Part 1

MODERN ENGLISH VERSE

(since Wyatt)
SECTION I

-------------

PRIMARY REFERENCES

The thirty works listed in this section constitute standard reference texts of various sorts for the study of English versification. The first six (A1–A11) are general histories, all unsatisfactory for one reason or another but wider in scope than several others, which will be found in Chapter Six on Meter in Section III below. The following fifteen (A12–A26) are collections of essays, either by a single author (A12, A13), or by several authors as an anthology of original essays (A14–A20) or reprints (A21–A26). The final four items, together with A5, represent the predecessors of the present work. The contents of all these works are "analyzed" elsewhere in this book. I consider the minimum library essential for any serious student of versification to be Omond (A5), Schipper (A11), the Princeton Encyclopedia (A18), Wimsatt (A20), and Smith (A26), but if you can only afford one book, as it were, take the Princeton--an exceptional reference book.
Chapter One

------------------

HISTORIES


To the teaching critic, *English Verse* is probably more useful as a compendium of examples of verseforms than as a history or theory of English versification, even though the book intends to offer both these latter. Chapter One of Part One and Part Three set forth Alden's principles, which are that accent at equal time-intervals is the basis of English meter, that three degrees of accent (primary, secondary, and weak) from three causes (lexical, syntactic, and metrical) are distinguishable, that the metrical pause is allowable, that verse is only analogus to music, that English syllables do have rudimentary and entirely relative quantity, that the concept of the metrical foot is worth preserving so long as it is understood as representing "the time-interval between the regularly recurring accents of the normal metre," and that in scansion the secondary accent if marked only complicates unduly the traditional notation, so that only the binary levels of stressed and unstressed are to be noted. Summarized on p. 405.

As Omond observed, Alden does not pursue the temporal theory of meter as aggressively as most, but his analyses do "depart considerably from mere stresses." Alden's position lies somewhere between the ad hoc impressionism of Saintsbury and the deductive interpretation of Omond; he seems most directly indebted to Schipper (A9) and Mayor (E592).

Chapter Two of Part One is reprinted in abridged form as an Appendix to Gross (A23, pp. 235–64). Part Two is a history of forms; Part Three, "The Time-Element in English Verse," reprints the substance of an earlier article in MLN (E272). Part Four collects the views of thirteen poets and critics on "The Place and Function of the Metrical Element in Poetry." See also E270 and E271.


Though now somewhat out of date, this well-positioned book has not yet been superseded. It does not aim to advance "an ideal prosody . . . any original theories . . . or critical estimates," but simply to present a coherent view of the technic of American poetry up to 1900, as seen in both the stylistic development and the known theoretical views of eleven major American poets: Freneau, Bryant, Poe, Emerson, Whittier, Longfellow, Holmes, Whitman, Lowell, Lanier, and Dickinson. The Introduction has the considerable virtue of distinguishing terms clearly and the lesser vice of allowing too many of them: Allen recognizes four natural speech-stresses (primary, secondary, "weak secondary," and weak), "metrical stresses" (apparently compromise scansion of the natural stressing of the line against the abstract metrical pattern), and four regular metrical feet (the common ones) but up to seven additional ones (tribrachs, ionics, bacchics, etc.). A short section also discusses the influence of
British versification on American, a subject which despite its obvious importance has never yet been thoroughly examined. Allen's study broke the necessary new ground, but after a half century of extensive scholarship it should now be possible to reappraise the whole subject of American versification--both theory and praxis--in a much more systematic and sophisticated way. See also Eaton (E25), Gillis (E35), and Fussel (E34).


The translation, which follows the original closely, is hereafter referred to as Kaluza.

During the writing of his book, Kaluza clearly felt the lingering coolness of the long shadow cast by Schipper's monumental work (A9); he is at pains, in the Preface and elsewhere, to justify his own study, claiming that "the mass of detail in Schipper is confusing for the beginner, and his presentation of Old and Middle English prosody needs correction in many important points." In fact, however, Kaluza's own study is considerably more complicated in theory and more scholarly in method than Schipper's, and it is decidedly not a book for beginners. But no justification was needed: Kaluza has not given us a full-scale history of English verse-technique, as did Schipper, but rather a seemingly indefatigable study of the various prosodic theories about verse—particularly Old and Middle English verse—that had been advanced up to 1900 by the German philologists. Indeed, Kaluza's title is misleading, since fully two-thirds of his book treats English verse before 1500. But for this single purpose—a synoptic, detailed account of the German theories of the Old Germanic and Old English alliterative line—Kaluza is valuable, and in that value superior to any other work yet written. After Kaluza we must go directly to the Germans.

