

The sixth type of Germanic alliterative verse : the case of Old English Beowulf (Part 2)

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The sixth type of Germanic alliterative verse:

the case of Old English *Beowulf**

Part II

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Abstract

According to Sievers (1885, 1893), there are five metrical types of Germanic alliterative poetry based on two stressed positions and two unstressed positions. With S and W representing a strong position and a weak position, respectively, these five are SWSW (Type A), WSWS (Type B), WSSW (Type C), SSWW (Type D), and SWWS (Type E), with the sixth possible combination WWSS lacking from the inventory. However, critical evaluation of earlier metrical analyses reveals that this sixth type is in fact present in Old English *Beowulf*. The two patterns of this type WWSS are verses with a disyllabic compound, as *Mē þone wælvæðs* ‘... me for the murderous onslaught’, and verses with a ‘contracted’ vowel (i.e. a vowel that has arisen from hiatus) as the second lift, as *Swā sceal mán dōn* ‘as a man should do’. Previous analyses subsumed the above verses under the basic five by stipulation of metrical stress and by an interpretive device that ‘decontracts’ a monosyllabic word form into the stem syllable and the ending syllable (cf. Sievers 1885, 1893, Bliss 1967, Fulk 1992, Hutcheson 1995, Suzuki 1996 among others). However, not only is metrical stress relative by nature, but also ‘decontraction’ as a metrical device presupposes Sievers’s scansion and lacks independent motivation. Arranging strong and weak positions in alliterative verse is not restricted in the way in which WWSS pattern is prohibited.

Keywords: metrical types, Germanic alliterative verse, Old English, *Beowulf*, decontraction

This paper claims that there is the sixth type of Germanic alliterative verse, i.e. WWSS, in addition to Sievers’s five metrical types. As background information of the proposed analysis, Part I illustrated properties of Germanic alliterative verse and Sievers’s scansion. In Part II, section 2.5 below discusses two metrical devices, i.e. resolution and decontraction. It will be shown, following Touster (1954), that decontraction as a metrical device lacks independent justification

and thus must be rejected. Further, section 3.1 discusses the sixth-type verses with a disyllabic compound in *Beowulf*, e.g. *Mē þone wælræðes* ‘... me for the murderous onslaught’. In Part III, the rest of section 3 will discuss the sixth-type verses with a ‘contracted’ vowel as the second lift, other possible sixth-type verses, and various problems associated with the proposed analysis.

2. Metrical interpretation of Germanic alliterative poetry (continued)

2.5. Interpretive devices

2.5.1. Resolution

As discussed in section 2.1 in Part I, a strong position is normally filled by one stressed syllable in contrast to weak positions that may accommodate more than one syllable. As an additional restriction on strong positions, the stressed syllable that fills a lift must be heavy. A stressed light syllable forms a lift together with the following unstressed syllable. This device is called resolution. For example, in the verse given in (28), the alliterating syllable *gu-* is light and thus fills a lift together with the following unstressed syllable *-man*.¹

	W	S	S	W	
	∧	∧			
(28)	wolde	gúman	findan	2294b	
	wanted	man	find		‘he wanted to find the man’

Without resolution, the verse would be of the pattern WSWSW and thus have five positions contrary to the four position requirement. However, with resolution, the unstressed syllable between the two stressed syllables is subsumed under the preceding strong position. Thus the verse is of the pattern WSSW, i.e. Type C.

In most metrical analyses resolution is consistently suspended when a lift filled by a stressed light syllable directly follows another lift. For example, in the verse given in (29) the light syllable *gu-* of *guma* is directly preceded by a lift *seld-* and thus fills a lift on its own.

