

# The Place of Metrics in Anglo-Saxon Latin Education: Aldhelm and Bede

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The Anglo-Saxons are well known for having been pioneers in teaching Latin as a foreign language and in developing materials for elementary Latin instruction to supplement the grammars they inherited from late antiquity.<sup>1</sup> The Insular grammar-producing industry centered on explicating Donatus's Ars minor and Ars maior, the sine quibus non of early medieval Latin learning.<sup>2</sup> Yet, surprisingly, the earliest treatises on linguistic subjects to survive from Anglo-Saxon England are not elementary grammars, but treatises on Latin quantitative versification, Aldhelm's De metris and De pedum regulis.<sup>3</sup> In the next generation, Bede produced a De arte metrica which became the model for metrical instruction for centuries to come.<sup>4</sup> Aldhelm's and Bede's approaches to explaining versification are as different as their stylistic temperaments. Their contrasting approaches to explaining versification shed light on what they expected of student readers, for whom metrics was an integral part of grammar and thus a model for how to approach complex Latin texts of all kinds.

The description of the Latin hexameter occupies a special place in the early medieval grammatical curriculum for three reasons. First, hexameter (and hexameter-and-pentameter) poetry was prominent in the curriculum of Classical and Christian Latin authors. Second, the quantitative verse line is particularly well-suited to description in the conceptual and terminological framework of early medieval grammar. Finally, the verse line offered a way of

talking in precise terms about the demarcation of continuous text that contemporary syntactical and rhetorical terminology did not allow. Aldhelm's and Bede's approaches to describing the hexameter show these founding masters of the Anglo-Latin tradition making highly personal decisions about how best to exploit the inherited descriptive resources of Latin grammar.

In the later Middle Ages, when Priscian's Institutiones grammaticae was an established part of the university curriculum and artes dictaminis and poetriae were widely available, students learning to read and write continuous Latin texts were supported by technical descriptions of syntax and by well-developed rhetorical strategies for the analysis of smaller and larger elements of verse and prose. By contrast, the very early Middle Ages (especially before the Carolingian period) was rich in elementary grammars, but comparatively poor in texts that would provide students with the skills needed to decode and compose continuous Latin texts. The grammatical curriculum of the period lacked both organized treatments of Latin syntax – Priscian's Institutiones grammaticae did not begin to enter the teaching curriculum until the end of the eighth century – and artes devoted to the rhetoric of composition.<sup>5</sup> But while syntax was a poorly-developed science in the grammatical tradition that the early Anglo-Saxons inherited, Latin quantitative metrics offered a rigorous, well-defined account of the relationship between the sounds and the sense-units of the Latin language. Quantitative metrics had the advantage of being a "closed system", in the sense that it consists of a limited number of foot types combined into lines of fixed length. Such a system was easily susceptible of description within the terms of late-antique grammar. What's more, although quantitative metrics is a complicated system, especially for second-language

learners, its basic principles build directly on the most elementary concepts in grammar as taught by Donatus.

We are accustomed to think of metrics as a matter for fairly advanced students. In American high school Latin programs, for example, the scansion of the hexameter is normally introduced to students when they are preparing to read Vergil, which in traditional curricula follows two or three years of prose reading. Lyric meters are only for those who have made it to the fourth or fifth year of Latin study, and virtually no-one today learns verse composition as an ordinary part of Latin instruction at the high-school or college level. Because metrical instruction is today typically reserved for advanced students and often skipped altogether by those acquiring a reading knowledge of Latin later in their academic training, we might be surprised at the much more central place of metrics in the ancient and medieval curriculum. The traditional conception of grammar as the elucidation of the poets meant that metrical study was privileged in the grammatical instruction of Latin-speaking schoolboys in antiquity.<sup>6</sup> The emphasis on the smallest phonological units of Latin and their representations (the letter and the syllable) in the teaching grammars of late antiquity meant that students were acquainted from the very beginning with the building-blocks of quantitative meter. Donatus's *Ars maior*, for example, begins with a discussion of vox (intelligible sound), its written representation, littera, and the combination of litterae into syllables.<sup>7</sup> The foundational stages of grammar instruction were, therefore, literally “elementary”: they taught that language was composed of minimal, indivisible units which could be combined into larger units, which could in turn be combined into larger units, and so on. In Part II of the *Ars maior*, the combination of letters into syllables leads, in due course, to the combination of syllables into words, or, in medieval terminology, the partes orationis, which form the central subject of the

Ars maior and the only subject of the Ars minor. But in Ars maior I, Donatus teaches an alternative combinatory system: besides being combined into words, syllables may be combined into pedes, metrical feet.<sup>8</sup> Thus, although the Latin learner working with parts-of-speech grammars would first have been taught to direct what he knew about Latin phonological units towards the morphological analysis of words, he would also have been equipped with the basic concepts needed to understand Latin quantitative versification.<sup>9</sup>

The prominence of metrics in early-medieval education is thus assured by the predominance of verse texts among the curriculum authors and by the strengths (and weaknesses) of the descriptive system inherited from late-antique grammar. In taking up the challenge of re-creating the ancient metrical treatise for non-Latin-speaking students, Aldhelm and Bede can both be seen to grapple with the relationship between sound units and sense units which is inherent in the grammars' description of metrical structures.

Any explanation of quantitative verse needs to cover certain essentials. The rules for determining quantity must be explained, especially for foreign-language learners. Quantity is determined at the level of the syllable, so the syllable is the logical starting-point, and is adopted as such by both Aldhelm and Bede. When the role of syllable quantity has been explained, the student needs to learn the nature and nomenclature of the feet used in the verse form under discussion, which are characterized by their various combinations of long and short syllables. The verse or metrical line must in turn be characterized according to the number and type of feet it admits, in the case of the hexameter, a combination of six dactyls and spondees with certain constraints on what feet may appear in what position. Finally, the teacher may wish to discuss the relationship between the formal constituents and boundaries

of the verse line and the content of the poetic text expressed as words, ideas, or syntactical structures of various sizes. It is in their treatments of the latter two problems, the characterization of the verse line and the relationship between verse line and other linguistic units, that Aldhelm and Bede differ most markedly. For Aldhelm, the verse line is composed of six feet mutually arranged, or abstractly patterned, according to possibilities which can be calculated mathematically. The mathematical potential of the verse both allows and limits variation, which is conceived of as feet "running freely" through all the possible positions in the line. For Bede, the verse line is to be processed linearly: it is described in terms of the reader's experience of scanning the verse, with certain feet that appear predictably in certain locations at either end of the verse and a degree of room for variation in the middle of the line. When he comes to consider the relationship between metrical feet and other linguistic units, Aldhelm describes the mathematical possibilities for overlapping the formal unit that is the foot with the formal unit that is the word. The meanings of words do not enter into the discussion, nor do larger semantic or syntactical groupings. For Bede, on the other hand, the interplay of meter and meaning is primary: the continuous verse text is a constant interplay of verse-units and sense-units, an interplay that is allowed or constrained by rhetorical considerations. The contrast in approach is heightened by the way Aldhelm and Bede situate their subjects rhetorically for their audiences and in the companion works with which they chose to compile their treatises. Aldhelm packages his metrical treatises with his Aenigmata and prefaces them with a work of spiritual number-lore, while Bede accompanies his metrics with a practical compendium of rhetorical figures. The implications are clear: for Aldhelm, versification is a mathematical puzzle whose mysteries may be plumbed by adepts, while for Bede versification is a matter of the interplay of aesthetics and communication.