Kaluza's principles are accentual: the thesis and arsis (he uses these terms in their modern sense) make up the foot in syllable-counting verse, or the bar (takt, measure) in alliterative stress-verse. Elucidating the course of the theories about Old English verse, he discusses the "four-stress" (to the half-line) theory of Lachmann and his followers and the competing "two-stress" theory of Wackernagel et al., accounts that were eventually superseded by Sievers' "Five Types" system (Sievers himself was of the two-stress school). Kaluza adheres to the doctrines of the older four-stress school, and so a considerable portion of his long first section on Old English is given over to a detailed criticism of the Sievers theory, Kaluza substituting for it instead his own modified version (pp. 60–64) of two Laws, six Types, and ninety "subspecies," but nevertheless laboring to make the whole system compatible with the authoritative Five Types typology. See Kaluza's monograph (J139) in Part 2, Section 1, below.

All the German philologists were pretty well agreed that the oldest Indo-European meter had been x / x / x / x / x / (later to be called the iambic dimeter in classical Greek metrics), a meter which was divided into four bars for purposes of dancing or singing.

When he came to the Middle English, French-derived meters of our verse, Kaluza had the candor and good sense to acknowledge there the presence of an entirely new form, with different rules for construction and hence an entirely different texture and structure from that of Old English verse—all merely by the addition of the simple rule of syllable-counting. Appropriately, then, Kaluza views the Middle English alliterative verses as derived not from the Old English form but from a mixed form of the Latin septenary transmit-
On the Modern period, Kaluza gives only a short synopsis of the nature of the modern meters (in modern English it is easier than it formerly was to dispose the stresses at rhythmically equal periods of time; the poet, then, must create harmony out of the clash of word-stresses and metrical-accents; inversion and hovering accent were developed to reduce this difficulty, as well as elision, which will produce a correct metrical value for excess syllables (pp. 266–84), then traces out in cameo the modern development of the various metrical and stanzaic forms, especially blank verse.

Rev: in TLS 1 September 1921, p. 557 (reply by Omond in the Correspondence for Sept. 15, p. 596); in Notes & Queries series 12, vol. 8 (1921): 519; by McKerrow in MLR 17 (1922): 436. Hereafter referred to as Omond.
Our first historical and bibliographical survey of writings on English metrics. This final and definitive edition of Omond's work, published shortly before his death, combines and extends his earlier two editions (below) by adding supplements to the bibliographical lists and Postscript which bring the survey up to 1920. These two earlier studies, in turn, followed Omond's original 1903 monograph on English verse-structure, A Study of Metre (E310) and were intended as bibliographical appendices, but they gradually assumed larger and larger proportions then complete attention as the research broadened and deepened (no source-list whatsoever existing at the time). These were:

See his other metrical studies listed below in Chapter Six on Meter, beginning at E305.

Prior to the present study, English Metrists offered the most succinct, thorough, and accessible history of English metrical theory available. Given the date of Omond's first two editions (A6 and A7), a comparison of his work with Saintsbury (A8) is natural, even though the contrasts between the two could scarcely be greater: Omond is a history of critical theorizing about verse-structure, while Saintsbury is in fact a history of the poets' practice; Omond's assumptions about the (temporal) nature of poetic meter are evident on every page of his criticism, whereas Saintsbury repeatedly evades the explicit and takes refuge in the ambiguous and unexamined; Omond believed that a quantitative verse could be written in English, whereas Saintsbury rejected the possibility out of hand while paradoxically insisting on the retention of its archaic terminology. For the serious student of English verseform, however, Omond is the indispensable book.

English Metrists is not, however, so much a history as a bibliography; the text of the book is actually little more than a discursive, amplified commentary on the bibliographical lists at the end. So the work might more properly be thought of as discursive bibliography (see Chapter Three, Earlier Bibliographies, below). As such, however, its value is in no wise diminished; for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries especially, Omond's research was meticulous. And he regularly allows three to five pages for a discussion of a particularly important writer, a practice I have much envied, being unable to follow it here. I have included in the present work every full article or book which Omond cites, but there remain, in English Metrists, many brief notices of pas-
sages of verses, remarks, correspondence, and other references which I have not thought worthy of pursuit. Scholars working on future, more specialized studies such as the nineteenth century interest in hexameters will want to return to these, as well as to search out others which Omond himself mentions only in passing.