(29)	nis	þæt	sældgúma	249b	
	not-is	that	retainer		‘that is not a retainer’

Although most metrists accept resolution and its suspension as metrical devices, there are

also disagreements. Thus Hoover (1985) rejects the notion resolution and Obst (1987) assumes that resolution is never suspended and applied consistently. I leave open the question of whether resolution and its suspension are valid and follow the conventional assumption just illustrated: the discussions on the sixth type in section 3 below and in Part III do not depend on the validity of resolution and its suspension. For further discussions on resolution, see Sievers (1885), Bliss (1967: 27-35), Hoover (1985: 119-138), Obst (1987: 20-24), Cable (1991: 16-20), Hutcheson (1995: 68-96), Suzuki (1996: 171-275), and Russom (1998: 97-117).

2.5.2. Decontraction

In contrast to resolution, decontraction is a device whereby one stressed syllable is interpreted as filling two metrical positions, i.e. a sequence of a lift and a drop, provided that that syllable has arisen from hiatus by contraction (cf. Sievers 1885: 475-480, 1893: 123ff, Richter 1910: 13-15, Campbell 1959: §§234-239, Amos 1980: 40-63, Hoover 1985: 58, 60-62, Russom 1987: 39-41, Fulk 1992: 92-121, Hutcheson 1995: 40-45, but Touster 1954).² This device applies both to diachronically contracted vowels that follow from the loss of intervocalic *h*, *j*, and *w* at different stages and to synchronically contracted vowels that result from juxtaposition of a vowel-final stem and a vowel-initial ending.

As an example of contraction of the first type, the verse in (30) consists only of three syllables and thus does not provide four metrical positions, which is required by Sievers's analysis.³

- (30) hēan hū-ses 116a
 high house 'the lofty house'

The adjective *hēan* in this verse historically goes back to the stem *hēah* plus the ending *-an*. With loss of intervocalic *h*, the stem vowel and the ending vowel merged into one. By decontraction, the monosyllabic word *hēan* is interpreted as a sequence of a stressed heavy syllable and an unstressed syllable, i.e. a lift and a drop.⁴ Together with the following word *hūses*, which consists also of a lift and a drop, the entire verse with only three syllables is a regular Type A, as shown in (31).

- (31) hēan hū-ses
 \bigwedge | |
 SW S W

With decontraction, three-syllable verses may conform to the four-syllable requirement and the typology of Sievers's scansion.

Examples of the second type of decontraction are mostly forms of *dōn* 'to do' and *gān* 'to go'. Without decontraction, the verse in (32) has two successive strong positions *man dōn* in verse-final position, which does not fit any of Sievers's five types.

	$\begin{array}{c} \text{W} \\ \wedge \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \text{S} \\ \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \text{S W} \\ \vee \end{array}$	
(32)	Swā sceal	<u>m</u> án dōn	1534b	
	as	should man do	'As a man should do'	

With decontraction, however, the infinitive *dōn* is decomposed into a stressed stem syllable and an unstressed ending syllable, thus forming a sequence of a lift and a drop. As shown in (32), with an invisible verse-final drop, this apparently anomalous verse comes to fall under the regular Type C, i.e. WSSW. Here decontraction is used to make a deviant pattern into a canonical type.

Like anacrusis (cf. 2.4.1 in Part I) and resolution (cf. section 2.5.1 above), decontraction is not used consistently every time when relevant forms occur in the text. Instead, application of decontraction depends on whether or not its application yields a valid metrical pattern. For example, according to Amos's (1980: 57) scansion, the metrical status of the word *frēan* varies in three verses given in (33): obligatory in 271a, yielding Type A verse, optional in 291a, resulting in either Type A with decontraction or Type D without decontraction, and prohibited in 2794b, which is Type E.

(33)	<u>D</u> éniga frēan	271a	
	of-Danes lord	'to the lord of the Danes'	
	<u>f</u> rēan Scýldinga	291a	
	lord of-Scyldings	'to the lord of the Scyldings'	
	<u>F</u> rēan ealles ðánc	2794b	
	Lord all thank	'thanks to the Lord for all'	

Furthermore, use of decontraction varies depending on analyses. Metrists do agree on resorting to decontraction for three-syllable verses such as *hēan hūses* (cf. (30) above) and verses that end with two successive stressed syllables such as *Swā sceal man dōn* (cf. (32) above) because these are anomalous in Sieversian metrical analysis. However, in other cases, opinions vary as to the actual application or non-application of decontraction. In addition, although there seems to be agreement on the validity of decontraction as a metrical device, the validity of decontraction as a device for dating is controversial.

