



The Poetics of Old English

Tiffany Beechy

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Combining literary analysis and theoretical linguistics, Tiffany Beechy's timely and engaging study provides a critical reassessment of Old English texts that challenges the distinction between Anglo-Saxon prose and verse, ultimately recognizing an inherent poetic nature present in all Old English texts. While the poetic nature of *Beowulf*, due to the regular meter and heroic story, is recognized, this study demonstrates that poetry is a more widespread phenomenon than previously thought; poetic patterning can be found across the Old English corpus, both in verse and in so-called prose. Informed by Jakobsonian linguistics and oral theory, Beechy's analysis focuses on the text itself to identify unique poetic strategies. This demonstration includes a comparison between King Alfred's Old English version of Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae* and the Latin original; the poetic quality of prose homilies; poetic epistemology in law codes, riddles, and charms; and unconventional poetics even in traditional verse texts, such as the short lyric 'Deor' and the long poem *Christ I*. *The Poetics of Old English* brings interrelated developments in linguistics and literary theory to the study of Anglo-Saxon language and culture, showing that Old English texts, when considered at the level of language, are surprisingly sophisticated.

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