In comparison with the study of Old English verse, which as a discipline is relatively coherent in its terms and its method, our understanding of Middle English versification is far less advanced. One wonders why those departments in the academies charged with the study of the English language and its poetry have allowed this situation to persist. The Middle English language itself is much more accessible to us now than is Old English, and the German and English philologists of the last century devoted almost as much attention to the Middle English poetical monuments as they did to the Old English ones. Yet all of the principal Middle English syntaxes are by foreign scholars, and we do not even have--pace Baum, Southworth, and Robinson--a sophisticated yet concise account of Chaucerian metric. In fact, we are altogether unsure of the origin of the Chaucerian line (Italian? French? Medieval Latin? a fusion of high native, popular native, and nativized foreign?).

The principal studies are four: Schipper (A11), whose History gives extensive attention to Middle English but is based on relatively few texts; Luick (K223), mainly on alliterative and tail-rhyme verse; Oakden (K274), an admirable study of Middle English Alliterative Verse; and Trounce (K408), a catalogue and revaluation of the tail-rhyme romances. But the truly synthetic study has yet to be written. By far the best recent work is Gaylord's long, metatheoretical critique of the scholarship on Chaucer's versification (K136), a critique which will apply without alteration to the whole field of versification. Much work remains to be done. The study of Middle English versification may be as much as a century behind that of Old English.

This section takes for its domain the verse written in Britain by English, Anglo-Norman, and Scottish poets from the eleventh century up to the sixteenth, with some few studies of rhythmical prose included as well. John of Garland's treatise, however, is listed in the Medieval Latin section of Appendix A (he was an Englishman living in Paris and writing in Latin). The phrase "Middle English Alliterative Verse" is regularly abbreviated throughout as MEAV.


K2 Adams, Percy G. "Chaucer's Assonance." JEGP 71 (1972): 527–39. Scholarly interest in the structural and ornamental properties of alliteration--so obvious a feature--has obscured the role--even the degree--of assonance and its effects in Middle English verse, but as Adams shows, Chaucer's use of the latter device is if anything even more pervasive than the less subtle alliteration. He may have learned it from either the French or the Italian traditions, where it is common due to inflection, but it also appears more frequently than we think in the native OE and ME tradition, often as a result of rhetorical figuration. See the author's larger study (C127), but see also the criticism by Finnie (K116).


The Gawain poet, tested by tabulation and chi-square, definitely prefers k, b, g, and l sounds for alliteration, while avoiding fricatives and vowels.

Approbation for Skelton's metrical virtuosity in Magnyfycence.

A study of intralinear apocopation in Chaucer (and Lydgate) which is considerably hampered by the absence of a firmly-established chronology for the canon. Allowing for trisyllabic and inverted feet, epic caesurae and the "broken-backed" line, and headless lines, the frequency of apocopation (based on a sample) seems to be about 30% in Chaucer, decreasing over time.

K8  Basilius, Harold A. "A Phonology of the Alsfeld Passion Play as Determined Rimes." Diss., Ohio State University, 1935.

K9  -----.
Dialectal evidence in the rhymes furnishes indications of location and date of composition for this Middle English versified romance.


K11 -----.
Baum's handbook of Chaucerian versification is designed both to entertain and to instruct, by illustrating various aspects of Chaucer's verse-technique. Consequently it is not a treatise or a theory of Chaucerian meter; it is a reassertion of the traditional views. Baum draws his conclusions from limited samples and generally prefers to treat all questions as matters of taste, not wishing to inquire into any one question so far as to take a decided position. He sees Chaucer's line as both syllabic and accentual, ultimately "a series of five iambis." Chapter 1 treats the technicalities of versification: metrical variation (weak stresses, spondees, substitution, use of final -e, and elision), the iambic tetrameter (octosyllabic) couplets (they show greater irregularity because they are founded on both native and foreign models, the native accentual influence being strong), rhyme (Chaucer decidedly prefers feminines, and certain specific rhyme-pairs as well) and stanza (his favorite was the royal, of course, which may have been the source for the couplet if it did not come from lengthening the short couplets). Chapter 2 treats sound texture and further metrical variation (irregular lines, enjambement, pauses, and variant weighting of consecutive lines); chapter 3 illustrates the "embellishments," the "purple inlays" in the verse. An Appendix criticizes Southworth's theory (K367).

Two instances of tensing of the slack form.

Semantic congruity in the rhymes ouse:trouse in the fourteenth-century work Thomas Caste Ford's Cronicide.


K16 Berdan, John M. "The Poetry of Skelton: A Renaissance Survival of Medieval Latin Influence." Romanic Review 6 (1915): 364–77. The Skeltonic verseform also appears contemporaneously in French and Italian, suggesting that the model for all three cases is the rhymed accentual Latin verse of the Middle Ages.


K18 -----.


K20 Biggins, Dennis. "Chaucer's Metrical Lines: Some Internal Evidence." Parergon 17 (1977): 17–24. Interesting comparative scansion of the Prologue's first 18 lines by Southworth, Baum, Robinson, and Conner are cited. Biggins buttresses his homely thesis that Chaucer's lines were meant to be iambic pentameters by showing 80 of the first 100 lines to be acceptable pentameters, in five varieties, even if final -e is ignored. Beyond such a statistic, however, everything--both general principles and specific scansion--is uncertain.


K25 Blake, N. F. "Chaucer and the Alliterative Romances." *Chaucer Review* 3 (1969): 163–69. Judging from a close explication of the "rum, ram, ruf" passage in the Prologue to the *Parson's Tale* and analysis of vocabulary and alliteration in the alliterative passages in the *Knight's Tale* and the Legend of *Good Women*, Chaucer was not explicitly intending to imitate the style of the alliterative romances, nor is there much reason on any other grounds to believe he knew them at all. The "rum, ram, ruf" passage refers to alliteration in general.

K26 -----. "Rhythical Alliteration." *MP* 67 (1969): 118–24. The older view that ME Alliterative Revival verse must have sprung from a (hypothesized) continuous tradition of OE popular poetry (now entirely lost) is really not very tenable; a much more probable explanation (heretofore ignored) results from our recollection of the very close "interanimation" of prose and verse in ME. There "the boundary between verse and prose was so blurred that a clear division is impossible," and this intermediary, mixed form may be termed rhythrical alliteration; it was a verbal mode which could be alternately lined or unlined without concern. Moreover, it was the OE prose texts, preserved by the clergy and less vulnerable to change in the language than more strictly ordered verbal structures, which were recopied throughout the twelfth century, not the high OE poetry. The *Brut* shows a later development of this hybrid mode.


On the basis of quite a few instances, we can conclude that Chaucer occasionally allowed the rhyming of closed and open o "in order to meet the exigencies of his verse."


Analyzes the number, types, and positions of alliteration, the influence of end-rhyme on the alliteration, and the varieties of end-rhyme in the poem, including a summary table (p. 25) of statistics on alliteration patterns in the solely alliterative vs. alliterating-and-rhymed lines, by thousand-line sections. The alliteration is looser in Layamon than in its classical form, and "rhyme" is much more difficult to define adequately here than later. The usual form is internal rhyme (in the long-line), giving short couplets, but long couplets do appear, and, more rarely, even longer schemes.


On the relation of stressing and inflection to meaning: "by the rhetoric of verse... is meant the emphasis elicited by verse-stress when it is at variance with the usual (prose) emphasis." Bright shows how Chaucer bases metrical stressing on prepositions and other words not normally stressed in speech.


A study of the frequency of single words in alliteration and the relationship
between the alliteration system, morphology, and semantics ("poetic value"). The staves generally demand syntactically strong words but weak ones do appear; it also prefers those words bearing primary stress which are also strong semantically. Gawain is compared to four of its ME fellows.


K41 Translated by M. B. Smith as The Language and Meter of Chaucer. London: Macmillan, 1901.


K43 See M. B. Smith's "Some Remarks on Chapter III of Ten Brink's Sprache und Verskunst" (K361) and also Jiriczek's "Skeat's Debt to Ten Brink" in Anglia Beiblatt 33 (1922): 120.

A monument of Chaucer scholarship, surpassed up to its time perhaps only by Tyrwhitt in the eighteenth century: Ten Brink's formulations and synthesis of the German work before him became the foundation for all the work on Chaucer's prosody after the turn of the twentieth century. To be sure, some of his principles are now (a century later) outdated, but the edifice remains admirable in form even if it is seldom used. The edifice contains three chambers: Phonology, Accidence, and Verse and Stanza Structure, each carefully delimited, divided, organized, and ordered. In Chaucer's metric, Ten Brink distinguishes the natural stresses from the metrical rhythm, and further, three possible results when these two systems conflict: "either the accent must yield to the exigencies of the verse--accent shift; or the rhythm must conform to the normal accentuation--inversion of the metrical measure; or finally, in delivery a compromise must be attempted of such a character that the hearer remains conscious both of the natural accentuation and of the claims of the rhythm--level stress--veiled rhythm" [italics added]. The "level stress" is a compromise scansion. How modern all this sounds!

The cracks in the edifice arise from a ground-fault: Ten Brink takes the Chaucerian line as an iambic decasyllable more than pentameter, and so whenever a line fails to be ten-syllabled, he immediately emends. We know better than that now. But his text is the irreproachable Chaucer Society Six-Text Edition, his terms are very clear, and his command of detail is sure.


K45 Brown, Arthur C. L. "On the Origin of Stanza Linking in English Alliterative Verse." Romanic Review 7 (1916): 271–83. A companion-piece to Medary (K252). The devices of stanza-linking and beginning and ending a poem with the same word cannot have originated under the influence of Romance or Medieval Latin, as has been suggested, since no body of sources can be found. The devices are very common in Irish and Welsh, however, which must surely be the sources. Brown notes that the in-
fluence of Irish and Welsh prosodic conventions on the Alliterative Revival in
the North of Britain has been entirely unexplored. But cf. Travis (L264, L266).

K46 Brown, Jack A. "Melodic and Rhythmic Patterns in the First Extant Songs in the
An examination of the dozen or so extant thirteenth-century songs having
both music and text in order to determine the influence of medieval music on
the metering of lyrics. Certain relations can be shown: one stressed syllable is
set equivalent to two unstressed ones, and in general the music is a respecter of
neither line-end nor rhyme.

K47 Bruce, J. Douglas. "The Middle English Metrical Romance 'Le Morte Arthur'
(Harleian M S 2252): Its Sources and Its Relation to Sir Thomas Malory's
Nothing on metrics, but valuable background information. Both Malory and
the romance have a common French source.

English Text Society, Extra Series, no. 88. London: Kegan Paul, Trench,
Trübner & Co., 1903.

K49 Brunner, Karl. "Die Reimsprache der sog. kentischen Fassung der 'Sieben weisen

K50 Brusendorff, Aage. The Chaucer Tradition. Copenhagen: V.P.P. Branner, and
See especially pp. 45–48 and Index B on rhyme-tests, etc.

It is "at the very least upon an equal footing" with the masculine, and it eventu-
ally came to be used nearly systematically in rhyme royal. Such lines also
tend to appear in clusters.

K52 Bülbbring, K. D. "Untersuchungen zur mittelenglischen Metrik." In Festschrift für
Lorenz M orsbach. Ed. F. Holthausen and H. Spies. Studien zur englischen
Still a valuable study and worth consultation, since in the first part of his ex-
amination of the meter of the tail-rhyme romances, chiefly The A vowyng of
Arthur, Bülbbring gives a very judicious and full review of the various other
theories put forward on the structure of the tail-rhyme meter which still re-
mains the best available account. Disagreeing with Luick, he argues that the
tail-lines contain three stresses and the "triplet-verses" four, the former being
derived from the second half-line of the M E A V, the latter from the first.

pp.
An adherent of the vierhebungstheorie, the author scans the M E long-line as 4 +
3 stresses, but he emphasizes sharply the difference between primaries and sec-
ondaries, a point which separates him visibly from the Trautmann school.

K54 Butler, Norbert P. "An Analysis of the Metrics of Sir Gawain and the Green K Night." 
Diss., University of Wisconsin, 1930.

K56  Cæding, Dennis, and V. J. Scattergood. "One Aspect of Stanza-Linking." Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 75 (1974): 79–91. Medary (K252) found stanza-linking in ME verse so pervasive that she assumed that instances of its absence were due to either incompetence or textual corruption, but at least some of these lacunae or breaks seem to be intentional variations.


K61  Clark, Cecily. "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Characterization by Syntax." Essays in Criticism 16 (1966): 361–74. Syntactic idiosyncrasies—especially imperatives, overfamiliarity, and avoidance of hypotaxis—are very closely paralleled in the speech of both the Green Knight and the Lord of the Castle, as well as in that of Arthur and—curiouser and curiouser—the Guide. In contrast, the Lady's idiom is (appropriately) much like Sir Gawain's own: it is highly conditional, digressive, suspenseful, and complex.

K62  Clark, John W. "The Gawain-Poet and the Substantial Adjective." JEGP 49 (1950): 60–66. Clark rejects Oakden's (K274) attribution of common authorship to Sir Gawain, Pearl, Purity, Patience, and St. Erkenwald on the basis of this feature, as he does for another feature, vocabulary distribution, in:


K64  Clasby, Eugene S. "The Rhythm of the Fourteenth-Century English Religious Lyric." DA 28 (1967): 621A (Wisconsin). These lyrics are written in stress verse, not in syllable-counting verse, the stresses being used (Clasby thinks) to mark off isochronous time-periods, the whole metrical system being "surprisingly similar" to that of the rhythmical
modes in medieval music, even though no precise correlation of verse-time to musical-time can be shown.