The purpose of the following discussions is to question the validity of decontraction as a metrical device. Since the evidence for archaism of decontraction can be at the same time evidence for decontraction as a metrical device, the remainder of this section will examine this evidence and present arguments against decontraction as a metrical device.

Earlier literature has presented two pieces of evidence for decontraction as a device for dating poems. First, disyllabic forms are in fact attested in texts, e.g. *hēagan* for *hēan*, *dōan* for *dōn* (cf. Sievers 1885: 477-479, 1893: 123, Campbell 1959: 347-349, Brunner 1965: 358-360, Amos 1980: 41-43, and Fulk 1992: 115-121). A second piece of evidence for decontraction is greater frequency of decontracted forms in chronologically earlier poems (cf. Amos 1980 and Fulk 1992; see below). Since disyllabic forms are considered as more archaic than contracted monosyllabic forms, the assumption is that decontraction as disyllabic interpretation of monosyllabic forms must be used more frequently in earlier texts than later texts. As will be shown, neither piece of the evidence just mentioned is decisive.

As for the first piece of evidence, Amos (1980: 45) concludes that the attested disyllabic forms may very well be due to analogy instead of being archaism (cf. also Quirk 1950). On the other hand, Fulk (1992: chapter 2) argues that, although evidence is not decisive for decontraction that involves the loss of *j* and *w* and decontraction that does not involve consonant loss, decontraction that involves the loss of *h* cannot be due to analogy. Unfortunately, the arguments that Fulk presents are not decisive. For example, he argues that the last syllable *bēot* in the verse *hæfde wordbeot* (*Genesis A*, 2762b; the macron omitted following Fulk) should be **bi-hāt-* by decontraction and that, since this archaic disyllabic form cannot be restored by analogy, use of decontraction in this verse must be the genuine case of archaism (Fulk 1992: 120). While his claim is valid that the form *bēot* can be interpreted as disyllabic only in reference to the earlier form and not by analogy, decontraction of the given form presupposes that the WWSS pattern as the verse originally is without decontraction is invalid, which itself requires verification. Thus, Fulk's claim that decontraction represents archaism remains merely a possibility.

As a further problem with the assumption that decontraction is archaism, although contracted forms caused by loss of intervocalic consonants (e.g. *hēan* for **hēahan*) historically go back to disyllabic forms, hiatus that results from juxtaposition of a vowel-final root and a vowel-initial ending cannot be shown to have existed at a prehistoric stage. Therefore, decontraction of forms that does not involve loss of consonants such as *dōn*, *gān*, and *gæð* cannot be shown to be archaism in the same sense as those forms that involve consonant loss. It can only result from morphological analysis.

In addition, attested disyllabic forms suggest that at least the words in question were perceived as disyllabic by those who used them, but it is not enough to prove that monosyllabic forms that historically or synchronically arose from hiatus were intended as disyllabic for metrical purposes. That is, if the words in question are metrically disyllabic, why are they not written disyllabic?

As a second piece of evidence for decontraction, according to both Amos (1980: 50-63) and Fulk (1992: 103), decontraction that involves the loss of intervocalic *h* is in fact more frequent in earlier poems such as *Genesis A*, *Daniel*, and *Beowulf* than later poems such as the *Cynewulf* canon and *Andreas*. The table below shows part of Fulk's (1992: 103) table with the number of decontracted and contracted forms of the poems in column A, excluding ambiguous forms (e.g. 291a in (33) above), and the dating of each poem in the first column, which is also taken from Fulk (1992: 94-101). To this information is added the ratios of decontracted and contracted forms (i.e. the number of decontracted forms divided by the number of contracted forms) in column B and the total number of relevant forms in the rightmost column.

