



Filologia del testo inglese medievale

CdL in Lingue e Letterature Europee e Americane

A.A. 2020/21

PROF. OMAR KHALAF

Old English verse

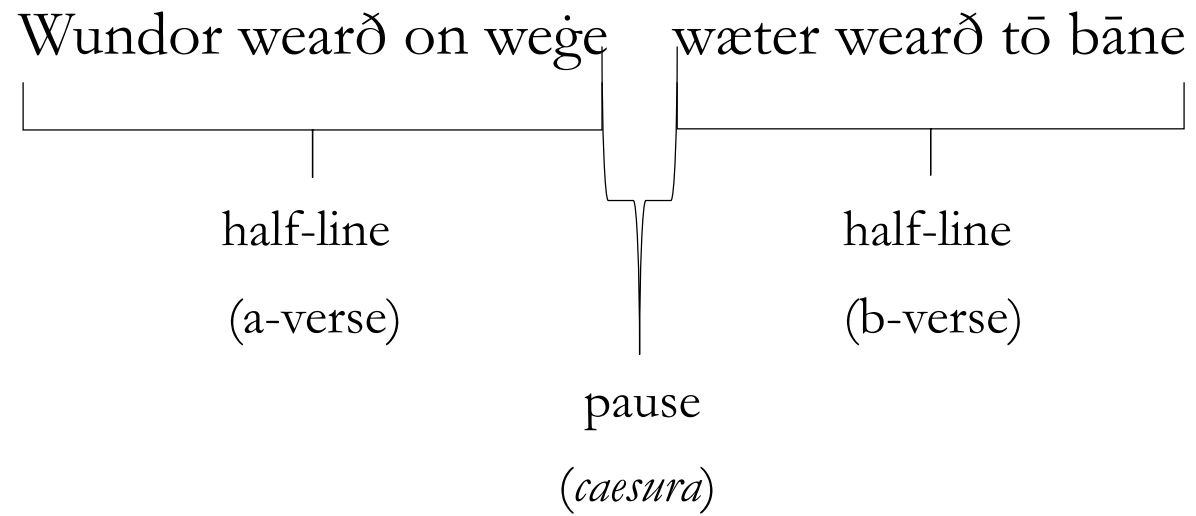
Wundor wearð on wege wæter wearð tō bāne

Old English verse

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A wonder happened on the way water turned to bone

Old English verse



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The basic unit of OE poetry is the half-line. It consists of two heavily stressed syllables (**lifts**), unstressed syllables (**dips**), and, sometimes, of lightly stressed syllables.

A typical half-line is made of two lifts and two dips, but variations are recorded.

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The number of unstressed syllables varies greatly; occasionally more stressed syllables occur within the half-line, determining a **hypermetric verse**

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Kennings (compound words): *eardstapa*, lit. ‘eart-stepper’ for ‘man’; *bānhūs*, lit. ‘bone-house’ for ‘body’; *bronrād*, lit. ‘hwale-road’ for ‘ocean’

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Bord to gebeorge, ‘board as protection’, is a variation for *linde*. Both expressions mean ‘shield’.

Variation is a stylistic technique very much used by Old English poets

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Swā hī bylde forð bearn Ælfrices,
wiga wintrum geong, wordum mælde,
Ælfwine þā cwæð, he on ellen spræc

[lit. ‘Thus [he] urged them forth / son of Ælfric // warrior in winters young / with words he spoke // Ælfwine then spoke / he in courage spoke]

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Swā hī bylde forð **bearn Ælfrices,**
wiga wintrum geong, wordum mælde,
Ælfwine þā cwæð, he on ellen spræc

Then he urged them forth, **the son of Ælfric,**
warrior young in winters, he declared with words,
Ælfwine then spoke, he said with courage

The Battle of Brunanburh

<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/wp146tq7625>

(fol. 26r-v)