K68 Conner, Jack. English Prosody From Chaucer to Wyatt. The Hague: Mouton, 1974. 98 pp. + Bibliography and Index. Both Saintsbury and Wimsatt would have admired this book: with grace, lucidity, candor, and rigor, Conner sets forth his argument that "a single tradition of prosodic theory extends all the way from Chaucer to the Elizabethans... all used the same metrical pattern... that of iambic feet in four-foot or five-foot lines." In short, Chaucer invented, and wrote, the iambic pentameter (not necessarily the iambic decasyllable). As support, Conner offers a hypothesis in medieval phonology: every consonant which ended a word had an obligatory release (schwa), a feature which disappeared from the language between 1500 and 1550. Thus, Conner directs metrical attention away from inconsistent scribal texts (and the vexations of the final -e) and toward the pronunciation of the words in the lines. His scansions thereby become considerably more complex, but the lines can still be shown to be iambic. The advantage of the theory is that the entire medieval metrical tradition from Chaucer to Shakespeare may be seen as coherent and continuous. In metrical studies, work of this sort—a graceful presentation where the author is completely candid about his argument, its assumptions, the evidence, and the consequences—is very, very rare. (But for a contrary appraisal see K136).

K69 Coote, Henry C. "Chaucer's Ten-syllable Verse." The Antiquary 8 (1883): 5–8. A claim that Chaucer arrived at the figure of ten syllables for a workable verse-line by the observation that eight was too few and twelve too many. Such an observation would be elementary; such a claim is something less.

K70 Cowling, G. H. "A Note on Chaucer's Stanza [ababbcc]." Review of English Studies 2 (1926): 311–17. Chaucer's seven-line stanza rhyming ababbcc is less often tripartite (two pedes and a cauda), as Ten Brink thought, than bipartite; the form is bipartite—abab, bcc—about 40% of the time it is used, and Cowling terms this type the 4:3 type. Other less frequent versions are the 3:4 (aba, bbbc—over 20%), the 5:2 (ababb, cc—less than 20%), and a rare 2:5 (ab, abbcc). The shift from usage of the 4:3 type to the 3:4 type also provides a very rough metrical test for dating some of the poetry. All of the types show an internal syntactic or semantic pause, the volta. Cf. Lineberger (K220).


K73 Crosby, Ruth. "Chaucer and the Custom of Oral Delivery." Speculum 13 (1938): 413–32. Background information. See also her


K79 -----. "The Versification of the 'Gawain Epigone' in Humfrey Newton's Poems." JEGP 51 (1952): 562–70. A detailed argument that the poem, though probably not by Newton (1466–1536) himself, is masterly in metrical technique, being formed in the bob-and-wheel stanza, and based on Sir Gawain and the fifteenth-century De Tribus Regibus Mortuis.

K80 Daniel, Neil. "A Metrical and Stylistic Study of The Tale of Gamelyn." Studies in Medieval, Renaissance, and American Literature: A Festschrift. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1971. pp. 19–32. The poem exhibits both rhyme and also a more-than-ornamental alliteration, and its meter may be read convincingly as either a four-stress or a seven-stress line; these facts suggest that the poem stands precisely in the gap between the two major traditions in English verse, the Germanic and the Romance.


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the prefixes of compounds lends support to Manly's theory of multiple authorship. The variations are especially wide between the first and second ten Passus of the B-Text.

Kaluza (K182) was right in believing that several of the non-alliterative Middle English poems were divided into quatrains; there is considerable MS evidence. But no such evidence exists for larger strophes. The very regular marginal quatrain markers in the MSS reflect a strong presupposition on the part of the scribes, though there are cases in which the poet clearly added anomalous lines to a Passus in order to make the line-total equal a multiple of four.


"Contemporaneously with the Norman Conquest, English lyric poetry abandoned its traditional prosody, the essence of which was a fusion of natural Germanic accent and metre with alliteration in continuous, loose, unrhymed long-lines, and adopted quite a different rhythm in which stress alternated regularly with unstress and the lines were shorter, rimed, and commonly organized into stanzas." The source of the new form of ME lyrics was almost exclusively the Latin hymn meters, not the Provençal or Romance verse traditions. But was the source of the form the source of the change? The author argues that it was the religious lyric in England which preserved the native tradition, combined it with the Latin one, and transmitted this fusion to the secular lyric later in the ME period.

A philosophy of form . . . an attempt to go "beyond quantification and description to the discovery of universals," by drawing out constants from the study of relationships. The sententious middle of ShT is packed solidly with closed couplets, formal, disciplined, rational, whereas the more heartfelt opening and conclusion allow interspersed open couplets. The linking of stanzas in PF has a wider significance--or symbolism--nearly equal to that of the rhyme-and-semantic scheme of the rhyme royal stanza itself, for indeed the whole poem is one rhyme royal in structure, writ both large and small.

Argument, mainly on the basis of the rhyme, that there is no good reason for deleting this line from all the modern editions as spurious.

A reply to Southworth (K366), who replies to Donaldson in "Chaucer's Final -
Donaldson turns aside from the question of the rhymes for the bulk of his essay in order to defend the account traditionally given of the final -e (it had dropped out of pronunciation by Chaucer's time or was well along in the process of doing so, a state of affairs leaving Chaucer in the virtually unique position among English poets of having an unusually supple language (doublets) to work with, and allowing him to use the -e selectively for metrical exigency), to demonstrate that Southworth's statistics are grossly distorted by a failure to consider elision (in fact if elision is taken into account the figures are nearly reversed), and to argue that Southworth's logic by a curious twist actually confirms the traditional account. On sounding of the -e in the rhymes Donaldson argues in effect for consistency (if within the line then surely at the end as well) and for the unlikely possibility of eye-rhymes, given the aural bent of the age.


K92 Dürmüller, Urs. Narrative Possibilities of the Tail-Rime Romances. Swiss Studies in English, vol. 83. Bern: Francke, 1975. 245 pp. At last critics begin to move beyond catalogues of forms and summaries of plotting to consider the intrinsic potentials and limitations for narrative development offered by a given form—in this case, the tail-rhyme stanza of twelve lines, in eight ME romances, primarily the neglected The Earl of Tolouse (ca. 1400). See chapters 2, 3, 6.1, and 14 especially.

K93 Duggan, Hoyt M. "Strophic Patterns in Middle English Alliterative Poetry." MP 74 (1977): 223–47. A fresh examination of the MS at The Wars of Alexander not only vindicates Max Kaluza's theory of strophic divisions in the poem (K182) (which most other critics deny) by noting additional marginal marks hitherto missed but also adds further weight to the theory by providing a cogent motivation for the larger strophic units: they are intended to correlate with units in the text of the Latin source. Further, the concept of a stanzaic grouping of lines which nonetheless lacks any rhyme to bind it together is a technique which came into MEAV from Old Norse poetry, not Old English.

K94 Easton, Morton W. "Some Features of Chaucer's Verse, especially Stress and Hiatus." PMLA 11 (1896): xxxiii–xxxiv (Proceedings). Abstract. We are informed the paper is "to be published," but if so, I have been unable to locate it.

K95 Eby, James A. "The Alliterative Meter of Piers Plowman A." DAI 32 (1972): 3948A (Michigan). Analysis of a thousand lines of the A-text fails to confirm the traditional view that the poem is metrically careless, loose, and erratic. All five of the conventional OE verse-types described by Sievers can be identified in Piers Plowman with only a minimum of divagation, and the alliterations correlate closely with the primary lexical stresses. Hence, we must conclude that the poet both understood and intended to perpetuate the older alliterative verse-form, which shows that the tradition was continuous, not revived.
K96  Eckhardt, Eduard. "Die metrische Unterscheidung von ernst und komik in den

K97  Einenkel, Eugen. "über den Verfasser der neuangelsächsischen Legende von
"Der Vers," pp. 105–9. This scansion--the "Otfridian" four-beat theory--is in-
correct.

K98  Einenkel, Eugen, ed. "The Life of St. Katherine." Early English Text Society,
"The Metrical Form of the Legend," pp. xxi–xxxix, treats meter and rhyme;
Einenkel's account of the former is unreliable, as it was in his earlier study of
this text (supra).


K100  Eliason, Norman E. "The Sound of the Verse." The Language of Chaucer's Poetry: A
An excellent purview of Chaucer's art of versification, written in an elegant,
leisurely style, but accurately and widely informed on matters of meter,
rhyme-practice, usage, and Middle English phonology (pronunciation).
Should be ideal for advanced undergraduates.

K101  Ellinger, Johann. Über die sprachlichen und metrischen Eigentümlichkeiten in "The
Romance of Sir Perceval of Galles." Troppau, 1889 (36 pp.), 1893 (39 pp.).
See pp. 26–36.
The poem is in sixteen-line stanzas, each stanza having four parts, each part
having three four-stress lines and a three-stress coda; the rhyme-scheme is aaab
cccb dddb eeeb and alliteration appears. The meter is iambic-trochaic, varied by
missing and doubled slacks, double anacrusis, and hovering stress.


K103  Emerson, Oliver F. "Imperfect Lines in Pearl and the Rimed Parts of Sir Gawain
An argument for emendation of 23 metrically irregular lines in Pearl and a
dozen or so in Sir Gawain by the addition of a regularized final -e, on the
grounds of scribal carelessness.

K104  -----. "The Old French Diphthong EI (EY) and Middle English Metrics." Romanic
Review 8 (1917): 68–76.
Skeat's hypothesis that the diphthong -ey- should be considered disyllabic for
metrical purposes is entirely unreasonable; a whole series of M E adjectives of
the sort seinte-seinte can be accounted for as regular doublets.

K105  Erdmann, Axel, and Eilert Ekwall, eds. Lydgate's "Siege of Thebes." Early English
(for 1920).

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K106 Evans, Robert O. "Whan that Aprill(e)?" Notes & Queries 202 (1957): 234–37. The first line of the General Prologue may be the most disputed scansion in Chaucer: is it an acephalous iambic pentameter (with Aprill disyllabic) or a regular decasyllable with initial trochaic substitution (Aprille trisyllabic)? At least seven scansion are possible, but close scrutiny of the MSS evidence suggests that the traditional (Ten Brink's) view favoring the latter scansion is more likely than Manly's preference for the former. Indeed it is possible that Chaucer never intended any of the headless lines catalogued by Freudenberger (K125) and Seeberger (K344).


K108 Everett, Dorothy. "Chaucer's Good Ear." Review of English Studies 23 (1947): 201–8; rpt. in her Essays on Middle English Literature (see K109). pp. 139–48. Evidence of Chaucer's keen ear for language--his ability to distinguish and imitate nuances in the several varieties of speech and literature available to him in fourteenth-century London--may be found, inter alia, in his skillful reproductions of the alliterative and metrical structure of the long-line of the metrical romances, especially in the battle scenes of the Knight's Tale and the Legend of Cleopatra.


K110 Farish, John. "Some Spellings and Rhymes in the Scots Sege of Troy." English Studies 38 (1957): 200–6. The scribe seems to have substituted o *[o] for a in writing the manuscript, based on analogy.


K112 Fifield, Merle J. "Alliteration in the Middle English Lyrics." DAI 21 (1960): 1553A (Illinois). Continuity of the old native verseform must be established not on the absence of metered verse in ME (as Schipper tried to do), since metered-and-rhymed verse does exist in ME, but on the basis of alliteration, which (upon analysis of the extant lyrics of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries) can be shown to exist as a structural principle in ME verse.

A condensed prospectus and survey which presumes considerable linguistic and prosodic sophistication. Fifield reviews the works of Ten Brink, Baum, Southworth, and Halle-Keyser on Chaucerian metrics and finds them all inadequate; he then approves and applies both the Trager-Smith and the Chomsky-Halle phonologies (considering the latter as an advance over the former) to the problem of Chaucerian stress. The four levels of stress possible in Trager-Smith will allow six possible forms of iambic feet, and, with additional constraints, 4,004 legitimate forms of iambic lines (by computer analysis). See the Appendix for a most succinct statement of those constraints. The generative phonology, however, "reveals aspects of prosody never before objectively recognized: tessitura of stress, range of stress, distribution and position of stress levels, the function of word order, and the actual operation of metrical tension on running speech-stress."

A provocative argument that Chaucerian meter has "still unmeasured variety within its order."

A summary of the results of a catalogue of alliterative formulae given in his dissertation (supra). Oakden did not discuss these lyrics. Continuity in MEAV is supported by the evidence here that over half of these formulae appear in either OE poetry or in fifteenth-century verse.


Sharp criticism of Percy Adams (K2) for failing to distinguish significant qualitative (open-closed) and quantitative (long-short) differentiation in Middle English vowels, as well as consonantal r.

K117 Finsterbusch, Franz. Der Versbau der mittelenglischen Dichtungen "Sir Perceval of Gales" und "Sir Degrevant." Wiener Beiträge zur englischen Philologie, vol. 49. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1918. 181 pp. His dissertation at Vienna in 1916. Following Luick's analysis of The Avowyng of Arthur (K266), in which he showed the tail-line to be derived from the second and the triplet-line from the first half-line of the regular alliterative long-line, both verses having two beats, Finsterbusch, a student of Luick's, analyzes both these verseforms in two additional romances, inventorying the metrical variations exhaustively. Cf. Casson (K57).

Fischer, a student of Trautmann's (see K404), applies his "seven-bar" theory (four in the on-verse, three in the off-verse) to Sir G awain, Pearl, Purity, Patience, and St. Erkenwald.

Students of Trautmann (see K404) and his "seven-bar" theory. Here they pursue their quarrel with their mortal foe Luick.