TABLE 1 Frequency of decontraction in Old English poems

Poem	A		B	Total
<i>Genesis A</i> (8th c.)	27 : 4	=	6.75	31
<i>Daniel</i> (8th c.)	6 : 2	=	3.0	8
<i>Beowulf</i> (8th-9th c.)	15 : 9	=	1.67	24
The <i>Cynewulf</i> canon (9th c.)	3 : 11	=	0.27	14
<i>Andreas</i> (9th c.)	1 : 6	=	0.17	7
Poems by Alfred (9th c.)	2 : 9	=	0.22	11

N.B. A. Proportion of decontracted and contracted forms

B. The number of decontracted forms divided by the number of contracted forms

The table shows that the eighth century poems have distinctly higher ratios of decontracted forms in column B, i.e. over 1.0, than the ninth century poems, which show the ratios of well below one. However, the number of relevant forms is by no means large especially in the ninth century poems. According to Fulk (1992: 102-103), the tenth and eleventh century poems have no or only a few relevant forms. Although Fulk assumes that the decrease in the number of relevant forms might be due to poet's uncertainty about this device, this assumption remains merely a possibility. At any rate, the low number of relevant forms undermines the claim for archaism of this device.

Even if the decrease in ratios as shown in Table 1 is taken at face value, change in frequency of decontraction that involves loss of *h*, assuming that it is in fact an archaic feature as Fulk (1992) claims, is susceptible to reinterpretation. Many of the decontracted forms of eighth century poems that Fulk (1992: 94-99) gives involve three-syllable verses as *hēan hūses* in (30) above (cf. Amos: 43-44, fn. 12): six out of twenty-seven in *Genesis A*, two out of six in *Daniel*, and eight out of fifteen in *Beowulf*, as given in Column A in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2 Proportion of decontracted and contracted forms

Poem	A	B	C
<i>Genesis A</i> (8th c.)	6	6.75 (31)	5.25 (25)
<i>Daniel</i> (8th c.)	2	3.0 (8)	2.0 (6)
<i>Beowulf</i> (8th-9th c.)	8	1.67 (24)	0.78 (16)

N.B. A. The number of three-syllable verses

B. Ratio based on Fulk's (1992) analysis with the total number of relevant forms in the parentheses

C. Ratio when three-syllable verses are excluded, with the total number of relevant forms in the parentheses

In these verses, decontraction is applied in order to make three syllables into four. When three-syllable verses are excluded from consideration, the change in frequency of decontraction is less convincing than Fulk claims. Table 2 gives the ratios based on Fulk's analysis in column B (same as column B in Table 1 above) and in column C the ratios when three-syllable verses are excluded. As shown, the ratio in column C is distinctly lower than the ratio in column B. Thus, part of the reason for decrease in decontracted forms might very well be decrease of three-syllable verses in later poems.

As given in Table 1 above, there are fifteen verses that require application of decontraction in *Beowulf* according to Fulk (1992). Among them, eight are three-syllable verses, as just discussed. The other seven consist of four syllables or more. In two of them the stressed alliterating syllable is light and thus these verses would have only three positions with application of resolution and without decontraction, e.g. (34).

- | | | | | |
|------|---------------------|------|-------|----------------------|
| | S | W | S | |
| | ∧ | | | |
| (34) | <u>m</u> étodsceaft | sēon | 1180a | |
| | destiny | see | | ‘to see the destiny’ |

Here decontraction is applied to make three positions into four. One verse given in (35) has an unstressed disyllabic word between verse-initial and -final stressed monosyllables, i.e. *þone* between *beorh* and *hēan*. With decontraction applied to *hēan*, this verse is of Type A.

