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ENCYCLOPEDIA OF POETRY AND POETICS

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place in serious literature), though there is major disagreement here. Castelvetro, Maggio, Chapelain, and d'Aubignac discriminate between ordinary and extraordinary verisimilitude. Rymer, and later—rather surprisingly—Johnson, take a conservative view with respect to this point, Dryden and Rapin take moderate positions, and Chapelain (who wants a more Christian poetry) a radical one.

It was on grounds of *vraisemblance* that the Academy censured *The Cid* of Corneille. Corneille and Racine accepted the principle of *vraisemblance* or verisimilitude quite genuinely, and the struggle in each of them between the abstracted rules and the pressures of their artistic habits and desires was, for both, fruitful.

Though the term has had much less use in the last two centuries, the idea, as a perennial and inescapable demand, persists in various, often implicit, forms: Wordsworth's turning to the common realities and the language of men, Coleridge's frequent appeals to "good sense," Arnold's "criticism of life," and the New Critics' concern for paradox, irony, "toughness" as giving an adequate, which is to say verisimilar, image of our experience.—R. M. Alden, "The Doctrine of Verisimilitude," *Matzke Memorial Volume* (1911); Bray; P. van Tieghem, *Petite histoire des grandes doctrines littéraires en France* (1946); Tuve, esp. chap. 9; B. Weinberg, *A Hist. of Lit. Crit. in the It. Renaissance* (2 v., 1961). P.R.

VERS. A kind of song in Old Prov., fundamentally indistinguishable from the *chanso* (q.v.). But v. was the older term, in use before the literature became rigidly formalized; consequently, it was used more loosely than *chanso*, sometimes designating poems on almost any subject, and not exclusively love poems. The v. is also apt to have shorter and less complicated stanzas, but more of them.—Jeanroy, II. F.M.C.

VERS DE SOCIÉTÉ. See LIGHT VERSE.

VERS LIBRE. Rhymed, syllabic verse, mainly the product of the Middle Ages, was not to remain long unchallenged: the *versi sciolti* (q.v.) of the It. Renaissance, prosodic experiments by Antoine de Baïf, alternations of verse lengths in La Fontaine begin a loosening which is climaxed by the v.l. of 19th-c. France. Whitman's free verse may have served as model, but the form appears in the *Illuminations* (1873?) of Rimbaud, who was probably unaware of the *Leaves of Grass* (1855) which, anyhow, seem closer to the *verset* (q.v.) than to v.l. The two v.l. poems of Rimbaud were first printed in the review *La Vogue* in 1886. Gustave Kahn, the editor, published his own v.l. there shortly afterwards, and haughtily insisted that he was nowise influenced by Rimbaud, to whose v.l. he, moreover, denied that appellation. About this time Jules Laforgue, Kahn's friend, produced his—infinitely superior—v.l., to be followed (it would seem) by that of Jean Moréas. These men have claimed, or been credited with, inventing the form; but it is fairer to say the form invented itself through them, the tyrannical strictures of Fr. versification eliciting a strong, if gradual, reaction—first in poetic prose, then prose poem (q.v.), then *vers libéré*, and finally v.l. This last can be defined as verse in which neither syllable nor metrical rules obtain, and only rhythm matters. Though rhyme (as opposed to most Eng. free verse) may persist, the traditional Fr. regulations for caesura, hiatus, counting of mute *e*'s, etc., are ignored. Consecutive lines may vary greatly in length, or may not, and the only unity generally maintained is one of sense or syntax.

The key problem is rhythm: how can it be defined—or at least demonstrated—in v.l., so as to justify the form's claim to poetic status? According to Herbert Read (following Professor Sonnenschein), we have in v.l. the substitution of the "element of proportion . . . for the element of regularity." Edouard Dujardin, himself an early *verslibriste*, sees it as "a form able to rhythmify or derhythmify itself instantaneously," and so suited to changes of mood in longer, particularly dramatic, poems. Professor V. Černý views v.l. as the spontaneous expression of inner rhythm, fighting "against formalism and, implicitly, for the self-assertion of poetic content" (a characteristically leftist position). One could adduce numerous further descriptions from scholars or practitioners, but it may be safely asserted that v.l. defies precise definition. Whatever is put on paper as free verse and moves us as poetry is v.l.: the rhythm may be simply a question of emotional and intellectual response.

