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**Leonard Neidorf, Rafael J. Pascual and Tom Shippey (eds.).** *Old English Philology: Studies in Honour of R. D. Fulk.* Anglo-Saxon Studies. Cambridge: Brewer, 2016, x + 427 pp., 5 figures, 16 tables, £ 60.00.

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<https://doi.org/10.1515/ang-2018-0038>

Old English Philology is an achievement: twenty contributions consistent in quality, scope, and format, all gathered in a handsome volume of 427 pages. The editors of this notable Festschrift have honored Professor Rob Fulk (Indiana University), whose publications are listed on pages 415–423. Fulk earned his celebrity reputation as a metrist. His *History of Old English Meter* (1992) and *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* (co-edited, 2008) have been regarded as transformative for the discipline. His breakthroughs include dating pre-Conquest verse in relative terms and placing *Beowulf* convincingly in the Age of Bede. Yet the editors have espoused an even broader view of Fulk's accomplishments. In his "Introduction" (1–16), Leonard Neidorf credits him with restoring faith in Philology as a strategy of textual and literary criticism. In 2003 Fulk asserted that "relative probability, not absolute certainty, must be the criterion for validation in philological research" (7). Some critics, however, exploit a converse *incertitude* to erect could-be-true hypotheses that disregard the probable in favor of the merely clever, no matter its improbability. The title of this tribute volume, then, throws red meat to lions. By self-consciously promoting linguistic and metrical analyses, its contents reinvigorate Philology as a resurgent discourse. What made it moribund? Professional cynicism: "a tolerance for pedantry, for the obscure, esoteric, and devious, characterizes Philology" (Frank 1997: 500).

The first seven essays in this book concern Old English meter, a subject fraught with cynicism. Mark Griffith's outstanding contribution, "Alliterating Finite Verbs and the Origin of Rank in Old English Poetry" (103–121), shows why. Griffith begins conscientiously: "Old English metrical-grammatical theory is *corroborated at almost every point*" (103, my emphasis). Doubters of metrical analyses based on Eduard Sievers' five verse-types will deviously latch onto the implicit converse: theories "corroborated at almost every point" are not corroborated at all. Consequently, a brilliant argument that hypothesizes verbal 'rank' to explain why some unstressed particles should alliterate while others do not already seems precarious. Griffith continues by observing a "significant mismatch between the alliterative and the metrical-grammatical systems" (*ibid.*) of Old English verse: "One group of un-displaced sentence particles, the finite verbs, *frequently fails to behave according to the rule*" (*ibid.*, my emphasis). If epiphenomena do not behave according to a rule, the cynic would suggest that there is no 'rule'—just an expectation.

In fact, Griffith's evidence reveals that more widely attested unstressed finite verbs alliterate less often in alliterating positions than less commonly attested verbs. Compare OE *gan* in *Beo* 1814b, ***eode*** *weorð Denum* to OE *abreotan* in *Beo* 2930a, ***abreot*** *brimwisan*. OE *gan* has approx. 3,700 occurrences, but *abreotan* only 17. For *Beowulf* Griffith concludes:

Almost all of these forty-one verses contain verbs that are unique, rare, or uncommon in Old English, and almost all are confined, or mainly confined, in occurrence to the poetry, or are disproportionately frequent there. (110)

Poetic register explains why certain unstressed finite verbs alliterate. Griffith goes on to account for ornamental alliteration and to observe how alliterating un-displaced finites appear in clusters – six of them in four consecutive verses from "Battle of Maldon" and five in six verses from "Solomon and Saturn" (114–115). Anyone reading this fine article will come away impressed by its erudition and explanatory power. Those lacking expertise in meter, however, will hedge. The disagreement lies in accepting the relative probability of a credible analysis or stubbornly rejecting it for lack of absolute verification.

I cite Griffith's article only to highlight the suspicion that meter arouses for most Anglo-Saxonists. Yet this book is full of the most fruitful observations relative to metrical evidence. Jun Terasawa's "The Suppression of the Subjunctive in *Beowulf*: A Metrical Explanation" (69–81), for example, shows that metrical considerations can explain the appearance of indicative verb forms in clauses that typically require the subjunctive. Two examples occur in *Beowulf*, one in lines 1612a–1613b:

Ne nom he in þæm wicum, Weder-Geata leod,  
maðmæhta ma, þeh he þær monige geseah.

