

not be mentioned in the *Pléiade* edition. Surprisingly, these scholars barely pay attention to staging, although there was clearly some room to improve over the previous editions in this field. Indeed, Corneille is still very much present in our theaters and each year the *Festival d'Avignon*, for instance, gives a new representation on *Le Cid*. We could have expected these new *mise-en-scènes* to be emphasized in a 2017 edition of Pierre Corneille's work.

Jennifer Tamas-Le Menthéour, *Rutgers University*

The Evolution of Verse Structure in Old and Middle English Poetry: From the Earliest Alliterative Poems to Iambic Pentameter. Geoffrey Russom.
Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 98. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. xii + 324 pp. \$99.99.

Geoffrey Russom's *The Evolution of Verse Structure in Old and Middle English Poetry* is a technical and wide-ranging analysis of English versecraft from its inception to the beginning of the early modern period, with particular focus on Middle English (ME). Although partly an extension of his previous monographs, which covered Old English (OE), Old Norse, and Old Saxon, this text expands his scope by extending his word-foot theory into a broader concept of universal poetics. The book thus presents a comprehensive viewpoint of early English poetics and its connection to linguistics that Russom hopes will engage literary scholars and poets as well as linguists and metrists.

The eleven chapters can be roughly organized into four sections. The first, chapter 1, explains Russom's theory of universal poetics, which he formulates in analogy to linguistic universals. He connects metrical patterning to linguistic norms, arguing that metrical positions, feet, and lines are abstracted from a language's syllables, words, and simple sentences, respectively. To this foundation, he adds features that cross traditions, using musical concepts of dissonance and resolution to explain some universal aesthetic principles, mainly relating to the idea that poetic mismatches keep the line interesting, but they must resolve to create a regular line ending. This principle of closure, an established poetic universal, becomes central to Russom's argument.

The second section, chapters 2–3, discusses Indo-European poetics and their manifestation in OE. Russom argues that Germanic meter evolved from SOV word order: verb-final structure favors metrical subordination (with the lightly stressed verb ending the line), and the related root stress favors alliteration. Based on these and other universal principles discussed above, Russom establishes a set of norms for OE meter that operate similarly to the constraints in optimality theory. In Russom's theory, norms pertaining to the line outrank those pertaining to the verse, which outrank those pertaining to the foot, and so forth. He considers them all violable rules, though any violation adds to the line's complexity. Using these norms, he explains the different realizations

of OE verse types and what complexities make them less likely to appear in the b-verse (the second verse of the line) due to the principle of closure.

Having established his model, Russom explains in chapters 4–9 how the shift from synthetic to analytic syntax effected a corresponding shift to ME verse. The linguistic change created a greater need for unstressed function words and a preference for SVO word order. Consequently, late OE verses were longer, with more allowances in the drops and less precedence governing subordination of later lifts. As the linguistic changes continued into the ME period, poets reorganized the system by expanding on the allowances where necessary and developing new rules to replace those lost, most importantly, the principle of asymmetry. As closure split the increasingly complex metrical patterns more definitively into either the a-verse or the b-verse, the distinction between the verses was codified into a rule: although both verses have two stresses, the a-verse must be heavier, with either two long drops, an ultra-long drop, or a long drop plus secondary stress, while the b-verse must be more structured, with exactly one long drop and a trochaic ending. Tracing the verse patterns through their split into the a- and b-verses, Russom argues that each ME pattern descends from an OE one and, further, only those in the a-verse were expanded beyond acceptable OE limits; regulated by closure, the b-verse contains patterns that are long but attested in OE.

As language change continued, Russom asserts in chapter 10, the alliterative long line became untenable. Specifically, English lost SOV order (used as needed by ME poets to alleviate metrical irregularities) and final *-e* (optionally realized in ME to fill out trochaic positions or long drops). Simultaneously, borrowed French words, along with an increasing number of native iambic word groups from prepositional phrases, made iambs and end-rhyme more applicable than alliteration. Thus, the common poetic form switched to borrowed French iambic meters, a transition that can be traced through the *Gawain* poet's carefully composed bob and wheel constructions, which completed each alliterative stanza with four lines of iambic trimeter.

Russom finishes his monograph with suggestions of where this research might go. He brings up a number of questions that are beyond the scope of this work, and more targeted research could also investigate the connections he sees between verse types and the different antecedents that he distinguishes. Certainly, the book provides a well-considered and consistent methodology that proposes some sweeping claims about poetics that will elicit much further discussion.

Megan E. Hartman, *University of Nebraska at Kearney*