Among other early *verslibristes* should be mentioned Viele-Griffin, Henri de Régnier, Maeterlinck, and Verhaeren (the first half-Am., the last two Belgians). The movement spread to other countries. It was imported into Italy both by the futurists and the post-symbolist Gabriele d'Annunzio in his plays. In Spain, the "Generation of '98" produced some admirable v.l., especially, perhaps, Juan Ramón Jiménez. The so-called *freien Rhythmen* of Germany go back to Klopstock and the 18th c., and come down through Goethe, Hölderlin, and others; but they have been especially popular in the modern period. Rilke's *Duino Elegies* and the lyrics and dramas of expressionism are the best-known examples. There is probably no occidental literature now without its variety of v.l. The theatre has proved

especially receptive to the flexible but effective form. It has also been used frequently in poetry of spiritual (e.g., Francis Jammes, P.-J. Jouve) or socio-political (e.g., V. Mayakovsky, Bert Brecht) exaltation. At present v.l. is a vigorous and developing form. A recent innovation (E. E. Cummings) has been the shift of the line breaks away from the natural speech rests, creating an effect of syncopation. See also FREE VERSE.

G. Kahn, "Preface," *Premiers poèmes* (1897); C. C. Clarke, *Concerning Fr. Verse* (1922; last ch.); M. M. Dondo, *V.L., a Logical Development of Fr. Verse* (1922); J. Hytier, *Les Techniques modernes du vers français* (1923); E. Dujardin, "Les premiers poètes du v.l.," *Mallarmé par un des siens* (1936); H. Morier, *Le Rythme du v.l. symboliste* (3 v., 1944); A. Closs, *Die freien Rhythmen in der deutschen Lyrik* (1947); P. M. Jones, *The Background to Modern Fr. Poetry* (1951; part two, best introd. to the subject); W. Ramsey, *Jules Laforgue and the Ironic Inheritance* (1953; ch. 9); V. Černý, *Verhaeren a jeho misto v dejinach volného verše* (Prague, 1955; the Communist view). J.S.

VERSE AND PROSE. Words are used (1) for ordinary speech, (2) for discursive or logical thought, and (3) for literature.

Discursive language makes statements of fact, is judged by standards of truth and falsehood, and is in the form of prose. Literature makes no real statements of fact, proceeds hypothetically, and is judged by its imaginative consistency. Literature includes a great deal which is written in some form of regular recurrence, whether meter, accent, vowel quantity, rhyme, alliteration, parallelism, or any combination of these, and which we may call verse. All verse is literary, and philosophical or historical works written in verse are almost invariably classified as literature. We can exclude them from literature only by some kind of value-judgement, not by a categorical judgement, and to introduce value-judgements before we understand what our categories are is only to invite confusion. But although verse seems to be in some central and peculiar way the typical language of literature, all literature is not verse. The question thus arises: what is the status of literary prose? The best way to distinguish literary from nonliterary prose is by what we may call, cautiously and tentatively, its intention. If it is intended to describe and represent facts and to be judged by its truth, it normally belongs in some nonliterary category; if it is to be judged primarily by its imaginative consistency, it normally belongs to literature. We say *normally*, because it is quite possible to look at some works, such as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, from either point of view.

A subordinate problem also arises in passing: what is the meaning of the word poetry? Aristotle remarked in the *Poetics* that meter was not the distinguishing feature of "poetry." But Aristotle also remarked that the work of literary art as such, whether poem or play or essay, is "to this day without a name," and to *this* day, 2,500 years later, the statement is still true. The word "poetry" has always meant primarily "composition in meter," so that while *Tom Jones*, for instance, is certainly a work of literature, nobody would call it a poem.

The first point to get clear about prose is that the language of ordinary speech is not prose, or at least is prose only to the extent that it is not verse. Ordinary speech, especially colloquial or vulgar speech, is a discontinuous, repetitive, heavily accented rhetoric which is as readily distinguishable from prose as it is from regular meter. Any fiction writer who is a close observer of common speech will show in his dialogue a markedly different rhythm from what he himself uses in narration or description. Prose is ordinary speech on its best behavior: it is the conventionalization of speech that is made by the educated or articulate person when he is trying to assimilate his speech to the patterns of discursive thought. Anyone listening to the asyntactic prolixity of uneducated speech, or to the chanting or whining of children, can see that regular meter is in fact a much simpler way of stylizing ordinary speech than prose is, which explains why prose is normally a late and sophisticated development in the history of a literature.

