

BEOWULF:
SOME EXAMPLES OF BINARY¹ STRUCTURES
TRADITIONALLY PUNCTUATED AS PARATACTIC SEQUENCES

OE and eME writing was associated with logic and was based on the logical meaning of sentences. Rhetoric paved the way to other meanings.² Hence every medieval reader/listener could elucidate his

¹.- By “binary” is meant a bipolarization of two stretches of language (sentences, clauses or groups) notionally and syntactically interdependent or interordinate, and mutually bound in a related contingency. So I differentiate three models of syntactical organization of clauses: coordinate clauses (expansion of structure); subordination (+embedding); and interordination (=interdependent binary clauses). Then binary must be differentiated for our purposes from “binomial” in the sense defined by Yakov Malkiel, as a “sequence of words pertaining to the same form-class, placed at an identical level of syntactic hierarchy, and ordinarily connected by some kind of lexical link” (“Studies in Irreversible Binomials,” *Lingua* 8 (1959), p. 113). Cf. also V. Kohonen, “Observations on Syntactic Characteristics of Binomials in Late Old English and Early Middle English Prose,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 2, LXXX (1979), pp. 143-163. A pioneer work in binary sentences can be found in G. Rojo, “Cláusulas y oraciones,” *Verba*, anejo 14 (1974); cf. chapter 7, “Las oraciones bipolares.”

².- The term “rhetoric” is used here in its medieval sense to denote a rhythmical structural pattern which categorizes given poetic techniques in composition. So when we say, for example, that two units of language appear according to an elaborate rhetorical pattern, -in the sense that one tends to mirror the other, such as syntactical parallelism, chiasmus, etc-, we mean that the cohesion of both units must also be measured in logical, and rhythmical terms. (cf. W. H. Beale, “Rhetoric in the Old English Verse-Paragraph,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 2 LXXX (1979), pp. 133-142). Scholars contend about the precise meaning of punctuation marks in medieval writing. To pose the matter unevenly I will quote M. B. Parkes: “one might adduce a general principle about medieval punctuation. Medieval scribes and correctors punctuate where confusion is likely to arise (if their Latin is sufficient to recognize the fact) and do not always punctuate where

own interpretation of the right meaning of a sentence according to rhetorical, liturgical and oral performances. Modern editors of medieval texts restrict the meaning of sentences by the syntactical use of punctuation marks.¹ Readers, therefore, passively limit themselves to digesting the conceptual units prepared for them by editors. Notwithstanding, as alteration of the order of elements is not involved to amend the paucity of punctuation marks, the grammatical relationship between the varied components of the sentence maintains its original character. Thus “tactic” (paratactic and hypotactic) relations are unevenly balanced, as parataxis apparently seems to be a prevalent principle of construction of all the “natural” syntax of an early English text. It is in the light of foreign sources that embedding may conceivably be justified in OE composition.

The widespread occurrence, in particular, of paratactic univariate structures in medieval writing is still under conjecture.² Scholars con-

confusion is not likely to arise, even when they are concerned with the *sententia literae*.” (“Punctuation, or Pause and Effect,” *Medieval Eloquence Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric*, ed. J. J. Murphy (University of California Press, 1978), pp. 138-9.

¹.- See on this topic the works of C. G., Harlow, “Punctuation in Some Manuscripts of AElfric,” *Review of English Studies*, 10 (1959), 1-19; B. Mitchell, “The Dangers of Disguise: Old English Texts in Modern Punctuation,” *Review of English Studies*, 31 (1980), 385-413; M. B. Parkes, *op. cit.*; P. Clemoes, *Liturgical Influence on Punctuation in Late Old English and Early Middle English Manuscripts* (Occasional Papers, No. 1, printed for the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Cambridge: 1952); N. F. Blake, *The English Language in Medieval Literature*, (London and New York: Methuen, 1977), pp. 66-74.

².- For a further study of parataxis in OE cf. G. Rübens, *Parataxe und Hypotaxe in dem ältesten Teil der Sachsenchronik* (Göttingen diss., 1915); G. W. Small, *The Comparison of Inequality* (Baltimore: 1924), pp. 125-32; H. Möllmer, *Konjunktionen und Modus im Temporalatz des Altenglischen* (Breslau: 1937), pp. 28 and 113-14; S. O. Andrew, *Syntax and Style in Old English* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1940), pp. 87-100; Fr. Klaeber, “Eine Randbemerkung zur Nebenordnung und Unterordnung im Altenglischen,” *Anglia Beiblatt*, 52 (1941), pp. 216-19; G. Mann, “Die Entstehung von nebensatzeinleitenden Konjunktionen im Englischen,” *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 80 (1942), 86-93; A. Rynell, *Parataxis and*

tend not only about the precise function of OE and eME punctuation marks, but also whether the absence of syntactical punctuation was the cause or the effect of the priority of a coordinate sentence structure, or of the paratactic construction idiomatically used to indicate subordination or semi-subordination.

