

While there is little evidence of formal rhetorical instruction in Anglo-Saxon England, traditional Old English poetry clearly shows the influence of Latin rhetoric. *Verse and Virtuosity* demonstrates how Old English poets imitated and adapted the methods of Latin literature, and, in particular, the works of the Christian Latin authors they had studied at school. It is the first full-length study to look specifically at what Old English poets working in a Latinate milieu attempted to do with the schemes and figures they found in their sources.

Janie Steen argues that, far from sterile imitation, the inventiveness of Old English poets coupled with the constraints of vernacular verse produced a vital and markedly different kind of poetry. Highlighting a selection of Old English poetic translations of Latin texts, she considers how the translators responded to the challenge of adaptation, and shows how the most accomplished, such as Cynewulf, absorb Latin rhetoric into their own style and blend the two traditions into verse of great virtuosity. With its wide-ranging discussion of texts and rhetorical figures, this book can serve as an introduction to Old English poetic composition and style. *Verse and Virtuosity* will be of considerable interest to Anglo-Saxonists, linguists, and those studying rhetorical traditions.