There are, then, at least two ways of conventionalizing ordinary speech: the simple and primitive way of regularly recurring meter, and the more intellectualized way of developing a consistent and logical sentence structure. When recurrent rhythm takes the lead and the sentence structure is subordinated to it, we have verse. When the sentence structure takes the lead and all patterns of repetition are subordinated to it and become irregular, we have prose. Literary prose results from the imitation for literary purposes of the language of discursive thought. Of all the differentia between prose and verse, the only essential one is this difference of rhythm. Verse is able to absorb a much higher concentration of metaphorical and figurative speech than prose, but this difference is one of degree; the difference in rhythm which makes the higher concentration possible is a difference of kind.

This division between prose and verse is however complicated by the various forms of "free verse," which are unmistakably literary and yet are not in meter or any other form of regular recurrence. The naive assumption that any poetry not in some recognizable recurrent pattern must really be prose clearly will not do, and we have to assume the existence of a third type of conventionalized utterance. This third type has a peculiar relation to ordinary speech, or at least to soliloquy and inner speech. We may call it an oracular or associational rhythm, the unit of which is neither the prose sentence nor the metrical line, but a kind of thought-breath or phrase. Associational rhythm predominates in free verse and in certain types of literary prose, such as "stream of consciousness" prose.

A historical treatment of this threefold division of verbal rhythm—discursive, metrical, and associational—would require an encyclopaedia in itself. It will be best if we proceed inductively, confining our examples to the single language of Eng., and look at some of the literary phenomena which may be explained by it. Each of the three rhythms, in literature, may exist in a relatively pure state or in combination with either of its neighbors.

Varieties of Prose Rhythm. Prose, we have said, is typically either the language of discursive thought or an imitation of that language for literary purposes. In pure prose the logical or descriptive features are at a maximum, and the stylistic, or rhetorical, features at a minimum. The rhythm of the sentence predominates; all repetition, whether of sound or rhythm, is eliminated as far as possible, and recurring rhetorical devices, or tricks of style, are noticed only with irritation. The aim is to present a certain content or meaning in as unobtrusive and transparent a way as possible. When prose is like this it is at the furthest possible remove from metrical or associative influences. Pure prose has two chief types of rhythm: the more informal and colloquial type which represents the rhythm of educated speech transferred to the printed page, and the more formal type which is thought of from the beginning as something to be read in a book. Let us take a passage from Darwin's *Origin of Species*: "The great and inherited development of the udders in cows and goats in countries where they are habitually milked, in comparison with these organs in other countries, is probably another instance of the effects of use. Not one of our domestic animals can be named which has not in some country drooping ears; and the view which has been suggested that the drooping is due to the disuse of the muscles of the ear, from the animals being seldom much alarmed, seems probable." This passage plainly does not lack either rhythm or readability; there is certainly a literary pleasure in reading it. The pleasure however is in seeing prose expertly used for its own descriptive purposes, and from our confidence that such alliteration as "the drooping is due to the disuse" is purely accidental. Let us compare Darwin's prose with a passage from Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

"The mystic sacrifices were performed, during three nights, on the banks of the Tiber; and the Campus Martius resounded with music and dances, and was illuminated with innumerable lamps and torches. . . . A chorus of twenty-seven youths, and as many virgins, of noble families, and whose parents were both alive, implored the propitious gods in favour of the present, and for the hope of the rising generation; requesting in religious hymns, that, according to the faith of their ancient oracles, they would still maintain the virtue, the felicity, and the empire of the Roman people." Here, along with the information given about the secular games of Philip, we are aware of certain tricks of style, such as antithetical balance and doubled adjectives. If we are intent only on the history, the tricks of style obstruct our path. But we notice that a specifically literary intention is visible in Gibbon beside the descriptive one. He is suggesting a *meditative* interest in the decline of Rome, and for this meditative interest a certain formal symmetry in the style is appropriate.

We notice also that the more obtrusive stylizing of Gibbon's prose makes it more oratorical, a quality of deliberate rhetoric being present. Another step would take us all the way into oratorical prose, where the formalized style is of equal importance with the subject matter. This is the normal area of all great oratory, as from Cicero down to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and Churchill's 1940 speeches, the most memorable passages of oratory have usually been passages of formal repetition. Samuel Johnson's letter to Chesterfield provides similar examples:

"The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it." With the increase of the rhetorical or symmetrical element in the style, the prose is taking on an increasingly *metrical* quality, and is moving closer to verse. This metrical quality is strongly marked in Ciceronian prose, in the long formal sentences broken in two by an "and" out of which the 17th-c. character books are constructed, in the deliberately symmetrical arrangements of phrases and clauses in Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial* and Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying*.