- | | | | | |
|------|---------------|------|------|-------------------|
| (35) | <u>b</u> eorh | þone | hēan | 3097b |
| | barrow | the | high | ‘the high barrow’ |

The verse in (35), however, can be interpreted as of Type E without decontraction, i.e. SWWS, although it is anomalous in not having a secondary lift. This analysis is justified in that there are some other Type E verses with no secondary lift in *Beowulf* (cf. section 2.3.1 in Part I). Yet another verse given in (36) has two successive lifts in verse-final position.

- | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|------|-------|-------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| (36) | swā | hȳ | nǣfre | <u>m</u> án | lȳhð | 1048b |
| | so | them | never | man | blames | ‘so that one never blames them’ |

Given the assumption that two successive lifts are not allowed in verse-final position, the verse-final *lȳhð* must be decomposed into the stem syllable and the ending syllable, i.e. a lift and a drop. Therefore, decontraction in the verse given in (36) is dictated by typology of Sievers’s scansion.

Eight three-syllable verses mentioned earlier and four other verses that have been just discussed are analyzed with decontraction not only by Fulk (1992) but also by other scholars such as Amos (1980: 56) and Suzuki (1996: 394 n.6). As for the rest, i.e. the other three verses given

in (37), interpretation varies among the three scholars just mentioned.

(37) *þæt hē mē ongēan slēa* 681b
 so-that he me against strike 'so that he would strike at me'

féorran ond nēan 839b
 far and near 'far and near'

néarofāges nīð 2317a
 cruelly-hostile malice 'cruelly hostile malice'

The verses 681b and 839b in (37) are also analyzed with decontraction by Suzuki (1996), but Amos (1980) classifies them as 'ambiguous', i.e. both application and non-application of decontraction yield valid scansion. Such different analyses result from different assumptions as to which requirements must be observed or can be violated if necessary (cf. Fulk 1992: 92-93). The verse 2317a given in (37) literally has a disyllabic form, i.e. *-fāges* from the stem *fāh* and the genitive singular ending *-es*. Decontraction is thus unnecessary and neither Amos (1980) nor Suzuki (1996) include this verse in their list.

Although there is an apparent decrease in the number of decontracted forms in chronologically later poems, the evidence involves uncertainty for three reasons as has been discussed. First, there is also a decrease in the number of relevant forms, which is not accounted for. Second, several verses in the sample consist of three syllables or three positions with resolution, which might itself (i.e. three-syllable/position verses) be archaism rather than decontraction. Third, analysis may vary depending on metrists, i.e. assumptions.

The only justification for disyllabic interpretation is Sievers's scansion, as Touster (1954: 28) aptly claims. However, there are a number of subtypes of and deviations from Sievers's analysis even with decontraction. Also, we are not certain to what extent the basic five patterns are observed in verse composition if they are valid at all. In conclusion, the validity of decontraction as a metrical device is highly questionable.

2.6. Summary of section 2

As has been shown so far, Sieversian scansion is by no means simple and straightforward, but involves inconsistencies and is in a number of respects controversial. Sievers's five metrical

types result from stress patterns of arranged words and are not part of metrical conventions. Words can be arranged so that two unstressed syllables and two stressed syllables occur in a sequence. There seems to be no reason why the sixth possible pattern WWSS should not arise except that, given interpretive devices, WWSS is interpreted as a realization of a different pattern.

3. The sixth type

With the preceding discussions as background, this section will show that many of the verses that have been analyzed as Type A3 or C in earlier literature in fact show the stress pattern WWSS, i.e. the sixth possibility which is absent from Sievers's scansion.