It is characteristic of Aldhelm, who famously rejoices in making things gratuitously difficult, that he presents metrics as something recondite, with little connection to the rest of grammar. This attitude towards the subject might in part be explained by the circumstances of Aldhelm's – and Anglo-Saxon England's – introduction to the subject.<sup>10</sup> Our first evidence for the teaching of metrics in England comes with the foundation of the school of Canterbury by Theodore and Hadrian, sometime shortly after 669.<sup>11</sup> Aldhelm, the first known Anglo-Latin author and the first to write Latin quantitative verse, was also the most distinguished product of this new school, and the only one to digest the fruits of his learning into treatises for future generations of students. Aldhelm was proud to be the first of his countrymen to have "entrusted the proofs of earlier talents to the fabric of letters according to the discipline of the metrical art."<sup>12</sup> We know little that is certain about Aldhelm's early education, but it is clear that he arrived at Canterbury, probably in his thirties, with his characteristically mannered prose style already well-developed but without apparently having studied quantitative metrics before.<sup>13</sup> Aldhelm's letter to Leuthere from this period shows him finding metrical study challenging, but rejoicing at the same time in its obscurities and exotic vocabulary. Metrics is but one of a number of advanced subjects, each with its own mysteries and metalanguage.<sup>14</sup>

The practical repercussions of this approach to metrics are best expressed in the De metris, the first of Aldhelm's paired treatises on versification.<sup>15</sup> In the De metris, Aldhelm describes the structure of the Latin hexameter as an abstract mathematical system for combining smaller metrical units (feet) into larger units (lines), in a way that almost completely ignores the communicative content or rhetorical structure of verse as a linguistic form. The mathematical approach is foreshadowed by the disquisition on the significance of "seven" that Aldhelm prefaced to his metrical treatises, which signals that number is

immanent in everything, especially (perhaps) in language. Meter is seen as a combinatory system that is strictly constrained by its own “rules of the game” but totally unrestrained by the notions of sense unit, completeness of thought, grammatical concord, or any of the other syntactic-semantic concepts that were developed elsewhere in the grammatical curriculum. Aldhelm’s approach to metrics is an extreme example of a persistent strain in the early medieval understanding of language: the tendency to see the combination of smaller linguistic units into larger ones as a matter of abstract patterning overlying (or underlying) other levels of linguistic meaning.

Aimed at an audience with basic grammar (and all that implied) but with no experience of Latin quantitative metrics and at most an imperfect understanding of the phonology underlying them, the De metris is arranged to pick up where Donatus leaves off. That is, although Aldhelm presents his material as a self-contained subject of study, he makes some effort to arrange his presentation so as to take advantage of what students would be likely to know already. The De metris falls into three major sections: first, a reminder of the importance of syllables and a short lesson on elision; second, an exhaustive account of the possible arrangements of metrical feet within the line; and third, a two-part treatment of the caesura, that is, the relationship of foot-boundaries and word-boundaries within the line.

The De metris opens with a reminder that syllables are the very essence of the matter:

Neque enim in tam densa totius latinitatis silva et nemorosis sillabarum saltibus, ubi de singulis verborum radicibus multiplices regularum ramusculos pululasse antiqua veterum traditio declarat, rudibus facile negotiumprehenditur et praesertim metricae

artis disciplina carentibus et nescientibus qualiter vel quo pacto longae et breves  
 sillabae vel etiam communes utrobi competentes, quas Graeci dichronas dicunt,  
 sagaciter discriminantur.<sup>16</sup>

(For, in so dense a wood of the whole of latinity and amid bushy groves of syllables,  
 where from each root of words the venerable tradition of the ancients declares that  
 many branchlets of rules have sprouted, this matter is not easily grasped by the  
 untrained and especially by those lacking the discipline of the metrical art who do not  
 know how or by what method long and short syllables, or even common ones fitting  
 together in whichever way, which the Greeks call two-timers, are wisely to be  
 distinguished.)

The whole theory of meter, Aldhelm says, springs from this three-fold division of syllable  
 quantity: long syllables, short syllables, and those which may be long or short. The “whole  
 theory of meter” – omnis metrorum ratio – to which he refers consists of four interrelated sets  
 of quantitative criteria: tempora, syllable count, foot count, and schemata.

The doctrine of tempora applies what the student would know about how to determine  
 syllable length to mathematical proportions internal to metrical units. Tempus may be used to  
 describe the duration of the whole line, as here, or the internal time-structure of a single foot.  
 In ancient metrical theory, one short syllable had a notional duration of one tempus and two  
 short syllables were equal in duration to one long syllable, or two tempora. Thus the feet that  
 make up a particular verse type can be quantified in terms of tempora, and a verse made from  
 the permissible types of feet will have a fixed number of tempora. In the case of dactylic



hexameter, for example, a dactyl has a duration of  $2 + 1 + 1 = 4$  tempora, and a spondee measures  $2 + 2 = 4$  tempora. A line consisting of six feet chosen from these two types, will have  $6 \times 4 = 24$  tempora. The number of tempora in a hexameter line is thus constant, even though the number of syllables may vary.

To arrive at an accurate count of tempora, though, one must understand elision, which eliminates certain syllables from the reckoning because they are not pronounced:

...nisi sagaci subtilitate praecognitae fuerint, diversa impedimentorum obstacula et errorum offendicula scandentibus velut iter carpentibus generare solent. Idcirco diversos versus metrorum ad sinaliphae metaplasmm congruentes catervatim conguessimus, quatenus his perspectis nullum deinceps explosae collisionis chaos et latebrosum confractae sinaliphae baratrum lucem scandentis confundat aciemque legentis obtundat.<sup>17</sup>

(...unless they [the two types of elision] are recognized in advance with sagacious subtlety, they tend to generate various obstacles of impediments and small stumbling-blocks of errors for those scanners as it were picking their way. Therefore we have gathered together in throngs various verses of meters pertaining to the metaplasmm of synaloepha, so that when these have been looked over, no confusion of ejected elision or hidden pit of irregular synaloepha might henceforth confound the eye of the scanner or blunt the gaze of the reader.)

Having dealt with elision, Aldhelm returns to the tempora. At this point, Aldhelm takes up the dialogue form of his main source, Audax, and his student interlocutor asks troublesome questions to which the master responds with greater or lesser clarity.<sup>18</sup> Aldhelm allows the student to guide the dialogue and to interrogate the master about inconsistencies in his doctrine. The master acknowledges, for example, that although the dactylic hexameter is said to consist of dactyls and spondees, the sixth foot is in fact often a trochee. This would disturb the tempora-count, however, since such a line would yield  $(5 \times 4) + (2 + 1) = 23$  tempora. The 23-tempora line disrupts the 24-tempora theory, so Aldhelm summarily excludes it from further consideration.<sup>19</sup>

After several complications to do with nomenclature (such as: How can a line be called dactylic if it has six spondees? Because such a line only occurs in dactylic hexameter. Q.E.D.), Aldhelm moves on to the second mathematical parameter of the verse, syllable count. The magister in the dialogue states that every hexameter line has between twelve and seventeen syllables. The student protests that one often finds lines of eighteen or nineteen or twenty syllables, but the master reminds the forgetful student about how elision eliminates some syllables from the count.