A slight exaggeration of this metrical element would take us into the area of euphuism, which is a deliberate attempt to give to prose the rhetorical features of verse, including rhyme and alliteration as well as metrical balance. Here is a sentence from Robert Greene's euphuistic romance *The Carde of Fancie*: "This loathsome lyfe of *Guydonius*, was such a cutting corasive to his Fathers carefull conscience, and such a haplesse clogge to his heavie heart, that no joye could make him injoye any joye, no mirth could make him merrie, no prosperitie could make him pleasant, but abandoning all delight, and avoyding all companie, he spent his dolefull dayes in dumpes and dolours, which he uttered in these words." Here we are almost as far away as we can get from anything that we now think of as prose: the predominating rhythm is still the sentence, but the writer has done everything that a descriptive prose writer would try to avoid. Euphuism is of course an intensely rhetorical form of prose: one would expect to find it in sermons, where it has been prominent from Anglo-Saxon times; and in euphuist stories the writer strives for situations where the characters may write letters, lament, or harangue. We notice that the sentence quoted above leads up to a harangue.

Now let us return to the type of pure prose that is more informal and colloquial, designed to suggest good talk rather than good exposition, of which perhaps the greatest practitioner is Montaigne. Let us take a passage from one of Bernard Shaw's Prefaces:

"After all, what man is capable of the insane self-conceit of believing that an eternity of himself would be tolerable even to himself? Those who try to believe it postulate that they shall be made perfect first. But if you make me perfect I shall no longer be myself, nor will it be possible for me to conceive my present imperfections (and what I cannot conceive I cannot remember); so that you may just as well give me a new name and face the fact that I am a new person and that the old Bernard Shaw is as dead as mutton." As compared with the Darwin passage, there is here some influence of an associational rhythm: we can see the easy use of parenthesis, the imaginary conversation with the reader, and similar signs of the associative process of speech. But everything here is on an impersonal plane, the conscious mind and logical argument being assumed to be in charge. Continuous prose, or writing with a logical shape, assumes an equality between writer and reader. The writer buttonholes his reader, so to speak, when he talks to him continuously. If he wishes to suggest aloofness or some barrier against his reader, or if he simply wishes to suggest that there are greater reserves in his mind than he is ready to display all at once, he would naturally turn to a more discontinuous form.

We find such a form in the series of aphorisms of which many prose works, such as books of recorded table talk, are constructed. Philosophers in particular seem to be fond of it: Pascal, Bacon, Spinoza, Wittgenstein, Nietzsche are a few random examples. The aphorism is oracular: it suggests that one should stop and ponder on it. Like oratorical prose, it suggests meditation, but the reader is being directed into the writer's mind instead of outward to the subject. In such discontinuous and aphoristic prose the associational rhythm can be clearly heard. Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* provide examples, especially in those passages cast in the form of prayer, where the reader is not being directly addressed: ". . . thou callest *Gennezareth*, which was but a Lake, and not *salt*, a *Sea*; so thou callest the *Mediterranean Sea*, still the *great Sea*, because the *inhabitants* saw no other *Sea*; they that dwelt there, thought a *Lake*, a *Sea*, and the others thought a *little Sea*, the *greatest*, and wee that know not the *afflictions* of others, call our owne the heaviest."

A step further in this direction takes us toward the oracular and associational prose poem of which Ossian is the best known Eng. example, though there is so little intellectual or logical interest in Ossian that there is not much sense of prose left. Eng. does not provide as clear examples of the aphoristic prose poem as German has in Nietzsche's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* or as Fr. has in Rimbaud's *Saison en Enfer*. But it is clear that in the opening of Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* prose is being as strongly influenced by an associational rhythm as it can well be and still remain prose: "It is Spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobblestreets silent and the hunched, courters'-and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea."

Varieties of Verse Rhythm. This subject really belongs to PROSODY, but a few additional suggestions may find a place here. In Eng. such forms as the stopped heroic couplet and the octosyllabic couplet represent the rhythm of metrical verse at its purest, equidistant from prose and from the associational rhythm. The following passage from Pope is typical:

Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus'd;
Still by himself abus'd, or disabus'd;
Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of Truth, in endless Error hurl'd:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

The one recurrent sound is the rhyme; assonance and alliteration are kept to a minimum, and even the sentence structure tends to fall into the suggested metrical unit; hence the inevitable and unforced use of antithesis and the regular fall of the caesura. In Dryden and Pope, in the octosyllabics of Marvell, in the simple quatrains of Housman, where a strictly controlled meter makes the words step along in a precise and disciplined order, the predominant sense is one of conscious wit. This sense arises from the technical dexterity displayed in neutralizing prose sense with associative sound, on approximately equal terms.