The two successive weak positions of this pattern require at least two unstressed syllables. Since a sequence of unstressed syllables most frequently occur in clause-initial position, the verse of the sixth type is restricted to clause-initial verses with only one exception. As a second feature concerning the weak positions, difference in stress level of the two drops is not obvious in sixth-type verses, while in Types D and E one of the two drops in a sequence is usually stronger than the other (cf. section 2.3.1 in Part I). In some verses of Type E, however, the secondary lift cannot be determined on the basis of natural stress (cf. (9) and the discussions thereby in Part I). Lack of stress-level difference of two drops is thus not without parallel. Further, in the sixth-type verses the number of the unstressed words preceding the alliterating lift varies from one to four and it is often unclear where the boundary lies between the two drops. The two weak positions are thus assumed to merge into one. A possible parallel is the verse-initial drop of A3 verses, which is also restricted to the clause-initial position (cf. section 2.4.2.1 in Part I). As already discussed, the clause-initial sequence of unstressed light elements together forms one drop.

The two lifts that follow the two drops are trochaic: except for the one verse with possible double alliteration, the first lift alliterates and the second does not. Two major patterns are observed. Mostly in a-verses the two lifts are filled by each element of a disyllabic compound (cf. section 3.1 below). On the other hand, mostly in b-verses the two successive lifts are filled by two monosyllabic words or elements, the second of which involves decontraction in Sieversian scansion (cf. section 3.2 in Part III). Other possible examples of the sixth type involve verses with a thematic vowel as the second lift in addition to some sporadic examples, but the interpretation of all these other verses is controversial (section 3.3 in Part III).

when it is used as an independent word. For example, each element of the compound *wælræ̅s* in (38) above is actually used alone and fills a lift. That is, as shown in (40), *wæ̅l* fills the alliterating lift in line 3027b and *ræ̅s* fills the non-alliterating lift in line 2626b.

- (40) *wæ̅l* *ræ̅afode* 3027b
 the-slain plundered ‘...plundered the slain’
- þæt hē gū̅ðe ræ̅s* 2626b
 that he war onslaught ‘that he...onslaught in the war’

Further, in Sieversian scansion each element of the same compound fills a lift if the compound has an unstressed suffix syllable (cf. section 2.3.2 in Part I). Thus the verse in (41) is of Type C.

- (41) *æfter þām wæ̅lræ̅se* 824a
 after the murderous-onslaught ‘after the murderous onslaught’
 Cf. also 2531a

In Sieversian metrical analysis, with the same compound *wælræ̅s* preceded by two unstressed words, the second element fills a heavy drop if it lacks an inflectional ending as in (38), but, as shown in (41), it fills a non-alliterating lift if it is followed by an inflectional ending. As already argued in section 2.3.2 in Part I, this different metrical treatment of the same element with or without an inflectional ending appears to be an arbitrary feature dictated by metrical analysis (cf. also Hoover 1985). It is more reasonable to assign the same level of metrical stress to the second element of a compound whether or not it is followed by an unstressed syllable than to assign different metrical stress as in Sieversian scansion. Thus, in the proposed analysis, the second element *-ræ̅s* fills a non-alliterating lift in (38) as in (41).

As already noted at the beginning of section 3, it is not always possible to divide a sequence of unstressed words into two weak positions or, as the potential non-alliterating lift in A3 verses discussed in section 2.4.2.1 in Part I, to choose one of the words as filling a secondary lift except by arbitrary decision. Thus it would be reasonable to assume that the two weak positions merge into one in this sixth type. This apparent anomaly of this type follows from linguistic organization of the clause-initial sequence of grammatical words that characterizes the weak position(s) of all the sixth type verses. A sequence of unstressed syllables does occur in clause-non-initial

position, such as a preposition and a demonstrative preceding a noun, as given in (41) above. However, a verse-initial sequence of unstressed syllables that characterizes the sixth type is most easily obtained in clause-initial position where unstressed grammatical elements tend to cluster (cf. Kuhn 1933, Hock 1985, Pintzuk 1991 among others). The number of clause-initial unstressed syllables or words may exceed two where metrical regularity requires two weak positions. This is where there is a gap between metrical requirement and linguistic structure.

