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Metre and Rhythm in Medieval and Early Modern English Poetry

Padova, 19-20 May 2022

‘Tunable rhyme or metrical sentences’, the distinguishing features of poetry according to George Puttenham, do not only mark the passage from prose to ‘poesy’: they also make such texts as orators’ and doctors’ sermons acceptable to princes as well as the common people. In chapter 6 of his *Art of English Poesy*, Puttenham thus attributes to poetry a fundamental role in the community: it turns discourse into public utterance, it lends memorability and authority to speech, both in the ancient and in the contemporary world: ‘And the great princes and popes and sultans would one salute and greet another – sometime in friendship and sport, sometime in earnest and enmity – by rhyming verses, and nothing seemed clerkly done but must be done in rhyme’.

These reflections come after centuries of change in the English language, a change that is also reflected in the extraordinarily rich range of metres and poetic forms that develop between the medieval and early modern period in the British Isles, and that by the sixteenth century become also the object of theoretical reflection. The present conference investigates all aspects of this phenomenon in medieval and early modern poetry in English and Scots. Topics include (but are not limited to):

- Alliterative poetry
- Connections between metre and genre
- The sonnet and its development
- Cross-cultural exchanges: metres from different languages
- Rhythms on the stage: versification and dramatic forms
- Epic poetry and its metrical modes
- Metre in prose: the rhythm of public speaking and of scientific discourse
- Musical modes and metres
- Description and prescription: treatises

Keynote speakers:

Ad Putter, University of Bristol

Robert Stagg, Shakespeare Institute / University of Oxford

Please send an abstract (roughly 500 words) and a brief curriculum by **30 September 2021** to

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