The function of the present book in relation to its predecessor, then, is twofold--extension, and organization. The limitations of Omond's book, in other words, form the greater part of the rationale for this one. To begin with, Omond's meticulous bibliographic searches end not long after the turn of the century (1908 for quantitative verse and, much less rigorously [Omond was ill], 1920 for accentual verse). The great mass of newer work published since that time has wanted collecting and reviewing, and so I have thought to bring Omond up to date. Moreover, though his researches at the British Museum and the Bodleian were prodigious, Omond frequently confesses himself unacquainted to the same degree with American scholarship, particularly periodical. He has not, for example, searched the nineteenth-century American literary journals for articles on versification as he did the British. But more importantly, Omond's criteria for inclusion now seem unacceptably narrow: he admitted only (1) works on English metrics (2) written in English, constraints which immediately barred him from the whole field of German scholarship on English philology (especially Old English, which Omond had little interest in) in the late nineteenth century, as well as from the important treatises of Schipper, Kaluza, Verrier, and others on English metrics. My own criterion has been that a work be on English versification (a far wider subject than merely metrics) regardless of its provenience or language of discourse. A truly comprehensive theory will require a truly comprehensive search for information.

Beyond the problem of scope, however, there is the problem of organization, and here Omond's book must be judged to have done little to clear up the immense confusions in English metrical theory. The source lists of English Metrists are divided into two parts, one a list of attempts to write (and legitimize) quantitative meters in English, the other a survey of theories about the ordinary accentual-syllabic tradition. This scheme is useful for chronological reference, but not for the immediately essential purpose of keeping separate problems separate. Omond makes no effort in his second list to sort out the competing schools of theorists, a procedure which is immensely important for readers who have little knowledge of the field and no idea of the quandaries which await them. Too, the bibliographical lists are cumbersome visually, for typographical reasons, and though the citation data is exceptionally accurate even for very obscure works, the remarks added thereto are less informative than evaluative. This latter difficulty, though, betokens a broader one, and a candid review of English Metrists would have to weigh heavily the fact that the book is, albeit modestly, a tendentious one. Omond firmly accepts the temporal nature of English verse as the foundation of its meter. This principle and others are evident, and they continually shade the chronicler's responses and judgments. One would prefer a list of sources--beyond question, a history of theory--to take a more disinterested stance. Some may believe that such a stance is impossible in this particular field, but I for one think that the significance and cogency of a work can be reliably assessed without any particularly strong commitment to one theory or another. Certainly one has assumptions, and principles, and I have tried to state mine in the Introduction above. But principles ought not deter one from recognizing quality or determining typology.

Born in Edinburgh, Omond took his M.A. at St. John's College, Oxford; thereafter he moved to Tunbridge Wells, a small town in Kent some forty miles southeast of London, employing himself as a barrister until his
death in 1923 (March 1). He is not listed in the DNB. For some time, I have been trying to trace his family, library, papers, and a photograph, but so far without much success. His will stipulates that his papers be destroyed.


Historically the successor to Guest (E543), the History of English Prosody represents one of the monuments of late Victorian criticism (as Saintsbury himself said of Patmore, the work "simply swarms with crotchety and temerarious deliverances") and the most extensive effort ever made to trace the poets' craft of versifying throughout the entire course of English poetry. The successor to the History, when it comes, will not be written by a single hand. The second edition is the definitive one, containing eleven Books of historical survey and fifteen Appendices treating specific problems. Since the latter are of more immediate interest for gauging Saintsbury than the former (the historical surveys are likely to be consulted only for specific purposes), I list the Appendices herewith, postponing for the moment, however, any discussion of Saintsbury's theories:

In vol. 1:
1: Equivalence, Substitution, and Foot-Arrangement in English;
2: Common Syllables in English, and Degrees in Quantity;
3: The Nature and Phenomenon of Doggerel;
4: Alliteration and its Varieties;
5: English Feet--1200–1600;
6: English Metres--1200–1600;
7: Pause in English--1200–1600;
8: Rhyme--1200–1600;

In vol. 3:
1: What Is a foot?;
2: Is the Basic Foot of English Iamb or Trochee?;
3: Trisyllabic Metres Since 1600;
4: R rhyme, 1600–1900;
5: Alliteration and Vowel Music, 1600–1900;
6: An Omnibus Box [Notes and Addenda].