On the other hand, the secondary lift in Types D and E (cf. section 2.3 in Part I) is required for the same reason, i.e. by linguistic restriction, and not by arbitrary metrical stipulation. The two weak positions in Types D and E, i.e. SSWW and SWWS, respectively, are necessarily clause-non-initial because the initial position is occupied by a strong position, unless the clause begins in verse-medial position, as in (42), where the clause boundary is indicated with a slash.

- (42) Wá bið þæm / ðe sceál 183b
 woe is that who shall 'Woe to that one who shall...'

Since unstressed grammatical words such as conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns and demonstratives tend to occur clause- or phrase-initially (cf. e.g. (38) – (41) above), the verse-medial weak positions in verses of Types D and E are mostly filled by one or more unstressed syllables that follow the primary word stress. When both of the two syllables that fill the drops belong to the same word as the stressed syllable that precedes them, then in a number of verses one of them is filled by the stressed syllable of the second element of a compound, as indicated by the grave accent in (43).

- (43) éal ínnewèard 998a
 all within 'all within'
- flódýþum féor 542a
 sea-waves far 'far over the sea-waves'

This syllable, which bears certain amount of stress, i.e. the syllable marked with a grave accent in (43), then, fills a secondary lift. Thus the sequence of two weak positions is metrically different between the sixth type on the one hand and Types D and E on the other, because it is filled by linguistically different material, i.e. by the clause-initial sequence of grammatical

elements in the sixth type and typically by the syllables that follow the primary stress of the word in Types D and E.

The weak position of this group of verses consists of three or four syllables or two to four words. For example, in *Mē þone wælvæðs* (cf. (38) above), it consists of three syllables or two words. In (44) below, as indicated in italics, the weak position consists of as many as four syllables or four words.

- (44) *oð þæt hē ðā bānhūs* 3147a
 until that it the bone-house ‘until it...the body’

While the weak position has at least two unstressed syllables in a-verses of this group, in one of the four b-verses, i.e. 112b given in (45), there is only one unstressed syllable preceding the alliterating lift.

- (45) ond *ǫrcnēas* 112b
 and evil-spirits ‘and evil spirits...’

As already mentioned above, this b-verse involves a final ‘contracted’ vowel. As will be discussed in section 3.2 in Part III, several other verses that involve a contracted vowel have only one unstressed syllable. Although verses with only one unstressed syllable appear anomalous, this is an expected anomaly if the verse of the sixth type has one merged weak position.

In addition to the seventeen a-verses and four b-verses mentioned at the beginning, five other verses with resolution of the first lift belong to this group. As given in (46), the first element of the verse-final compound consists of a stressed light syllable and an unstressed syllable, together forming a resolved lift (cf. section 2.5.1 above). The second element of the compound is monosyllabic and fills the second lift.

- (46) Ðonne wæs *þeos mēdohéal* 484a
 then was this mead-hall ‘Then this mead hall was...’

Thus each element of the verse-final compound fills a lift, as is the case with the other sixth-type verses discussed so far. According to Sieversian scansion verses such as the one in (46) are again A3 with a final heavy drop.

Other than *medo-heal* ‘mead-hall’ given in (46), compounds in the sixth-type verses that require the resolution of the first lift are: *here-pād* ‘coat of mail’ (2258a), *cyne-dōm* ‘royal power’ (2376a), *brego-stōl* ‘princely seat, throne’ (2389a), and *heaðo-rinc* ‘warrior; lit. war-man/warrior’ (2466a).

Another possibility is resolution of the second lift, i.e. verses with a compound where the second disyllabic element has a stressed light syllable, as in (47).

- (47) Hæfde lāndwára 2321a
 had dwellers-in-the-land ‘He had...the dwellers in the land’

Since most metrists assume that resolution is not applied to the syllable directly following a lift (cf. section 2.5.1 above), I do not include the verses where the second lift must be resolved. Since the unresolved second lift is followed by an unstressed syllable, the verse in (47) is of Type C, i.e. WSSW, in Sievers’s scansion.

