THE
RHYTHMICAL INTENTION
IN WYATT'S POETRY[1]

IT is not always realized what an extraordinary psychological problem is suggested by the conviction of literary historians that the English post-Chaucerians lost the art of metrical writing and lapsed into a kind of prose chopped up into lines. Such a complete and sudden loss of a social skill would, if it had really occurred, have been a remarkable challenge to psychological explanation. Rather rapid changes took place in the language, it is true, and there were serious political disturbances during the fifteenth century, but something cataclysmic, linguistically and politically, would have been needed to make such a loss of skill reasonably understandable. What is more, the fifteenth century produced not only the non-metrical dissertative poems of Lydgate, Occleve, Hawes and Barclay, but also a line of lyrical and often regularly metrical verse in the form of carols, nursery rhymes and the songs of the vagantes. We are asked to suppose, then, that people had the 'ear' to enjoy such rhythms, and some could compose them, but that when the most devoted followers of Chaucer came to write they suffered an unaccountable lapse of metrical skill.

Wyatt's verse summarizes the problem. As Dr. Tillyard points out (*The Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, 1929), some of his work continues the tradition of the flowing, lyrical verse of the fifteenth century carols, but much of it shows what Tillyard calls 'unconscious roughnesses' derived from the manner of Hawes and Barclay. The views of literary critics on these features of Wyatt's verse have varied from time to time, but they have all been based on the assumption that his intention was to write the flowing, metrical verse which established itself as the standard for English poetry in the Elizabethan period.

Puttenham first formulated the assumption in saying that Surrey and Wyatt 'did greately polish our rude and homely manner of vulgar poesie from that it had been before, and for this cause may justly be sayd the first reformers of our English metre and style'. (*Arte of English Poesie*). Miss A. K. Foxwell some three hundred years later spoke of Wyatt as ' . . . the pioneer of our modern poetry. It was he who brought order out of chaos and re-established the line of five stresses . . .' (*A Study of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poems*, 1911). But there was always the unspoken proviso

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[1]The substance of a paper read to the Doughty Society, Downing College, November, 1945.

that his efforts were fumbling and that he often failed in the ordering and polishing for which he strove. So for a long time his editors, from Tottel to Quiller-Couch, cheerfully completed the polishing process and altered Wyatt's wording for the sake of metrical regularity and smoothness.

Miss Foxwell followed a different path. Her scrupulous editing was marked by irreconcilable hostility to the convenient distortions of Tottel and the rest, and the text she offers must be close to what Wyatt wrote. But as a critic she took over the familiar assumption that Wyatt aimed at metrical regularity. Instead of altering his words, in the manner of Tottel, she postulated systems of pronunciation, especially accentuation, and an amazing array of metrical rules and licences (supposed to have been derived from Pynson's Chaucer) which allowed her to believe that Wyatt was, in spite of all appearances, actually achieving a regular metre. She lists fifteen so-called rules of versification, thirteen of which (and many more if sub-divisions are included) are simply common practices in Wyatt's writing which are *not* capable of being fitted into a regular metrical scheme (*Study*, pp. 40-49). The natural conclusion is that he had no such regular scheme in mind. Foxwell's plan was to regard these practices as permitted deviations and to suppose that once you have called them this you can go on believing that he wrote metrically.

Some of the readings which result are extraordinary. In the following examples the first version indicates (with exaggerated pauses) what I take to be a rhythmical grouping of syllables in the line as Wyatt wrote it, the second is Tottel's metrical version, the third is Foxwell's proposed scansion (marked exactly as she indicates it in the *Study*) to make them, with a few 'licences', into iambic pentameters:

I   Ther was never ffile   half so well filed;
(Tottel)   Was never file yet half so well yfiled;
(Foxwell)   Ther was név | er ffíle | hálf | so wéll | filéd.

II   And the reward   little trust   for ever;
(Tottel)   And the reward is little trust for ever;
(Foxwell)   And thé rewárd littlé trust fór evér.

III   I served the   not to be forsaken;
(Tottel)   I served the not that I should be forsaken;
(Foxwell)   I sér | ved thé | not tó | be fór | sakén.