In blank verse, so easy to write accurately and so hard to write well, we move much further in the direction of prose. For in blank verse there is little place for the metrical absorption of the sentence structure: a long series of blank-verse lines in which the sentence structure closely followed the iambic pentameter would produce intolerable singsong. Hence blank verse tends to develop syncopation and run-on lines, and as it does so a second prose rhythm is set up beside the metrical one. This process may continue until the pentameter approximates prose. The following passage from Browning's *Ring and the Book* has been chosen as less extreme in its approximation than many that might have been selected:

So
Did I stand question, and make answer, still
With the same result of smiling disbelief,
Polite impossibility of faith
In such affected virtue in a priest;
But a showing fair play, an indulgence, even,
To one no worse than others after all—
Who had not brought disgrace to the order, played
Discreetly, ruffled gown nor ripped the cloth
In a bungling game at romps . . .

In such discursive or narrative blank verse as the above the listener hardly hears a definite pentameter at all: what he hears is a rhythm that seems just on the point of becoming prose, but is prevented from achieving the distinctively semantic rhythm of prose by some other rhythmical influence. The rhythm of Jacobean blank-verse drama has its center of gravity somewhere between verse and prose, so that it can move easily from one to the other at the requirements of dramatic decorum, which are chiefly the mood and the social rank of the speaker. In *The Tempest,* especially the speeches of Caliban, and in some late plays of Webster and Tourneur, the barrier between verse and prose often comes near dissolving, and hence the third associational rhythm peeps through, as in this passage from *The Tempest:*

I will stand to, and feed,
Although my last: no matter, since I feel
The best is past. Brother, my lord the Duke,
Stand to, and do as we.

A strong bias toward a prose sentence structure combined with a more elaborate rhyming scheme often produces the kind of intentional doggerel that is a regular feature of satire, as in *Hudibras* or *Don Juan*, or in Ogden Nash today. Wordsworth, who stressed the identity of language between verse and prose, sometimes had trouble in keeping the simple flat sentences in the *Lyrical Ballads* from sounding like doggerel. One of Donne's Satire (the fourth) opens as follows:

Well; I may now receive, and die; My sinne
Indeed is great, but I have beene in
A Purgatorie, such as fear'd hell is
A recreation to, and scarse map of this.

Nobody hearing these lines read aloud would realize that they were pentameter couplets: the whole metrical scheme is parody, and as such it fits the satirical context.

In relation to prose, associational writing shows itself chiefly in a change of direction in meaning, away from the logical and toward the emotional and private. In relation to verse, it shows its influence chiefly in an increase in sound patterns. We notice this particularly in stanzaic verse, for the natural tendency of the stanza is to develop elaborate rhyming patterns, often supported by alliteration, assonance, and similar devices. Words tend to echo each other, and an evocative rhythm is superimposed on the metrical one, as in this lovely madrigal from *The Faerie Queene:*

Wrath, gealosie, griefe, loue do thus expell:
  Wrath is a fire, and gealosie a weede,
  Griefe is a flood, and loue a monster fell;
  The fire of sparkes, the weede of little seede,
  The flood of drops, the Monster filth did breede:
  But sparks, seed, drops, and filth do thus delay;
  The sparks soone quench, the springing seed outweed,
  The drops dry vp, and filth wipe cleane away:
So shall wrath, gealosie, griefe, loue dye and decay.

A further step in this direction would make the sound-patterns obsessive, as happens occasionally, by way of experiment, in *The Faerie Queene* itself. Edgar Allan Poe, who made the discontinuity and the evocative effect of verse his "poetic principle," shows in such experiments in sound as *The Bells* and in such lines as the famous "The viol, the violet and the vine" the permeation of meter by associative sound. In Hopkins a similar unifying of metrical and associative rhythms takes place, but in a much more intellectualized context:

'Some find me a sword; some
The flange and the rail; flame
Fang, or flood' goes Death on drum,
And storms bugle his fame.
But we dream we are rooted in earth—Dust!
Flesh falls within sight of us, we, though our flower the same,
Wave with the meadow, forget that there must
The sour scythe cringe, and the blear share come.

This passage illustrates another important principle. As associational patterns increase, and as alliteration and assonance appear beside rhyme, a more vigorous rhythm than a strict meter may be required to prevent the poem from becoming a soggy mass of echolalia. The rhythm in the Hopkins passage is accentual rather than metrical: like the rhythm of music, which it closely resembles, it sets up a series of accented beats, with a good deal of variety in the number of syllables that may intervene between beats. The sixth line of the above passage begins with an accentual spondee, though the prevailing rhythm of the line is anapestic. This accentual rhythm, usually with four main beats to a line, has run through Eng. from Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse to our own day, and often syncopates against the metrical rhythm. Thus "Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote," "To be or not to be, that is the question," and "Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit" are all iambic pentameter lines with four accented beats.