That paratactic uni-or-multivariate structures preceded hypotactic construction in the development of a language seems to be far beyond any type of doubt. It is a widely held opinion that statements of fact are much easier to express than their qualifications, though it seems fairly clear that at the time of the OE period most of the IE languages had developed, along with their own paratactic compositions,¹ a highly complex system of subordination construction. This means that either OE was a very rudimentary language or, on the contrary, as many scholars suggest, hypotactic construction was not the natural grammatical system of this Germanic language. To our understanding, however, many paratactic units of OE, properly punctuated, would be considered in a subordinate or interordinate relationship.² S. O. An-

Hypotaxis as a Criterion of Syntax and Style, especially in Old English Poetry (Lund: 1952); B. Mitchell, *Old English Syntax* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), I, pp. 693-763 and 769-772.

¹.- Asyndetic co-ordinate clauses were also common in Latin, though for the most part restricted to certain verbs of opinion such as *credo, opinor, puto, fateor, quaeso, obsecro, oro*, etc. cf. *Attica mea, obsecro te, quid agis?* (*Att.* 13, 13, 3); *Proclivius currit oratio, venit ad extremum, haeret in salebra* (*Fin.* 5. 84); *Abiit, excessit, evasit, erupit* (*Cat.* 2, 1). Sometimes these paratactic constructions were residual idioms or reminiscences of official style as in *Volens propitius, velis nolis, serius ocius, velitis jubeatis, Quirites, ut...* Nonetheless, syndetic paratactic units are very often used to express a subordinate relationship both in prose and poetry after Augustus' time. This occurs particularly with verbs of commanding used in the imperative. *Dic quibus in terris, et eris mihi magnus Apollo* (*Eccl.* 3, 104); *Impinge lapidem, et dignum accipies praemium* (*Phaedr.*, 3, 5, 7). Cf. also in Spanish, *hazme* ("si me haces") *eso y te garantizo que no lo volverás a ver*.

².- Parataxis is used in two different senses: the multiple sentences-clauses occurrence lacking the formal subordination of one to the other (asyndetic or syndetic parataxis),

drew,¹ states that subordination in OE, though “clumsy,” was productive, particularly in prose. In like manner, B. Mitchell says that the term co-ordinating is misleading because some OE conjunctions such as *ond* and *ac* “are frequently followed by the element order S...V, which is basically subordinate.”²

I am much of the opinion that there is no one-to-one correlation between the absence of instruction of vernacular grammatical units and the stagnancy of “natural” English syntax in paratactic constructions.³ Nor do I believe that the difficulty of recognizing indigenous syntax must lead us to suppose that the language of the OE texts was an artificial or an elaborate code framed by foreign sources and far removed from colloquial speech. So I think it extremely unlikely that to “some extent it could be said that any syntactic construction in written (medieval) English was acceptable provided it had a model in some other language.”⁴

The crucial matter we face is how to punctuate supposedly paratactic sequences of OE according to syntactical principles. In some passages editors separate the paratactic element from the principal verb by a full stop making two sentences; on the other hand, by using a comma, others either integrate the “paratactic” components in a complex sentence, that is, in a hypotactic relationship, or form a coordinate sequence with the clauses involved. For the latter, the presence or absence of linkers probably has no special significance. *Beowulf* is certainly considered the prototype of the OE paratactic con-

and an idiomatically co-ordinately juxtaposed sequence which encloses a subordinate relationship, as in “Knock and it shall be opened,” instead of “If you....” Cf. S. O. Andrew, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

¹.- *Ibidem*, pp. 90 ff.

².- *Op. cit.*, I. p. 694.

³.- N. F. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁴.- *Idem*, p. 138.

struction. However, I find that such a structural type is not systematically registered, particularly if we reconsider some of the punctuation patterns that appear in modern editions.

In this paper I intend to encroach on two main areas of concern: on the one hand, to assemble evidence of how some basic rhetorical and rhythmical units of *Beowulf* were converted into paratactic cumulative constructions by means of misleading punctuation and, on the other hand, to collate some of the translations provided for such paratactic compositions. I will concentrate on certain sequences in *Beowulf* usually recognized in modern editions as self-contained clauses or parts of a compound (multiple) sentence. In particular, I will confine my attention to binary sequences introduced by the so-called adversative *nom þyu æmr*, the strong negative *nealles* and also to binary clauses introduced by *wolde*¹ (“wished to,” “intended to”), -normally punctuated as complete sentences-, in which the subjects of the verbs of the sequential “parataxis” are different and both expressed.

Let us consider my first example (Ex1)² according to the punctuation given in one of the earliest editions of *Beowulf* this century to

¹.- This usage is now obsolete or archaic, though sometimes it appears in clauses dependent on syntactical units with a verb in the preterite (Cf. F. Th. Visser, *An Historical Syntax of the Old English Language* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), Part III, 1st. half, pp. 1705-7.