It has to be noticed that in spite of all the talk about Romance accentuation and the changing value of the final '-e' (where evidence can be adduced), there seems to be no philological evidence for the majority of the distorted accentuations offered by Foxwell. Their only support is the initial assumption that Wyatt wrote in regular metre. Hence completely arbitrary changes are suggested

in the pronunciation of the same word when it occurs in different poems, for no reason except that metrical regularity would require the change. For example, Foxwell says that in a line from Sonnet 2—

With his hardines taketh displeasur—

'hardines, l. 8, has the Romance accent on the second syllable'; but of Sonnet 15—

With sore repentaunce of his hardines—

she says 'hardines has modern accent here'. Again, she remarks (*Study*, p. 43) that 'ayn' (in words such as rayn and fayn) is 'often' dissyllabic; 'and plëasure *in one instance* [my italics] has three syllables'. This different accentuation in one passage and another has no shadow of support except the sheer assumption that regular metre was intended.

Moreover, many of the poems show perfectly smooth, regular rhythms when the words are pronounced in the modern way. Miss Foxwell believes (without satisfactory evidence, according to Sir Edmund Chambers) that these are later works, and therefore says (*Poems*, Vol. I, vi) 'His earlier poems, to be rightly understood, must be read with the earlier style of pronunciation, namely with the romance accents. His later poetry conforms to the modern style'. Once again the philological question of the pronunciation has been begged by the critical assumption that he must at all times have been trying to write in regular metre.

Miss Foxwell seems to stand alone in her conviction of Wyatt's metrical regularity. Saintsbury, writing before her *Study* appeared, saw no sign of it; nor does either Tillyard or Chambers writing more recently. The latter says of the translations and paraphrases, 'This division of Wyatt's work furnishes something of a puzzle. Much of it, especially in the sonnets, is stiff and difficult to scan; and even when full allowance has been made, both for Romance accentuation and for textual corruption, many lines can only be regarded as simply unmetrical . . . Attempts have been made to explain these derivative poems as prentice-work, in which Wyatt was fumbling his way to a comprehension of the pentameter, with the help of a text of Chaucer perverted by oblivion of the Chaucerian inflections. I cannot say that I find them plausible'. (*Sir Thomas Wyatt and some collected studies*, 1933). Tillyard simply notes the 'unconscious roughnesses' of some of Wyatt, in contrast to other effective and significant deviations from regular rhythm; he makes no attempt to defend them or explain them away and he regards them as a hangover from similar roughnesses in such fifteenth century poets as Hawes and Barclay.

In their view of Wyatt's metrical intention, these two recent opinions are close to that of Saintsbury who (*Cambridge History of English Literature*, III), after praising Wyatt and Surrey as those 'in whom the reformation of English verse first distinctly appears', goes on to say 'But . . . it is quite clear that even they still have

great difficulty in adjusting rhythm to pronunciation. They
"wrench accent" in the fashion which Gascoigne was to rebuke in
the next (almost the same) generation . . . '. And these modern
views are in a direct line of descent from Tottel. We no longer
alter Wyatt's words to make the line scan, and we see (as Tillyard
does for instance) the admirable effect achieved by some of his
'irregularities'. Basically, however, we assume that he did his
best to write metrically but marred his work with rather frequent
bungling.

It is this idea which, considered seriously, is so startling. Is
it really possible to believe that a writer who shows such exquisite
management of rhythm in some of his verse could have been
reduced by the mere difficulty of manipulating language to such
elementary failures of metrical writing as the critics think they see
in other parts of his work? The very notion that he progressed
slowly, with laborious practice, towards metre is unplausible.
Emphatic metrical schemes are among the earliest forms of com-
position, and both children and 'primitive' peoples master them
readily. It is true that exceptional polish of simple metres may
represent one form of literary sophistication, as in Dryden and
Pope, but advancing skill and command of language may equally
lead to increasing irregularity, as of course in Shakespeare. What-
ever chronology may ultimately be accepted for Wyatt's poems
it will not in itself prove that he wrote the irregular lines because
metre was too difficult to compass, because he had 'great difficulty
in adjusting rhythm to pronunciation'.

