Old English Philology: Studies in Honour of R. D. Fulk

Leonard Neidorf, Rafael J. Pascual, and Tom Shippey (eds.), Anglo-Saxon Studies 13. Cambridge: Brewer, 2016, x + 427 pages. Hardcover, £60.00

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The term 'philology' these days has suffered some of the pejoration that has attended the term 'academic', but perhaps has suffered even more from disuse in scholarship. It has come to signify over-prescriptive and unimaginative analysis, a scientific as against humane approach that leaches poetry of its ability to delight. Yet our wider discipline is founded on philological principles. My own discipline of onomastics is a resolutely philological pursuit which illustrates the point: one can acknowledge that locals, present and past, associate the many Beestons in England with bees, but one should not imagine that the originators of the name thought of flying insects when they named the places; philology, at a very simple level, forbids it.

Old English Philology is a collection of essays written in tribute to a scholar who has, not quite *contra mundum* but certainly to an outstanding degree, approached the early languages and literatures of the north philologically. The varied essays here, sometimes quirky, sometimes challengingly complex, give the lie, overall, to the notion that philology is dry and unimaginative: every one has something intriguing, stimulating, thought-provoking or erudite to say. The result is both delightful and occasionally embarrassing as one realises that assumptions one has made over the years are perhaps slightly astray.

The volume consists of twenty essays by leading scholars on a range of philological topics. They are not grouped into sections, though the early essays focus mainly on metrics and *Beowulf*. Later essays are more broadly interpretative, including treatment of prose and manuscripts, as well as historical, source and textual studies. There is an introduction, a comprehensive list of R. D. Fulk's writings and a functional title and name index. The introduction orientates the volume by giving a brief history of Fulk's scholarship and its implications; the final essay assesses the development of *Beowulf*-studies from Tolkien to Fulk and thus the book returns to where it started and offers an overview and a prospectus for future work.

Several of the essays in the volume adopt or adapt metrical research, and indeed the first third of the volume would make a good introduction to metrical studies. Application and practical examples of a range of metrical rules are given: Fulk's law of the coda (pp.10, 43), resolution (p. 25), the rule of precedence (p. 59), Krackow's law (p. 60), Kuhn's law (p. 61), Terasawa's law (p. 65), the principle of closure (p. 82), rules relating to compounds (p. 107). The names may seem intimidating at first sight, but together and in application to *Beowulf* in particular, the rules give a rich insight into the skill and technical virtuosity of the poet.

Outstanding essays answer simple questions. What is the metrical significance of, or difference between syllable stress, length and ictus (Pascual, Cable)? How can meter help us to understand what scribes did to texts appearing in more than one copy (Neidorf)? Why does the *Beowulf* poet sometimes use indicative verb-forms when we would expect subjunctives (Terasawa)? Why does word-order vary in poetic sentences (Russom)? And why do finite verbs sometimes carry alliteration and sometimes not (Griffith)? The underlying principle in these essays is that Old English poets understood metre and deployed it coherently and consistently; errors are more likely to derive from the scribes than the poets. The results offered in these essays speak for themselves.

Minkova's essay interestingly applies Old English metrical analysis to the early Middle English text *Poema Morale*. Ecay and Pintzuk make a bold attempt to apply analysis of diachronic syntactic change in Old English using large-scale datasets from the parsed corpus to the issue of the dating of *Beowulf*: the main conclusion here is that syntactic elements should not be ignored in the consideration of the big literary issues in criticism. George Clark returns illuminatingly to a question that has preoccupied scholars, and apparently

Anglo-Saxons too, namely how to translate Latin *superbia*. Two essays, those by Liberman and Momma, explore etymological and lexical questions. Liberman enters a heart-felt plea for the return of etymology as a taught (and practised) philological discipline; Momma entertainingly explores the semantics and usage of worm/*wyrm*.

Context, style, sources and historical evidence occupy most of the remaining essays. Stefan Jurasinski discusses handbooks of penance and some unusual features of Wulfstan's *Canons of Edgar*, leading him to conclude that public penance in Anglo-Saxon England was the province of bishops. Christopher Cain discusses the often-ignored letter-form of *e*-caudata (ę) in manuscripts in an attempt to localise its scriptorial and orthographical origins and cultivation: limitations of the *Dictionary of Old English* corpus notation led to the letter being recorded as æ and necessitate much revisiting of manuscripts, but even with such limitations, the essay shows patterns of usage in scribes and manuscripts. Dennis Cronan revisits a different issue, one where his work has led the field, namely the study of poetic words. The emphasis here is on how words contribute stylistically and ideologically to the poetic tradition, and by statistical analysis and consideration of examples, he concludes that 'every poetic word is a minor metonym for the values of the tradition as a whole' (270).

The essays following cover a range of texts and literary issues. Daniel Donoghue returns to the puzzle of the *engel* in *The Dream of the Rood* 9b, and neatly clarifies some metrical and semantic obscurities. Charles Wright examines the curious motif of the fate of Lot's wife and locates an origin for the notion of her soul remaining in the pillar of salt until the Last Judgement in *Genesis A* in 'Canterbury School' glosses from the time of Theodore and Hadrian. Megan Hartman's essay treats *The Fortunes of Men*, discussing the distinctive style, syntax and metrical patterning of different parts of the poem, particularly the narrative and wisdom sections. Andy Orchard revisits the question of the originality of *Andreas* and, with a complex array of parallels and differences between the poem and other verse the poet might have known, shows how the poet worked creatively

in the shared tradition, borrowing and reworking, sometimes remodelling his Latin source(s), sometimes innovating. Rory Naismith's essay reveals that poems and charters idealised the economic transactions that went on in Anglo-Saxon England, locating them in the sphere of courtly and heroic exchange rather than that of commerce, buying and selling. He shows nevertheless that *Beowulf* was composed when a monetary economy was in existence. The discursive part of the volume is concluded by a brief and quietly witty essay summarising developments in *Beowulf* criticism since Tolkien by Tom Shippey.

The above summary of content is aimed at persuading the reader of the breadth and quality of the essays in the book. There is occasional obscurity, and some essays are hard to take in on a single reading. There are very occasional typological or other errors: the false Latin plural *apparati* (pp. 235, 236, 237); 'which is usually the gloss, which is usually the gloss' (p. 241); and Issacs for Isaacs (p. 325). I should guess R. D. Fulk is pleased with this Festschrift. Leonard Neidorf writes in the introduction, '[t]he editors believe it would be a fitting tribute to Fulk if a volume in his honor were to become essential reading for students of Old English poetry' (p. 12). A book like this cannot be comprehensive, or articulate a fully worked-out approach to language or literature, but in this reviewer's opinion it is essential reading for students of Old English poetry and a coherent demonstration of the value of philology, in a wide range of forms, in the scholarly enterprise.

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Latinity and Identity in Anglo-Saxon Literature

Latinity and Identity in Anglo-Saxon Literature, edited by Rebecca Stephenson and Emily V. Thornbury, is a recently published