².-J. Zupitza's transliteration of the MS is as follows: **(A)** sume / worde het pæt ic his ærest ðe est gesægde / cwæl pæt hyt hæfde hiorogar cyning / leod scyldunga lange hwile. **(B)** no / ðy / ær suna sinum syllan wolde hwatum heoro-wearde peah he / him hold wære. (ll. 2158-61), *Beowulf* (reproduced in facsimile from the Unique Manuscript British Museum MS Cotton Vitellius A XV), EETS, 245, 1959). Original punctuation differentiated limited pauses depending on rhetorical and rhythmical units. The longest was the period (.) and the shortest was the small slash (/); and in between, the transposed semicolon (;) and the longer slash (|).

base itself on syntactical tenets:¹ (For practical reasons I shall divide the passage into two units A and B).

(A) Sume worde heµt,
pæt ic his æµrest Íeµ eµst gesægde,
cwæÍ pæt hyt hæfde Hiorogaµr cyning,
leµod Scyldunga, lange hwÈµle;
(Sedgefield's edition, ll. 2156-59)

Later editions provide other alternatives to Sedgefield's punctuation. A. J. Wyatt² and F. Klaeber³ write a semicolon after *gesægde*, whereas C. L. Wrenn⁴ and Fr. P. Magoun⁵ have a colon and M. Swanton⁶ uses a full stop. Editing and punctuation are crucial matters. For instance, the prevailing paratactic sentence-structure of unit A of Ex1, if rightly punctuated, may be transformed into a periodic one. In this way, the editors who use a comma or a semicolon after *gesægde* integrate unit A into a complex sentence. It would clearly appear capricious to link the components of this paratactic sequence in a hypotactic relationship just by means of punctuation. However, the pattern of this type of punctuation is substantiated by the word *cwæÍ*, which usually introduces an adverbial clause of reason or purpose⁷.

¹.- W. J. Sedgefield, *Beowulf* (Manchester: Univ. Press, 1913)

².- *Beowulf* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1933, 1st. ed. 1914).

³.- *Beowulf and the Fight of Finnsburg* (Massachusetts: Heath & Co., 3rd. ed. 1950, 1st. ed. 1922)

⁴.- *Beowulf* (London: Harrap, 1973, revised ed. by W. F. Bolton, 1st. ed. 1953).

⁵.- *Beowulf and Judith* (Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, revised ed. by J. B. Bessinger, 1st. ed. 1959)

⁶.- *Beowulf*. Ed. and trans. (Manchester: Univ. Press, 1978).

⁷.- S. O. Andrew, *Syntax and Style in Old English* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1940), pp. 87-88. He also uses a semicolon after *gesægde*.

Notwithstanding, the editors who use a colon or a full stop after *gesægde* divide the paratactic sequence into two sentences. So in Sedgefield's punctuation, we find an apparently univariate paratactic construction involving a subordinate relationship, whereas in Swanton's, for example, there are two independent sentences.

In view of the various uncertainties surrounding this passage translators also show signs of hesitation. The problem seems to be one of basic definition of punctuation marks. Though there are few differences in meaning, the syntactical variations are very important for our purposes, because the translator is usually taking for granted the punctuation provided by the editors. I am aware of the constraints on any type of translation. It seems reasonable to assume that the act of translating goes far beyond syntactical accuracy to the source language, therefore I do not intend to judge such a task as good or bad on that basis, but to consider it as appropriate or inadequate from syntactical principles. Indeed, we note at least three different approaches from the syntactical point of view with regards to Ex1. G. N. Garmonsway and J. Simpson¹ thought of a clear division of the paratactic sequence:

(Hrothgar, the far-sighted ruler, gave me this garb of battle,) and in one speech he bade me first tell you whose legacy this is. He said that king Heorogar, prince of the Scyldings, had owned it a long while;

Swanton² also divides the passage into two sentences with a full stop:

¹.- *Beowulf* (London: Dent & Sons, 1968).

².- *Op. cit.*

he commanded me in one speech that I should first tell you about his gracious gift. He said that king Heorogar, the Prince of the Scyldings, had it for a long while; ...

In like manner, the translations of J. Earle¹, J. R. Clark Hall² and B. G. Stanley³ do the same with a colon. Andrew, by commenting this passage, opts for a decidedly hypotactic association of the elements of the sequence expressed in terms of reason or purpose and translates:

bade me mention the gift of armour first *because* (emphasis mine) king Herogar... once possessed it.⁴

Whereas A. Strong⁵ prefers a co-ordinately multiple sentence. Let us consider his translation:

and (emphasis mine) bade me bring thee the tale of its first bequeathing, *and* (emphasis mine) he said that the Scylding king Heorogar, long while owned it, ...

In my view, Strong's translation is the most appropriate one to incorporate the meaning of these cumulative reported clauses. Incidentally, it should be stated that such a translation demands a correlative punctuation based on the same syntactical tenets. That is the reason why I consider the use of full stop after *gesægde* in Ex1 to be a

¹.- *The Deeds of Beowulf* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892).

