

Orlando Gibbons

Professor Schoolfield

English 1325.007

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Review: Pearsall, Derek. "The Alliterative Revival: Origins and Social Backgrounds."

Lawton, David, ed. Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: Seven Essays. Cambridge: Brewer Press, 1982. 34-53.

In "The Alliterative Revival: Origins and Social Backgrounds," Pearsall begins by noting that "[n]o discussion of the alliterative revival can be without some preliminary recognition that its subject-matter is, to some extent, hypothetical" (34). Reviewing the history of the term "alliterative revival," Pearsall reveals its earliest use in W. P. Ker's essay on romances in the first volume of the 1907 Cambridge History of English Literature. Use of the term continued in Samuel Moore's "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk" (1913) and Sir Israel Gollancz's 1915 edition of *The Parlemtent of the Thre Ages* to J.R. Hulbert's "Hypothesis Concerning the Alliterative Revival" (1931). By the 1930s, according to Pearsall, the term enjoyed systematic use, which continues to today, even though it may be qualified, as in "so-called Alliterative Revival."

Pearsall reports that more recent scholars, such as D.J. Williams have seen "some difficulties about treating all the poems of the movement together in a brief space . . . They cover . . . such a wide variety of styles and subjects that the integrity of the category assumed . . . is threatened'" (34). Further, Norman Blake cautioned scholars against "creating an artificial corpus of 'classical' alliterative poems by dismissing as aberrations those that did not fit the category" (35). Elizabeth Salter noted that the "literary context