‘He, the prince of the Weder-Geats, did not take any more precious objects from that dwelling, although he saw many there.’ (69)

Terasawa explains that this type B verse would, if it were subjunctive, become a type A with a kind of anacrusis strictly avoided by the poet. Extending such observations to *butan-*, *nymþe-*, and *ær-*clauses, and to poems other than *Beowulf*, Terasawa alleges the avoidance of the subjunctive mood under conditions that would make verses unmetrical. The effect must have been subtle, perhaps akin to the mental hitch native English speakers have when encountering words like *graffito* or *computer mouses*.

Terasawa’s intriguing article is more narrowly focused than Rafael Pascual’s “Sievers, Bliss, Fulk, and Old English Metrical Theory” (17–33). In some respects, this is one of the most important contributions in the book, since it emphasizes key findings of Fulk’s that deviate from Bliss’ system of scansion. Pascual emphasizes that Bliss was wrong in all his departures from Sievers’ *Altgermanische Metrik*, but that Sievers was only conditionally right in the first place. Pascual begins by recounting Fulk’s conclusion, “that syllable quantity is more integral to the formation of metrical ictus than phonological stress” (17). His explanation of this proposition centers on *Beo* 2888b *syððan æþelingas*, which Bliss deemed a light verse because he did not believe in tertiary stress – that *æþelingas* contained two lifts, the second on *-ling-*. Sievers, by contrast, theorized that it must, since light verses with an unambiguously single ictus cannot appear in off-verses. As Pascual notes, this “incontrovertible distributional fact can only be taken as a sign of [the] unreliability” (20) of Bliss’ system. Furthermore, in an analysis of word-medial syllables, Fulk found that “long medial syllables are always ictic” (21), but the treatment of short medial syllables varies according to their position in the verse. Syllable quantity explains this variation. As Pascual correspondingly notes, historical syllable quantity can also explain secondary ictus, and, since syllables receiving primary stress are always long, syllable length – not phonological stress – explains Old English meter more comprehensively.

Pascual goes on to account for other errors and oversights in Bliss’ scholarship in similarly convincing detail. He concludes that Bliss’ alleged “innovations” in Sievers’ system “are devoid of empirical sufficiency” (30). This conclusion will disappoint those like me who devoured Bliss in their undergraduate years. It seems inconceivable that Bliss’ observations could be so deficient. To his credit, Pascual commends Bliss for using meter to detect scribal corruptions but quickly alleges that Bliss’ interpretation of verses like *ræhte ongean* (*Beo* 747b) and *lissa*

*gelong* (*Beo* 2150a) would mask obvious solecisms. The innovations are Fulk's, of course, but one appreciates the clarity of Pascual's superb exposition.

As Bliss asserted, studying meter can expose scribal corruption. Leonard Neidorf's contribution, "Metrical Criteria for the Emendation of Old English Poetic Texts" (52–68), reasserts this claim, which is repeatedly dogged by "deep-seated suspicions" (53). Neidorf addresses whether Anglo-Saxon poets "deliberately composed unmetrical verses" (*ibid.*) Evidence is provided by texts surviving in multiple copies: "Soul and Body", "Solomon and Saturn", "Daniel", "Azarias", and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* poems. Fourteen three-position verses are shown to be spurious in every instance, the result of accidental miscopying – corrupted mostly by the loss of inflectional endings. An extension of this tendency to *Beowulf* suggests that its three-position verses are similarly faulty, not the consequence of poetic originality. Nor are five-position verses acceptable. In some of these cases, unthinking scribes seem to have introduced the errors by making poetic expression conform to prose. For example, the morpheme *hasu-* 'gray, dun' in the Old English hapax legomenon *hasupadan* ('gray-garmented [eagle]' from "Battle of Brunanburh", 62b) was turned into a weak adjective *hasuwan*. If ever any deliberate revision conveyed scribal ignorance of poetic diction, this example would serve nicely.

Neidorf goes on to investigate Sievers' expanded type D\* verses with expected double alliteration, the rule of precedence that governs the alliteration of stressed syllables, anacrusis, and Kuhn's law of particles, which states that particles (e.g., pronouns, demonstratives, and finite verbs) can bear stress when "displaced from the first drop of the verse clause" (61). Two violations of Kuhn's law in this small corpus are revealing. Neidorf concludes his discussion with a section entitled "Genuine unmetrical verses?" (62). Examples of deliberate unmetricality, he observes, belong exclusively to two late poems with one verse each of five metrical positions. The loss of tertiary ictus reflected in the phonology of late Old English explains these anomalies, not poetic ingenuity. The cynics would accuse Neidorf of tendentiousness, of course, but we need only ask how the unmetrical *þæt þu wære þurh flæsc* ("Soul and Body", 44a) is any more "original" or transgressive than the likeliest metrical alternative, *þæt þu wære þurh flæsce*.