².- *Beowulf. A Metrical Translation* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1914).

³.- *A Readable Beowulf* (Carbondale: Univ. Press, 1982).

⁴.- *Op. cit.*, pp. 87-88. He says that a paratactic sentence, when introduced by *wolde*, *wende* or *cwæġ* is usually equivalent to an adverbial clause of reason or purpose. He also quotes the example under discussion.

⁵.- *Beowulf* (London: Constable & Co., 1925).

wrong punctuation. By using a comma or a semicolon we suspend the import of what has been said in order to integrate the clauses in the sequence in either a joining or a binding relationship. Thus if we name the individual clauses of unit A of Ex1 as *a*, *b*, *c* and *d*, and symbolize their hypotactic association with an arrow pointing towards the bound member and the paratactic relationship with a plus, and the binary relation with an arrow pointing in both directions <--> the structure of:

a sume worde heµt||
b pæt ic his æµrest Íµ eµst gesægde,|||
c cwæÍ || *d* pæt hyt hæfde Hiorogaµr cyning,
leµod Scyldunga, lange hwÈµle;

would be as follows:

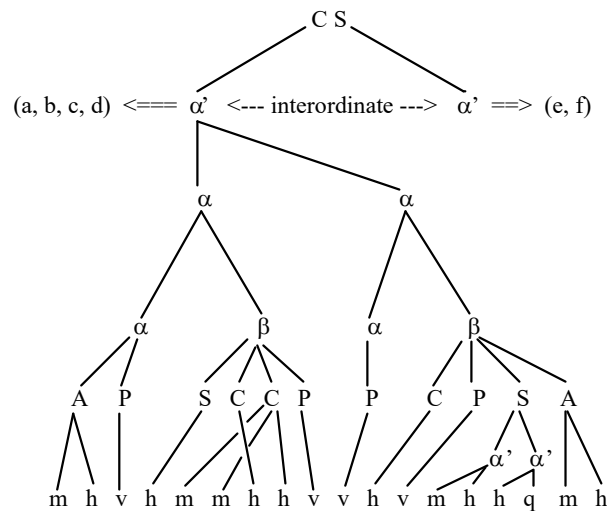
$$(a \rightarrow b) + (c \rightarrow d)$$

That is, *b* is bound to *a*, and *d* is bound to *c*, and both of these are joined to the complex unit *a* and *b*.

The tree¹ diagram would be as follows:

¹.- These are the meaning of the symbols used in this paper in tree diagrams: CS = complex sentence S = subject; MS = multiple/compound sentence P = predicator; a' = element of a binary relation v = verb; a = main element m = modifier; β = subordinate element h = headword; A = adjunct q = qualifier; C = complement a' = element of complex group in an appositional paratactic univariate structure. In our syntactical description we differentiate three major groups of bound clauses: a) adding clauses which supply extra or incidental information; b) reported or verbalization clauses and c) contingent clauses which modify or limit the proposition of the dominant clause. Cf. David J. Young, *The Structure of English Clauses* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), pp. 238-250. It is worth noting that those clauses traditionally dubbed as conditional, causal, concessive and also adversative clauses are included here in interordination.

Beowulf: Some Examples of Binary Structures ...



With regards to unit B of Ex1 there is no great difficulty in setting the grammatical relationship of the elements of the sequence. So, the clauses of unit A being **(a, b, c, d)** and the clauses of unit B **(e, f)**:

(B) ||| e noμ Íγμ æμr suna sĒμnum syllan wolde,
 hwatum Heorowearde, ||fpeμah he him hold wæμre,
 breμostgewæμdu. (Sedgefield's edition, ll. 2160-2)

the structure of unit B would be of this type **(e --> f)**, and by and large editors coincide by punctuating similarly to Sedgefield. But the problem arises when they try to figure the relationship of both units (A and B). Sedgefield's edition runs as follows:

(A), lange hwĒμle;
(B) noμ Íγμ æμr suna sinum

Wyatt, Klaeber, Wrenn and Swanton also use a semicolon after *hwĒμle*, whereas Magoun, for example, prefers a full stop. The main

point then is how to organize both units syntactically and how to elucidate the relationship which occurs between them. Andrew¹ states that a sentence introduced by the adversative *nom Ūyμ æμr* “should not be taken as a principle sentence,” but as a clause co-ordinate to a dependent sentence. Magoun by pointing a full stop after *hwÈμle* definitely creates two complete clauses.

Translators also differ on the syntactical meaning of Ex1. Swanton, for example, separates both units with a semicolon and leads the second half of the passage with “nevertheless.”

... ; *nevertheless* (emphasis mine) he would not give it, the breast-
armour, to his son, bold Heorowearð, faithful to him though he
was.