To my mind it is impossible to believe that Wyatt could not
quite easily have made his irregular lines regular had he wished.
Fifteen years after his death Tottel's *Miscellany* came out, with
very trivial and obvious changes which put the metre straight.
Can we believe that changes which came so easily to Tottel or his
hack had been impossibly difficult to a man like Wyatt fifteen or
twenty years earlier, or that Wyatt had failed to detect the missing
or redundant syllable or the reversed accent in the lines that
Tottel 'corrected'? In the poem from prison, 'Sighes ar my foode'
the first two lines run

> Sighes ar my foode : drinke are my teares
> Clynkinge of fetters suche musycke wolde crave :

Tottel changes the second to

> Clynkinge of fetters would such Musick crave.

Three lines further on Wyatt writes

> Rayne, wynde or wether I judge by myne eares

and Tottel changes this to

> Rayne, wynde or wether judge I by myne eares.

Would alterations of this kind have been beyond Wyatt's skill,
or the necessity for them beyond his perception?

Consider a most revealing change in the poem 'Alas madame for stelyng of a kysse'. Wyatt's fifth and sixth lines run

> Then revenge you : and the next way is this :
> An othr kysse shall have my lyffe endid.

Tottle alters the fifth line to

> Revenge you then, the rediest way is this.

But the revealing fact is that Wyatt's version was itself a revision—his own revision—of what he first wrote, and what he first wrote was just as regular as Tottel; it ran

> Revenge you then and sure ye shall not mysse
> To have my life with an othr ended.

In other words, Wyatt deliberately altered it from metrical regularity to what it now is.

It seems very probable that when Wyatt didn't write in regular metre it was because he didn't want to. If we take this view we are left with the question, What did he aim at in the so-called 'awkward' rhythms? How are we to read the lines? Where we have no fixed metrical scheme to guide us, it seems that the simplest alternative is to follow speech rhythms, and to group the words into rhythm units suggested partly by the sense and partly by convenience in forming the sounds of the words. The speech rhythm we adopt must be affected by anything we really know about pronunciation in Wyatt's time, but it ought not to be based on 'rules of pronunciation' derived from the assumption that he wrote in metre.

Before going further I have to say what I mean by a rhythm unit. The experience of rhythm is not the passive recording of some pattern of time intervals but an active process, the process of rhythmization. It is one kind of mental unifying activity : a number of impressions that would otherwise be merely a sequence can, if rhythmized, be perceived as an organized whole. It is perceived as a unit, distinguished from its background; and it has a structure or pattern, depending on the fact that the component impressions are differentiated within the rhythm unit, some standing out and others being subordinate. A simple example of rhythmization is the hearing of the regular and equal sounds of a clock as 'tick-tock'. This is subjective rhythmization. More usually the differentiation of one sound from another is brought about by objective differences—of loudness, duration, length of interval and so on. But what creates the differences is a subsidiary point : all that matters is that the component impressions of the rhythm unit are in fact perceived as different from one another, so that a pattern is apparent in the unit.

This unification of sensory impressions is independent of their having any meaning—of their 'standing for' or referring to anything outside themselves; a meaningless sequence of syllables can

be rhythmized. Further, the unification brought about by rhythm-
ization is, for conscious experience, immediate, and though
conscious activities (such as counting) may help to bring it about,
yet when it does occur it will appear as an 'immediate fact of
sensory apprehension' (R. MacDougall, *Psychological Monographs*,
IV, 17). It is well known that once rhythmization in a certain
pattern has been established it tends to recur in that pattern very
readily, but this fact is not essential in the definition of rhythm,
and it is important not to confuse rhythmization with the *repetition*
of a rhythm unit (as for example in metre).

The rhythm units in ordinary speech and prose are very varied
in structure, not regularly repeated, not emphasized strongly, and
not much attended to. When our attention is caught by a speech
rhythm it is generally in the form of a short phrase in which a
sense unit and a rhythm unit coincide, and often one in which
a well marked attitude or emotion is expressed; for instance, 'What
a day!', 'Believe it or not . . . ', 'Did you really?', 'You mark
my words . . . ' Slogans have the same characteristic.
Advertisers have also noticed that if the flow of prose is broken
and rhythm units given prominence by typographical devices, the
effect is to claim more attention for the rhythms and the way they
emphasize the sense. A series of advertisements for National
Savings in 1945 put their message in such forms as

> Never before
> in a few years
> have the people of Britain
> achieved so much.
> Never before
> etc.