The other essays on metrics in this Festschrift are just as revelatory, especially those by Geoffrey Russom (82–102), Donka Minkova (122–143), and Megan E. Hartmann (311–330) – though I have a particular admiration for the computer analysis of *Beowulfian* syntax undertaken by Ecay and Pintzuk (144–171). Similarly, the contributions on Old English language will be widely cited as original analyses of semantics and style. In "The Anglo-Saxons and *Superbia*: Finding a Word for it" (172–189), George Clark revisits the problematic sense of Latin *superbia*, starting from Hans Schabram's 1965 study of its Old English renderings.

The problem derives from a Christian morality. Clark suggests that identifying a negative valence to pride “in a culture that valued physical courage and daring” must have “posed a problem, or a shock” (173). His examination has the virtue of being a thorough review of Schabram’s impeccable scholarship, with digressive insights into passages from Old English verse and prose.

While Clark’s insights are more global, Haruko Momma (“*Worm: A Lexical Approach to the Beowulf Manuscript*”, 200–214) focuses on the meaning of a single noun, OE *wyrm* ‘worm, dragon’ in the Nowell Codex. She observes that OE *wyrm* occurs about 325 times in the corpus. Bafflingly, the term can denote both a dragon and a crawling insect – a “zoologically mixed semantic range” (201). After noting that the 22 occurrences of OE *wyrm* in *Beowulf* do not reference insects or worms, Momma studies its lexical distribution versus near-synonymous lexemes as evidence of “cultural geography” (203) in the *Beowulf* manuscript. This approach generates some clever deductions. In the “Letter of Alexander to Aristotle”, the term *nædre* ‘snake’ describes the serpent genus *cerastes*, which is only described by OE *wyrm* when the serpent evokes dread for Alexander’s men. Once deemed noxious, Alexander’s weird serpents are no longer *nædran*. Similarly, the “expressed genre” (208) of *Wonders of the East* suggests to Momma that the avoidance of OE *wyrm* for creatures that resemble dragons reflected the nature of the text as a “treatise objectively describing one marvel after another” (*ibid.*).

Dennis Cronan looks at poetic words in Old English (256–275), defining them by distributional taxonomies: “262 simple nouns and adjectives, 13 adverbs and 66 verbs with or without prefixes” (265), not to mention 843 compounds and 2,549 hapax legomena, some of which occur twice in the same poem. Cronan puts these 3,763 poetic words into perspective, noting that 44 % of headwords found in pre-Conquest verse are “poetic” (267). Using a figure of 115,000 “primarily content words” across all of Old English poetry, Cronan asserts that almost 11 % of “content words” (12,400 occurrences) are “poetic” (*ibid.*). But Cronan’s study is not merely statistical, for he also suggests ways of construing poetic terminology, raising questions of its alleged ‘archaic’ significance. In modern English, obsolete technological terms like *macadam* and *wireless* evoke bygone eras, while the equally archaic *computer* has retained its currency. But which term sounds ‘poetic’:

Does that hard, honest hand now clasp  
 The tiller in its careful grasp, –  
     With every summer breeze  
 When ladies sail, in lady-fear, –  
 Or tug the oar a gondolier  
     On smooth Macadam seas? (Thomas Hood, “Stanzas to Tom Woodgate”, 23)

Just as *macadam* in my example belongs with the Victorian sexism of “lady-fear”, Old English poetic diction belongs, in Cronan’s view, to a “social ideology” (257) that arose in tandem with it. The ideology is heroic, and “every poetic word is a minor metonym” that reinforces “the values of the tradition” (270).

Andy Orchard visits “The Originality of *Andreas*” (331–370) with an examination of poetic indebtedness. It is widely debated whether the *Andreas* poet knew *Beowulf*, but Orchard identifies borrowings from it and from all of Cynewulf’s signed poems, among other works. The evidence derives from “shared formulas” and “rare poetic compounds and clusters of overlapping diction” (333). Orchard extends and refines the case made by A. M. Powell in an unpublished 2002 dissertation, and his new evidence is compelling:

*Beowulf* ll. 1–3

Hwæt, we Gar-dena /  
in geardagum, fand  
þeod-cyninga /  
þrym gefrunon,  
hu ða æpelingas /  
ellen fremedon

*Fates of the Apostles* ll. 1–3 *Andreas* ll. 1–3

Hwæt, we gefrunan /  
on fyrndagum  
twelfe under tunglum, /  
tir-eadige hæleð  
þeodnes þegnas. /  
No hira þrym alæg

Hwæt, ic þysne sang /  
siðgeomor  
on secum sefan, /  
samnode wide,  
hu þa æpelingas /  
ellen cyðdon.