Like Swanton, Earle, Garmonsway and Simpson, and Stanley also use a semicolon to separate both sequences, initiating the second unit with “nathless,” “yet even so,” “yet” respectively. Clark Hall keeps the same syntactical principle but uses a colon between the two units and begins the second unit with “yet,” whereas Strong, more coherently, just uses a comma. A different view is held by Andrew (1948: 53 *ff*) who integrates the whole passage in a “syndetic” co-ordinate clause and translates:

... saying that H. long possessed it [and] yet would not give it to
his son.

He includes unit B of Ex1 among the “clauses co-ordinate to dependent sentences.”² In my opinion it seems to be more plausible to

¹.- *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

².- *Postscript on Beowulf* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1948), p. 54.

consider the whole passage as a period in which both units A and B are in a mutual binding relationship. Then I consider the supposed paratactic composition of Ex1 as a binary structure of this type:

$$A \text{ <-----> } B$$

I therefore propose replacing the semicolon or full stop after *hwËµle* with a comma, since any greater pause would separate the paratactic sequence of unit A from the dependent sentence of unit B creating two self-contained sentences. Thus the structure of Ex1 might be as follows:

$$((a \rightarrow b) + (c \rightarrow d)) \text{ <-----> } (e \rightarrow f)$$

In a linear diagram:

<i>a</i> sume heut	<i>b</i> šæt gesægde	<i>c</i> cwæġ	<i>d</i> šæt hwiþle	<i>e</i> noþ Heor	<i>f</i> šeþah breþe
free dominant	bound reported	free dom.	bound reported		
-----> ----->					
joined ----- joined				domi- nant	bound contingent
----->					
dependent <----->					dependent

Let us consider another example¹. (Ex2)

Wrenn's punctuation of the passage was as follows (for the sake of clarity I divide Ex2 into two units):

¹.- grap pa/to-geanes guġ-rinc ge-feng atolan / clom-mum no þe in/ge-cod halan / lice hring utan ymb-bearh þæt (Zupitza's transliteration of the MS. ll. 1501-1503).

(A) Γραψ παμ τομγεμνες; गुर्लृnc gefeμng
atolan clommum; (B) νομ πυμ æμr in gescoμd
hαμlan lÈμce; hring uμtan ymbbearh,
? æt... (ll. 1501-3)

There are no radical divergencies in the punctuation of these lines: Klaeber, Swanton, Magoun and Wyatt coincide, though they have a comma after *τομγεμνες*. But all of them have thought of a paratactic construction of the two sequential elements of unit A. So that unit A appears coordinate to unit B.

The translations are quite different. Garmonsway and Simpson maintain the asyndetic paratactic construction of the first two clauses of unit A and link these with unit B at the same level. This is their translation:

She grasped him, she clutched the warrior in a terrible lock; yet for all that she did no harm to his unwounded body, for there was ring-mail wrapped around it to protect it, ...

Swanton arrives at a similar translation, but Earle prefers to divide the sequence of unit A with a semicolon.

It made a grab then towards him; it caught the brave man with grisly talons; nevertheless ...

Strong links the two paratactic statements of the first line with the linker *and*:

And she caught at the hero *and* (my italics) clutched him in the grip of her fell embrace; but his flesh ...

Again I consider Strong's translation as the most appropriate from a syntactical point of view, except for the semicolon after *embrace*. In

my opinion this supposed paratactic construction must be considered again as a bipolarized period (**A** <-----> **B**) and therefore I propose to replace the semicolon, wherever it appears in Ex2, with a comma.¹ Thus the structure of

a Graup paμ tougeμanes, ||*b* guμl̄rinc gefeμng
 atolan clommun; ||*c* noμ py æμr in gescopd
 haμlan l̄eμce; ||*d* hring uμtan ymbbearh,

would be:

(a + b) <-----> (c -> d)

In a linear diagram:

<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>d</i>
Graup tougeμanes	guμl̄rinc clommun	noμ liμce	hring ymbbearh
free joiner	free joiner	dominant	bound contingent
dependent <----->		dependent	

We may also consider other sequences of *Beowulf* introduced by *noμ l̄yμ æμr* which should not be taken as self-contained clauses. Let us view the punctuation suggested by Klaeber in the following passages (for practical reasons I differentiate two sequences, **A** and **B**, in every Ex.):

Ex3.

(**A**) heμ on moμde wearl̄

¹.- Cf. Andrew, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

forht on ferhpe; **(B)** *nom pyu æmr fram meahte.* (ll. 753-4)

Ex4.

(A) *him Grendel wearf,*
mæmrum magupegne toμ muμfbonan,
leμofes mannes lEμc eall forswealg.
(B) *Nom pyu æmr umt famu geμn Eμdelhende*
bona bloμdigtof, bealewa gemyndig,
of famμ goldsele gongan wolde; (ll. 2078-2083)

Ex5.

(A) *bearne ne truwode,*
pæt heμ wif ælfylcum eμpelstoμlas
healdan cuμfe, fam wæs Hygelaμc deμad.
(B) *Nom pyu æmr feμasceafte findan meahton*
æt famμ æfelinga æμnige finga,
pæt heμ Heardreμde hlaμford wæμre,
of fe pone cynedoμm cEμosan wolde; (2370-76)

Ex6.

