English Alliterative Verse
Poetic Tradition and Literary History

ERIC WEISKOTT

English Alliterative Verse tells the story of the medieval poetic tradition that includes Beowulf, Piers Plowman, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, stretching from the eighth century, when English poetry first appeared in manuscripts, to the sixteenth century, when alliterative poetry ceased to be composed. Eric Weiskott draws on the study of meter to challenge the traditional division of medieval English literary history into ‘Old English’ and ‘Middle English’ periods. The two halves of the alliterative tradition, divided by the Norman Conquest of 1066, have been studied separately since the nineteenth century; this book uses the history of metrical form and its cultural meanings to bring the two halves back together. In combining literary history and metrical description into a new kind of history he calls ‘verse history,’ Weiskott reimagines the historical study of poetics.

Eric Weiskott is Assistant Professor of English at Boston College. In addition to publishing widely on alliterative verse and early English literary history in journals such as Anglo-Saxon England, ELH, Modern Language Quarterly, Modern Philology, Review of English Studies, and Text and Performance Quarterly, Weiskott is also a practicing poet. Most recently his poems have appeared in Berf小康 ton, Cricket Order, the Journal of American Poetry, and Paper Nautilus. His first poetry chapbook was Sharp Fish (2008). With Irina Dumitrescu, he is currently co-editing a volume of essays with the working title Early English Poetics and the History of Style.