K120 Fisiak, Jacek. Morphemic Structure of Chaucer's English. Alabama Linguistic and
This section, along with Chapter 1 on the "General Introduction to the Science of Metre and the Structure of Verse" (see E539), presents Schipper's conception of modern English meter as it was codified in the ME period. Includes "Verse-Rhythm," "The Metrical Treatment of Syllables," and "Word-Accent."
In "Verse-Rhythm" Schipper recognizes only the four commonest meters, though many variations of the plain metrical pattern are noted: suppression of the anacrusis, hovering stress, missing weak syllables in the middle of a line, extra syllables, inverted feet, polysyllabic thesis in the foot, enjambement, rhyme-breaks (on the odd lines of couplets), and alliteration.

Disputing Hohlfeld's conclusions from metrical evidence (K161) that the Chester miracle play on the sacrifice-of-Isaac theme was based on the earlier Brome play of the same subject, Fort concludes on the basis of the rhymes that Chester was the original and Brome the revised version.

Strict syllable counting in a variant-tail-rhyme, semi-pattern poem by Stephen Hawes [1509] shows that final -es had full syllabic value metrically though probably not in pronunciation.

Very slight: versification merits only the last six pages. A full treatment that is more recent is Eliason (K100).

The famous crux of the first line of the General Prologue raises the whole question of whether "headless" lines, lines showing a "suppression of anacrusis" or missing first slack syllable, should be emended, on the assumption that Chaucer's meter is strict in its syllabism, or retained, as metrical variations. Freudenberger examines closely each such line in the Skeat text of the Chaucer canon for precedents and analogues. Appendix by Varnhagen on Chaucer's spellings and stressings of the name of the fourth month. See K106 and K344.


The surviving fragments show that Early ME accentual verse is defined by neither alliteration nor rhyme but by two other specific characteristics: a verse (half-line) of two stresses, and heavy syntactic stopping at the end of both the verse and the line. These two constraints were sufficiently weak that they encouraged considerable metrical variety while discouraging metrical complexity.
whereas the stronger constraints of the Five Types did not survive changes in the stress-rules of the language. In this respect meter was but one element among many in EM E verse, which as a rule chose simplification, stereotyping, and formula instead of their opposites. The source of EM E verseform was probably not French (this was the nineteenth century view), OE popular poetry (Oakden's), or rhythmical prose (Blake's, and the least improbable one), but rather the classical OE line in a degenerate form (Layamon tells us his sources are books) and Latin, which would have suggested rhyme to the ME poet, even though the real impetus behind rhyming was ultimately change in the language itself. An outstanding study.

R hyme, meter, and alliteration are discussed in the Introduction, pp. xlviii–lii.

Part 1 presents the phonology; it is Part 2, especially p. 126 ff., that is of interest. Examples of Chaucer's use of doublets on pp. 132–34.

M eter, rhyme, and alliteration are examined on pp. 50–62.


Lists of alliterative phrases with etymologies.


A fter Sir Thopas is over, the matter may lurch somewhat but the meter is sure; we have been returned to the sure order and control of the couplets; the poet's in his narrative place and all's right with the world. W ithin, however, it is the meter that lurches, as Chaucer turns his hand to witty and ironic parody of the profession of the poet and thereby himself. (It is so with the doggerel poems that Shakespeare's characters proffer as good poetry in the plays.) Chaucer's joke is on himself, but underneath the wit there is art: when he comes to tell of poetry he tells it straight, so it is the way of the telling, the meter, which must serve his ends and belie his words, making him seem a driveler and a hack. T his is the good art that can make bad art for play--and for purpose.

Not only an immensely useful article, as a full review of the major studies of Chaucer's versification in this century--Ten Brink, Baum, Southworth, Robinson, Knight, Fifield, Conner, and Halle-Keyser--but also a remarkably lucid critique of prosody theory itself: from fifteen exemplary passages in the "General Prologue," Gaylord extracts some questions that one would want to answer about them, prosodically, and also a set of broader a priori questions--assumptions--about Text, Pronunciation, Metrical Patterns, Versification, and Poetic Effect--that will have to be answered in any satisfactory theory, and that any prosodist does answer, implicitly if not explicitly, whenever he writes about Chaucer's versification. The ensuing review of the prosodic work leaves the reader glum, though, despite the reviewer's grace, wit, and lambent good sense, because pretty clearly the scholarship has made no advance in this century: no new breakthroughs have occurred, several bizarre theories have been proposed, the older "standard" philological works have not been corrected, and a general opinion has developed in scholarly circles that work on Chaucer's verse-craft is just not interesting or important.

Hopefully the present essay will effect some change in that attitude. Had it kept the same title and applied the same methodology, except to all of English verse, I would have judged it one of the five most important works on versification written since Schipper.

K137 Gilbert, Dorothy. "The Rude Sweetness: A Study of Chaucer's Prosody and of Its Examiners." DAI 37 (1976): 288A (California). A comprehensive review of the "voluminous" scholarship on Chaucer's versification and analyses of his three most characteristic metrical forms: octosyllabic couplets, decasyllabic couplets, and rhyme royal. Gilbert views Chaucer's metric as "balancing" the foreign, literate, accentual-syllable tradition and the native, oral, strong-stress meter, so that his lines fit the syllabic norms yet also tend to fall into recognizable hemistichs, resulting in a "highly complex" metrical system that allows "immense variety, subtlety, and power" in its verses.


K143 -----. "Meter and Rhyme in Chaucer's Anelida and Arthure." University of Mississippi Studies in English 2 (1961): 55–63. Analysis of the meters and rhyme schemes of the poem by stanza or group of
stanzas, with discussion of irregularities and special effects.


K146  Haggard, Elias W. "Syllable Stress in French Words as Used by Chaucer and Spenser." Diss., George Peabody College, 1944.


This well-known anthology of fifteenth-century verse offers an excellent General Introduction (see pp. 18–26 on versification), very useful--sometimes lengthy--chapter introductions (especially for Lydgate), and short bibliographies for each chapter. Should be consulted particularly for work on the versification of Lydgate, Hoccleve, and Skelton.


The chapter is composed of a collection of historical observations on the subject, a short bibliography of studies, and several short essays by the author on Chaucer's language, versification, line forms and variations, stanzas, and rhymes.


Systematic, keen-eyed scrutiny of the scribal practices (and errors) behind the recension of each MS will allow us to "filter out" the scribal influence and more adequately assess authorial intent. Hammond provides a model of such scrutiny, examining headless and broken-backed lines in Chaucer, Hoccleve, and Lydgate. Chaucer apparently intended few such if any.


On the metrical treatment of syllables--syncope, apocope, and aphaeresis of vowels and consonants--in Chaucer, using the Skeat edition as text.


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K159 Hilligoss, Susan J. "Conventional Style in Middle English Tail-R hyme R omance." D A I 38 (1978): 4844A (Pennsylvania). T he received opinion of this stanza-form has been that it is "uniquely unsuited for narrative use," despite its very wide usage. Analysis of meter, syntax, stanza-linking, and stylistic modification of source-material in fourteen romances, however, shows that the stanza is organized metrically into three- and four-line phrases dominated by hypotactic constructions, that the tail-line is used for rhetorical not narrative purposes, and that narrative continuity is established by means other than direct stanza-linking. The stanza thus seems best adapted to amplification of theme, even though it does not actually inhibit development of the narrative.

K160 Höfer, Paul. Alliteration bei Gower. Diss., Leipzig, 1890. 82 pp. M ainly a typology of alliteration in various metrical configurations within the line and patterns of linkage between lines. Short introduction, conclusion, and discussion throughout, however.

K161 Hohlfeld, Alexander R. "Two Old English Mystery Plays on the Subject of Abraham's Sacrifice." M LN 5 (1890): cols. 222–37. Based on metrical and rhyme evidence, an original version of the extant Brome text must have been the source for the extant C hester play. Cf. Fort (K122).

K161a Honour, Margaret C. "The Metrical Derivations of the Medieval English Lyric (Volumes I and II)." D A I 31 (1970): 2346A (Y ale, 1949). 578 pp. Originally intended only as a prolegomenon to a study of the early English lyric, this full-scale metrical analysis of the M edieval Latin lyric was prompted by the discovery that no such systematic study had been made. The results of
that work, in conjunction with a returning examination of the Provençal and Romance verse traditions, suggest that the Latin tradition was the foremost influence on the English, especially in terms of the adoption of the Goliard stanza and the polyphonic musical form. Provençal forms seem to have been relatively alien to the English.

Dr. Johnson relied for his very imperfect (indeed uninformed) understanding of Chaucerian versification on the very corrupt edition by Urry in 1721 (Tyrwhitt called it "the worst that was ever published"), and he seems not to have realized the syllabic value of the final -e. In short he never troubled himself to substantiate his low estimation.

After some discussion of translation problems, the Introduction turns, on p. xxxvii, to Chaucer's versification, where Horne defends Chaucer's virtuosity with great vigor, by siding with Tyrwhitt against all those who hold that any line not exactly decasyllabic is lame or inept and on these grounds prove Chaucer to be an awkward versifier, since he has many longer and shorter lines. Horne's informal survey of the history of English versification shows exactly the same case to hold for all the greatest poets, and a further argument compressing lines with extra syllables into the same time-periods as the normal verses completes his defense.

Especially p. 412 ff. Argument that the Revival was fostered by the baronial opposition to the crown, on the grounds that only such a presumption of patronage by certain nobility away from London can account for the audience, courtly tone, archaic diction, and native meter of the verse.

A careful review of the early-twentieth-century scholarship and opinions, followed by a review of the problems posed by the MSS. Hulbert concludes most significantly that Piers Plowman (among others) has "no systematic use" of quatrains, and he prints 109 lines in stanzas so the reader may see the effects of grouping for himself. Cf. Kaluza (K182).


Section 1 of the article provides a useful review of the scholarship on alliteration.


K170 -----. "Gower's Use of rime riche in Confessio A mantis As Compared with his Practice in M irror de l'O mmee and with the Case of Chaucer." Studies in English Literature (Tokyo) 46 (1969): 29–44.


The feature: phrases, especially adverbial, preceding a connective and its fol-lowing principal clause (e.g. "Unkindly for thou hast wrought"), apparently for purposes of rhyme.


Second only to battles, storm set-pieces appear nearly everywhere in MEAV, but hardly anywhere, surprisingly, in non-alliterative verse. They seem not to have been derived from OE sources, but rather from Latin texts and from Guido's Historia. W hy the alliterative long line was such a congenial mode for this motif is not clear, though that it was so is evident enough.


The style of this tale is unusually high in its proportion of parataxis–78%, in fact, as compared with 42% for the K night's T ale and 27% for the Squire's T ale especially the conjunctive and used for anaphora. T he miller, one may ob-serve, has a hard time elaborating a sentence.


Under the rubrics of correspondence and noncorrespondence of the linguistic stress with the metrical ictus of the pentameter pattern Joerden gives a relatively traditional account of (respectively) the "so-called inversion" and modula-tion (taktverschleierung: literally, camouflaging the measures) in the Chaucerian five-foot line. Indebted to Schipper and Ten Brink.


The long-assumed metrical irregularity of this twelfth-century Anglo-N orman writer can be disproven if one considers the metrical unit as the hemistich rather than the line: the second hemistich is almost invariably hexasyllabic, while the lengths of the first hemistichs show discernible patterns of variation. Cf. R ose (K319).


In six minor poems. Scanty evidence.

K179 Joseph, Ruth E. F. "Alliterative Style in T he A wntyrs off Arthure, T he A vowing of

A simplified account of the metrical structure of the tetrameter and pentameter couplets, rhyme, and stanza-forms.

A quarrel with Luick, who replies at 24 (1898): 342-43.

This is Kaluza's original argument that ME alliterative poems are, based on regular marginal marks in the MSS, divided into quatrains and then grouped into larger strophic units of multiples of quatrains, i.e. (title of poem followed by number of lines to the strophe): The Wars of Alexander, 24; Crowned King, 16; St. Erkenwald, 32; Chevelere Assigne, 8; The Siege of Jerusalem, 36; Sir Gawain and Patience, 12; Pearl and Purity, 60 (quintuple groupings of these triple-quatrain units); and the Morte Arthure, among others, 8 or 12. Kaluza's theory has not been generally accepted--see Day (K84) and Vantuono (K416)--but recently it has been defended vigorously by Duggan (K93). Cf. H ans Möller on OE poetry (J211) and Hulbert (K165).


Views the Skeltonic line as stress-verse, consisting of two (sometimes three) stresses and a variable number of slacks, on the presumption that this form evolved from the fourteenth-century alliterative line, also stress-verse, and for Kendle a model of the accentual character of all of English verse. The Latin sequences and leonine hexameter seem too regular to have been sources.


Of the thirteen essays in the volume on ME verse Ker's gives the most extensive attention to versification. But cf. Saintsbury (J261).

The most recent full-scale study of Chaucerian syntax; organized by parts of speech.
A response to Bock (K27) in which Kern reiterates (from his review of Bock in Anglia 39 (1915): 389 ff.) his view that Hoccleve's line regulates its syllables closely, having invariably either ten or eleven.

Skelton learned his versification from the popular medieval "Signs of Death" poetry.

Argues in part that Skelton's distinctive rhyme- and stanza-forms were derived from the Burgundian tradition of "vers septaine," "vers brisiez," "rhetorique batelée," and "rime rurale."

Formulates a definition of this stanzaic mode in ME poetry based on inventory of 47 ME and MS texts. As for its origin, closer analogues are found in medieval Latin poetry than in Old French, and its development in England proceeded in the South before it did in the North, contrary to received opinion. Showing frequent but inconsistent alliteration, the bob-and-wheel seems to be a transitional form between the old alliterative line and the later ME rhymed syllabic verse.