Advertising of this kind was derived from the serious use
made of the same device by the writers of free verse, who employed
additional means of concentrating sense and feeling, such as the
omission of inessential words, the repetition of grammatical con-
structions and so on :

> The young today are born prisoners,
> poor things, and they know it.
> Born in a universal workhouse,
> and they feel it.
> Inheriting a sort of confinement,
> work, and prisoners' routine
> and prisoners' flat, ineffectual pastime.

(D. H. Lawrence, *Pansies*).

In one way and another, through serious and trivial experiments,
we are now familiar with the effects of heightened significance
that may be gained by emphasizing the rhythmical units which
underlie ordinary speech and prose.

Normally these units are kept flowing into one another and

losing their outlines.[1] The flow occurs, I think, through the fact
that certain words can readily form a rhythmical unit with either
the preceding or the following words, and they thus partly bridge
the pause between two smaller units. Consider a piece of Henry
James' prose, printed with an exaggerated indication of the just
perceptible pauses that seem to me to give the most natural grouping
of words for ordinary reading:

> 'The river—had always—for Hyacinth—a deep attraction.
> —The ambiguous appeal he had felt—as a child—in all the
> aspects of London—came back to him—from the dark detail of
> its banks—and the sordid—agitation of its bosom'. (*The Princess
> Casamassima*).

I have indicated what seems to me a natural grouping, but
other groupings are almost equally possible and to other readers
may seem preferable.

For example, instead of 'The ambiguous appeal he had felt—
as a child', we could read 'The ambiguous appeal—he had felt as
a child'. There are here two rhythmical nuclei—one 'The
ambiguous appeal', the other 'as a child'—and the phrase 'he had
felt' will attach itself with almost equal ease to either. Again,
in the quotation as I have given it, some of the larger groupings
are themselves made up of smaller rhythmical nuclei connected by
these floating words. Thus the phrase 'from the dark detail of
its banks' has the two nuclei 'from the dark' and 'of its banks',
and the word 'detail' can attach itself to either nucleus: 'from the
dark detail—of its banks' or 'from the dark—detail of its banks'.
In this way a kind of competition between one rhythmical unit
and another deprives both of any close attention or emphasis and
creates the fairly steady flow of prose, with pauses marking only
the main divisions of the sense.

In completely metrical verse there is equally a continuous
flowing from one rhythmical unit to the next; but because the
successive units have the same internal structure—the same num-
ber of syllables and pattern of accents—we still have the outline of
the rhythmical unit brought emphatically to our attention. Against
this suggested background of repeated identical units the writer
then introduces deviations for special effects. But his groundwork
is the continuous flow throughout the line, with only a slight pause
at the caesura.

Now a characteristic of free verse, and of many of Wyatt's
irregular rhythms, is that the rhythmical units will not flow
continuously from one to another. It is pausing verse instead of

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[1] I am grateful to Professor F. C. Bartlett for pointing out that in
an earlier paper (*British Journal of Psychology*, 1932) the account
I gave of rhythm units offered no explanation of the continuous
flow from one unit to another. The present notes are a belated
beginning at finding some explanation.

flowing verse. In free verse the pauses are largely secured by the typographical device of the line ending. In the verse of *Piers Plowman*, the pause-mark is used, besides the line ending. But these scribal and typographic devices are not always necessary, because sometimes the structure of the successive rhythmical units is itself enough to prevent any flowing of one into the other. A few lines from *Piers Plowman* will illustrate the point:

For hunger hiderward · hasteth hym faste,
He shal awake with water · wastoures to chaste.

In the first lines the pause-mark only emphasizes what might be the caesura in a flowing, metrical line. But the second line is divided by a complete pause, like a rest in music. In the next two lines of the poem also the pause-mark and the line ending divide rhythmical units that are not meant to flow together:

Ar fyve yere be fulfilled · suche famyn shal aryse,
Thorwgh flodes and thourgh foule wederes · frutes shal faille.

(Passus VI, 323-326).