VARIETIES OF ASSOCIATIONAL RHYTHM. It is only in the more experimental writing of the last century or so, with its strongly psychological bias and its interest in the processes of creation, that any serious attempts have been made to isolate the associational rhythm in literature. Owing to this late development, its earlier manifestations have fallen within the normal categories of prose and metrical verse.

The associational rhythm has always been a feature of oracular writing, as in the Koran and in many parts of the Bible, as well as a regular literary device for expressing insanity, as in some of the Tom o' Bedlam speeches in *King Lear.* These uses are solemn or tragic, yet associative rhythms and mental processes have also a close connection with the comic, and, in the form of puns and malapropisms, have been one of the chief sources of humor. The conscious wit that was mentioned as an effect of expertly handled meter is quite distinct from associational wit, which results rather from an involuntary release from the subconscious. The most striking examples of associational rhythm at its purest before our own day are dramatic attempts to render the speech of uneducated or confused people who make no effort to organize their language into prose, such as Mistress Quickly in Shakespeare or Jingle and Mrs. Nickleby in Dickens. This curious duality of the oracular and the comic is peculiar to associational rhythm, and has been illustrated in passages quoted above.

Rabelais is the great progenitor of associational prose, especially in passages depicting drunkenness or other oracular states of mind, as in the fifth chapter of *Gargantua.* But of course in Eng. the tradition of associational prose writing was established by Sterne. Almost any page of Sterne, notably the famous opening page of the *Sentimental Journey*, illustrates the lightning changes of mood and rhythm and the dislocation of the ordinary logic of narrative or thought that are characteristic of associative style. Modern "stream of consciousness" writing is heavily indebted to Sterne. In such passages as this from *Ulysses* we can see the predominance of what we have called the "thought-breath" rhythm of association as distinct from the poetic line and the prose sentence: "Confession. Everyone wants to. Then I will tell you all. Penance. Punish me, please. Great weapon in their hands. More than doctor or solicitor. Woman dying to. And I schschschschschsch. And did you chachachachacha? And why did you? Look down at her ring to find an excuse. Whispering gallery walls have ears. Husband learn to his surprise. God's little joke. Then out she comes. Repentance skindeep. Lovely shame. Pray at an altar. Hail Mary and Holy Mary." The speed of this is andante and the monologue of Molly Bloom at the end of the book presto, but the rhythmical units are the same.

Associational prose develops in two directions, which may be called the disjunctive and the conjunctive. In disjunctive writing, as illustrated most typically by Gertrude Stein, and also found in Hemingway, Faulkner, and D. H. Lawrence, there is a technique of deliberate prolixity, a hypnotic repetition of words and ideas. In dialogue this may express simple inarticulateness or fumbling for meaning: in short, the original naive speech out of which associational writing grows. In more sophisticated contexts it expresses rather a breaking down of the more customary logical prose structures preparatory to replacing them with the psychological and emotional structures of associational prose. In conjunctive writing the aim is the reverse: to pack into the words as great a concentration of association as possible, whether of allusion, of sound (as in punning or paronomasia), or of ideas. The logical culmination of this process is *Finnegans Wake*, where the dream language used shows the influence of Freud's demonstrations of the incredible associative complexity of states of mind below consciousness.

In verse, associational rhythm very seldom predominates over meter before Whitman's time: about the only clear examples are poems written in abnormal states of mind, such as Christopher Smart's *Jubilate Agno*. Whitman's own rhythm shows many formalizing influences, such as that of biblical parallelism, and the relation to prose is also often close. But in Whitman's oracular lines, with a strong pause at the end of each and with no regular metrical pattern connecting them, the distinctive associational rhythm has been fully emancipated. Whitman's natural tendency is disjunctive, and in some later free verse, especially in imagism (q.v.), this tendency is developed. Thus Amy Lowell:

Lilacs,
False blue,
White,
Purple,
Color of lilac,
Heart-leaves of lilac all over New England,
Roots of lilac under all the soil of New England,
Lilac in me because I am New England . . .

But the prevailing tendency in modern associational verse is conjunctive or evocative, as it is in the erudite literary allusiveness of Eliot and Pound, in the catachresis (q.v.) metaphors of Hart Crane and Dylan Thomas, or in the symbolic clusters of the later Yeats.