Part I treats Syntax, Part II (pp. 346–421) Meter, i.e., the metrical treatment of syllables, chiefly the final -e, in order to preserve Chaucer's line as decasyllable, which is what Kittredge assumes it is to be, following Ten Brink very closely in this view.


Based on a computerized analysis of lexical, syntactic, and alliterative distribution, the author concludes that the poet who wrote Gawain did not write Pearl.

Enjambement is analyzed, first, by types of syntactic structures which break
across the line-end, and second, vis à vis its chronological development in Chaucer, especially in respect to the “hardness” or roughness of the syntactic break. Three pages of tables at the end.


K208 -----. "Zur Frage der Verfasserschaft einiger mittelenglischer Stabreimdichtungen." Englische Studien 67 (1932–33): 165–73. In response to Oakden (K274) and Luick (K224).


In his Introduction Kaluza reviews the scholarship on the two-beat/four-beat theories of OE and ME verse, then criticizes all the theorists for attempting too much. He himself accepts the four-beat theory of Kaluza and Trautmann, and, being perhaps a more myopic soul, he prefers close-detail work. The work he furnishes here is simply a series of long lists of examples of verse-types in Sir Gawain.

A mere list of examples of the various positions of the verb. Unusually full bibliography.

Ten Brink's view that Chaucer allowed only etymologically pure rhymes is rejected as being an unsupported assumption, like the correlate view that he never rhymed closed vowels with open. Long tables of examples are appended.

K213 Lawlor, John. "Rhythm, Speech, and Argument." In his "Piers Plowman": An Essay in Criticism. London: Edward Arnold, 1962. pp. 189–239. Especially pp. 189–200, 230, and 234–36. This very widely informed discussion of meter actually ranges over the whole gamut of English poetry and has little directly to do with Langland, except insofar as his meter--in which the unit of metrical organization is the phrase, exactly coterminous with the half-line, two phrases being formally balanced to make the line--is paralleled strikingly in modern free verse: no metrical modulation or tension is possible in this meter; there is no norm to play against, as in syllable-counting meter.

An obscure by-way leads to a major reassessment of perspective. An instruction to his diocese written by the Archbishop of York in 1357, as found in an authorized translation of this sermon by John Gaytryge, provoked a quarrel between Skeat and others in the late nineteenth century as to whether the piece was in prose or verse. Skeat thought that unrhymed MEAV influenced the form of the sermon, but in fact it was ME rhetorical prose, and behind that the medieval cursus of the ars rithmica. The sermon itself was very influential and may actually have influenced MEAV. Its form is-not verse, but not prose--lineated near-verse, rhythmical, spasmodically rhymed and alliterated, in four-stress lines, but extremely irregular in all of these. When we reflect that over half of the extant corpus of unrhymed MEAV represents translations of Latin texts, we begin to see the origin of the MEAV long-line as a conscious effort to parallel, in the vernacular, the Latin ars dictaminis.

An extension of his earlier argument in favor of the vierhebung scansion of the OE verse (J166) to ME, though like the others of that persuasion Leonard considers that the eight-beat long-line in OE was reduced to seven in the ME, the second verse being looser. But he prefers to make his case (in the Tale of Gamelyn) without reference to OE, as if it had not existed. Cunningly, he
shows that the seven-beat line of Gamelyn is in fact indistinguishable from the "four-beat" line of Piers Plowman by mixing extracts from both and asking the reader if he can tell which is which. Leonard has a feisty temperament and also--rarity of rarities in this field--a wonderfully lively style, full of vigor, wit, directness of speech, and homely examples.

K216 Lewis, C. S. "The Fifteenth-Century Heroic Line." Essays and Studies 24 (1938): 28-41; rpt. in his Selected Literary Essays. Ed. Walter Hooper. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969. pp. 45-57. We think the fifteenth-century line bad only because we try to read it as a decasyllable, an iambic pentameter, which Lewis believes it is not. In fact, he argues, it is plainly the familiar, old, popular ballad meter: "a long line divided by a sharp medial break into two half-lines, each containing not less than two nor more than three stresses, and most hovering between two and three stresses." This meter can be found in Chaucer even though many of his lines are certainly pentameters. Hence came the pentameter form? Not from the French--their line counts syllables but knows nothing of the principle of stress-alternation. We must conclude then that Chaucer "attempted a compromise"; he intended to write five-stress decasyllables, but the older tune "was running in his head and he allowed it to intrude; he even welcomed it." Such a combination or conflation was possible precisely because [this is the crux] "the one metre slips easily into the other." And still slips, today, not only in nursery rhymes and popular songs but in serious verse. What Chaucer received as a native verse tradition (from early ME), and what the post-Chaucerians reverted to so quickly, was a hemistich of simply "two, or two-and-a-half, or three" stresses. That is the most one can say of the meter.

K217 Licklider, Albert H. Chapters on the Metric of the Chaucerian Tradition. Baltimore: J. H. Furst Company, 1910. 241 pp. His dissertation at Johns Hopkins University, 1907. Not a work on Chaucer's metric, but rather a study of the Chaucerian Tradition between Chaucer and Wyatt, inclusive on both ends. The prevailing thesis is that "the versification of the Tradition is not a misapprehension but an exaggeration of Chaucer's system." Licklider was a student of Bright's and followed faithfully his doctrines of resolution of stress (i.e., multisyllabic arsis or thesis with "hovering" stress), "arsis-thesis variation," and "pitch accent" (i.e., ictus in English marked by quantity and sometimes also by pitch).


K220 Lineberger, Julia E. "An Examination of Professor Cowling's New Metrical Test." MLN 42 (1927): 229-31. Finds evidence discrediting Cowling's (K70) stanza-division test as an instrument for dating Chaucer's work.


K223  Luick, Karl. "Englische Metrik: Geschichte der heimischen Versarten." In Paul's Grundriss (L531), pp. 141–80. An omnibus survey of ME verse, both (1) rhymed-alliterative (as in Layamon and King Horn) and (2) fully (Revival) alliterative, based on the work Luick had earlier published in Anglia. On the verse of the Alliterative Revival Luick is generally sound, but his position on the nature of the unusual fully-rhymed-but-occasionally-alliterative verseform in the Brut and King Horn, however, is unsound: Luick adopted the theory that the verse of Layamon and the Horn was not derived from the OE alliterative long-line ("stress-verse") but was a separate form which appeared only in ME, as an analogue to Otfrid's rhymed verse in Germany, and contained four beats (takte, "beat-verse") to the verse (half-line) -i.e., according to the old vierhebungstheorie (cf. Trautmann). Thus, Luick believed that ME verse showed three distinct and wholly detached traditions -the revival of the older native alliterative long-line, the Otfridian four-beat rhymed short line, and the Romance syllable-counting "foot-verse." Opposed to this view stand Schipper (A9), who sees the Layamon-Horn verse as simply a loosened form directly descended from the OE verse tradition, and West (K430).

K224  -----. "Die englische Stabreimzeile im 14, 15, und 16 Jahrhundert." Anglia 11 (1889): 392–443, 553–618. Still a valuable study for reference purposes, even though Luick's belief that the inflectional -e continued to be sounded is now discredited and his principles for determining stressing outside of alliteration are also unsound. The essay applies the zweihebungstheorie to MEAV, Luick being intent to show that the Five Types are evident even in the later verse, even though metrical mutation has taken place in the interim via regular linguistic processes. Luick also argues that stressing should be determined without reference to the alliteration. Discussed in Borroff (K32), chapter 7 and Notes, especially pp. 183–86.

K225  -----. "Zur Metrik der mittelenglischen reimend-alliterierenden Dichtung." Anglia 12 (1889): 437–53. Three short studies: The first examines the meter of the last four "wheel" lines in the bob-and-wheel stanza, Luick arguing that the first three of these are derived from the first verse of the alliterative long-line while the last is from the second, which explains why it is generally shorter than they. The second section treats stressing which is not supported by the alliteration; the third treats the final -e.

K226  -----. "Zur mittelenglischen Verselehre." Anglia 38 (1914): 269–348; 39 (1915): 274. A response to Bülbbring (K52) on the meter of the tail-rhyme romances, Luick agreeing that the "triplet-verses" and tail-line verses have four and three members (respectively) but denying that they bear four and three stresses: in his view both bear only two stresses. Lists of types. Summary, pp. 339–48.

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K228  Lupack, Alan C. "Structure and Tradition in the Poems of the Alliterative Revival." DAI 36 (1975): 323A (Pennsylvania). A defense of MEAV against the charge of structural weakness by demonstrating (1) the functional ends of structures such as quatrains, stanzas, and passus, and (2) use of a traditional, bipartite principle of narration and description. Analyzes eight major works.


K231  McClumpha, Charles F. The Alliteration of Chaucer. Diss., Leipzig. Leipzig: Grimme & Tromel, 1888; rpt. Folcroft, Pa.: The Folcroft Press, 1974. 56 pp. Six areas are examined: "Examples and Rules for Alliteration"; "Relation of Alliteration to Accent" (e.g. to preserve rhyme or meter); "Different Forms and Disposition of Alliteration" (Position and Quality); "Application [in] different Forms of Verse" ("heroic verse" and "short verse"); "Proportional Relation between Alliteration and Different Works"; "Character of Alliteration in the various Works with comparison of the same"; and "Relation of Alliteration to the Subject-Matter." Throughout, McClumpha denies emphatically that Chaucer used any regular rule for alliteration as did his predecessors; rather, Chaucer echoed sounds solely for "poetical effect...to color and vivify."


K234  McFayden, Neil L. "The Stylistic Influence of the Alliterative Tradition on the Poetry of William Dunbar." DAI 37 (1977): 4372A (Florida). Separating Dunbar's poetry into aureate, comic, and plain styles, McFayden shows the variety of alliteration's uses: formal decoration, characterization, comic or ironic counterpoint, and contrast. The final chapter applies the Halle-Keyser generative-metrics analysis (E775) and Kiparsky's morphophonemic approach (E827) in order to show that Dunbar created metrical effects like those in the alliterative long-line by adapting the resources of metrical variation and complexity (H-K) and metrical range, or linguistic complexity (Kiparsky).
A detailed explication of the ends and effects of about half of the twenty linkwords or refrains connecting the twenty five-stanza sections of the poem demonstrates that "the verse carrying the end-refrain is an integral, functional element of the poem's assertion, not a dangling, jingling excrescence appended to satisfy the metrical form." Part 2 of the article assesses the amount of alliteration, and Part 3 the phonetic symbolism, in the poem. See also:


The author is able to demonstrate a clear pattern of regularity in the seemingly irregular distribution of final -e's on monosyllabic nouns in Chaucer's English, yielding the conclusion that his speech was neither archaic nor overly "poetical" but a judicious middle course within contemporaneous East Midlands usage. The -e had been regularly affixed to OE feminine nouns by analogy before Chaucer's time, and it was still being used after final double consonants (and long vowels) to distinguish them from single. Employing a metrical "aristest," McJimsey shows that monosyllables ending in -e never stand in the first position of an iamb.

Layamon's verse presents to us the remarkable spectacle of an attempt to combine two major--and inconsistent--verse-traditions. The Brut shows both alliteration and rhyme. But the use of rhyme increases over the course of the poem while that of alliteration decreases, and in general the usage of alliteration here is not sufficient to justify classifying the poem as alliterative rather than rhymed (84.4% of the lines have rhyme, 67.6% alliteration). The influence of Wace is heavy both in the principle of rhyme, the new device which steadily supplanted Layamon's familiarity with the old alliteration, and also in meters. Layamon had neither the desire nor the capacity to imitate the syllabic regularity of Wace's lines, yet they affected him sufficiently to lengthen his habitual (shorter) OE lineform whenever he followed his source-material most closely; the result is that Layamon would write a series of longer lines, then revert to shorter lines out of neglect or instinct, thereby confounding the stability and homogeneity of his verse. It was the capacity for allowing more stresses (and possibly iambicity) in the French line which attracted Layamon (even unconsciously) to it. But Layamon never could forget or outgrow the OE model that he had learned early, and so his focus on line-length and/or rhyme, even though it increased as the poem progressed, produced not a new form but a curious, mixed, hybrid type of the old form. Trautmann and his followers were wrong in their account of Layamon's meter--Schipper was correct to uphold the zweiehebungstheorie--but even Schipper's classification of the meters in
the Brut is "redundant" in its types and "incomplete" in its categories. McNary's revised classification appears on pp. 24–25. This is a very solid study, with important results and an excellent conclusion.


K241 Malone, Kemp. "Chaucer's Book of the Duchess: A Metrical Study." In Chaucer und seine Zeit: Symposium für Walter F. Schirmer. Ed. Arno Esch. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1968. pp. 71–96. Following up a suggestion made formerly by Karl Luick that OE and ME verseforms are more similar than we think, it being unreasonable to believe that the OE meter simply disappeared altogether, Malone proceeds to argue that "BD can be scanned in terms of the Germanic metrical tradition and that this approach yields better results than does a scansion in terms of the French octosyllabic line of verse." I.e., he provides a complete metrical catalogue of BD, scanning each line as an OE line according to Sievers' Five Types. Extensive notes appended.

K242 -----. "Chaucer's Double Consonants and the Final E." Mediaeval Studies 18 (1956): 204–7. We have tolerably good knowledge of whether or not final -e's are to be pronounced in words within the line, but what about at line-end? R hymes provide some information, especially the fact that Chaucer never rhymes a word with double consonants (e.g. sonne) with a correlate single-consonant form (sone) though he often rhymes members of each of these types with each other. Therefore we may conclude that in the former type "Chaucer habitually pronounced the final unstressed e at the end of a line." Cf. Borroff (K32).


K244 -----. "Notes on Gramstylistic Analysis: With Reference to Articles in Chaucer." Studies in English Language and Literature 27 (1977): 95–107 (Summary in English, pp. 141–42).