If we try to make them flow continuously we are tripped up with surplus syllables or unexpected accents. Each separate section of the lines forms a satisfying rhythmical unit by itself, but because each is of different rhythmical structure there is no smooth flow either from one section of the line to the other or from one line to the next. It is verse that depends on a pause between successive rhythmical units.

This pausing verse has much in common with plainsong. The music complicates the question by sometimes giving an unnatural or exaggerated accentuation, but the main effect is similar: the words are divided up into rhythmical units of diverse structure which therefore have to be clearly separated from one another by a pause: 'As it was in the beginning—is now—and ever shall be'. The 'parallelism' adopted in the translation of the Psalms further reinforces the tradition of balanced but distinct units as a satisfactory mode of treating language. And, as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on plainsong points out, the absence of a regularly repeated rhythm allies plainsong 'with such things as sea-chanties, counting-out rhymes, and the like'.

Within this strong English tradition much of Wyatt's verse takes its place, with two (or possibly more) diverse rhythmical units included in one line. In much of his verse, of course, units of similar structure are brought together and then the line flows, becoming regular and metrical. But it seems evident that Wyatt had no conception that the pausing rhythm was in any way incorrect or unsatisfactory. It would not have been beyond his skill to turn it into flowing rhythm had he wished.

The first poem in Miss Foxwell's edition illustrates clearly the general plan of two balancing rhythmical units in a line, with a pause dividing them. It is particularly interesting on account

of the heavy punctuation in the manuscript (reproduced in facsimile)
which emphasizes the pauses between the rhythmical units:

> Behold, love, thy power how she despiseth:
> my great payne how little she regardeth:
> the holy oth, whereof she taketh no cure:
> broken she hath: and yet, she bideth sure,
> right at her ease: and litle she dredeth.
> Wepened thou art: and she unarmed sitteth:
> To the disdaynfull, her liff she ledeth:
> To me spitefull, withoute cause, or mesur.
> > Behold, love:

> I ame in hold: if pitie the meveth:
> Goo, bend thy bowe: that stony hertes breketh:
> And, with some stroke, revenge the displeasur
> of the, and him: that sorrowe doeth endur:
> And, as his lorde, the lowly, entreateth.
> > Behold, love.

Another poem (later, according to Miss Foxwell) is worth
quoting because although it has little intrinsic interest it shows how
readily Wyatt would introduce pausing lines in a poem where most
of the lines were flowing.

> Venemus thornes that ar so sharp and kene,
> Sometyme ber flowers fayre and fresh of hue:
> Poyson offtyme is put in medecene,
> And causith helth in man for to renue:
> Ffire that purgith allthing that is unclene,
> May hele and hurt: and if thes bene true,
> I trust sometyme my harme may be my helth:
> Syns evry wo is joynid with some welth.

In most of these lines the pause between the rhythmical units is
reduced to the caesura of flowing verse, but in lines 5 and 6 it
recovers its full value because the units it divides are too dissimilar
to flow together. Tottel's emendations are extended even to the
earlier lines so as to reduce still further the suggestion of two
separate units and to bring each line into an even more continuous
flow, giving minimal value to the caesura:

line 2   beur flowers we se full fresh and faire of hue

line 3   poison is also put in medecene

line 4   and unto man his helth doth oft renue

line 5   The fier that all thinges else consumeth clene

line 6   May hele and hurt: then if that this be true

I should say that in a case like this the difference between
Wyatt and Tottel is a complete difference in rhythmical principle.
It is not that Tottel established the metrical regularity after which
Wyatt was clumsily groping; it is not that he crudely ironed out
subtle variations that Wyatt had introduced into a metrical scheme;

and it is not that he misunderstood a system of pronunciation
which had once made the poems scan correctly. The difference
is that Tottel's generation had fully accepted the metrical principle
of the flowing line and had turned its back completely on the
pausing, balanced line.