The line's syllable count is directly related to the third criterion, the number of feet of each permissible type in the line. (Aldhelm is leading up to a classification of all possible lines based on the number of dactyls in the line.) To arrive at a line of only twelve syllables, you need a line consisting entirely of spondees. Substitute a dactyl for one of the spondees, and you get a line of thirteen syllables. Two dactyls increase the count to fourteen syllables; three dactyls make a line of fifteen syllables, four dactyls make sixteen syllables, and five dactyls

make seventeen syllables. Since a dactyl is not allowed in the sixth foot, seventeen is the maximum possible number of syllables in the line. As Aldhelm summarizes,

Versus dactilicus exámetro, si a solis spondeis constiterit, erit XII syllabarum; si unum dactilum habuerit, XIII; si duos, XIV; si tres, XV; si quattuor, XVI; si quinque, XVII: ita, quoties dactilicus accesserit, toties sillaba crescit.<sup>20</sup>

(The dactylic hexameter line, if it consists of only spondees, will have twelve syllables, if it has one dactyl, thirteen, if two, fourteen, if three, fifteen, if four, sixteen, if five, seventeen. Every time a dactyl is added, it grows by a syllable.)

After an unhelpful digression on the possibility of having a dactyl in sixth place in the line, Aldhelm returns to the internal arrangement of the line, six dactyls and spondees “circum se positis aut alterna interpositione variatis”, “arranged around one another or varied by alternate insertion” (p. 82). The free variation in mutual ordering implied by this characterization is subject to the limitation, Aldhelm says, that a dactyl must appear in the fifth foot (p. 83). The fact that this is a) not always true and b) in direct contradiction to the immediately-preceding discussion of the spondaic line and to the theory of schemata that follows does not seem to have bothered Aldhelm. That the dactyl is characteristic of the fifth foot explains (in Aldhelm’s view) why the spondee is characteristic of the sixth foot.

Once the student has understood the relationship between the number of syllables and the number of dactyls in the line and the constraints on the placement of dactyls, he is ready to confront the schemata. A schema is any one of the possible arrangements of the metrical

elements of the line, an abstract formulation of the arrangement of dactyls and spondees.

Aldhelm's presentation involves classifying all hypothetical verses according to the number of schemata they admit. The number of syllables (and hence the number of feet) in a line determines the number of possible schemata, the possible arrangements of dactyls and spondees in that line. Since there are six feet in a line of dactylic hexameter and the last foot cannot contain a dactyl, there are thirty-two possible arrangements – schemata – of dactyls and spondees in the five free positions. These schemata can, in turn, be classed in five groups, depending on how many dactyls they contain: lines with no dactyls, with one, with two, with three, with four, and with five. These five classes are then grouped into three categories according to how many schemata they admit: an all-dactyl line and an all-spondee line have only one possible arrangement each, and so are called monoscemi. A one-dactyl line and a four-dactyl line admit five schemata each and are called pentascemi. The two-dactyl and four-dactyl lines admit ten combinations each, and so are called decascemi.

These classifications may be summarized in the following chart: <sup>21</sup> (D=dactyl, S=spondee)

|                    |              |                               |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Monoscemi:</b>  | all dactyls: | DDDDD                         |
|                    | no dactyls:  | SSSSS                         |
| <b>Pentascemi:</b> | 1 dactyl:    | DSSSS SDSSS SSDSS SSSDS SSSSD |
|                    | 4 dactyls:   | SDDDD DSDDD DDSDD DDDSD DDDDS |
| <b>Decascemi:</b>  | 2 dactyls:   | DDSSS DSDSS DSSDS DSSSD       |
|                    |              | SDDSS SDSDS SDSSD             |
|                    |              | SSDDS SSDSD                   |
|                    |              | SSSDD                         |

3 dactyls:     DDDSS  
                   DDSSD DDSDS  
                   DSSDD DSDSD DSDDS  
                   SSDDD SDSDD SDDSD SDDDS

The monoscemi-pentascemi-decascemi distinction is important to Aldhelm because it affects the possibilities for variatio. Versus monoscemi (all dactyls or all spondees) he characterizes as lacking the possibility for variation; the admission of a single foot of the other type immediately introduces an element of free play into the line:

**M** In versu XII sillabarum una species est: hic est, quem superius diximus  
 monoscemum nuncupari; is quippe sine ulla varietate omnes in se spondeos habet...

**D** In versu XIII sillabarum quot scemata sunt?

**M** Quinque sine dubitationis scrupulo.

**D** Quomodo quave ratione?

**M** Ibi quippe unus dactilus inter spondeos admissus omnibus quinque locis libere  
 decurrit.<sup>22</sup>

(**M** In a verse of twelve syllables, there is only one form: that which we said above is  
 called monoscemus; indeed, it has in itself all spondees without any variation...

**D** How many schemata are there in a verse of thirteen syllables?

**M** Five, without any scruple of doubt.

**D** In what way or for what reason?

**M** Why, one dactyl admitted there among the spondees runs freely through all five places.)

The modern reader will be reassured to hear that the “student” in Aldhelm’s dialogue was as confused by the idea of schemata as one might expect. It is here that Aldhelm’s manipulation of the dialogue form comes into its own. The “student” constantly questions the unhelpful explanations of the “master”, allowing Aldhelm to play his usual game of being pedantic and obscurantist while at the same time glossing his own text and expanding and improving on his source’s terseness. One example will show his method. Here is the explanation of the line of fourteen syllables:

**D** Versus .XIV. sillabarum quot scemata habet?

**M** Certissima definitione .X. scematibus constat.

**D** Da per ordinem earundem specierum rationem!

**M** Aut enim primo et secundo loco dactilus ponitur aut primo et tertio aut primo et quarto [etc.]

[...]

**D** Da exemplis horum probationem!

[...]

(**D** How many schemata does the verse of 14 syllables have?

**M** By the most specific description it consists of ten schemata.

**D** Give an account of these same types in order!

**M** A dactyl is put in the first and second position, or the first and third, or the first and fourth [etc.]

[...]

**D** Give proof of these with examples!)

(The master gives six verses from Juvenecus, Sedulius, Juvenal, and Lucan as examples of three of the schemata.)