“Tradition” insufficiently explains these parallels, and Orchard adduces other verbal contiguities unique to *Beowulf* and Cynewulf’s oeuvre, including 32 nominal and adjectival compounds gathered in an appendix: *ær-geweorc* ‘ancient work’, *ban-hring* ‘bone-ring’ (= vertebra), *beadu-lac* ‘battle-sport’, *beag-sæl* ‘ring-hall’, *beor-þegu* ‘beer-drinking’, *blod-fag* ‘blood-stained’, etc. (355). The author of *Andreas* does not copy slavishly. On the contrary, he makes slight adjustments, such as taking “genitive phrases from the earlier poems and [turning] them into compounds unique in the corpus” (341). Orchard adduces: *under heofones hwealf* (*Beo* 576a) > *under heofon hwealfe* (*And* 545a, 1042a); *morðres scyldig* (*Beo* 1683a) > *morðorscyldige* (*And* 1599b). This evidence, and more, leads Orchard to conclude that the *Andreas* poet reflexively borrowed from older, presumably recognizable, poetic models, recycling familiar diction, locutions, and formulas to create a pastiche of verbal novelty.

In the final essay of this compilation (392–414), Tom Shippey traces the “struggle going on for the soul of *Beowulf*-studies” (392) from the time of J. R. R. Tolkien’s 1936 “*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics”. Tolkien ventured a corrective to linguistic micro-analyses promoted by continental philologists (i.e., German scholars), but even post-War critics still could not read *Beowulf* without (over)emphasizing certain discrete components, like the digressions. Evaluating the “Fight at Finnsburg” or the Unferth episodes seemed strategic in the 1950s, at which time ‘structure’ served as a key hermeneutic strategy: parallelisms were

highlighted, analogies adduced, and patterns exposed. Some remained unconvinced of the poem's unity, however. Tolkien's rival Kenneth Sisam argued against it in *The Structure of Beowulf* (1965), while Edward B. Irving supported the poem's subtle arc in *A Reading of Beowulf* (1968). Disagreements then flared about the epic's anachronistic Christianity, Margaret Goldsmith's *Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf'* (1970) doing far more than "The Monsters and the Critics" to incite academic feuds. It seemed essential for Anglo-Saxonists to heap scorn on *Mode and Meaning* in every context.

Having identified the "digressions, structure, theme, [and] religious orientation" (397) as the mid-century preoccupation of Anglo-American *Beowulf* scholarship, Shippey addresses the scholarly crisis leading up to the Toronto "Dating of *Beowulf*" conference in 1980. Oral-formulaic theory was briefly hot, but dwindled in esteem. In the absence of much credible work on the poem in the 1970s, the Toronto venture created shockwaves. Shippey presents the conference as assailing the views of Dorothy Whitelock, whose laudable *Audience of Beowulf* (1951) was roundly patronized. "Four [papers] came from the home team", Shippey remarks, naming Walter Goffart, Alexander Murray, Roberta Frank, and Colin Chase (401). Moreover, Ashley Amos (later editor of the Toronto *Dictionary of Old English*) challenged the general consensus that *Beowulf* was pre-800 by asserting that linguistic and metrical tests alleging an early date were unreliable (see Amos 1980). Unconstrained by a date for which little historical or cultural evidence could be adduced, *Beowulf* studies ran amok, encouraging all manner of exuberant critiques.

The Fulk era dawned at this very moment with the publication of Fulk's review of the conference proceedings (*The Dating of Beowulf*, ed. Chase, 1981). He called the results "uniformly disappointing" (402). Fulk went on to forge his own path with a spate of influential writings (especially *A History of Old English Meter*, 1992) that made Philology relevant again. Now firmly planted in the Fulk era, we can take stock of a *Beowulf* renewal that embraces trenchant metrical, lexical, and semantic studies like those in this fine book. The cynics have not been banished, admittedly, and Shippey remains cautious about the tides of scholarly fashion. Yet Fulk's authority will continue to hold sway over the profession as junior philologists digest, re-formulate, and extend his bedrock findings.

I have summarized only a few of the twenty outstanding articles in this landmark book. Many are so (gratifyingly) technical, they defy abridgement. Writing complex arguments, like having expertise, is no criticism, however. Do you want your cardiologist to diagnose a 'dicky ticker' or 'Takotsubo cardiomyopathy'? Ultimately, this volume is a magisterial tribute to its inspirational dedicatee. In a transcendent career filled with accomplishments of seismic magnitude, Rob Fulk has re-asserted the methodological responsibility this book emulates. In

other words, *Old English Philology* affirms philological learning as an essential adjunct to literary criticism.

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