K245 Manly, John M. "The Stanza-Forms of Sir Thopas." MP 8 (1910): 141–44. The eight varieties of tail-rhyme stanza ought not be seen as laxities, imperfections, deviances, imitations or satires of the metrical romances, or displays of virtuosity; they are ebulliences, flourishes - rich, playful, gleeful gestures of bravura. Cf. Kölb ing (K203), to which this essay is a response, and Gaylord (K135).

K246 Manzalaoui, Mahmoud. "Lydgate and English Prosody." Cairo Studies in English. Ed. Magdi Wahba. Cairo, 1960. pp. 87–104. Though published in a somewhat obscure vehicle, this essay is in fact a very important contribution to metrical theory; admitting Lydgate's shortcomings as metrist, Manzalaoui searches for an adequate theoretical description, which leads directly to a reconsideration of the whole theory of meter. Taking three descriptive terms from the fine arts, Manzalaoui sketches out the varieties of metrical form:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Regularity</th>
<th>Irregularity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>Natural speech-rhythms</td>
<td>Simple incompetence at metrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorative</td>
<td>Strict meter</td>
<td>Variety for variety’s sake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>Perfect identity between natural rhythm and abstract meter</td>
<td>Semantically expressive metrical variation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then he defines the levels of requiredness (necessity, constraint) of metrical elements in a theoretical system:

- **Exigency**: obligatory aspects such as stress (in English verse);
- **Contingency**: secondary or non-ordered but unavoidable elements such as quantity or pitch patterning;
- **Speech-Rhythm**: in its interplay with meter;
- **Secondary Exigency**: elements ordered merely by convention rather than linguistic necessity, such as rhyme;
- **Special Cases of the Exigency**: certain specific conventions become quite rigid;
- **Constraint Within a "Special Case"**: sub-constraint within specific convention;
- **Delivery**: recitative, chant, and oral interpretation.

Finally, Manzalaoui suggests that in the long, complex transition from stress-verse to syllable-counting verse and alliteration to rhyme, regressions and atavisms occurred: the iambic pentameter, losing the special constraint of its iambicness, relaxed into alliterative stress-verse (an exigency) without the special exigency of the alliteration itself. Within the system both major rules and minor constraints may have shifted or relaxed at separate times.


of the couplet over the eighteenth century—and provides an even more variable survey of its antecedents in medieval Latin, Old French, and Old English verse. Conclusions: the seven-line rhyme royal is not a modification of ottava rima, it is a simplification of the ballade and as such is by far Chaucer's most important borrowing from the French (he persistently avoided all Italian verse-forms). Similarly, the Spenserian stanza is not based on ottava or terza rima but on the rhyme royal in Chaucer.

Proposing that modern verse differs from medieval in its insistence on novelty of phrase, Mead examines Chaucer, Gower, and other contemporaries for "stock phrases" (formulae, poetic diction) and "verse tags" (stock phrases and other occasional words used merely to fill out the meter). Finds that the force of convention in poetic phrasing was very strong, and a force which Chaucer readily accepted. Examples.

An examination of the six Middle English poems which show the devices of stanza-linking and beginning and ending the stanza with the same word; Medary identifies seven principal types of linkages, three of which had not been noticed by the nineteenth-century German editors, which shows that the linkage convention was much more consistently employed than was formerly believed. Summary table, p. 258. The six romances are compared to the York Mystery Plays, the popular ballads, and Pearl. Stanza-linking appears only in the northern poetry and always in conjunction with alliteration; see the following essay by Brown (K45) for an explanation.

Three foldout tables after p. 48 provide all the data on meters and rhyme schemes in a convenient form.


Jennen extends Trautmann's "seven-bar" theory (see K404)--four bars to the on-verse, three to the off-verse--to the alliterative Morte Arthure. The Verrification section covers pp. 34–118.

Summarizes the work of Vockrodt (K422) and Beschorner (K19) ordering the chronology of the canon based on rhyme practice, lists percentages of rhyming Romance-origin words in each of the works, and dismisses Skeat's suggestion about the frequency of sentences ending at the end of the first line of a couplet.

Proposes a rearrangement of stanzas 5–7 based on rhyme-schemes.
An argument for a triplet or even larger brace of rhymed lines at 1.546, citing evidence of similar disruptions in the run of couplets in other ME texts. Cf. Wittenbrinck (K435).

Trying to salvage, if not elevate, Hoccleve's reputation as a metrist, Mitchell rejects the scansion and judgments of Schipper, Bock, Saintsbury, and Licklider (K217). The lines will turn out much better, we are told, if we scan them according to the systems of either (1) Brooks and Warren (E501) allowing metrical substitutions; or (2) Schick (K328), adapting the five line-type system from Lydgate; or (3) Southworth (K368), reading the lines rhythmically not metrically.

Discarding the Child version in favor of a transcription of the MS by Skeat, the author discusses the sign "ii," suggesting that it meant "repeat the melody of this line once again" (rather than "repeat this line again") and argues that the ballad is in triple meter (rather than Common Measure).


This essay should be a summary of what is now the Received Opinion on the subject. Following Oakden (K242) fairly closely, Moorman characterizes the OE verseform (heroic, pagan, tribal) and social milieu, then argues that there was a continuous preservation of the meter, language, and themes of classical OE poetry into the ME period (there is no example anywhere in art of the complete extinction and subsequent recovery of a major technique). In the late OE period alongside the professional scops and clerics there appeared a class of popular minstrels, less proficient but more experimental metrically, who preserved the alliterative technique in an oral tradition (the sentiments of which were not acceptable to the copyists in the monasteries) until it reflowered in the fourteenth century.


An excellent introductory essay on Chaucer's verse-craft, followed by an equally thorough bibliography.

Becshomer's (K19) claim that the use of verbs—especially infinitives—for rhymes is a feature peculiar to Chaucer is not borne out by a wider inspection of M E verse; the feature seems to be fairly common, to judge from selected O E, M H G, M E, and M ode texts. Cf. M asui (K248).

The poet used (1) the alliterating sounds to suggest, mimetically, certain lexical and semantic points, as with the use of gr- and bilabial stops to body forth, kinesthetically, the fight scenes, and (2) the grouping and repetition of alliter-ants (elsewhere termed "plurilinear alliteration") as a mnemonic device to "help the listener to perceive the grouping of details." This last is significant, has not been suggested before, I think, and deserves considerable attention.


Both poems have a common O ld French source--Chrétien de Troye's Y wain--and (perhaps surprisingly) their meters are nearly identical, though the M E poem is metrically very much inferior to von A u'e's version. N olan devises a system for comparative scansion.

Notes on the metrical and pronunciational treatment of -e in fourteen types of syllabic environments, with two additional notes on irregular lines and alliteration. Each note catalogues all occurrences of its type. Concludes that final un-stressed -e's within the line were probably not pronounced. Conclusions about those at line-end must await analysis of the rhymes.

N otices two Skeltonics written by Gabriel H arvey and discovers some others in the Paston Letters; Skelton may have been related to the Pastons and learned the form directly from them.

N oyes noticed an apparently unique instance of rhyming close with open e. J. S. P. T atlock's reply (K393) adds other instances, however.


Vol. 1:  
I. The Dialectal Survey  
II. The Metrical Survey

Vol. 2:  
I. The Poems as Literature  
II. The Vocabulary [formulae: nominal compounds in O E, Early M E, and the Alliterative Revival]  
III. The Alliterative Phrases [alliterative formulae]  
IV. Style ["tags," fillers; style in general].

Though later work has modified this perspective in details, Oakden is still the standard authority on Middle English Alliterative Verse (MEAV). Note however from his title the extent of his domain: he does not treat at all the other two primary streams of M E verse, the tail-rhyme romances and the truly syllabic and stanzaic, Romance-influenced meters (most prominently Chaucer's). But since Oakden's account of MEAV is a major one—on a level with Schipper's—and since it is not especially easy to follow, a summary (with schema) will be in order.

The true O E alliterative line (meter) was preserved intact in the monasteries even as late as 1150 (the A nglo-Saxon Chronicle verses, 1065; the Des cription of Durham, ca. 1100, for example). Meanwhile the popular verseform (showing irregular rhyme and assonance with alliteration), preserved throughout the O E period and probably closely related to rhythmical prose as Blake suggests, combines with the classical (Five Types) meter; "the long line breaks up and a couplet is formed," having rhyme (internal rhyme in the long-line becomes final rhyme in the half-line couplets; Oakden neglects to say this though he clearly assumes it) together with alliteration (e.g., the Worchester fragment and the Departing Soul's Address to the Body, both ca. 1170; the Proverbs of Alfred, 1180; Layamon, 1189–1207; and the Bestiary, ca. 1200–50). This native couplet "inevitably becomes more and more syllabic, until it is written side by side with the French couplet and becomes indistinguishable from it," as witnesses the B rut, a poem in which alliteration is still dominant over rhyme, Layamon generally preferring not to mix the two, though the syllabic influence of the French is everywhere evident. In the West the more-strictly-classical line without rhyme must have been preserved (though we have no extant major works) until it flowered again in the Alliterative Revival, ca. 1340–1450. (To this movement Oakden naturally devotes considerable attention; see below.) In the Southwest, however, the popular verse tradition seems to have survived in another line of development; here the long-line adopted end-rhyme (instead of medial-rhyme followed by breaking into hemistichic couplets), apparently under the influence of the Latin septenary, and formed long couplets with some syllabic regularity. The line is not very strong but it is there, as witnesses O n G o d O rison of O ur L ady (ca. 1200), up until about 1300; thereafter, this form appears in the Northeast and Scotland, where it soon after gave way to the bob-and-wheel stanza, a form of extraordinary versatility and vigor, dominant from ca. 1350 to 1550. The hybrid short-couplet form seen in Layamon and apparently also the long end-rhymed couplets are eventually subsumed into a strictly syllabic couplet, under the pressure of French, which is the form we see in Chaucer. This way W yatt lies.

As for the disputed Alliterative Revival in the West, Oakden cites the evidence of (1) patterns of identical alliteration in consecutive lines, (2) instances of full-line alliteration "foreshadowed" or prefigured in earlier lines,
and (3) the survival of Sievers' Type C as proving the direct descent of the fourteenth-century alliterative line from the O E. Even further proof can be gleaned by observing six other metrical features already evident in Early ME which continued to develop: heavy end-stopping; alliteration only on identical vowels as well as identical consonants; lengthening of the line; recognizable O E alliteration patterns; extended half-lines; and a general collapse of the O E verse-types into one amorphous, general, flexible type in M E. New characteristics of the M EAV of the Revival period include stanzas, eye alliteration, and excessive alliteration.

In an Appendix Oakden argues for the sole authorship of Sir Gawain, Purity, Patience, and St. Erkenwald by the "Gawain-poet," and separate authorship for each of three other poems, the Destruction of Troy, the Wars of Alexander, and the Morte Arthure.

Compare Oakden's theory with the later, contrastive view of Turville-Petre (K412).

In response to Greg (K144), Oakden argues that the cumulative weight of metrical evidence for a continuous alliterative tradition in M E is convincing, especially the evidence of alliterative enjambment, consecutive alliteration, and the C-Type.

On problems of emendation and cavalier treatment of the text by editors, with some attention to alliteration.

There are some few remarks in section III (especially p. 84) on the setting of lyrics to music.

Corrections to Oakden (K274).


K281   ------. "Illustrations of Norse Formulas in English." Leeds Studies in English and Kindred Languages, no. 2 (1933), pp. 76–84.

K282   ------. "Norse Alliterative Tradition in Middle English I." Ibid., no. 6 (1937), pp. 50–64.

Suggests a Norse origin for this alliteration.

Based on his dissertation work, "The Alliterative Tradition in the Middle English Lyric," DAI 35 (1974): 1666A (Claremont College). Argues that "structural alliteration in the Middle English lyric does not derive either from the decadent long-line and arcane vocabulary of the alliterative revival poems, or from the octosyllabic pattern and hackneyed alliterative tags of minstrel verse, but evolved rather from the rhythmical alliteration of certain veins of devotional prose."


K286 Owen, Charles A., Jr. "Thy Drasty Ryming. . . . " SP 63 (1966): 533–64. A patient and searching yet broad assessment of Chaucer's developing skill at rhymecraft--at the deployment and pacing of thematic material in his stanzas, at metrical expressiveness, and at creating satire through form--especially in the tail-rhyme stanza, in rhyme royal, and in couplets. In contrast to the French, who cultivated the difficulty of complex rhymes, Chaucer explored its adaptability. For him it was a means not an end.


K288 -----. "Metrical -e in the O rmulum." Journal of English Linguistics 6 (1972): 35–45. O rm had the final -e available to him as an optional suffix for a great many words in his dialect, and he adapted it selectively for purposes of regularizing his meter. He did not employ the -e solely as an orthographic feature having no reality in contemporary speech.


K290 An earlier version appeared in Transactions of the Philological Society, 1868–69, pp. 86–153. Payne concludes that by Chaucer's time the inflectional -e had ceased to be pronounced in colloquial speech but was preserved in verse, though only when necessary (which would not include the rhyme at the end of the line), so that Chaucer could employ it at his discretion as a "help to the meter." In denying feminine rhymes Payne is disagreeing with Child (K59); he also demurs in deriving the Chaucerian line from the French decasyllable, preferring instead the Italian endecasyllabo.

Notes that the alliterative line in Langland--a distich comprised of two short verses--was, by the sixteenth century, "at length swallowed up and lost in our common burlesque alexandrine," the measure having lost all its force in the...
face (here, mouth) of rhyme. The French alexandrine is the "same legitimate offspring" of the old alliterative line, a meter not akin to blank verse but having "a sort of harmony of its own, proceeding not so much from its alliteration, as from the artful disposal of its cadence, and the contrivance of its pause."