**D** Versibus istis, quos exempli gratia protulisse visus es, nequaquam omnes .X. scematum regulae liquido patuerunt, sed tantum tres formulae id est dactilus loco primo et quinto, item loco secundo et quinto, item loco tertio et quinto; residua vero .VII. scemata necdum prolata delitescunt. Quamobrem operae pretium reor, ut id quod passiva definitionis generalitate non ad integrum promulgaveras, nunc per ordinem eorundem scematum recapitulando nequaquam semiplena specialitate examusim enucleare studeas.<sup>23</sup>

**(D** In no way are all the rules of the ten schemata perfectly clear from these verses, which you seem to have brought out for the sake of example, but only three formulae, that is a dactyl in first and fifth place, in second and fifth place, and in third and fifth place; but the seven remaining schemata are hiding unexplained. For this reason I think it would be worthwhile for you to set out in detail what you had promulgated incompletely and with a passive generalizing definition, by reviewing these same schemata in order and not with a partial picking and choosing.)

The master obliges with a full set of made-up examples. The student's hectoring compels him make the theory of the schemata complete, but it also disguises the actual distribution of the schemata in poetic practice. Of the total number of mathematically-possible schemata, Aldhelm can find a certain number exemplified in the poets; he uses even fewer in his own hexameter compositions.<sup>24</sup> The remainder are attested only in his teaching examples. Indeed, although Aldhelm nowhere states this explicitly, monoscemi, pentascemi, and decascemi refer not to individual, actual, attested hexameter lines, but to sets of possibilities for creating lines given the presence of a certain number of dactyls, which is to say a certain number of syllables.

Aldhelm's relish in describing the schemata highlights the suitability of quantitative metrics for description in the early medieval grammatical system, and, by contrast, the difficulty of making the syntax and meanings of propositions fit that system. Quantitative verse can be described in purely formal terms, using concepts that are well-developed even in the early medieval grammars. The building-block of quantitative metrics is the syllable as graphical-phonological unit, the description of which holds an important place in the ars grammatica (as, for example Donatus's Ars maior I). Syllables are combined into a limited number of types of feet, whose attributes can be described completely in terms of the number, order, and quantities of the syllables that make them up. One type of foot does not differ from another as to its accidents: no foot is incapable of description in terms of its constituent syllables. The notion of analyzing linguistic units in terms of the number and type of their constituents is one of the most frequently-recurring features of early grammar: every element of discourse has as one of its accidents figura, which is its status as being made up of one or more elements. Schema is the Greek equivalent of figura, and captures a similar notion: that a



line can be described in terms of the number and type of its constituents.<sup>25</sup> Feet are combined into verse lines of fixed length. The rules governing the number and order of the feet within the line are clearly stated in the inherited late-antique treatises. In short, the “syntax” of meter is, in itself, uncomplicated by sense – either constraints of sense on the mutual ordering of constituents or the need to track completeness of sense in order to determine where the formal unit ends. The metrical system is susceptible of clear description, too, because it is finite: the number of possible combinations of feet is manifold, but it is also, as Aldhelm demonstrates, calculable and easily predictable with a knowledge of the rules of that govern the system.

Of course, the parts of speech and all their attendant complications do, in reality, enter into metrical composition. In the Anglo-Saxon metrical treatises, there are two distinct ways of handling this complication. Bede’s method is to plunge right into the problem of sense, and to discuss the metrical line as a formal unit that overlaps with syntactical-rhetorical sense units. This approach treats meter as one of a number of forms of rhetorical patterning that can be used to help the reader demarcate the text, and is very much in continuity with Bede’s approach in the De schematibus et tropis, the companion-piece to the De arte metrica. We will return to Bede shortly. Aldhelm’s approach, by contrast, treats the parts of speech as formal units that must be manipulated in parallel with the formal units of the metrical system. This approach draws on the morphological description of the partes in which the grammars are so rich. The latter parts of the De metris and the whole of the De pedum regulis concern the incorporation of words into the metrical system – although the mechanics of that incorporation are poorly explained. The former deals with the intersection of word-boundaries and foot-boundaries in the hexameter line, and the latter with the metrical forms of words.

After Aldhelm has moved in the De metris through all thirty-two possible metrical schemata (in order and with complete specificity), he passes on to the caesurae, the pauses in the line coincident with word-ending. The caesura is where the concepts of word-boundary and foot-boundary intersect. As Neil Wright notes, the De metris offers two accounts of the caesura.<sup>26</sup> The second is the one with which modern students will be familiar: that is, caesurae as significant pauses in the line marked by a word-ending in the middle of the third or fourth foot of the hexameter.<sup>27</sup> Aldhelm begins, however, with a rather different explanation of the caesura, one which classifies the whole hexameter verse on the basis of the relationship between words and feet within the line.<sup>28</sup> His categories, districtus, divisus, and mixtus, like the hexameter schemata, are misleading as to actual poetic practice. A versus districtus is a line in which word- and foot-boundaries never coincide. A versus divisus is one in which word-boundary and foot-boundary always coincide – although Aldhelm admits that this type is not used much. His example is a made-up one from Audax:

Dic mihi, Clio, quisnam primus fingere versus

A versus mixtus is mixture of these forms - the usual sort. This method of classification, while likely to be of no help to the student, is in keeping with the schematic approach to the hexameter, in which the verse is characterized by the potential internal relationships among its constituent elements. The schemata describe the relationships among varieties of one type of constituent, metrical feet, and the caesurae describe the interaction of these with the second type of constituent, the part of speech.

The De pedum regulis (DPR) is devoted to cataloguing the second type of constituent, the part of speech, in terms that should allow it to be integrated into the schematic structure of the verse. In DPR, Aldhelm (following the ancient grammatical practice) uses the categories

of the metrical feet to explain the quantitative structure of words. The chapter headings of the DPR – “De pirrhichio”; “De spondeo”; “De iambo”; “De trocheo”; “De tribracho”; “De moloso”; “De anapesto”; “De dactilo”; “De amphibracho”; “De amphimacro”; “De bachio”; “De palimbachio”; “De proceleumatico”; etc., etc. - give the misleading impression that the treatise will be devoted to the lyric meters in which all these feet are used. Instead, each of these feet provides a metrical category into which words can be grouped: for example, deus is a pyrrhic, felix is a spondee; senex is an iamb, sanctus is a trochee, anima is a tribrach, and so on. There is no suggestion that Aldhelm contemplates users of the DPR composing any verse form other than hexameters (although one could use the word-lists compiled here for such a purpose, or for constructing metrical clausulae).<sup>29</sup> The relationship between words described as if they were feet, and feet as members of the metrical line, is touched on only once, in a brief exchange between Master and Student at the end of the chapter on the pyrrhic:

**D** Potestne pirrichius aut iambus exámetro heroico inseri, dum exempla exámetris versibus protulisti?

**M** Si praedicta coniugationum verba<sup>30</sup> sine contextu partium orationis et absque metrorum versificatione proferuntur, pirrichii aut iambi regulis mancipantur; quodsi in dactylico carmine scandendi ratio et caesurarum divisio per cola et commata sequestrare compulerit spondei dumtaxat aut dactili legibus subiugantur, quod millenis exemplorum formulis sine imposturae et falsitatis frivolo prolatis facillime conprobari poterit.<sup>31</sup>

(**D** Can the pyrrhic or the iamb be inserted in the heroic hexameter, whereas you have produced examples in dactylic verse?