In pure prose, where the emphasis is on descriptive meaning, figures of speech are used sparingly, an occasional illustration or analogy being normally the only figuration employed. The more rhetorical the prose, the more naturally figurative the style becomes. In Jeremy Taylor, for instance, there appear elaborately drawn-out similes, and in euphuism similes from natural history (or what then passed as such) are a regularly recurring feature. Verse also, when it steers its middle course between prose and associational rhythm, often finds its figurative center of gravity in the illustrative simile, so prominent in the classical epic. But in verse, words are associated for sound as well as sense, rhyme being as important as reason, and the more intensified the sound patterns are, the greater the opportunities for puns and similar verbal echoes. Associational writing, when conjunctive, tends to violently juxtaposed metaphor and to a thick figurative texture.

S. Lanier, *The Science of Eng. Verse* (1880); T. S. Omond, *A Study of Metre* (1903) and *Eng. Metrists* (1921); G. Saintsbury, *A Hist. of Eng. Prosody* (3 v., 1906–10) and *A Hist. of Eng. Prose Rhythm* (1912); Schipper; L. Abercrombie, *Poetry and Contemporary Speech* (1914; Eng. Assoc. pamphlet no. 14); Baum; D. L. Clark, *Rhetoric and Poetry in the Renaissance* (1922); C. P. Smith, *Pattern and Variation in Poetry* (1932); O. Barfield, *Poetic Diction* (2d ed., 1952); M. Boulton, *Anatomy of Poetry* (1953) and *Anatomy of Prose* (1954); J. Thompson, *The Founding of Eng. Metre* (1961). N.FR.

VERSE DRAMA. See DRAMATIC POETRY.

VERSE PARAGRAPH. Like prose, poetry tends to move forward in units which may be called, by analogy, v. paragraphs. The tendency is particularly strong in narrative and descriptive poetry, where the paragraphs are often indicated by indentation or spacing between lines. Elaborate stanzaic forms like the Spenserian stanza or ottava rima are often developed as v. paragraphs, and in inferior poetry the result is usually monotonous. If a paragraph is defined as one or more sentences unified by a dominant mood or thought, many lyrics could be described as single v. paragraphs, a point especially obvious in the case of the sonnet.

By general consent, the greatest master of the v. paragraph is John Milton. Many of the characteristic effects of *Paradise Lost*—its majesty, its epic sweep, its rich counterpoint of line and sentence rhythms—are produced or enhanced by Milton's v. paragraphs. To sustain his paragraphs Milton employed enjambment ("the sense variously drawn out from one Verse into another"), interruption, inversion, and suspension, or *Spannung*, the device of the periodic sentence whereby the completion of the thought is delayed until the end of the period.—G. Hübner, *Die stilistische Spannung in Milton's P.L.* (1913); E. Smith, *The Principles of Eng. Metre* (1923); J. H. Hanford, *Milton Handbook* (4th ed., 1946); J. Whaler, *Counterpoint and Symbol: An Inquiry into . . . Milton's . . . Style* (1956).

VERSET. A form derived from the "verses" of the Bible (especially The Song of Songs, Psalms, Prophets). Its earliest application, accordingly, is in religious or mystical works of biblical inspiration, like the 15th-c. *Imitations of Christ* (Thomas à Kempis?). More recently, the form appears in parts of Hölderlin's *Hyperion* (1797–99) and throughout two apocalyptic works: *The Books of Polish Pilgrimage* by Adam Mickiewicz and its immediate offshoot, Lamennais' *Paroles d'un croyant* (1834). The charismatic character of both books stems largely from the v.: the long line—actually perhaps several lines of print—is a powerful, rhythmic verbal surge corresponding roughly to one outpouring of breath from full lungs. Alliteration and assonance, possibly rhyme, anaphora and other types of repetition, rhetorical figures like antithesis, parallelism etc., bolster the *verset's* aural and emotional suasion. Inasmuch as maximum freedom (this side of the prose poem, q.v.) is allowed in the number of words per unit, an exciting oscillation obtains between vers libre and poetic prose, depending on the greater or lesser symmetry in a sequence of *versets*.

The fervor of the v. is usually religious or patriotic—Péguy, Claudel; or the (not altogether different) opposite—Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra;* it can accommodate also the pure passions of Paul Fort (*Ballades françaises*) and the cloudier ones of St.-John Perse. It has found favor with the inward-echoing receptivity of impressionism (e.g. Max Dauthendey), as with the intensified expansiveness of expressionism (Werfel, Ernst Stadler). The poetic drama made excellent use of the v.: Claudel and Péguy again, and expressionists like Walter Hasenclever (*Der Sohn*). Here its rousing quality can prove most felicitous.