(A) *white ne meahte*
on famμ feorhbonan fæμghfe gebeμtan;
(B) *nom fym æmr heμ pone heaforinc hatian ne meahte*
laμfum dæμdum, peμah him leμof ne wæs. (ll. 2464-67)

Klaeber uses a semicolon in Ex3 and Ex6 before the joiner (binder, in my opinion) *nom pyu æmr*, whereas in Ex4 and Ex5 he has a full stop. The reasons seem to be fairly clear. The clauses introduced by *nom pyu æmr* in Ex3 and Ex6 had a subjectless verb. The unexpressed subject is dragged up from the previous non-dependent clause. Bipolarization seems to be more uncertain for Klaeber in Ex4 and Ex5 as he punctuated the two main sequences of the passages with a full stop creating two independent sentences. Such punctuation

may be determined by the fact that the subjects of the verbs in both sequences are different and are both expressed.

My suggestion is to punctuate with a comma all the clauses introduced by *noμ pyμ æμr* in *Beowulf* and take them as non-self-contained clauses. I suggest this for three main reasons. Firstly, *noμ pyμ æμr* match two, and no more than two elements at the highest level. Secondly, both elements (unlike cumulative clauses) are not interchangeable because they are mutually interdependent and interordinate (<-->). Thirdly, word order confirms that *noμ pyμ æμr* clauses are not complete or self-contained clauses. Thus, the order S ... V is basically a subordinate order (cf. Ex5 and Ex6) and the V is placed at the very end of the period, except in Ex2, in which alliteration demands the splitting of the preposition *in* and its governing adjunct *haμlan lĒμce*.¹

Nealles clauses,² on the other hand, are also usually punctuated in *Beowulf* as self-contained clauses. In my opinion it would be more cohesive to remove by a comma many of the full stops and semicolons used before the introduction of a *nealles* clause. Let us run through just one example:³ (Ex7.)

Sedgefield's edition reads as follows:

¹.- It is worth noting the parallelism in the usage of predicators: Ex1 ... *syllan wolde*. Ex2 ... *in gescoμd / haμlan lĒμce*. Ex3 ... *(gongan) meahte*. Ex4 ... *gongan wolde*. Ex5 ... *findan meahton*. Ex6 ... *hatian ne meahte*.

².- It is certainly necessary to differentiate the stressed negative *nales* (*nealles*, *nallas*, *nalas*) used to negate a word or a nominal group as in *nealles swæμslĒμce* (*Beowulf*; 3089), from a headword used to negate a sentence as in the examples proposed in this paper.

³.- *pæt se bym- / wiga bugan sceolde feoll on fēlan nalles / frætwe geaf ealdor dugoīe us was a syllan / mere-wio-ingas/milts ungyfēīe*. (Zupitza's transliteration of the MS; ll. 2917-20)

? æt se byrnwiga buþgan sceolde,
feþoll on feþþan; nalles frætwe geaf
ealdor dugolþe; (ll. 2918-20)

Klaeber, Wrenn, Magoun and Wyatt coincide with Sedgefield using also a semicolon after *feþþan*. Swanton replaces the semicolon with a comma, whereas Andrew¹ suggests a colon.

Two factors may account for the hesitation in punctuating the pause before a *nealles* clause: firstly, to clarify the dependent/non-dependent character of a *nealles* clause, and secondly, if dependent, to reveal the type of relationship it kept with the main clause.

Translations also show a great deal of hazardous interpretations by taking for granted the punctuation provided by editors and therefore keeping the same syntactical digressive tenets. Earle seems to detect an asyndetic coordination rather than a static paratactic construction and translates as follows: (The previous content to *pæt* clause is “they struck him with overwhelming force”)

... that the mailed warrior was compelled to bow his head; he fell
among the fighting men [and] (:) far was he from giving spoils as
chieftain to his veterans (square brackets and brakets are mine)

Swanton seems to be aware of similar syntactical organization:

... that the mailed fighter had to bow in death; the chieftain fell in
the troop, [and] in no way gave adornments to tried warriors

Strong creates two independent sentences:

¹.- *Op. cit.*, p. 55)

Beowulf: Some Examples of Binary Structures ...

... that in death must the hero bow him, and he fell 'mid his troop in the fight. No booty from out that battle the chieftain gave his clan!

Garmonsway and Simpson do the same:

... (they forced) the mail-clad warrior to bow down in death, and fall in the midst of his troops. No rich adornments did our sovereign give to the flower of his host.