**M** If the aforementioned verbs of the conjugations are produced out of the context of the parts of speech and without metrical versification, they are subjected to the rules of the pyrrhic or the iamb. But if in dactylic verse the system of scansion and the division of the caesurae compels one to separate them into cola and commata, they are subjected in only to the rules of the spondee and the dactyl, which may be proved most easily by thousand-fold patterns of examples produced without any silliness of pretense or falsity.)

Ignored in this discussion are the complications a student would encounter in attempting to use the DPR catalogue of feet to compose verse: namely, that some of the feet here treated cannot be accommodated to dactylic verse, and that the metrical form of a word may change when it is placed in context with other words in the line.<sup>32</sup> While the DPR's word-lists do, as Wright notes, form a mnemonically-helpful elementary gradus,<sup>33</sup> one would need a great deal of metrical sophistication to use these words successfully in a verse.

The DM and the DPR, if they are taken as parts of a composite treatise, are carefully constructed to lead the student to understand the patterning of the multiple, overlapping units that make up quantitative verse: syllables, tempora, feet, and parts of speech. Aldhelm effects the introduction of parts of speech to this quantitative system by treating words as if they were metrical units: the communicative aspects of the partes are ignored. Even with this limitation – the assimilation of the partes to the metrical system – Aldhelm is not entirely successful in explaining what words have to do with meter. This is, admittedly, a difficult matter to explain. Aldhelm's approach is less than satisfactory because he treats words as a complication of the otherwise watertight metrorum ratio. Bede, on the other hand, takes the opposite approach in

his De arte metrica, treating the verse line as one of a number of kinds of patterning that can overlie the semantic units to which he gives priority.

Bede's De arte metrica (DAM) is the first part of a two-part work, the second part being the short tract De schematibus et tropis.<sup>34</sup> The pairing is significant for the methodology of Bede's metrical treatise, in which he uses concepts from the third part of the ars grammatica that will also appear in the companion work on the schemes and tropes. Bede's DAM emphasizes the rhetorical as opposed to the mathematical aspects of versification, but still offers a clear, usable account of the technical aspects of meter.

Whereas Aldhelm assumes knowledge of the minimal units of language and begins the De metris by reminding readers of their importancen and starting almost immediately on even more technical matters, Bede begins his treatise by considering litterae and syllabae afresh, as they pertain to meter and prosody. This difference of approach may reflect Bede's usual, systematic approach to textbook-writing.<sup>35</sup> It may also reflect the way he acquired his metrical knowledge. We know less about Bede's introduction to metrical studies than we do about Aldhelm's, because Bede does not mention his own metrical studies. In the absence of other evidence, it would be reasonable to guess that Bede learned about quantitative metrics earlier in his education, in a natural sequence with his other grammatical studies, and in the context of exposure to other metrical forms of Latin, such as hymns. That background is reflected in Bede's presentation of versification as a more-or-less integrated combination of elementary grammar, quantitative metrics as a system, the relationship of verse forms to semantic units, and accentual verse.

Bede's very first sentence situates his work pedagogically:

Qui notitiam metricae artis habere desiderat, primo necesse est distantiam litterarum syllabarumque sedulus discat.<sup>36</sup>

(He who desires to have knowledge of the metrical art must first be careful to learn the difference between letters and syllables.)

In the chapter “De littera” (DST I), Bede reviews the alphabet with an eye to properties of letters most relevant to scansion. The treatment is typical of Bede's keen eye for what among the mix of Greek information that pervades Latin grammar is actually useful for monastic readers. In “De syllaba” (DAM II), Bede explains the rules of syllabic quantity. Syllables are either short, in which case they have one tempus, or long, in which case they have two tempora. There are also common syllables: these are apparent exceptions to the rules of quantity, to which Bede will devote a separate chapter. Long syllables are long by nature or position, and Bede explains the rules for “making position” (positione syllabae fieri). Syllables that are not long by nature or position are short. (DAM II.1-47, pp. 86-88.) With the exception of the doctrine of the tempora, there is nothing here that would look unfamiliar to the modern student of Latin versification. Whereas Aldhelm went out of his way to make the rules of the hexameter look hard, Bede makes them as clear as possible by building systematically on what his students would already have known and paring away any superfluous information.

As soon as Bede starts discussing syllabic quantity, he invokes the concept of the word, pars orationis or verbum. This is necessary because the rules for "position" are different within the same word and across words – information omitted by Aldhelm – and unless a student recognizes this he will be tempted to see exceptions proliferating where there are none.<sup>37</sup> The rules of quantity apply equally to all Latin words, so in the early chapters of DAM Bede works with the idea of pars orationis or verbum without differentiating which part of speech or what morphological features he is talking about. In the remaining chapters on syllables (DAM IIII-VI), Bede deals with the effect of compounding on syllabic quantity and gives rules of thumb for quantity in morphological and derivational endings and in the indeclinable parts of speech. From this early stage, he relates the quantitative shapes of words to their employment in quantitative verse, and he explains clearly to the beginner what the practical implications are of knowing syllabic quantity. For instance, he suggests that the student who is just learning scansion should carefully observe the quantities of each part of speech as it occurs in hexameter and pentameter line:

Haec de differentia syllabarum paucis dicta sint, quas etiam exemplis ipse plurimum discernere potest, qui scansionem versus heroici discere curaverit. Sed et qui necdum ad hoc pervenit, hunc interim hortamur syllabas omnium partium orationis ex principio versuum heroicorum diligentius scrutetur. Omnis enim versus ex ameter, qui sex pedibus, et pentameter, qui quinque pedibus constat, primam habet syllabam longam, quia vel a spondeo vel a dactylo incipit, quorum prior pes duabus longis syllabis consistit, ut “dicens”, secundus longa et duabus brevibus, ut “dicimus”. Et ideo cum codicem ex ametri vel elegiaci carminis adsumis in manus, quamcumque paginam aperiens inspexeris, quemcumque versum arripiens legeris, absque ulla

dubietate primam syllabam aut natura aut positione longam invenies, quod nimirum sive spondei seu dactyli constat esse principium.<sup>38</sup>

(We need speak only briefly about distinguishing syllables, which he who cares to learn the scansion of heroic verse can for the most part discern for himself from examples. But in the meantime we urge even one who has not yet progressed to this point to scrutinize diligently the syllables of every part of speech at the beginning of heroic verses. Every hexameter verse, which consists of six feet, and every pentameter, which consists of five feet, has a long syllable first, since it starts with either a spondee or a dactyl, of which the former consists of two longs, as in dicens, and the latter of a long and two shorts, as in dicimus. And so when you take in your hands a book of hexameter or elegiac poetry, whatever page you open and look at, whatever verse you seize on and read, without the slightest doubt you will find the first syllable to be long either by nature or by position, since of course it is the beginning of a spondee or of a dactyl.)

He adds later that the hexameter always ends with a dactyl followed by either a spondee or a trochee (DAM X, p. 109). Thus the student is given the parameters of metrical certainty and uncertainty up front, and is shown how to apply what he knows of syllabic quantity to the practical problem of scanning a line. Moreover, the rules Bede presents are to be reinforced by observation of the actual practice of the poets. This is a far cry from Aldhelm's approach in which the structure of the hexameter was presented as a freestanding theoretical system (in the De metris) and the metrical shapes of words are relegated to a separate treatise (the De pedum regulis).



