

The scansion of lines with *evere* and *nevere* in *Troilus and Criseyde*

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1. Introduction

The scansion of *evere* and *nevere* in Chaucer's verse poses certain problems which have not hitherto been resolved. In this study, I will concentrate on *Troilus Criseyde* (TC) and give my suggestion.

The Riverside Chaucer states:

Unstressed vowels next to certain consonants within words may also be slurred, so that *hevene*(1.59) has two syllables, *never*(1.734) has one.¹

This is, however, no mention of *evere* and *nevere* in TC and the assumption is that these two words have two syllables, the middle -e being slurred in *evere* and *nevere*.²

2. *Ever* and *evere*

Two examples of *ever* and 103 examples of *evere* appear in TC. First, I would like to consider *ever*. The scansion of the following line is regular.³

U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

But for al that that ever I may deserve (Book II 1153)

The next example is slightly different.

U ' U ' U ' U ' U' U

As to my dom, that ever saugh ruyne (Book IV 387)

The middle -e of *ever* is pronounced to scan this line properly in this case.

Second, I would like to turn to the more common *evere* and I have grouped them as follows. The first group is regular.

U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

And evere bet and bet shal, til I sterve. (Book III 714)

There are 58 examples of this type. The second group of 33 examples show that the final -e of evere is elided before a vowel and h.

U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

I! Who say evere a wis man faren so? (Book IV 1087)

U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

For I am evere agast, for why men rede (Book IV 1644)

The third group is irregular and presents scansion problems.

' U U ' U ' U ' U ' U

Body that evere myghte on grounde go (Book IV 304)

' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

Who sey evere or this so dul a man? (Book II 548)

U ' U ' U ' U ' U U ' U

To ben hire help in al that evere they myghten.

(Book II 1624)

The first and second examples are headless lines and the first example contains an anapest. In the third example, I read the foot as anapestic. The next examples are:

U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

For now is wors than evere yet I wende! (Book V 693)

U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

I jape nought, as evere have I joye!" (Book II 140)

U ' U ' U U ' U ' U

The observance evere, in youre absence, (Book IV 783)

The final -e is usually slurred before a vowel and h sound. But in the first two examples, I broke this rule and gave a weak accent on the final -e of evere in order to scan properly. It is worth mentioning that there are six instances of evere yet(yit) phrase. There is a caesura in the line 783, so I scanned this line with an anapest. I do not avoid 4 feet in this case. The last example is:

U ' U ' U ' U ' U U ' U

She wolde come as soone as evere she myghte (Book V 511)
Wolde is usually monosyllabic but here it is dissyllabic to maintain the regular prosody. In addition, this line is scanned with an anapest. The following summarizes my investigation into the irregular cases of *evere*.

Type	Line
Headless line	II 548
Headless line plus anapest	IV 304
Anapest	II 1624
Final -e is pronounced before a vowel and <i>h</i> sound	II 140, 240, 293, 995 III 1376 V 693, 760
Final -e is pronounced plus anapest	IV 783 V 511

3. *Never* and *nevere*

I would like to deal with *never* and *nevere*. There is one instance of *never*, while 150 instances of *nevere* appear. The sole example of *never* is:

U ' U ' U ' U ' U '

I loved never woman here-biforn (Book V 157)

The middle -e of *never* is pronounced to scan this line properly.

Next, I would like to deal with *nevere*. The first group is the regular meter.

U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

"And certes yow ne haten shal I *nevere*;

(Book V 1079)

My investigation showed that there are 87 instances of this type. The second group is that -e is elided before a vowel and *h* sound.

U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

"Thus seyde I *nevere* er now to woman born (Book V 155)

U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

I may naught slepe *nevere* a Mayes morwe; (Book II 1098)

There are 28 instances of this type. The third group is now

problematic. The example is shown below:

U ' U ' U ' U ' U U ' U

"To knowe of this, yee, were it nevere so life? (Book V 1290)

The anapest is used in the example. I do not avoid 6 feet in this case.

U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

That nevere yet agylte hym, that I wiste?" (Book III 840)

U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

Now wolde nevere god but thow were esed! (Book I 943)

U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U

Ye hadde nevere thing so lief!" quod she. (Book III 870)

In the first example, final -e is pronounced, though it is usually not. There are 16 instances and it is noteworthy to mention 12 instances of the *nevere yet(yit)* phrase. In the second and third examples, *wolde* and *hadde* are usually monosyllabic but here dissyllabic in order to maintain the regular prosody. The final examples are:

U ' U ' U ' U ' U U ' U

"Now, goode nece, be it nevere so lite, (Book II 1203)

' U ' U ' U ' U ' U U ' U

Were his nayles pointed nevere so sharpe, (Book II 1034)

' U ' U U ' U ' U ' U

Be she nevere so fair or wel yshape, (Book III 411)

U ' U ' U ' U U ' U U ' U

For she was wis, and loved hym nevere the lasse,

(Book III 86)

In the firsts example, a weak stress is considered missing after the caesura and plus I used the anapest. The second and the third ones are a combination of the headless and anapestic lines. The anapest is used twice in the final example. I would like to sum up my investigation into irregular cases of *nevere* in the box below.

Type	Line
Anapest	I 37, 613, 739

	II 59, 134, 143 III 86, 1564 V 448, 1290
Final -e is pronounced before a vowel and h sound	I 657, 812 II 193, 364, 444 831 III 319, 706, 840, 1054 1446, 1605 V 144, 992, 1383, 1628
From monosyllabic to dis- syllabic	I 907, 943 II 586 III 870 V 124, 1052
A weak stress is missing plus anapest	II 1203
Headless line plus anapest	II 1034 III 411

4. Final Remarks

I hope to have shown that the traditional views on scansion and indeed pronunciation of *ever* (e) and *never* (e) in *TC* have been challenged. From the above examples it is clear that Chaucer varied his scansion of these words according to the metrical requirements of a specific line and that their variation reflects his experimentation in metrics and his poetic expertise.

Notes

1. Larry D., Benson (gen. ed.) *The Riverside Chaucer. Based on The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Edited by F.N. Robinson.* 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988: xl.
2. Davies, R.T. *The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales.* London: Harrap, 1974: 125.
3. All the quotations are from *The Riverside Chaucer.*

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