And Stanley has a different syntactical interpretation and integrate both paratactic sequences into a complex sentence of the following type:

... (Hetware) caused the mailed warrior to bow low and fall among foot-troops rather than give treasures as lord to his retainers

I agree with such a view, since I think that the structure of

a pæt se byrnwiga buƿgan || *b* sceolde,
|| *c* feƿoll on feƿlān; || *d* nalles frætwe geaf
ealdor dugoſe.

should be:

(*a* <-- *b* --> *c*) <-----> *d*

In a linear diagram:

<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>d</i>
šæt buḡgan	sceolde	feḡoll feḡlan	nalle dogoŕe
joiner		joiner	
bound <-----	dominant ----->	bound	
dependent <-----			dependent ----->

In view of the lack of consensus between such translations it is unwise to draw a definitive conclusion. There are signs that editors and translators seem to disagree about the syntactical function of *nealles* used as a head-word to negate a clause or a sentence. Word order *-nealles S ... V*, or *nealles...V*, tends to confirm a basic subordinate construction. So it seems to me quite inadequate to consider it as a simple strong negative adverb, and therefore translations such as “by no means,” “not at all” and the like do not serve to convey the real dependent relationship in which it usually appears. Thus I propose to organize Ex7 as a complex sentence that bipolarizes two alternatives (placed on the same level at the highest rank) which are opposed in terms of polarity: positive <-> negative Ps (Predicators). Consequently a *nealles* clause may appear in *Beowulf* as a mutually interdependent or interordinate sequential statement in opposition to its partner, functioning as the negative alternative. Hence, keeping in mind Stanley’s translation of Ex7, I am tempted to propose that a clause introduced by *nealles* binds the preceding clause by a “notial” binder such as “rather than” or the like. It may also be possible to explain this syntactical relationship as a contingency of preference that modifies or

limits the proposition of the dominant clause which has already been presupposed.

Let us consider now certain “asyndetic paratactic” constructions introduced with *wolde*. I only include here those clauses in which *wolde* heads the clause in modern editions and the subjects of the verbs of the sequential parataxis are different and both expressed.¹ I intend to prove that some of these “paratactic” sequential statements of *Beowulf* are wrongly punctuated because they are not complete self-clauses, though VS order (a functional rather than a syntactical order) may suggest the common order of an independent clause. Let us consider these examples:² Ex8.

(A) *Duguí eal aμraμs;*

(B) *wolde blondenfeax beddes neμosan,*
gamela Scylding. (Klaeber’s edition, ll. 1790-3)

In my opinion, the *wolde*-clause is interordinate with *Duguí eal aμraμs*, though the subjects of the verbs of both units (A and B) are different and are both expressed. To point a semicolon after *aμraμs* would be very misleading; but being aware of word order ambiguity, I would remove that semicolon or just write a comma. I coincide with Garmonsway and Simpson’s translation of this sequential pseudo-

¹.- In some of the *wolde*-clauses of *Beowulf* the subject is unexpressed, but dragged up from the previous sequence of the parataxis. Cf. ll. 755-6; 794-7; 1292-3; 1337-42; 1545-7; 2293-5. Andrew (*Syntax and Style... op. cit.*, pp. 72-86) refers to this type of composition as co-ordinate clauses “idiomatically used to indicate subordination to the sentence before.” Mitchell (*op. cit.*, p. 697) considers this asyndetic parataxis as a kind of “semi-subordination.”

².- *duguí eal aras wolde blonden-feax bed- / des neosan gamela scylding ...* (Zupitza’s transliteration of the MS, ll. 1791-3). Cf. also *wolde*-clauses in ll. 662-5; 1008-12; 1802-6; 2302-6.

paratactic statement in the sense that they also seem to think of a syntactical relationship of the following type:

A <-----> **B** instead of **A # B** (# = asyndetic parataxis)

Their translation reads as follows:

The tried warriors all arose, for the aged grey-haired Scylding
wished to go to his bed.

So translations such as Swanton's, who points the OE text in his parallel edition in the same way as Klaeber, seem to me excessively static and lifeless:

The band of companions all arose; the grey-haired man, the old
Scylding, wished to seek out his bed.

Clark Hall also keeps a syntactic segmentation:

The whole band rose, the grey-haired patriarch-Scylding would
fain go to his bed.

Ex7, then, provides a good example, on the one hand, of the hesitation in punctuating *wolde* clauses and, on the other hand, of the inconsistency of handling them as independent sentences. Again I put forward the theory that the syntactical model in which *wolde* clauses - when the subjects are different and both expressed- must be considered as interordinate clauses. So in my opinion the structure of

a Duguí eal aμraμs;
|| *b* wolde blondenfeax || *c* beddes neμosan,

gamela Scylding.

is a: <-----> (b --> c)

A similar example might be the following one:¹ (Ex9)

Ne meahte he on eorpan, Íeah he uíe weþl,
on Íaþm frumgare feorh gehealdan,
neþ Íæs Wealdendes wiht oncirran;
wolde doþm Godes dæþdum ræþdan
gumena gehwylcum, swaþ heþ nuþ geþn deþl.
(Klüber's edition, ll. 2855-2859)

Probably editors are alike in recognizing the fuzziness of their punctuation. Thus Swanton uses a full stop after *oncirran*, others a semicolon or comma, though there is a tendency to create a new self-contained sentence after *oncirran*. I certainly believe that the *wolde*-clause is interordinate to the sequence before, and therefore a binary structure. In a causal clause the cause and its effect are mutually needed. Hence it seems to me necessary to remove the full stop or semicolon and not to use any greater pause than a comma. Again I agree with Garmonsway and Simpson's translation:

He could not retain the chieftain's life in this world, dearly though
he wished to do so, nor could he turn aside what came from God
the Ruler, for the decree of God ruled every man's actions, as it
does even now.