Upon finishing the History, Saintsbury immediately turned his attention to the composition of a more accessible work, a student's manual of versification, which was intended to be "not so much an abstract as a parallel with a different purpose." This is his Historical Manual, still a very useful book (in many ways much more so than the History), cited below in the chapter on Metrics (E636); Saintsbury's prosodic assumptions, methods, and pronouncements are discussed at that point.

Saintsbury lived a very full life (1845–1933); he held the Chair of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, and he has been accurately assessed by René Wellek as "by far the most influential academic literary historian and critic of the early twentieth century." Over the course of his career, however, the scope (and variety) of his professional publications is staggering. The last of the great generalists, he eschewed the precise and the explicit, while never hesitating an instant to deliver an ex cathedra judgment. With Saintsbury, evaluation came first, understanding later. He has
an irrepressibly exuberant, anecdotal prose style that earned him the censure of his contemporaries (Hopkins called it "vulgar"); it is a great pleasure to read--in small doses--but admittedly it is often fluff. On the other hand, it is occasionally incandescent, too. Saintsbury is of that class of critics censured by Eliot as too creative for really accurate analysis.

The History of English Prosody is undeniably a great monolith of wide and informed reading. Yet at the same time it must surely stand as one of the most extravagant irrelevancies in criticism, since the instrument, the method, the theory by which the history is conceived, understood, brought into line, and written up is not simply vague or imprecise but actually non-existent--indeed, consciously ignored and avoided. Saintsbury was all for Taste, Gusto, Elan (this was what Eliot noticed most); he cared not a straw for Precision, Detail, Method, or Proof. In the view of many, therefore, the judgments, descriptions, and conclusions of the History--in effect the whole weight of the work--are entirely vitiated by Saintsbury's perverse and willful refusal to explain, either to himself or to us, the assumptions about the nature of meter and verse-structure by which those conclusions were reached. In versification clarity about assumptions is not merely indispensable, it is everything. See MacColl's critique at E371 and see D254.


Part I: Altenglische M etrik. 1881.
Part II: Neuenglische M etrik: V erslehre. 1888.
Neuenglische M etrik: Strophebau. 1888.


The translation (hereafter referred to as Schipper) is reorganized as follows: Book I: The Line
Part I: The Native Metre
Part 2: Foreign Metres
Division 1: The Foreign Metres in General
It has been said that Schipper’s table of contents in the English translation is the most thorough, logical, and minute organization of English verse-forms available anywhere; to peruse it is an education in itself. (Some have not thought so, however: Eleanor P. Hammond called it the product of “a mind which must name before it can see and feel.”) The translation is heavily reorganized in structure but seems much less reworked in content besides the obvious trimming of examples, though Schipper does take account of some arguments on Old and Middle English metrics published by Luick, Ten Brink, and others after 1881. The absence of an Index in the English edition is a great loss.

Each of the five Parts and three Divisions listed above is discussed elsewhere in the present work, since among the twenty-six chapters of HEV Schipper offers detailed, valuable accounts of Old English meter and the development of the modern meters in Middle English, as well as useful short reviews of the sonnet form, the Spenserian stanza, the development of blank verse and the couplet, trochaic meters, imitations of classical meters, varieties of rhyme—indeed on virtually every aspect of English versification.

Saintsbury’s observation that Schipper’s monumental work was “one of the foundation stones of a prosodic library” was one of the soundest judgments he ever made in his life. Englische Metrik was not only the first combined historical survey and classification of English verse-forms made on a truly comprehensive scale, it was also a study carried out with such theoretical clarity and acumen that subsequent researchers have found very little to quarrel with even after a century. Schipper complained that the German edition sold poorly, and his work had too much of the German drive for order and detail to make it attractive to the English, but I suspect that its sheer presence was an incentive toward the great flood of writing about versification which took place around the turn of the century. The reprint edition will be one of the first acquisitions of the serious student of versification.

The bulk of the book (about 70%—this is not obvious from the table of contents) discusses Old and Middle English metrics. The sections which treat modern stanza-forms are mainly catalogues of examples, with a few notable exceptions. This seems an unnatural distribution, and to some extent it simply reflects Schipper’s own specialty within English philology, which was Middle English, but it can be justified in part on the grounds that the two principles of modern English meter—syllable-counting and stress-alternation—were first established in early Middle English, a phenomenon which is only slightly more interesting than its correlate, the disappearance of the Old English meter about the same time. Hence Schipper turns his attention squarely on what is most important. Most of Book I and Parts 1 and 2 of Book II concern pre-1500 forms.