"On the Metre of the Poem," pp. xv–xix, seems indebted to Guest (E543); Perry identifies two stresses to the verse (occasionally three) and the system of alliterating staves as essential and thinks "the general effect of the metre is dactylic" (italics original).


"Versbau und Rhythmus," pp. 135–56, is the most extended discussion available. Pilch gives a quasimusical scansion in 4/4 time. Criticized by Standop (K372).

A student of Trautmann's (see K404), Pilch turns his attention to both the alliterative and rhymed verse of Middle English, hoping to show a steady and unified development throughout all of M E verse in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries. The Introduction reviews the history of the vierhebungstheorie and its opponent on the question of M E verseform succinctly and accurately; Pilch then turns to separate metrical analyses of eighteen M E poems, chiefly the Brut and König Horn. His view of the rhymed verse in M E (MER V) is that these short couplets were derived from a fusion of the Latin hymn verse with the French octosyllabic, producing an English meld which originally had counted only stresses (not syllables) but gradually came to regulate the number of slacks as well, resulting in a regular alternation of both. The alliterative verse, however, was a reversion of the Latin septenary to the unrhymed alliterative form of O E verse; the M EAV is thus in effect an unrhymed septenary.


The term was used by King James in 1585 for "rime royal."

K301  Pyle, Fitzroy. "The Barbarous Metre of Barclay." MLR 32 (1937): 353–73. Arguments that "the Eclogue meter is one of mechanical regularity" and that "the line-structure of The Ships of Fools is also essentially metrical."

K302  -----. "Chaucer's Prosody." Medium Ævum 42 (1973): 47–56. An exceptionally close and careful critique of the position taken by Robinson (K318), most especially his conception of the "balanced pentameter," the meter that he believes Chaucer was able to create by fusing the characteristics of both the old native alliterative meter and the imported Romance syllabic meter, retaining the characteristics of both forms together. Pyle reinforces the traditional view, that Chaucer's hybrid meter gave up certain characteristics of both its parent forms in order to become a distinctively new--albeit unstable--form. Also discussed: trochaic substitution, spondees, pronunciation, MS evidence.

K303  -----. "A Metrical Point in Chaucer." Notes & Queries 170 (1936): 128. At two points in his narrative where a character recites an old proverb, Chaucer makes an effort to preserve its colloquial flavor (i.e., order of phrasing), so that the meter for a moment slips from the pentameter mode into the older four-stresses mode.

K304  -----. "The Origins of the Skeltonic." Notes & Queries 171 (1936): 362–64. Skelton's verseform seems to have been an extension of forms popular before the Conquest, and its two identifying characteristics—shortness of line-length and irregular rhyme-grouping—were probably derivatives of (respectively) the OE half-line, with its descendant the short rhyming couplet showing a lesser influence from Medieval Latin and French verse, and the (much-neglected) Anglo-Norman tradition.

K305  -----. "The Pedigree of Lydgate's Heroic Line, With a Note on his Use of the Line-types." Hermathena, no. 50 (1937), pp. 26–59. One can discern actual orderliness in Lydgate's metrical ineptitude by recognizing that he employs a fixed medial caesura even though the flanking hemistichs vary greatly; in this practice he was following the pre-Chaucerian tradition of the Alexandrine and fourteener. The analysis seems exhaustive.

K306  -----. "The Place of Anglo-Norman in the History of English Versification." Hermathena, no. 49 (1935), pp. 22–42. Must not be ignored: the decline of the speaking of French at the English court in Chaucer's time is paradoxically responsible for two seemingly-divergent processes—the revival of the older native alliterative verseform, and also the preservation of the strict French forms in verse articulated in English. Anglo-Norman is pivotal.

K307  Ramsay, Robert L., ed. "Magnificence": A Moral Play by John Skelton. Early English Text Society, Extra Series, no. 98. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1908 (for 1906). "Versification," pp. li-lxxi, cxxxiv–cxlvii (the first installment treats the verse-structure of the play itself, the second its position in the metrical experimentation evident throughout the Morality Plays). The staple meter of the play is "the rimed native long line of four stresses" and strong caesura, but Skelton thought of it as two short lines in a rough triple rhythm. With this four-stress line alternates a more regular four-foot iambic tetrameter line (Ramsay terms...
these "heavy" and "light"; both of these together give four general types of line—short and long, heavy and light. Skelton keeps them pretty well distinct by rhyme schemes, chiefly rhyme royal, couplets, and the repeated "leash" rhyme. On the whole Magnificence [ca. 1516] shows a surprising variety of forms and a rich profusion of new forms which are nevertheless skillfully positioned and controlled for purposes of characterization.

K308 Rankin, J. W. "The Hymns of St. Godric." PMLA 38 (1923): 699–711. Structure of these verses is treated on pp. 701–7; they are in a four-stress line, the rhyme-scheme generally aabb.

K309 Raymond, James C. "Lydgate's Verse and the Nature of English Prosody." DAI 34 (1974): 5925A (Texas). The modern disparagement of Lydgate's versecraft, a sharp contrast to the high praise of the Renaissance, can only be explained as a modern misunderstanding: Lydgate was not trying to imitate Chaucer's meter. We must distinguish between his four-stress verse and his octosyllables (which regulate syllable count strictly). His pentameters, however, combine features of the octosyllable with the variable caesura of the fourteener.

K310 Reese, Jesse B. "Alliterative Verse in the York Cycle." SP 48 (1951): 639–68. Shows that nearly all the major studies dating the plays (Chambers, Greg, Hofhfeld, etc.) were not based on any thorough analysis of versification. Reese's own analysis shows the meter to be alliterative not syllabic. A study valuable in both length and detail.

K311 Regel, Karl. "Die Alliteration in Laamon." In Germanistische Studien: Supplement zur "Germania." Ed. Karl Bartsch. Vienna, 1872. Vol. 1, pp. 171–246. This study established a classification system for the relation of alliterating words which was widely followed in German dissertations thereafter:

1. Etymological
2. Associative
   A. Concrete
   B. Abstractions, or abstract + concrete
   C. Emphasis
   D. Contrast
3. Grammatical
   A. Substantive, with modifiers if any
   B. Verb or Adjective, with modifiers
   C. Substantive + Verb (Subject + Predicate)
   D. Verb + Substantive (Predicate + Object).
Cf. Lindner (K218).

K312 Reger, Hans. Die epische Cäsur in der Chaucerschule. Diss., Munich. Bayreuth: Lorenz Ellwanger, 1910. 88 pp. Mainly lists of occurrences in Lydgate, with some slight attention to the older Chaucerians near the end. The "epic caesura," it will be recalled, is preceded by an extra (hypermetrical) syllable, resulting in an eleven-syllable line.

On sound (imagery) in the poem not of the poem.

Problems of stanzaic and melodic form in some Middle English carols in British Museum MS Additional 5665. A "burden" is a line or short group of lines before the first stanza and each additional stanza.

Finds alliterative four-stress verses in The Knight's Tale.


Robinson's book stands somewhere between the introductory level and the scholarly; his principles are iconoclastic, and seem, from a certain distance, almost silly at times. For example, he is very much distressed that the student will try to read Chaucer in Middle English, and so disparages the sound-charts of all the standard editions, claiming that we know nothing concrete about fourteenth-century phonology. His chapter on "Rhythm and Metre" gives rhythm the precedence: "in much of the best English verse the metre does not fully replace speech-rhythms." He agrees with Northrop Frye that Chaucer's line is not an iambic pentameter but a four-beat line (p. 52) and considers that the best way to understand "the notion of an ideal metre is to think of it in terms of expectation and call it 'a willingness to create the metre.'" He disdains a metrically-weighted recitation of Chaucer.

Following a chapter on Chaucer's own prosodic terms and idea, Robinson takes up the final -e in a long chapter (perhaps the best) which concludes equivocally: "if the metre seems to demand an -e sound it, but if the resulting reading damages the poetry, suspect the metre that led to it." But, staggeringhly, he rejects "variable stress" on Middle English words; this course leads to fifth-foot trochees in some of Chaucer's pentameters, a consequence which Robinson prefers. He thinks the verse best punctuated in phrase-units, as the medieval MSS do, because he believes the Chaucerian line to be a "balanced pentameter"-i.e., a line of five feet, usually iambic, but also divided into half-lines, following the alliterative tradition.

Two final chapters treat the Chaucerians from Hoccleve and Lydgate to Wyatt; an Appendix repudiates any efforts to trace the sources of Chaucer's metric in foreign versifications. Bibliography. The whole thrust and tone of this work is negative, reactionary, and eccentric: it cannot represent any advance in either scholarship or method. See the critiques by Pyle (K302) and by Gaylord (K136), and see also E763.

Cf. Johnston (K177).

The earliest attempt to scan the Middle English alliterative line as being in the four-beat (to the half-line) meter described by the vierhebungstheorie. Word-stress, meter, and alliteration patterns are examined in eight poems, chiefly Piers Plowman, and tables cataloguing the alliterative filling for each of the three texts of that poem are provided at the end.


A very short survey of the material given fuller treatment in Books 1–3 (vol. 1) of Saintsbury's History of English Prosody (A8).


The "Alliterative Revival" may well have been not so much antiquarianism as a transformation process, since alliterative patterns had been preserved continuously since the Anglo-Saxon age in a strong but ingrained prose tradition. Fourteenth-century poets may have made less of a distinction between prose and verse than we do and hence drawn more readily on the materials preserved in the monasteries, the prose works.


Observations on authorship and provenience, generally critical of Hulbert (K164).


A sturdy defense of the traditional view of Chaucer's line as decasyllabic against the more recent caviling of Southworth and Robinson. Samuels shows that the argument for the metrical retention of syllabic -e is non-circular in logic and based on systematic grammatical features in ME irrefragably established by philology. And the more difficult questions about Lydgate's and W yatt's meters ought not be conflated with the question about Chaucer's.


Syntax of the verbs.


Schick identifies five types of line in Lydgate: (1) normal iambic pentameters, (2) lines adding one weak syllable before the caesura, (3) lines missing a weak syllable after the caesura (the "broken-backed" line), (4) acephalous lines, and (5) lines with a trisyllabic first foot. This typology has been generally accepted. Cf. Hascall (E779).

An application of Lanier's theory of isochronous musical-bar scansion (E364) to Sir Gawain. Schiller identifies the standard long-line as three bars in 2/4 time with a quarter-bar anacrusis and a three-quarter-bar hypercatalexis, making four bars altogether as the lines run continuously. In the bob lines the three middle bars drop out, as it were, leaving only one. N.B.: Schiller misunderstands and misjudges Trautmann; he recognizes the final -e as mute but then proceeds (explicitly) as if it were not, and he naively believes that primary stresses in Sir Gawain are "determined by mandatory alliteration."


This study of those aspects of verseform in English influenced by foreign (Latin, Romance) models, with almost exclusive attention to Middle English, also presents Schipper's views on the metrical treatment of syllables and on verse-rhythm. But it also shows us that Schipper had revised and reduced the German text of his great Englische M etrik before he translated it, since what we have here is virtually identical in substance to Book I Part I and Book II Parts I and II of the English version (A11).


K337 Schoeck, R. J. "Alliterative Consonance in H arley M S. 2253." E nglish Studies 32 (1951): 68–70. Notices that a rhyme technique occasionally employed in English poetry (there seems to be no established tradition; W ilfred O wen is its chief modern developer, though it appears commonly also in Eupheuistic prose) is found in two thirteenth-century poems. Schoeck's term is a misnomer: the technique is actually "alliterative consonance": the first and last segments of the rhyming
CVC syllable are identical, while the vowel changes: e.g., killed, cold. Cf. Schlüter (K335).


K341 Schröer, Arnold. "Exkurs über die Metrik." Anglia 5 (1882): 238–64. The long excursus on the history of English versification (especially in late ME and the early R enaissance) which Schröer appends to his study of John Bale's (1495–1563) interlude A Comedy Concernynge Thre Laws (dialogue in couplets, monologues in ababbcc stanzas) is now entirely forgotten, but undeservedly so. True, Schröer does consider the ME alliterative meter to be an eight-beat long line, an erroneous conception which forces the reader of this essay to do a good deal of mental translation of terms as he goes, but nevertheless the range of Schröer's excursus makes it required reading for anyone who would attempt to write the long-overdue History of Middle English Meters. He discusses the confusion and experimentation resulting from the contact of the old native line with the Latin septenary and Romance Alexandrine which produced fourteeners, imperfect tetrameters, and other forms, depending on whether a given poet counted syllables or not. Bale himself is the perfect exemplar of metrical license and ineptitude, for one can find in this interlude virtually any meter one wishes, syllable-counting and simple-stress lines are mixed with abandon. And after a long digression on "low tone" and "level stress," Schröer discusses the meters of Skelton, Gascoigne, W yatt, Lindsay, and Bale again. See also E1292–93.

K342 Schumacher, Karl. Studien über den Stabreim in der mittelenglischen Alliterationsdichtung. Bonner Studien zur englischen Philologie, vol. 11. Bonn, 1914. 213 pp. Parts 1 and 2 here (the first 170 pages) analyze (1) the distribution of the alliteration within the line and (2) the quality (perfect or imperfect) of the alliterating members in 29 ME poems. Part 3 concerns textual criticism.


K344 Seeberger, Alfred. Fehlende Aufakt und fehlende Senkung nach der Cäsur in der Chaucerschule. Diss., M unich, 1911. Bayreuth: Ellwanger, 1911. On lines in Chaucer missing the first weak syllable beginning the line or after the caesura; cf. Freudenberger (K125) and Evans (K106).