Bede carries this emphasis on understanding how metrical and non-metrical units function together throughout his treatise. His chapter on the metrical structure of the hexameter and pentameter ends with a note on the convention of end-stopping elegiac couplets:

Observandum est autem in carmine elegaico nequid umquam de sensu versus pentametri remaneat inexplicatum, quod in sequente versu exámetro reddatur, sed uel uterque sensibus suis terminetur versus.<sup>39</sup>

(It should be observed that in elegaic verse nothing of the sense of the pentameter line should ever remain unexpressed which is to be completed by the hexameter in the following line. At any rate, let each line end with its own sense.)

Bede's explanation echoes the language of ancient colometry as it was transmitted in early medieval grammar. For example, Bede here uses “sense” in much the same way that Isidore uses it when he talks about punctuating the periodic sentence. Isidore defines the colon as the point at which the sense is complete but there is still some sentence (sententia) left: “Ubi autem in sequentibus iam sententia sensum praestat, sed adhuc aliquid superest de sententiae plenitudine, fit cola”.<sup>40</sup> In both contexts, the semantic unit sensus can be tracked simultaneously with another, formal unit, to which it is not identical. In the case of Isidore’s sententia, the other, formal unit is implied but not defined; in Bede the other unit, the verse, is strictly defined by metrical criteria. In discussing his examples of the relationship of sensus to versus, Bede emphasizes not the internal metrical structure of the line, but the ways in which

successive lines or couplets are semantically and syntactically joined ("invicem conjuncti") or fastened one to another ("sibi mutuo conserantur"). The discussion of enjambment which follows continues the discussion of concatenatio or connexio versuum:

At uero in exametro carmine concatenatio uersuum plurimorum solet esse gratissima, quod in Aratore et Sedulio frequenter inuenies, modo duobus, modo tribus, modo quattuor, aut quinque uersibus, nonnumquam uel septem uel etiam pluribus ad inuicem connexis... Verum huiusmodi connexio si ultra modum procedat, fastidium gignit ac taedium. Hymnos uero, quos choris alternantibus canere oportet, necesse est singulis uersibus ad purum esse distinctos, ut sunt omnes Ambrosiani.<sup>41</sup>

(But in hexameter verse a linking of several lines is usually most pleasing, as you often find in Arator and Sedulius, now with two lines, now three, now four or five, and sometimes seven or even more lines joined to one other... But if a linking of this sort goes on beyond measure, it gives rise to distaste and boredom. On the other hand, hymns, which are to be sung by alternating choirs, have to be strictly divided into individual verses, as are all the Ambrosian hymns.)

The rest of this chapter concerns various ornaments to the verse, including rhyme at the caesura and the end of the line, and such exercises in variation as filling a whole line with nouns, or with verbs. DAM XII concerns the caesurae, and Bede's explanations are, predictably, clearer than Aldhelm's, and less theoretical. Here, too, the language is that of colometry:

Item ubi post duos pedes superest syllaba, comma dicitur; ubi post duos pedes nihil remanet, colon dicitur. Quae tamen nomina apud oratores indifferenter ponuntur, qui integram sententiam periodon appellant; partes autem eius cola et commata dicuntur. Vt puta: “sustinetis enim, si quis uos in seruitutem redigit”, colon est; “si quis deuorat”, colon est; “si quis extollitur”, etcetera, (2 Cor. 11.20) usque ad plenam sententiam, cola sunt et commata. Plena autem sententia periodus est. Interpretantur autem colon “membrum”, comma “incisio”, periodus “clausula” siue “circuitus”.<sup>42</sup>

(Similarly, when after two feet a syllable is left over, it is called a comma; when after two feet nothing remains, it is called a colon. Yet these names are used interchangeably by rhetors, who call a complete sentence a period; its parts are called cola and commata. So for example, “You bear it, if someone enslaves you”, it is a colon; “if someone preys on you”, it is a colon; “if someone is exalted”, etc., all the way up to the complete sentence, you have cola and commata. A complete sentence is a period. Colon means “member”; comma means “cutting”; period means “clausula” or “circuit”.)

Bede's comparison of metrical and rhetorical colometry is significant because it implies that one can read for completeness in a metrical structure as in a syntactical one. That is, the reader moves through the line and the sentence from left to right, noticing whether the metrical units and other linguistic units end together or overlap. Where Aldhelm rejoices in the operation of meter as a system, finite, quantifiable as well as quantitative, Bede never lets the discussion of pattern stray far from the words that form the center of the text's meaning. Aldhelm's method requires the student to learn to track several quantitative elements – syllables, tempora, feet

qua feet, and words as feet – that run in parallel through the structure of the hexameter line, and requires that words as grammatical units be subsumed into the metrical system and treated purely as discrete forms with mathematical structures. The Bedan approach, by contrast, allows the grammatical and rhetorical units of word, sense, and sententia to be understood as semantic groups that overlap with the formal units described by the metrical system.

Aldhelm's and Bede's contrasting approaches are equally plausible responses to the problem of explaining Latin quantitative meters within the conceptual framework of early medieval grammar. Neither approach is necessarily more efficient or more successful in teaching the scansion or composition of verse. History seems to have voted for Bede's method: his De arte metrica was a standard text down to the Renaissance and its method is instantly recognizable to anyone who learned about Latin versification in the Anglo-American tradition. Receptivity to Aldhelm's method is probably a matter of learning styles: those of a mathematical bent will find his explanations congenial instead of baffling. But what Aldhelm ignores, and what Andy Orchard's researches make clear,<sup>43</sup> is that verse composition cannot proceed before the author has deeply assimilated the rhythms, patterns, and phrasing of literary models. There is a large gap between mastery of the formulae – the schemata – of the De metris or even memorization of the word-lists in the De pedum regulis and the writing of Latin hexameter verse. Bede makes clear the importance of reading the models. He explains the bare essentials of the system in a splendidly logical manner, but he keeps the focus on examples and exhortations to careful reading.

Metrical treatises, then, function explicitly or implicitly as introductory manuals on the reading of verse texts. A student who turns from a study of Aldhelm's De metris to a reading

of model texts will bring to those texts a particular set of assumptions about the role of formal patterning in the experience of the text. The formal structures of meter are a web of overlapping patterns, manifold variations within the physical constraints of the single line and the theoretical constraints of the mathematics of the system. The semantic content of the text is overlaid and perhaps even concealed by the surface-web of formal patterning. The relationship between the formal pattern of the line and the words and statements of the text is a secondary concern. That does not mean, however, that the patterning is without significance. Quite the contrary: meaning inheres in number. The implications of this concern with number, sound-patterning, and the layered or concealed text for our understanding of the impulses behind the hermeneutic style are clear. By the same token, Bede's cultivation of a style that serves his meaning is mirrored in the way his metrical treatise instructs the reader. Metrical patterns reveal structures that would otherwise be hidden. For Bede, pattern articulates meaning rather than concealing it.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vivien Law surveys the available ancient grammars and new Insular texts in The Insular Latin Grammarians (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> These are edited by Louis Holtz in Donat et le tradition de l'enseignement grammatical: études sur l'Ars Donati et sa diffusion (IVe - IXe siècle) (Paris: CNRS, 1981).