As discussed in section 2.5.1 above, the validity of resolution as a metrical device is controversial and is neither defended nor rejected in this paper. Even without resolution, the preceding discussions have already established that there are verses of the pattern WWSS with a verse-final compound that fills both lifts.

As a further possibility of verses of this group, a number of verses with what Bliss (1967) calls ‘ornamental’ alliteration on the finite verb (cf. section 2.4.2.1 in Part I) have a verse-final disyllabic compound like other verses discussed so far. However, as already discussed, the alliteration on the finite verb must be interpreted as marking stress rather than being ‘ornamental’, as indicated in (48).

- (48) Gewāt þā ofer wægholm 217a
 went then over sea ‘...went then over the sea’

Thus verses with ‘ornamental’ alliteration as given again in (48) have the first lift filled by this alliterating verb and are not of the sixth type. Since the second lift is filled by the first element of the verse-final compound, the second element of the compound, although potentially stressable, fills a drop. Thus, following Sieversian scansion, the verse in (48) is of Type A, i.e. SWSW, with anacrusis.

In total, there are twenty-six verses of the pattern WWSS with verse-final compounds fill-

ing two lifts. This number includes twenty-two a-verses, five of which have the resolved first lift, and four b-verses, but does not include verses where the second lift requires resolution or verses with Bliss's 'ornamental' alliteration on the finite verb. For a complete list of the twenty-one a-verses that do not involve a 'contracted' vowel, see Appendix, section 1, in Part III. One of the a-verses and all the four b-verses of this group have a 'contracted' vowel in verse-final position and are categorized with other sixth type verses with a final 'contracted' vowel.

As the numbers just given show, this group of verses is distinctly more frequent in a-verses than in b-verses. Part of the reason seems to be that a-verses end with a compound more often than b-verses. Of the first 500 lines of *Beowulf*, i.e. about one-sixth of the entire poem, 163 a-verses but only 70 b-verses have a compound in verse-final position. Compared to a-verses, b-verses end with a compound less frequently because a number of b-verses have a verb in verse-final position (cf. section 3.2 in Part III). That is, compounds in the verse-final position occur more than twice as often in a-verses as in b-verses. This ratio is way below the ratio of twenty-two a-verses vs. four b-verses of this group, which has been discussed in this section. I have no explanation for the greater frequency in a-verses than is expected.

Notes

- * I thank two anonymous reviewers for comments on an earlier version of this paper.
- 1 As in Part I, examples from Old English *Beowulf* are taken from Klaeber's (1950) edition. The number refers to the line number and a and b after the line number represent the a-verse and the b-verse, respectively. Accent marks are supplied to show strong positions in verse. Alliteration is marked with an underline. Punctuation marks are omitted.
- 2 The following two works on decontraction are not available to me and thus are not discussed here:
Sarrazin, G. 1913. *Von Kädmon bis Kynewulf: Eine litterarhistorische Studie*. Berlin: Mayer & Müller.
Seiffert, Friedrich. 1913. *Die Behandlung der Wörter mit auslautenden ursprünglich silbischen Liquiden oder Nasalen und mit Kontraktionsvokalen in der Genesis A und im Beowulf*. Dissertation, Halle-Wittenberg. Halle: Hohmann.
For discussions on these works, see especially Amos (1980) and Fulk (1992).
- 3 Decontracted vowels are indicated with a circumflex in Klaeber's (1950) edition, e.g. *hêan*. Where an acute accent is used to mark a lift as in (30), a circumflex is replaced by a macron.
- 4 The first stressed syllable of the 'decontracted' form must be heavy in order to fill a lift on its own. If it is light, it fills a lift together with the following unstressed syllable by resolution (cf. section 2.5.1 above). In this case the application of decontraction is vacuous. Since the purpose of this section is to

discuss the validity of decontraction as a metrical device, I will not discuss whether the stressed syllable of decontracted forms is heavy in controversial cases. For discussions on the interpretation of decontracted forms, see especially Fulk (1992: 105-111).

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