K346 Severs, J. Burke. "Two Irregular Chaucerian Stanzas." MLN 64 (1949): 306–9. The stanza at 11. 33–40 of A n A B C has been regularized by modern editors without good justification from the transmission of the M S5 and without the recognition that the sixth stanza of T h e Former Age is identical, and intention-
ally irregular beyond question, in having the rhyme scheme ababbcac, the seventh line being an a instead of a b.

K347 Shannon, Edgar F. "Chaucer's Use of the Octosyllabic Verse in The Book of the Duchess and The House of Fame." JEGP 12 (1913): 277–94. Chaucer's metrical skill is much firmer in HF than in BD. Trochaic substitutions in any of the first three feet appear in both poems, but altogether the frequency is higher in BD; seven-syllable lines, though, appear more often in HF, suggesting that Chaucer did not consider the acephalous line a deformity. Hiatus, "sturring" (elision), and extra-metrical syllables before the caesura are also less frequent in HF, but enjambement there is both heavier and smoother. By contrast, Gower's octosyllabics are much more regular metrically and therefore less interesting and less expressive.

K348 Shepherd, Geoffrey. "The Nature of Alliterative Poetry in Late Medieval England." Proceedings of the British Academy 58 (1970): 57–76; rpt. as a pamphlet by Oxford University Press, 1971. The one interpretation which can embrace and account for all the diverse alliterative poems in the Middle English period is that they are all elaborations of a "poetics of memory." Alliteration itself was a mnemonic device, a vestige of the oral culture. "These poets were making melos out of memory." Especially Richard Rolle.


K352 Skeat, Walter W. The Chaucer Canon: with a discussion of the works associated with the name of Geoffrey Chaucer. O xford: Clarendon Press, 1900; rpt. N ew York: Folcroft, Pa.: Folcroft Library Editions, 1974. Dr. Skeat used the invariably regular meter of the Ælflaed (to establish the syllabic values of final -en, -es, and -e) and various rhyme tests also, in order to separate authentic from spurious texts and so establish the Chaucerian canon.

K353 -----. "Chaucer's Virelays." The Athenaeum 8 (1893): 281. Though Chaucer tells us that he wrote many such, only two are extant (Andida and A rite, II. 256–71 and 371–72); a considerable number can be found in Hoccleve, however, who clearly learned the form from Chaucer.

and Dalby, 1866; 2nd rev. ed., 1872. Vol. 1, pp. 121–96 (especially pp. 152–96 on meter). Sections 1–6, on the pre-Chaucerian verse in ME, are written by Tynwhitt (K414), whose work Skeat endorses and follows in his analysis of the meter of the Knight's Tale in sections 7–15. He examines (1) meter (pentameter lines, five-stress lines in stanzas, and four-stress couplets), (2) variation in syllable-count, (3) elision, and (4) rules for pronunciation. On the final -e, see pp. 183, 186–91. Skeat thinks it to be sounded when needed, and at the end he approves of the work of Child.

Includes Corrections to the Marshall-Porter rhyme-index for the Minor Poems (K247). See also Cromie (K72).


Section 30 of the Introduction treats "The Metre of the Poem" in three pages; section 31 reprints the comparative table of aberrant alliterations in the A, B, and C Texts compiled by Rosenthal (K320)--pp. xlviii–lxiii.

This fourteenth-century devotional work shows the influence of the ecclesiastical cursus on vernacular prose.


A general explanation of Ten Brink's position (his absolute insistence on a strict decasyllabilism in Chaucer's lines was not well received at first) and a gentle apologia for some of his more errant statements, by his English translator. Note the remarks on the concrescence of the native and foreign verseforms in ME on p. 15.

The third note. The alliterative description of the tournament at 11. 2601–16 has very close parallels, metrically and verbally, to those in Ipomadon A and Partonope of Blois, a fact not hitherto noticed.
Sounds rather similar to Baum (K11): Smoot examines metrical tension, end-stopping and enjambement, sound-patterning, and onomatopoeia in Chaucer, taking his verse to be accentual-syllabic in meter, and she gives a full-scale specimen analysis of 11. 1-42 of the General Prologue.

Both these auxiliaries served primarily metrical functions in Chaucer, propelling the infinitive into the rhyme-position. Their usage generally increases up through Troilus and Criseyde, after which point Chaucer seems to have decided them to be too great a convenience, or excrescence, for his highest art. Gower scarcely uses them at all.


K366  Southworth, James G. "Chaucer's Final -e in R hyme." PMLA 62 (1947): 910–35. See reply by Donaldson (K90) and ensuing exchange. Historical phonology has always sounded the final -e suffixed to the rhyme-word at the end of Chaucer's lines even though it was of two minds concerning whether or not to sound the final -e on words within the line, Southworth observes, yet since the -e was entirely inorganic (not pronounced) in Chaucer's day and since it is admitted only for purposes of metrical exigency, it must be denied in the rhymes since there is no question of filling the meter there.


K369  -----. "Chaucer's Prosody: A Plea for a Reliable Text." College English 26 (1964): 173–79; rev. and rpt. in Chaucer's Mind and Art. Ed. A. C. Cowley. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970. pp. 86–96. This last summarizes the position taken in the two monographs; all may be conveniently treated together. All of Southworth's theorizing about Chaucer's verse rests on the premise of a "fact," recently recovered, that final -e was disappearing from the speech of Londoners perhaps as early as 1350. From this "fact" Southworth argues that therefore we may not pronounce, consider syllabic, nor allow into the meter these suffixes. And since some of the Chaucer MSS have significantly fewer final -e's than others, these M SS must of course be the most authoritative ones, even though on other grounds they may seem less reliable. Hence, Southworth comes to make a direct assault on the well-fortified position of all those who believe that Chaucer wrote in meter, specifically an iambic pentameter meter. Southworth's counter to this "unsupported and improbable theory": Chaucer wrote "not in regular metre, but in rhythms or phrasal units"--meter did not appear in English poetry until Wyatt. In short,
Southworth wishes to abolish meter, and only consider Chaucer's lines as "rhythmical," or else he intends to conflate the two under the latter, believing that pronunciation = meter. He views the standard Chaucerian line as having four stresses, a natural family characteristic in the alliterative genealogy. To denote the rhythm of the verse he adopts Thomson's (E404) musical scansion-notation, since all the rest of the scholars—Tyrwhitt, Child, Ellis, Furnivall, Skeat, Schipper, Ten Brink—were wrong, utterly wrong, wrong about everything—Chaucer's pronunciation, texts, verse-structure, intention. All the theories about the sources of his metric being either the Italian endecasyllable or the French decasyllable are mere "Myths." Only the struggling eighteenth-century editor Urrey, the editor most cavalier with his MSS, was right. Urrey, that is, and Southworth.

In his second monograph Southworth draws upon the researches of Clemoes on MS punctuation and Schlaunch on the cursus in order to argue that the virgule was intended by the scribes to divide each line into hemistichs, each of which was then scannable as one of the standard types of cursus. He seems unaware of the work of Fijn Van Draat (J82) on the cursus in OE; that scholar concluded that the cursus as a conscious device in verse and prose was a chimera, representing nothing other than the normal phrasal stress-patterns of the language.


K372 Standop, Ewald. "Der Rhythmus des Layamon-Verses." Anglia 79 (1962): 267–86. Standop reconstructs scansion of Layamonic verse according to the systems of Heusler, Pope, and Pilch (K295) and gives a critique of each, especially the last. His own view is that the Layamonic verse cannot be measured as a classical alliterative line: it consists of half-lines of from four to thirteen syllables, in four double measures, in 2/4 time. It is a "monopodic verse which realizes the traditional dipodic alliterative rhythm only rarely." Prose stress and metrical ictus generally coincide, and the anacrusis, like the syllable-count, the distribution of stresses, and the filling of bars, is free. Layamon's verse is closer to the short rhymed couplet in its freer forms than it is to the alliterative long-line.

K373 Stanley, E. G. "Stanza and Ictus: Chaucer's Emphasis in Troilus and C r is ey d e. " Chau er und seine Ze t. Symposium für Walter F. Schirmer. Ed. Arno Esch. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1968. pp. 123–48. A study of the distribution of narrative movement within the stanza—i.e., (1) the various means by which Chaucer establishes continuity both through and between his discrete, discontinuous stanzaic meter, focusing on types of stanza-linking and last lines, and (2) the characteristic metrical deployments within the pentameter line (the second ictus regularly receives an inordinate amount of emphasis)—concluding that "in Troilus and C r is ey d e the last line of the stanza and within that line the metrically stressed syllable preceding the caesura are positions of special and pivotal emphasis."

K374 ------. "The Use of Bob-Lines in Sir T hopas." Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 73
Their chief characteristics are "bathos and vapidity," and no other Middle English poet shows such technical sophistication and sprezzatura at manufacturing incompetent verses. A valuable four-page table of all the occurrences of bob-lines in ME verse, including analysis of rhyme-schemes, is provided.

K375  Starr, David. "Metrical Changes: From OId to Middle English." MP 68 (1970): 1–9. A direct comparison of the OE alliterative and ME syllabic (iambic) metrical systems. Starr rehearses the commonplaces, noting in this transitional period of the language the loss of inflections, the assimilation of foreign vocabulary, and the induction of a positional principle (word order) into the syntax, and the effect of these three major shifts on meter. But he cannot very well explain his judgment that "the change from the OId English verse to the iambic norm [was] quite slight" merely by arguing that both systems allow for variation against a norm or that the OE long-line seems distinctly iambic at times. All these observations are too familiar and too easy; none of them gives us the lock of the suddenly-sprung-open lock.


K378  Stevens, Martin. "The Royal Stanza in Early English Literature." PMLA 94 (1979): 62–76. Challenges the received explanation of the origin and name of the "rhyme royal" stanza (from its use by King James I of Scotland for the Kingis Quair) by showing from ample evidence of English civic pageantry that the stanza was used at least as early as the fourteenth century for poetic contests in the Puy (guild) and was firmly associated with addresses to royalty. Chaucer’s use of the form in Troilus and the Canterbury Tales is examined. But more importantly, Stevens shows that Chaucer used the term "prose" to refer not only to unlined sentences (the modern sense) but also to the rhyme royal stanza (the medieval sense of prosa), while reserving rym for either couplets or the tail-rhyme Sir Thopas stanza. Chaucer certainly did not invent the form; he simply established its register--the high style--for nearly three centuries, and he was "the first poet in the language to endow the long poem with a sophisticated and uniform stanzaic unit." Stevens seems to be completely unaware of the earlier monograph by Maynard (K250), however; had he seen that study, part of this essay would have been unnecessary.

K379  Stewart, George R. "The Meter of Piers Plowman." PMLA 42 (1927): 113–28. The dispute between the four-stress (to the long line) and the seven-stress theories of Langland’s verse can be reconciled if we see the line as written in four dipodic feet. The four-stress theorists (zweihebungstheorie) are right to emphasize primary stresses, and the seven-stressers (vierhebungstheorie) are right to note the existence of secondary stresses, but even the latter fail to recognize the alternating, dipodic patterning of the stresses. Stewart’s view is very close to if not derived from Leonard’s (K215).
A crucial essay on the crucial question in the history of English verse, the question of what happened, precisely, to the OE verseform in the ME period. Stobie takes the intrepid position that the radical changes in English verse which occurred in the ME period were not, essentially, the result of the imported Romance forms but would have occurred in any event due to natural changes in the phonology of the language. These changes were three: (1) the gradation of vowels, reduction of grammatical cases, and subsequent loss of inflectional endings increased the number of monosyllables and altered such forms as OE Type A, /X/X/, to /X/, //, XX//, and finally X/X/ -- that is, the generally trochaic OE rhythm was changed, as a result of the lost inflections, to a prevalently iambic one; (2) the lengthening of OE vowels in open stressed syllables blocked resolution of double short syllables, adding extra syllables everywhere, and causing the collapse of the relatively distinct OE Types into one general, amorphous Type; and (3) the shortening of the second syllable in compounds had a similar blurring effect, adding weak syllables until "the temporal values in alliterative poetry disappeared and the native verse became entirely accentual."

"The superiority of the Scots is most evident in the quality of their rhythms and melodic line; the time-value of each word is governed by the length and pitch of the syllable before and the syllable after. Each word keeps its own resonance and the accents are those of an actual spoken language; there is a tension as accent is balanced against quantity."

K382 Stockwell, Brenda S. "Techniques of Aural Poetry in the Middle English Lyric."
Alliteration, rhyme, and (especially) formulaic diction serve structural and mnemonic functions for the oral poet, reducing the demands of immediate composition and also improving comprehension in his audience.

K383 Stone, Elwood W. "Chaucer's Prosody: Examination Based on a New Method."

K384 Storms, G. "A Note on Chaucer's Pronunciation of French u."

K385 Strandberg, Otto. The Rime-Vowels of "Cursor Mundi."

K386 Stüdl, Johann. Das Versmass in Langlands "The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman."
Diss., Vienna, 1936.

K387 Suchier, Hermann. "Zur Versbildung der Anglo-Normannen."

Traces the sources and distribution of some of Chaucer's formulaic rhymes (used repeatedly) as well as proper names used for rhymes.

Analysis of the early verse of the two poets allows Swallow to conclude that Skelton was using the pentameter form before W yatt, that both men understood the five-foot form very early in their careers, and that their verse is much more regular metrically than has been supposed. For support of these conclusions, Swallow argues that the mute - e is pronounced and muted variously (as in Chaucer), that Romance words are to have English pronunciations, that W yatt aimed at faithful matter over meter in his translations, and (finally) that the metrical tradition which these poets inherited was a very loose one. M any of their lines more closely resemble the fifteenth-century bipartite line described by C. S. Lewis (K216) than the pentameter line. So, their metrical context was weak, and their adherence to the pentameter must be seen as an effort at codification. See the critique by Evans (E987).