P. Fort, "Préface," *Le Roman de Louis XI* (1898); L. Spitzer, "Zu Charles Péguys Stil," *Stilstudien* (2 v., 1928); P. Claudel, "Réflexions et propositions sur le vers français," *Positions et propositions* (2 v., 1928); E. Dujardin, "Les premiers poètes du vers libre," *Mallarmé par un des siens* (1936); W. Weintraub, "A Gospel for the Refugees," *The Poetry of Adam Mickiewicz* (2 v., 1954); F. Martini, "Also sprach Zarathustra," *Das Wagnis der Sprache* (2d ed., 1956). J.S.

VERSI SCIOLTI. Also, *endecasillabi sciolti*. Hendecasyllabic lines with principal accent on the tenth syllable and without rhyme. They were used as early as the 13th c. (in the *Mare amoroso*, but were first cultivated during the Renaissance as the It. equivalent of classical epic hexameter. Trissino used them in his epic *Italia liberata dai goti*, and his tragedy *Sofonisba*. Despite his lack of success a controversy arose between the advocates of classical austerity and the advocates of rhyme. In the 16th c. rhyme won the day, but in the 18th c. and thereafter, v.s. were used with great success, particularly by Parini (*Il Giorno*), Foscolo (*I Sepolcri*), and Manzoni (*Urania*). Alfieri almost singlehanded made them the standard meter for tragedy. More recently the dramatist Sem Benelli used them in several dramas, and Pascoli adopted them for all but the last of his *Poemi conviviali*. *Endecasillabi sciolti* are equivalent to blank verse (q.v.) and may have influenced the development of that form in Eng.—F. Flamini, *Notizia Storica dei Versi e Metri Italiani* . . . (1919). L.H.G.

VERSIFICATION. See PROSODY.

VERSO PIANO. Also, *endecasillabo*. In It. prosody applied to any line that has a feminine ending with the accent on the next-to-last syllable. In particular, a line of 11 syllables with principal accent on the tenth. V.p. is the standard narrative line in It. corresponding to iambic pentameter in Eng. It was used in the earliest It. (and Sicilian) poetry in the first half of the 13th c. The opening line of the *Divine Comedy* is a famous example: "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita." See also VERSI SCIOLTI; VERSO TRONCO. L.H.G.

VERSO SDRUCCIOLO. Also, *endecasillabo sdrucciolo*. In It. prosody a line with the principal accent on the tenth syllable and ending in a *parola sdrucciola*, a word accented on the antepenultimate syllable, giving the verse a dactylic ending as well as actually 12 syllables. An example from Dante's *Divine Comedy* (*Inferno* 24.64) is: "Parlando andava per non parer fievole." This line was cultivated in the 16th c. instead of the L. iambic trimeter. Ariosto used it in his Comedies to imitate the meter in the Theater of Plautus and Terence. Monti used it later in the *Canto d'Apollo*, in his *Prometeo;* and Carducci, still later, in his *Canto di Marzo*, wherein he tried to reproduce the accents and pauses of the L. iambic trimeter. This system applies to the It. *settenario* verse as well.—F. Flamini, *Notizia Storica dei Versi e Metri Italiani* . . . (1919); C. H. Grandgent, Introd. to Dante's *Divina Commedia* (1933). L.H.G.

VERSO TRONCO. Also, *endecasillabo tronco*. In It. prosody applied to any line ending with an accented syllable; in particular, a line with principal accent on the tenth syllable and with a masculine ending. Because the final unstressed syllable has been dropped (*tronco*, from *troncato*, lopped off), the *endecasyllabo* has 10 rather than the usual 11 syllables. Dante may have used v.t. (*Inferno* 4.60), but uncertainty about his pronunciation makes it impossible to decide definitely. In the generation after Dante, Antonio Pucci began a sonnet with a v.t.: "Caro Sonetto mio, con gran pietà." In another of his sonnets, *versi tronchi* are used throughout the octave. Later poets sometimes used them as a metrical stunt. See VERSO PIANO. L.H.G

VERSUS POLITICUS. A verse of 15 accentual iambic syllables, rare before the 10th c. A.D. but common from the late Byzantine period to the present day. It consists of two cola, one of 8 and one of 7 syllables, with a caesura after the eighth syllable. It has two main accents, one on the eighth or sixth and one on the fourteenth syllable. The origin of the