Inevitably the versifiers of the new generation went too far
towards mechanical regularity, and a passage in *Henry IV, Part I*—
which has no doubt often been cited by students of prosody—
gives with effective illustration the contrast between the insipid
regularity of much early Elizabethan verse and on the other hand
the vigour of writing which allows its rhythmical units some of
the diversity of structure that marks both speech and pausing
verse. First comes Glendower's speech, a parody of Tottel
(including the syllabic '-ed' in line 3), and then Hotspur's explicit
criticism of it, in verse that finely exemplifies an alternative:

Glendower: I can speak English, lord, as well as you;
    For I was trained up at the English court;
    Where being but young, I framed to the harp
    Many an English ditty, lovely well,
    And gave the tongue a helpful ornament,—
    A virtue that was never seen in you.

Hotspur: Marry, and I'm glad of it with all my heart:
    I had rather be a kitten, and cry mew,
    Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers;
    I had rather hear a brazen canstick turn'd,
    Or a dry wheel grate on the axle-tree;
    And that would set my teeth nothing on edge,
    Nothing so much as mincing poetry:—
    Tis like the forced gait of a shuffling nag.

             (Act III, Sc. 1).

Wyatt comes at the turning point of the change in rhythmical
intention, and his writing includes both flowing and pausing lines.
It may be that he came to prefer the flowing line; only a reliable
chronology of his work could decide. Whatever the answer, there
seems to me little doubt that in many of his poems, early or late
(and probably both), he positively chose the pausing line composed
of dissimilar rhythmical units. Many difficulties no doubt remain,
even if we accept this view. (The Sonnets, for one thing, need
further explanation. Whether or not Wyatt fully understood the
principles of the Italian verse on which he modelled them, it looks
as if he was experimenting in most of them with lines of a fixed
number of syllables, with little regard for accent—as if the old
pausing verse was being complicated and spoilt by mechanical fixity
in the number of syllables). However, it seems to be a step forward
if we have something to put in place of the unplausible—I think
untenable—theory of an extraordinary loss of skill that put regular
metres beyond the reach of English writers from Chaucer's death
to Tottel's *Miscellany*.

In fact, of course, even the orthodox scholars have had their
doubts about this theory, even when they have helped to popularize
it. Saintsbury, who seems to have done most to establish the view
of fifteenth-century poets as writers of a barbarous pseudo-verse,
himself admits that the supposed facts present a puzzle which has
not been entirely explained. After referring to the futility of trying
'to get the verses of Lydgate, Occleve and the rest into any kind
of rhythmical system, satisfactory at once to calculation and
audition' (!), he goes on, 'And yet we know that almost all these
writers had Chaucer constantly before them and regarded him
with the highest admiration; and we know further, that his
followers in Scotland managed to imitate him with very considerable
precision. No real or full explanation of this singular decadence has
ever yet been given; probably none is possible'. (*Cambridge History
of English Literature*, III).

Most people would agree, given Saintsbury's premises. But
the insoluble problem exists only if we beg the real question and
assume with Saintsbury that it is simply a 'singular decadence'
that we have to explain. The alternative possibility is that these
poets were trying to do something different from Chaucer (or
from Skeat's reading of Chaucer). Saintsbury almost says that this
was so. He offers two partial explanations of the 'singular
decadence'. One is the familiar story of the syllabic final '-e' and
its obsolescence. The other, much more to the point, is that during
this period there was a widespread revival of alliterative-accentual
verse; verse which depended not on a flowing line but on rhythmical
units, divided if necessary by a pause. If we are rigidly committed,
as Saintsbury was, to a system of metrical scansion, with the iambic
pentameter as the chief criterion of rhythmical excellence, we are
bound to regard fifteenth century verse as a decadence and as
evidence of lost skill. But to the writers concerned it derived from
a long tradition of native verse, reinforced by the tradition of
liturgical chanting.

We may think that what they did was a failure. The varied
uses of the dissertative poems, as vehicles for sermons, political
discussions, scientific and medical dissertations, fiction and
narrative, encouraged a loss of interest in the rhythmical aspect
of writing and allowed it to become more and more prosy. At the
same time, the loss of rhythmical quality in fifteenth century
writers as a whole is not so extreme as one would gather from
critics like Saintsbury.