On Old English metrics Schipper gives one of the most judicious reviews of the nineteenth-century German scholarship available. He himself adheres to the Zweihubungs-Theorie in agreement with Sievers, whose Five Types
theory Schipper adopted soon after its appearance. His discussion of Old English verse is mainly an exposition of Sievers with examples. On the hypermetric lines he accepts the medial-fusion explanation given by Luick and subsequently endorsed by Sievers. As for the native meter in Middle English, Schipper generally follows Luick (see K223–26, and note K330) in tracing out the loosening form of the alliterative long-line (two-stress hemistichs expand to three; rhyme is added; internal rhyme allows a fracturing of one long-line into a short rhyming couplet) under the pressure of the foreign meters; he seems indeed more interested in the early ME verseforms, as in Layamon, than in the "Alliterative Revival," which had not yet become a bone of contention. Continuity of the alliterative tradition in ME is assumed throughout. The foreign meters, however, receive a different treatment, being the progenitors of the modern forms. Schipper adopts the traditional (classical) terminology of iambic, trochaic, anapestic, and dactylic feet, even going so far as the obstreperous nomenclature for line-ends (brachycatalectic, etc.). He also fails to distinguish between stress-verse and foot-verse (accentual-syllabic), so that Common Meter, for example, more commonly known as the Fourteener, is derived from the seven-foot iambic line in Latin, the Septenary. And he has a few blind spots: the poems of the Gawain-poet, for example, seem scarcely mentioned at all. Yet Schipper is right to identify the foreign sources of modern English versification as double: the influence of Medieval Latin has been seriously slighted elsewhere. And the traditional account of metrical structure he gives in Chapters 6, 7, and 8 is cogent and useful.

Altogether, it is the wide command of English literature and the steadiness of judgment that are distinctive in Schipper; he has no bold new theories to display, he borrows much, and his general approach may be fairly described as conservative. But he is remarkably good, not in spite of but in addition to the fact that he was first. I have been unable to trace much biographical information or (beyond hope) a photograph, but some information will be found in "Zum Gedächtnis Jakob Schippers," Englische Studien 49 (1915–16): 99–112, and the note on his election to the chair of English Philology at Vienna in Englische Studien 39 (1908): 318–19.
Chapter Two

-----------------

COLLECTIONS OF ESSAYS

Fifteen essays various in subject-matter but all concerned in one way or another with the possibilities for rapprochement between a precise linguistics and the study of literature. For the study of metrics the key essay is "What Is Metrical Analysis?" (see E534).

Twelve essays and an Appendix on a very wide range of subjects by a distinguished poet and critic, most of them previously published, many of them returning sooner or later to Hollander's first love, music--the music of, in, or about literature. Some of the finest writing done on versification will be found in this volume.

Ten essays by various hands.

These seven essays are some of those presented at two conferences on "Music and Poetry" and "Sound and Meaning in Poetry" at the English Institute. The volume contains an Introduction (E353) and six essays.


Eighteen articles on "general metrics and the metrics of Slavonic languages." Reference Bibliography.

Criticism, and the Relation of Poetry to Other Fields. Each article includes a short bibliography. The articles most relevant to English versification will be found listed under this item in Appendix D.


Chapter Three

EARLIER BIBLIOGRAPHIES


At 772 entries, this bibliography might otherwise be considered substantial. In fact, it relies very heavily on Omond, repeating his mistakes along with his discoveries, and though Lafourcade adds a considerable number of new citations, many of these are only of very minor interest, even to the fanatical prosodist, and some are quite difficult to justify as prosodic at all. Annotations are brief and intermittent. The typesetters seem not to have known English, for in truth "errors like straws upon the surface flow." In general the minutiae of dates, spelling, and pagination are all completely unreliable.


A29  -----. "A Selective Bibliography of Recent Work on English Prosody." Style 11 (1977): 136–70. A continuation of her earlier work (above); this article includes 285 annotated entries, 1968–76.

---  Omond, T. S. English Metrists. See A5.

A30  Shapiro, Karl. A Bibliography of Modern Prosody. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1948. 36 pp. Contains 71 entries. Shapiro undertook this short bibliography as part of his duties for the Chair of Poetry at the Library of Congress, 1946–47; it is not, therefore, an especially technical or comprehensive reference work. It contains some irrelevancies (such as the first and last entries) but does cite most of the larger (i.e., more visible, not necessarily better) works on versification from about 1880 to 1940. All the entries are annotated discursively, with some effort being made to sort the various approaches into "Temporal," "Stress," or "Mixed." The scholar will not be likely to examine this work more than once.