K390 -----. "Principles of Poetic Composition from Skelton to Sidney." Diss., Louisiana State University, 1941. Pp. 82–111 in chapter 2 treats Skelton's versification: Swallow argues that Skelton exercised conscious control over his meters, writing good pentameters and four-stress lines when he chose, but wrenching accent when that served expressive ends, and otherwise preserving Romance pronunciation in rhyming.


K392 Tamson, George J. W ord-Stress in E nglish: A S hort T reatise on the A ccentuation of W ords in M iddle E nglish as C ompared with the Stress in O ld and M odern E nglish. Studien zur englischen Philologie, vol. 3. H alle: M ax N iemeyer, 1898. T reats words of Germanic and of Romance origin separately, categorizing by part of speech, determining the stressing by the metrical treatment of the word in four texts: the T roy-Book, Piers Plowman, M orte A rthure, and R ichard the R ede.

K393 Tatlock, J. S. P. "Chaucer's dreme-s-lene. M LN 20 (1905): 126. C haucer and the other M iddle English poets did indeed rhyme the closed with the open e. See K273.

K394 -----. "Epic Formulas, Especially in Layamon." PMLA 38 (1923): 494–529. T he first half a list, the latter a discussion. Some mention of alliteration and rhyme.


K397 Teichmann, Eduard. "Zur Stabreimzeile im W illiam Langlands Buch von Peter dem Pflüger." Anglia 13 (1891): 140–74. An attempt to show that as a rule the lines have feminine endings.

Applying the Luick-Sievers analysis, Thomas finds that the verse of Purity, Patience, and Sir Gawain can be matched to the two-beat Five Types "without difficulty," though he believes that its meter is generally anapestic-dactylic, a view which requires considerable manipulation of the sounded inflectional -e to be viable at all. The rhythm of the long lines has influenced that of the short lines, but alliteration does not always correlate with primary stresses; the short lines are in an alternating meter with end-rhyme, the alliteration being merely ornamental. Discussed in Borroff (K32), chapter 7 and Notes.


K401 Tillman, Nathaniel P. "Lydgate's Rimes as Evidence of His Pronunciation." Diss., University of Wisconsin, 1941.


Trautmann published articles on Middle English versification over nearly two decades, and after he became editor of the Bonner Beiträge zur Anglistik, the articles that were published in that organ by his students and others all generally followed his philosophy, so that his influence extends well over four decades. During that time Trautmann never changed his opinion of the nature of Layamon's meter: he believed the half-line to be comprised of four stresses (as Lachman and the other proponents of the vierhebungstheorie had held for Old English verse), with a weakening of the off-verse in the ME period, so that the ME long-line had seven stresses instead of the eight in OE. Trautmann held this view for ME from the very beginning, even when he suffered a temporary lapse and championed the two-stress theory for OE briefly. Trautmann's opinions changed in other respects, however, and it is important to notice that he changed his position radically after 1895 not on the nature but on the source of Layamon's meter. In his first studies (K405) Trautmann had held that the verseform of the Brut was derived from Otfrid and through him ultimately from Medieval Latin, though later (J317, J318) he thought that it was derived originally from Otfrid and not from any earlier Latin source. After 1895, however (J319), he abandoned the Otfridian thesis and argued that Layamon's verseform was derived directly from Old English. Several of Trautmann's students
extended his version of the vierhabungstheorie to most of Middle English verse. But that theory has not been borne out by later scholarship and their work has no independent authority.


At 92 pages, a virtual monograph, and in fact this is still the fullest treatment of this subject. Intent to demonstrate how seriously the third major line of Middle English poetry has been underrated heretofore, Trounce examines conventional elements, formulae, the functions of the tail-line, and stanza-construction (vol. 1), meter and alliteration (vol. 2, pp. 34–40), and provenience (East Anglia), turning thereafter (vols. 2 and 3) to a separate examination of each of the 23 poems. See also Strong (L140).

Meter, stanza, rhyme, and alliteration: pp. 56–60 in the Introduction.

Rime-analysis.

A much more rigorous, detailed, and exhaustive analysis than those of Schiller (K329) and Borroff (K32) and a worthy successor to Luick's study (K224). In the verse of Sir Gawain the alliterative structure has become slightly discontinuous with the accentual one, the staves not always matching the primary stresses, and it is useless to search for concealed correct or obvious degenerate OE verse-types. The syntactic unit of the verse is the whole line not the hemistich, and its characteristic pattern is a longer a-verse in rising rhythm followed by a shorter b-verse in falling. The prevalent rhythm is triple time, of three general types, variegated by a less frequent, shorter, duple-time rhythm, often in the b-verse, also of three types. Both are "syntactically conditioned... by major constituents in spaced construction." Alliteration is regular in the short rhythms but frequently irregular in the standard triple-rhythm verses, with one major stress not alliterant being relatively common. Alliteration is still syntactically functional, but not metrically. Altogether, though the meter is much less tight than in OE, the syntax, alliteration, and accentuation systems are all still operating conjunctively.

To be compared with Oakden (K274): this is not a new theory but a codification and restatement of the older theory. The theory of continuity as set forth by Oakden, Turville-Petre finds "hard to accept"; he argues the alternative hypothesis that "the tradition of 'classical' Old English poetry died out soon after..."
the Conquest, and that for over one hundred years it was succeeded by a
looser form of alliterative verse, which in turn died out, though not before it
had sown the seeds of the Alliterative Revival." That is, early MEAV such as
Layamon's Brut "are not milestones in a developing tradition, but examples of
individual modifications to a fluid and imprecise verse form. . . . At all events
the poetry of the Alliterative Revival is not a direct descendant of Layamon's
verse."

Chapter 3 treats the meter of the Alliterative Revival poems, Turville-
Petre distinguishing three phases: the earliest, where the meter is over-loose,
followed by a second, where the meter overreacts to the earlier form by be-
coming over-tight, and a final stage of synthesis, where the meter has made
adjustments in both directions to become a supple and vitalic medium. Even
though this meter seems best suited for narration and description, "the most
remarkable quality of the alliterative line is its capacity to accommodate a vast
range of expression."

K413 ------. "'Summer Sunday,' 'De Tribus Regibus Mortuis,' and "The Awnyrs off
Arthure': Three Poems in the Thirteen-Line Stanza." Review of English Studies
A consideration of the prospect that there was a coherent Middle English tradi-
tion of alliterative "bob-and-wheel" stanzas. The three poems are compared
and a list of known poems in this stanza form is appended.

K414 Tyrwhitt, Thomas. A n Essay on the Language and V ersification of Chaucer. Vol. 4 of
The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer. To which are added, An Essay upon his Language
and Versification; an Introductory Discourse; and Notes. 4 vols. London: Printed by
T. Payne, 1775; rpt. 1875, 1877; rpt. Folcroft, Pa.: Folcroft Library Editions,
The first modern assessment of Chaucer's metric. Many of Tyrwhitt's judg-
ments have been subsequently reversed or amended, yet for its time his analysis
is relatively thorough and close. He believed that rhyme and meter did not
exist in English poetry before the Conquest, Anglo-Saxon verse having only
"pomp of diction," rhyme having come into ME through the offices of the
Normans from Medieval Latin. He seems to have been the first to detect the
syllabic regularity of the Ormulum, and indeed syllabism is a very strong point
with Tyrwhitt. He takes as his ground assumption the belief that a melodic
smoothness is the unquestionable perfection of metrical style, and hence aim of
all the best poets, and since Chaucer was a great poet, all deviations and ir-
regularities must be the work of shoddy scribes and imperfect MSS, and the
editor is therefore more than justified in removing these blemishes in every
instance. This is to say that Tyrwhitt was a wholesaler in emendations. The
irregularities of meter he lists as: supernumerary syllables (few), deficiency of
syllables (frequent), and displacement of stress. Deficiency he considers espe-
cially grievous (no "heroic verse which wants a syllable of its complement can
be musical, or even tolerable") and to be corrected by sounding of final -e's
(Tyrwhitt in fact sounded them everywhere, both within the line and on the
rhyme-words) and by trisyllabic substitutions ("an English verse, though
chiefly composed of feet of two syllables, is capable of receiving feet of three
syllables in every part of it, provided only one of the three syllables be ac-
cented"). These strategies Tyrwhitt employed to regularize the count of sylla-
bles and the alternation of stresses, thereby assuring the "correctness and ha-
mony" of the verse. He was in fact a strict syllabist even though he believed
that the Chaucerian line contained eleven syllables rather than ten, being de-
rived from the Italian endesyllabo. Chaucer's meters he lists as the "long Iam-
bic Metre" [fourteener], the Alexandrine, the Octosyllabic, the Stanza of Six
[tail-rhyme], and the Heroic. The discussion concludes with an analysis of ll.1–18 of the General Prologue.

K 415 Ulrich, Karl. über die alliterierenden Reimformeln im Mittelenglischen, besonders in Layamons "Brut." Diss., Vienna, 1891.

Support for the negative side of the question, in opposition to Kaluza (K 182).
The marginal marks which appear every fourth line in the MS are sienal, not authorial, and we have no way of knowing their purpose. A quatrain division does not match up with the logical and narrative structures of the poem. Cf. Day (K 84) and Hulbert (K 165).

A rare form aabbabba appears in the fourth stanza of a seven-stanza poem, noticed by Schipper, having an otherwise-regular rhyme scheme abababa.

Extending the hypothesis of Kaluza (K 182) and Duggan (K 93) supporting quatrain stanzas and supra-stanzaic strophes in ME poetry, Vaughan finds that the alliterative MA is divided into quatrain-like "four-line thought groups" bound in a "structural" (not ornamental) pattern of alliteration that is easily demonstrable though also extremely diffused: over 4,346 lines, the number of patterns per number of lines of extension was 948 twos, 95 threes, 189 fours, 12 fives, 27 sixes, 3 sevens, 4 eights, 1 nine, 3 tens, and 1 eleven. Given such evident range, he can only conclude that the MA is "not a stanzaic poem, at least not by any common definition of that term, but neither is it a poem whose sole formal feature is the alliterative long line. It exists as a tertium quid." There is also some very rough and very ambiguous evidence for strophes.

K 419 "Verse-Forms Common to the Middle and Modern English Periods." Schipper (A 11), Book I, Part 2, Division 2, pp. 183–218.
An inventory of line-types, especially the couplet.


Analysis of rhyme-forms in order to establish the chronology of those Tales in couplets. The forms: the suffixes -ing, -ly, and -ness, varieties of simple rhyming words, and "split rhyme"--one word rhymed with two, etc.

Hoccleve's rhymes follow Chaucer's precedent almost entirely.

K 424 von Ende, Frederick A. C. "The Prosody of the Pearl-Poet: A Technical Analysis

K 426  W a l d r o n, Ronald A. "Oral-Formulaic Technique and Middle English Alliterative Poetry." Speculum 32 (1957): 792–804. Waldron departs from traditional oral-formulaic theory by suggesting that even literate poets working solidly within a written tradition were capable of using formulae, that ME alliterative verse shows clearly the presence of such formulae, and that this fact establishes the continuity of verseform in Old and Middle English. Criticized by Finlayson (K 115).


K 428  W a t s o n, Melvin R. "Wyatt, Chaucer, and Terza Rima." M L N 68 (1953): 124–25. Chaucer rather than Wyatt first used the form in English (in "The Complaint to his Lady").


K 430  W e s t, Henry S. The Versification of "K ing H om." Diss., Johns Hopkins, 1899. Baltimore: J. H. Furst Co., 1907. 92 pp. West in agreement with Schipper, West attacks vigorously Luick's theory that the verseform of the Brut and King Horn is written in a four-beat half-line modeled on Otfrid in employing rhyme throughout instead of structural alliteration. That is, Luick believed that these rhymed-alliterative poems represented a tradition in ME verse wholly unrelated to--underived from--the native tradition of the alliterative long-line (two stresses to the half-line) in Old English. Wells agrees with Schipper that the Horn verse is within the native "free-rhythm" tradition, even though the alliteration has been exchanged for full rhyme; it is precisely this interpretation which allows us to trace a "natural and unbroken development" from the native OE verse through the assimilation of the Romance prosody in ME into Modern English. Otherwise we would be forced to believe in the "fundamental fact of a double prosody" in English verse. Where Luick found three discrete prosodies, West and Schipper find one. But West denies, equally as vigorously, Schipper's scansion of the Horn verse (half-line) as having three stresses; West's analysis takes an unwavering stand on Sievers and finds only two. Indeed, Schipper is chastized smartly for "compromising" with the Otfridians. Chapters 1, 2, and 6 and the Conclusion are required reading that is particularly absorbing, but pp. 18–20 are especially good. Any history of English versification must squarely confront and
clearly explain how the native verseform accommodated itself—if indeed it did—to the immigrant principle (rhyme) which quickly took control. The alternative interpretations are atrophy and assimilation. And even though West’s claim that alliterative verse could lose alliteration and still survive seems incredible, assimilation is clearly the preferable view.


K436 Wolff, Edward J. "Chaucer's Normalized Diction: A Comparison of Recurring Phrases in Chaucer and Beowulf to Determine the Validity of the Magoun Thesis." DA 27 (1967): 3022A (Michigan State). Tabulation of the lexical repetitions (word echoes) in a sample of Chaucer's verse reveals (surprisingly) that its frequency is very nearly the same as that in the Beowulf. If, then, the OE epic is said, on precisely these grounds, to have been orally composed, we must say that The Canterbury Tales were as well.