<sup>3</sup> Aldhelm's works are edited in Aldhelmi opera, ed. R. Ehwald, MGH Auctores antiquissimi XV (Berlin, 1919). Translations of the works of Aldhelm are available in Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, Aldhelm: The Prose Works (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), and Michael Lapidge and J. L. Rosier, Aldhelm: The Poetic Works (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). See below for details on the individual treatises.

<sup>4</sup> The De arte metrica (DAM) is edited by C.B. Kendall in CCSL 123A, pp. 81-141 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> I examine the evidence for syntactical teaching in early Anglo-Saxon England in my dissertation, “The Hidden Curriculum: Syntax in Anglo-Saxon Latin Teaching”. (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Univ. of Toronto, 2001). Suzanne Reynolds discusses problems with medieval approaches to syntactical description in Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric and the Classical Text (Cambridge, 1996), especially the chapter “From words to the phrase: the problem of syntax”, pp. 88-96.

On knowledge of Priscian in the early Insular world, see Vivien Law’s comments in The Insular Latin Grammarians, pp. 20-21. Evidence for early Irish engagement with “Priscianus minor”, the two books on syntax, is lacking because of defective manuscripts and/or flagging glossators. Aldhelm, whose early training was presumably Irish, knew Priscian’s Institutiones grammaticae (IG), but Priscian’s syntactical theories are not clearly reflected in Aldhelm’s own work. On the adaptation of Priscianus minor for syntactical instruction in schools, see J. Reginald O’Donnell, “Alcuin’s Priscian”, Latin Script and Letters, A.D. 400-900: Festschrift presented to Ludwig Bieler on the occasion of his 70th birthday, ed. John J. O’Meara and Bernd Naumann (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp. 222-35. On the later artes, see for example Douglas Kelly, The Arts of Poetry and Prose, *Typologie des sources du moyen-âge occidental* 59 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> On the status of metrics in the grammatical treatises of antiquity, see Mario De Nonno, “Ruolo e Funzione della Metrica nei Grammatici Latini”, Metrica Classica e Linguistica: atti del colloquio Urbino 3-6 ottobre 1988, ed. R. M. Danese, F. Gori, and C. Questa (Urbino: QuattroVenti, 1990), pp. 453-94, esp. 453-66.

<sup>7</sup> Ars maior I.1-3 = Holtz, Donat, pp. 603-7.

<sup>8</sup> Ars maior I.4, “De pedibus” = Holtz, Donat, pp. 607-9.

<sup>9</sup> As Diane Anderson remarks in a recent article, "In Aldhelm's age, where Latin came as a very foreign tongue, knowing quantities was part of advanced language acquisition, as it is for us. Yet it was merely the highest level of basic grammar. Throughout the Middle Ages – and well up into the modern period – this knowledge was material for pueri." Diane Warne Anderson, "Medieval Teaching Texts on Syllable Quantities and the Innovations from the School of Monte Cassino." Latin Grammar and Rhetoric: From Classical Theory to Medieval Practice, ed. Carol Dana Lanham (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 180-211, at 181.

<sup>10</sup> It would be tempting to attribute Aldhelm's distinctive approach to metrics to his sources. However, Bede drew on a very similar set of sources for his De arte metrica but managed to present the subject as clear, comprehensible, and neatly-integrated with elementary grammar. Aldhelm's sources in the De metris, in particular, are in no way out of the ordinary: his chief sources are Audax (or, in one passage, the nearly-identical Victorinus) and Donatus's Ars maior. On Aldhelm's sources, see Vivien Law, "The Study of Grammar in Eighth-Century Southumbria," ASE 12 (1983), 43-71. Law offers several corrections to the sources proposed by Ehwald in his edition.

<sup>11</sup> Many aspects of the extraordinarily broad curriculum of this school - but little information on grammatical studies - have come to light with the publication by Bernhard Bischoff and Michael Lapidge of Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> "...priorumque argumenta ingeniorum iuxta metricae artis disciplinam litterarum textui tradidisse..." MGH Auct. antiq. 15, p. 202. Translations are my own.

<sup>13</sup> On the evidence for Aldhelm's life and early education, see Lapidge and Herren, Aldhelm: the Prose Works, pp. 5-9, Orchard, The Poetic Art of Aldhelm, pp. 4-5, and Scott Gwara, Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis Prosa de virginitate cum glosa latina atque Anglo-Saxonica:

Praefatio, Indices, CCSL 124 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 23-34. Orchard concludes there is no reason not to accept William of Malmesbury's report that Aldhelm's first teacher was an Irishman. There is a scholarly near-consensus that quantitative Latin verse was neither studied nor practiced - or at least not widely - in seventh-century Ireland. The canonical position is articulated in Michael Winterbottom, "Aldhelm's Prose Style and its Origins", ASE 6 (1977), 39-76. Further, the metrical tag to Aldhelm's letter to Heahfrith has been interpreted as a suggestion that the English are superior metricists to the Irish (Herren in Lapidge and Herren, Aldhelm: the Prose Works, p. 146). David Howlett's investigation of prose rhythm in Hiberno-Latin authors supports the consensus position. ("Insular Latin Writers' Rhythms". Peritia 11 (1997), 53-116.) On the other hand, Rijklof Hofman has presented evidence that the Irish Priscian glossators commented on quantitative metrics: Rijklof Hofman, "Moines irlandais et métrique latine", Études Celtiques 27 (1990), 235-66. Since the Irish Priscian commentaries are found in ninth-century or later manuscripts, we cannot be sure whether or not they reflect seventh-century Irish teaching.

<sup>14</sup> "Neque enim parva temporum intervalla in hoc lectionis studio protelanda sunt, ei dumtaxat qui solerti sagacitate legendi succensus legum Romanarum iura medullitus rimabitur et cuncta iurisconsultorum secreta imis praecordiis scrutabitur et, quod his multo artius et perplexius est, centena scilicet metrorum genera pedestri regula discernere et ad musica cantilenae modulamina recto syllabarum tramite lustrare, cuius rei studiosis lectoribus tanto inextricabilior obscuritas praetenditur, quanto rarior doctorum numerositas reperitur." MGH AA 15:476-77. ("Nor must small intervals of time be prolonged in this study of reading, at least by one who, afire with the skillful sagacity of reading, will probe inwardly the codes of Roman law and scrutinize with his inmost heart all the secrets of the jurisconsults, and what is much stricter and more intricate than these, namely to distinguish the hundredfold kinds of



meters by the foot-rule and to traverse the musical modulations of song along a straight path of syllables. For eager readers, the obscurity of this subject becomes the more difficult to disentangle as the number of teachers grows sparser.")