Some examples of what he calls doggerel are far from being
as futile, rhythmically, as he finds them, especially since they
occur in plays, where the variety of speech rhythm has special
claims. He quotes from Heywood's *Husband, Wife and Priest*:

> But by my soul   I never go to Sir John
> But I find him   like a holy man,
> For either   he is saying his devotion,
> Or else   he is going in procession,

where the effect seems to be of emphatic repudiation and a hasty mustering of evidence (I have again exaggerated the slight reading pauses). But Saintsbury says the first two lines are pseudo-octosyllabics, and then complains that 'the very next lines slide into pseudo-heroics'. Continuing with this obsessional prosody he gives from Bale's *Kyng Johan* an example of what he calls pseudo-alexandrines:

Monkes, chanons and nones   in divers colours and shape,
Both whyte, blacke, and pyed,   God send their increase yll
     happe.

The effectiveness of this vigorous writing depends on our accepting the principle of a pause or rest between rhythmical units. This is what Saintsbury particularly disliked, as giving what he called the 'broken-backed line'. He quotes an example from Hawes:

The minde of men   chaungeth as the mone,

which again, read naturally, has a satisfying rhythmical quality.

In the period that separates us from the time when Saintsbury was writing and forming his taste there have been the free verse movement and all its derivatives, the appearance of Hopkins' poems, a new appreciation of Donne, and Graves' insistence on the interest of Skelton's verse (which Saintsbury instanced as fifteenth century doggerel). By all these means, and no doubt others, we have been led away from the assumption that smoothly flowing metrical verse is the standard for all poetry. But in speaking of variations and licence and 'free' verse we have still been inclined to adopt a negative view of non-metrical verse—we have regarded it as a 'departure from' some established norm.

What I have been suggesting is that we have in the tradition of our language a positively different mode of rhythmical organization. Some of the most effective of the so-called 'deviations' from metrical norms might be better understood in terms of the other rhythmical principle. A possible instance comes from Henry King's 'Exequy'. The metrical framework consists in four iambic feet to a line:

Accept thou Shrine of my dead Saint,
Instead of Dirges this complaint.

But what do we gain by describing the following lines in terms of licences within or deviations from the metrical scheme?—

But heark! My pulse like a soft Drum
Beats my approach, tells *Thee* I come; . . .

Even from the prosodic point of view it seems that the lines could best be described in terms of rhythmical units rather than metrical feet.

At any rate I suggest that the non-metrical forms of verse, and the related modes of handling language, deserve a closer—

and still more a friendlier—study than they have received from
orthodox prosody. In any such study Wyatt's work should have
an important place. He was at home in both kinds of rhythmical
organization and came at a turning point when the flowing metrical
style gained a supreme place in English verse, but not such
exclusive control of it as some prosodists have thought.

D. W. HARDING.

GEORGE ELIOT (IV)

'DANIEL DERONDA' AND
'THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY'

IN no other of her works is the association of the strength with
the weakness so remarkable or so unfortunate as in *Daniel
Deronda*. It is so peculiarly unfortunate, not because the weak-
ness spoils the strength—the two stand apart, on a large scale, in
fairly neatly separable masses; but because the mass of fervid and
wordy unreality seems to have absorbed most of the attention the
book has ever had, and to be all that is remembered of it. That
this should be so shows, I think, how little George Eliot's acceptance
has rested upon a critical recognition of her real strength and
distinction, and how unfair to her, in effect, is the conventional
overvaluing of her early work. For if the nature of her real strength
and distinction had been appreciated for what it is, so magnificent
an achievement as the good half of *Daniel Deronda* could not have
failed to compel an admiration that would have established it, not
the less for the astonishing badness of the bad half, among the
great things in fiction.

It will be best to get the bad half out of the way first.
This can be quickly done, since the weakness doesn't require
any sustained attention, being of a kind that has already been
thoroughly discussed. It is represented by Deronda himself, and
by what may be called in general the Zionist inspiration[1] . . . In
these inspirations her intelligence and real moral insight are not
engaged. But she is otherwise wholly engaged—how wholly and
how significantly being brought further home to us when we note
that Deronda's racial mission finds itself identified with his love
for Mirah, so that he is eventually justified in the 'sweet irresistible
hopefulness that the best of human possibilities might befall him—
the blending of a complete personal love in one current with a
larger duty . . . '.

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[1]At this point a part of the essay as intended for publication in
book form has been omitted.