

knowledge effectively. Clarity struggles under the weight of unclear sentences, constant qualifications, and shifts in focus; passages frequently have to be re-read for their meaning. She is prone to overload her sentences with detail, as for example when speaking of pseudonyms: ‘Some (alias, incognito) are taken by characters themselves; namelessness imposed within the text (by self or by others) tends to attract a pseudonym or nickname very quickly, unlike the Anonymity imposed as if directly by the writer’ (pp. 22-23). Abstraction rules; this reviewer longed for the reassurance of a concrete noun.

Bliss has much to say that is insightful, but her contribution to scholarship would have been more effective if she had written a series of chapters focussed on quite specific, limited topics, avoided such extensive use of asides, and resisted the desire to convey the whole reach of her thoughts in a single volume.

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Bredehoft, Thomas A., *Early English Metre* (Toronto Old English Studies 15), Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2005; cloth; pp. 225; R.R.P. CA\$71.95; ISBN 9780802038319.

Thomas Bredehoft sets out ambitiously to establish a new system of metrical classification for Old English poetry. He also sets out to demonstrate that the rules which make up this metrical system, with minor developments over time, were in use from classical Old English through late Old English and into Middle English poetry. His attempt occupies a mere 120 pages – accompanied by 51 pages of notes. It soon becomes tiresome flicking back and forth to the notes, which are more or less necessary if one is to follow and, more importantly, to assess the argument.

Bredehoft’s opening summary of the problems posed by Sieversian formalism is clear and unarguable: Sievers’ system leaves too many examples of poetry unexplained, requiring recourse to the label ‘bad’ poetry; and it requires the evidence to be massaged to fit the rules. Unfortunately, Bredehoft’s own metrical formalism, resting on three sensible and clear principles, gradually unfolds as having so many rules, exceptions and complications that it is difficult to see where it improves on Sievers’. This new formalism is perhaps no less satisfactory than the Sieversian (and as such deserves consideration) but it is hardly more so. A discussion of classical Old English poetics comprising a

sensitive and considered assessment of some examples of ‘secondary’ poetic effects may not contribute much to Bredehoft’s argument, but it is worth reading.

On the question of late Old English verse, Bredehoft really shines. His metrical formalism is applied here too, and it contributes to his argument that late Old English poetry is not a ‘debased’ variant of classical Old English poetry, but rather a slightly different form of verse. His dismissal of the rather bizarre concept of ‘rhythmical prose’ is masterful and deserving of much more respect than it is likely to receive. His argument from metrical evidence that this is clearly poetry, constructed under the rules of late rather than classical Old English poetry, is well supported by the physical evidence from manuscripts, on which he has published before and which he reviews here.

The argument that Middle English poetry, particularly Layamon’s *Brut*, has a direct line of descent from classical through late Old English poetry is solid. Less convincing is the argument for direct borrowings from late Old English material into the *Brut*. Bredehoft provides a valuable opportunity for those who read Anglo-Saxon poetry to think outside the square that tends to confine ideas about Old English metre. We should be grateful.

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Carlson, David R., ed., *The Deposition of Richard II: “The Record and Process of the Renunciation and Deposition of Richard II” (1399)* (Toronto Medieval Latin Texts 29), Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2007; paperback; pp. vii, 104; R.R.P. C\$12.95; ISBN 9780888444790.

This is a scrupulously prepared edition of a manuscript source from 1399 and therefore one contemporary with the events it describes, the deposition of King Richard II by Henry Bolingbroke, who subsequently claimed the throne as Henry IV. This edition is a product of a long-standing series of edited medieval texts which present the text in the original language (in this case late-medieval Latin) with glossed comments.

The manuscript source emerges from constitutional conflict which followed the period of Richard’s personal rule, beginning in 1389, and the period of Richard’s ‘tyranny’ from 1397-9, which saw the banishment of Henry Bolingbroke.