<sup>15</sup> Aldhelm's two treatises on meter, De metris ("On meters"; MGH Auct. antiq. 15.74-96) and De pedum regulis ("On the rules of feet"; MGH Auct. antiq. 15, pp. 150-204) form parts two and four of the Epistula ad Acircium, a large composite work. The Epistula opens with an address to Acircius (=Aldfrith, King of Northumbria, 685-705; on this identification see Lapidge and Herren, Aldhelm: the Prose Works, p. 32) and an extended essay on the wonderful number seven (MGH Auct. antiq. 15, pp. 59-74). This is followed by the De metris, which covers the structure of the hexameter. After the De metris come one hundred Aenigmata, or riddles, of whose meter the metrical treatises are ostensibly explanatory, and finally the De pedum regulis, a catalogue of metrical feet.

The Epistula ad Acircium is split up in the Lapidge-Herren and Lapidge-Rosier translations. The address to Acircius and the treatise on the number seven are translated in Lapidge and Herren, Aldhelm: the Prose Works. The Aenigmata, which are nested between the two treatises on metrics, are translated in Lapidge and Rosier, Aldhelm: the Poetic Works. The De metris and a selection from the De pedum regulis are translated by Neil Wright in Lapidge and Rosier, Aldhelm: the Poetic Works, pp. 183-219, where they are accompanied by a very helpful introduction and notes.

<sup>16</sup> MGH Auct. antiq. 15, p. 78

<sup>17</sup> MGH Auct. antiq. 15, p. 81. As Neil Wright notes (Lapidge and Rosier, Aldhelm: the Poetic Works, p. 185), an explanation of elision and its function in scansion is hard to find in the grammars, so this is a gap that needs filling before Aldhelm can proceed. Its treatment here is a useful adaptation to second-language learners for whom the whole phonology of

Latin was a foreign construct. Its insertion at this point is original with Aldhelm: grammarians classed the types of elision under “metaplasm”, and filed them at the end of the grammar with figures of speech, not at the beginning with syllables. Aldhelm refers to them as metaplasms, but has nevertheless managed to place them at precisely the point where they are of most relevance in his explanation, and rightly congratulates himself on having removed an obstacle for his readers.

<sup>18</sup>In a chapter headed "On the Exchange of Alternate Question and Answer Signified by Two Different Letters", Aldhelm explains that he will signify the teacher (magister) by M and the student (discipulus) by D. As Wright notes (Lapidge and Rosier, Aldhelm: the Poetic Works, p. 266), Aldhelm claims Augustine (Soliloquies, De libero arbitrio, De magistro, and De musica), Isidore, and Junilius as exemplars of the dialogue form, even though Audax, Aldhelm's main source, is also in dialogue form. Audax relays information in a very compact, short question/short answer format, though, whereas Aldhelm expands the form to allow the "student" to ask for clarification and examples where an explanation has been unclear. The result is somewhat more like a literary/philosophical dialogue than the source would suggest. It would be interesting to know whether Aldhelm actually read (and profited from) Augustine's De musica, but I have found no evidence so far in the text of the metrical treatises that he did.

<sup>19</sup> While the desire always to make practice conform to theory can be an irritant in Aldhelm, the advice to ignore the syllaba anceps is sound from the beginning student's point of view.

<sup>20</sup> MGH Auct. antiq. 15, p. 84.

<sup>21</sup>My chart is inspired by Neil Wright's elegant but somewhat different illustration of these possibilities (Lapidge and Rosier, Aldhelm: the Poetic Works, p. 186). Aldhelm, unfortunately, does not include any charts. On the lack of diagrams in early medieval

grammars see Vivien Law, "Linguistics in the Earlier Middle Ages: The Insular and Carolingian Grammarians", Grammar and Grammarians in the Early Middle Ages (London and New York: Longman, 1997), pp. 70-90, at p. 86, n. 3.

<sup>22</sup>MGH Auct. antiq. 15, p. 84

<sup>23</sup> MGH Auct. antiq. 15, pp. 85-86

<sup>24</sup> On the limitations on metrical variation in Aldhelm's own hexameter verse, see Orchard, The Poetic Art of Aldhelm.

<sup>25</sup> On the term figura, see the brief comments by Law in "The Terminology of Medieval Latin Grammar", Grammar and Grammarians in the Early Middle Ages (London and New York: Longman, 1997), pp. 260-269, at p. 265. Don Chapman is working on a study of the idea of figura in early medieval grammar.

<sup>26</sup> Lapidge and Rosier, Aldhelm: the Poetic Works, p. 187.

<sup>27</sup> MGH Auct. ant. 15, pp. 95-96.

<sup>28</sup> MGH Auct. ant. 15, pp. 92-93.

<sup>29</sup> It has recently been suggested that the De pedum regulis is directed at the composition of rhythmical prose, and the relationship of the feet it catalogues to Aldhelm's prose rhythm deserves further exploration. For some discussion, see Anderson, p. 185.

<sup>30</sup> At pp. 153-54, Aldhelm has run through a long list of first- and third-conjugation verbs that may be pyrrhics. I take praedicta to be transferred from coniugationum, as it were "verbs of the aforementioned conjugations".

<sup>31</sup>MGH Auct.ant. 15, p. 154. The "silliness" perhaps harks back to the Student's pestering the Master in the De metris to provide a full set of examples for each schema, which the Master was forced to do with made-up verses. I explore Aldhelm's use of humor and the dialogue

form to problematize his own system in an essay in progress, “‘Desipere in loco’: Style, Memory, and the Teachable Moment.”

<sup>32</sup> E.g., sanctus will no longer be a trochee if it is followed by a word beginning with a consonant.

<sup>33</sup> Lapidge and Rosier, Aldhelm: the Poetic Works p. 188.

<sup>34</sup> The two treatises are edited by C.B. Kendall in CCSL 123A: 81-171 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975). Kendall has also published a translation of the two works: Bede, Libri II De arte metrica et De schematibus et tropis: The Art of Poetry and Rhetoric (Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 1991). Translations here are my own. The two parts usually – but not always – travelled together in manuscript and continued to do so in printed editions into the seventeenth century. Kendall discusses their manuscripts and stemmata at CCSL 123A: 60-76.

<sup>35</sup> See for example the discussion of his methods in R.B. Palmer, "Bede as Textbook Writer: A Study of his De arte metrica", Speculum 34 (1959), 573-584.

<sup>36</sup> I.1, p. 82. Citations of Bede's text are by chapter and line number, as well as page number in Kendall's CCSL edition. (DAM is, technically, Book I and DST Book II of the composite work, but I have not used "Book I" designation in my citations.)

<sup>37</sup> In the De schematibus et tropis and De orthographia, Bede shows a similar concern for categorizing apparent exceptions to ordinary usage, perhaps in part to avoid seeing them emended away. Here, though, in discussing versification, he has the advantage of a tradition that states the rules for ordinary usage quite unambiguously.

<sup>38</sup> DAM III, p. 94

<sup>39</sup> DAM X, pp. 110-11

<sup>40</sup> Isidore, Etymologiae sive origines, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), I.xx.1-5.

<sup>41</sup> DAM XI, pp. 111-13

<sup>42</sup> DAM XII, p. 118

<sup>43</sup> Orchard, The Poetic Art of Aldhelm.

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