¹.- ne/meahte he on eorþan / Íeah he uíe wel on/Íam frum-gare feorh ge-healdan / ne/Íæs wealdendes wiht oncirran wolde dōm / godes dæþdum ræþdan gumena gehwylcum swa / he nu gen deþ (Zupitza's transliteration of the MS, ll. 2855-60).

Clark Hall keeps a similar version, though he divides the sequential period with a full stop:

He could not keep on earth the chieftain's spirit, much though he wished it, nor alter anything ordained by the Almighty. For men of all degrees God's judgment ruled their deeds, just as it still does now.

Swanton seems to be consistent with his own punctuation of the passage:

Dearly though he would wish, he could not keep life on earth in the chieftain, nor tum aside anything ordained by the Ruler. The judgement of God would rule the actions of every man, as he still does.

The discrepancy between Garmonsway and Simpson's translation and the one by Swanton, for example, illustrates the uncertainties surrounding the syntactical model in which a *wolde* clause must be organized. I definitely consider the translation by Garmonsway and Simpson much more appropriate from a syntactical point of view because in my view the structure of Ex9 must be measured in terms of polarity and periodical interordination. So the structure of

a Ne meahte heμ on eorġan, || *c* Īeμah heμ uμĪe weμl,
on Īaμm frumgaμre || *b* feorh gehealdan,
|| *d* neμ Īæs Wealdendes || *e* wiht oncirran;
|| *f*wolde doμm Godes dæμdum ræμdan
gumena gehwylcum, || *g* swaμ heμ nuμ geμn deμĪ.

should be:

((a --> b --> c) + (d --> e)) <-----> (f --> g)

A fair amount of space has already been given to the discussion of binary structures, so I will not insist on details of basic definition. At this point we can arrive at the conclusion that in scrutinizing the succession of thoughts of Ex1-9 it seems fairly clear that all the passages are sequentially bound in bipartite structures, and that ordering relationships are more functional -the known thought precedes the unknown one -than syntactic. It is in the light of this that we can draw the conclusion that Beowulfian composition is not first and foremost paratactic but periodic. And the supposed tactical or cumulative parataxis is essentially a binary/bipolarized construction: *a*) in terms of related and opposed contingency, as in the case of *nom pyμ æμr* clauses; *b*) in terms of alternative opposition (positive <-> negative predicators, in the case of clauses introduced by *nealles*, and *c*) in terms of interdependence -*wolde* clauses in which the subjects are different and both expressed.

We are left to fall back on the role of modern punctuation in OE. Unfortunately scholars disagree as to the right function of medieval punctuation, and modern editors hesitate at some passages when they point on syntactical tenets. The general scarcity of joiners and binders in the sentences and word order constrictions may explain the abundance of semicolons in punctuation producing the banal effect of monotonous parataxis. Much more embarrassing turns out to be the reproduction of paratactic compositions in translations, particularly in bound contingent and reported clauses. I cannot arrive at a definitive conclusion, but the problem is one of basic definition: what is the role of a semicolon in modern writing? It is a greater pause than a comma and lesser than a full stop, but to what extent does it divide the known information from the unknown one which follows? The subject-matter, then, implies the taking of a decision on the right grammatical meaning

of punctuation marks. If we consider that a full stop is a “reaction point” or a device to advise the reader to take stock of what has been said; and a semicolon or a comma a device to delay this process until one gets to the full stop, then a syntactical paratactic or periodic construction, or in popular usage, a sentence,¹ would necessarily be delimited by a full stop. The term “sentence” is necessarily associated with a written text and therefore it depends largely on punctuation. So we may transform a sentence by means of punctuation into a tactical unit of discourse,² -a unit independent of any grammatical structure-, as opposed to a syntactical one. If I say, “I haven’t seen him. For the last year,” grammatically I have one clause, but two tactical units of discourse. So many “supposed” paratactic sequences of *Beowulf* would be transformed into “sentences” (=tactical units of discourse) by the abuse of semicolons and full stops.

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¹.- Particularly, when the term “sentence” is considered as a unit of higher rank than the clause.

².- According to J. McH. Sinclair and R. M. Coulthard (*Towards an Analysis of Discourse: the English Used by Teachers and Pupils*, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975) there are two kinds of factors in addition to the linguistic form of what is uttered. Situational factors and tactical factors (these are the functional and conventional stages or sequences of moves that characterize linguistic interactions and which vary from one kind of discourse to another). Quoted from David J. Young, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

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Luis Iglesias-Rábade

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