategy. Even if that is not the case, the combination of metrical evidence, the evidence of poetic practice and the evidence of scribal habits makes the conclusion that these works were verse difficult to avoid. Our understanding of Ælfric and his place in Anglo-Saxon literary history may well change as a result of such an identification, but I believe the identification is secure. At the very least, any assessment of Ælfric and his works must attend to the powerful similarities those works share with poems from the late Old English verse tradition.

[76] Of course, CUL Gg. 3. 28 is often closely associated with Ælfric or his scriptorium: the points in this manuscript may even reflect an authorial habit, rather than scribal habit. Either way, the significant issue is the similarity of this pointing practice with the pointing practices encountered in the classical Old English verse tradition.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

CONCLUSIONS

My purpose in this essay has been to describe the formal characteristics of late Old English verse, including the rhythmical and alliterating works of Ælfric. Signficantly, then, the description of the metre of late Old English verse offered here has implications not only for our understanding of the formal categories of Old English texts, but also for our broader understanding of Anglo-Saxon literature and culture. An extensive reassessment of a century and a half of Anglo-Saxon literary history is certainly a task too great for an essay such as this, but a few comments nevertheless deserve to be made.

First, so far as can be determined from relatively datable poems, the classical verse tradition (including the use of resolution) survived at least into the beginning of the tenth century: the extensive use of classical verse forms in *The Meters of Boethius* (and the lack of diagnostic late forms) is sufficient to show the survival of the old forms to the beginning of the tenth century, while *The Battle of Brunanburh* and *The Capture of the Five Boroughs* (the latter not written before 942) suggest the survival of classical forms into the middle of the century, despite these poems' brevity. But at the same time, note that Metrical Charm 7, *For the Water-Elf Disease* was written into London, British Library, Royal 12 D. xvii (?Winchester, s. x^{med}) by scribe 3 of the Parker Chronicle, the very scribe responsible for entering *Brunanburh* and *Capture* into that manuscript. Since the *Water-Elf* charm clearly has late forms (including a line of late verse printed as prose by Dobbie, in his lines 14–15), we ought to conclude that 'late Old English verse' was already being composed around the middle of the tenth century. The Sutton Brooch and the *Chronicle* poems in annals 975DE, 979DE and 1011CDE appear to confirm that the late verse tradition was widespread and current at just the time when Ælfric was writing.[77]

In all probability, then, the composition of *The Metrical Psalms* should be dated to the middle-to-late tenth century, and perhaps associated with the period of Benedictine reform in the second half of that century.[78] *The Metrical Psalms* feature many late verse forms, but they often seem fairly close to classical verse. This circumstance may be related to the date of their composition: *The Metrical Psalms* were probably composed relatively early in the late Old

[77] As I discuss elsewhere, Ælfric's contemporary and correspondent Wulfstan also wrote two verse passages for the *Chronicle*, s. a. 959DE and 975D (Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 106–10). A. McIntosh, 'Wulfstan's Prose', *British Academy Papers on Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. E. G. Stanley (Oxford, 1990), pp. 111–44, at 117, also reminds his readers that these passages have been 'accepted implicitly' as poetry. For the Sutton Brooch, see E. Okasha, *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions* (Cambridge, 1971), no. 114 (pp. 116–17).

[78] Cf. Fulk, *History of Old English Meter*, p. 414, who writes: 'The Psalms are probably rather late compositions . . . most of [their] metrical faults are like those of *Maldon* and other presumably late verse' (ellipsis mine).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

English verse period, when contact with and influence from the classical tradition was high. Ælfric's homily on Cuthbert, which may have been his earliest attempt in the form, is the closest of all his works to classical verse; in many ways it is markedly reminiscent of *The Metrical Psalms*. Since Ælfric's own teachers were so prominent in the Benedictine reform, it seems probable that Ælfric (and his signature style) was heavily influence by the translation of *The Metrical Psalms*.

Nevertheless, Ælfric's mature rhythmical style did not remain so close to the style of *The Metrical Psalms*, but shared much more with the late Old English verse of the turn of the century as seen in the *Chronicle* poems. Ælfric, we might conclude, followed the metrical fashion of his time (possibly even innovating upon it), rather than attempting to produce more classical compositions, which, by then, would have seemed to be consciously (or at least conspicuously) archaizing, as *Maldon* is.

Notably, however, Ælfric remained fairly true to the alliterative origins of his verse form, making little use of rhyme as a substitute for alliteration. Nevertheless, such rhyme is prominent in *The Death of Alfred* (written sometime after 1036) and may be seen somewhat sporadically in the poems even of the late tenth century (as in *The Death of Edgar II* and the Sutton Brooch). The poet of *William the Conqueror*, working at the end of the eleventh century, used rhyme almost to the exclusion of alliteration, but it seems clear that alliteration was never entirely abandoned by late Old English poets, and a poem such as *Durham* suggests the continuity of alliteration as a structuring principle of late Old English verse. Layamon's use of a mixture of rhyme and alliteration a century or so later can surely be traced to the habits of late Old English poetry as seen in these latest examples of late Old English verse.

In short, then, the last two centuries of the Anglo-Saxon period witnessed a radical reorganization of the principles and practices of Old English verse. To understand the literary culture of those times, I believe, we must acknowledge the basic metrical innovations here identified as being typical of 'late Old English verse'. Crucially, verse continued to be composed throughout the period, and rather than characterizing late compositions according to a discourse of corruption and decay, we can appreciate the artistry of these late works in their own right: the greatest beneficiary of such a renewed look at the period is surely Ælfric, Anglo-Saxon England's most prolific poet.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675104000043 Published online by Cambridge University Press