The Prosody of the Middle Scots Alliterative Poems*

J. Derrick McClure

The importance of the alliterative line as a staple of Middle Scots poetry has long been recognized, and the essential characteristics of the thirteen-line stanza form favoured by Scottish poets have often been described. In her 1975 landmark study "The Alliterative Tradition in Middle Scots Verse," a doctoral dissertation which is still by far the most comprehensive account of the structural features of the verse form, Margaret Mackay lists the poems which utilize this stanza: besides three substantial poems of major literary and historical importance, *The Buke of the Howlat*, *Rauf Coilyear*, and *Golagros and Gawane*,[1] the list includes *Sum Practysis of Medecyne* by Henryson and the Prologue to the Eighth Book of Douglas's *Eneados*, the anonymous *Gyre-Carling*,

---

1 Respectively, and on the simplest face-value showing, these works present an elaborate re-telling of a familiar bird-fable, a comedic story nominally set in the France of Charlemagne, and an Arthurian tale of chivalry and feudal allegiance. For introductions, see Royan, "'Mark your Meroure be Me'," the excellent historical and critical material in Walsh, ed., *The Tale of Ralph the Collier*, and Jack, "Arthur's Pilgrimage." Only *The Buke of the Howlat* has a known author. Linguistic and stylistic considerations suggest, though not conclusively, that the other two, *Rauf Coilyear* and *Golagros and Gawane*, are slightly later in date and by different authors. McDiarmid's carefully presented evidence that both are by Blind Hary, author of *Wallace*, has not been generally accepted; see McDiarmid, ed., *Hary's Wallace,* 1:cviii-cxxxii. It is specifically challenged by Mackay, "The Alliterative Tradition"; also cf. Riddy, "The Alliterative Revival."

Montgomerie's *Ane anser to ane heland manis Invectiue* and contributions by both antagonists to the *Invectiues Capitane Allexander Montgomeree and Pollvart* (*The Flyting of Montgomerie and Polwart*), and a short meditation by John Stewart of Baldynneis. She also cites two instances of a verse form identical except that the ninth line is short instead of long — *The Ballat of Kynd Kittok* and Lyndsay's unique use of the stanza for Diligence's opening speech in *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* — and a few other poems which also utilize the alliterative long line though in different stanzaic arrangements.[2] In his seminal work on the history of alliterative poetry in English, Thorlac Turville-Petre notes that "from the end of the fifteenth century the thirteen-line alliterative stanza was only used for ribaldry and satire"[3] (though the Lyndsay and Stewart instances are exceptions to this), and James VI in his *Reulis and Cautelis* prescribes it specifically for "flyting or Inuectiues."[4] Yet the remarkable fact is surely not that the form had by then come to be restricted in its use but that it had survived at all: even at the highly sophisticated court of James VI, whose poets prided themselves on being at the cutting edge of European literary movements, this old warhorse retained its popularity. Contrasting with the enduring importance, in Scotland, of alliterative stanzaic verse is the scarcity of poems in continuous unrhymed alliterative verse, a form which flourished in England: Scotland has, of course, only one major example of the latter, which can be seen as bringing the history of that ancient poetic form to a spectacular conclusion, namely, Dunbar's *Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*.

The English and the Scottish responses to the enormous range of metrical possibilities afforded by the co-existence of the French-derived metres based on syllable-counting with the continuing presence of the old Germanic verse forms are strikingly different. In the southern kingdom, rhymed octo- and decasyllabic lines and alliterating four-stress lines reached a peak of technical development almost simultaneously in the works of Gower and Chaucer, on the one hand, and Langland and the *Gawain*-poet, on the other; but this was followed by a period in which, notoriously, poets were chronically unable to devise any systematically applied prosodic technique: with or without alliteration, the interaction of syllable-counting and

---

2 For full literary examinations of the poems in this group, see Riddy, "The Alliterative Revival," and Parkinson, "Alexander Montgomerie, James VI, and 'Tumbling Verse.'" See also MacDonald, "Alliterative Poetry and its Context," for a summary discussion of the chronological relationships among Scottish and English alliterative poems.

3 Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival*, 117.

4 James VI, *Reulis and Cautelis*, in *The Poems of James VI*, ed. Craigie, 1:81.

stress-patterning was managed in an astonishingly haphazard fashion.[5] At the same time in Scotland, by contrast, while rhymed octo- and (slightly later) decasyllabics, in stanzaic arrangements and continuous sequences, were handled with assured skill and fluency, the old four-beat alliterative line continued alongside them in vigorous life. The distinctively Scottish development of associating the alliterative line with a specific and well-defined stanza form appears to have provided a poetic context in which it was able to maintain its identity, and the two contrasting prosodic techniques coexisted happily throughout the fifteenth century and even most of the sixteenth, each giving rise to its own corpus of sometimes brilliant poetry. The present article will examine some of the essential prosodic features of the Scottish alliterative line[6] with reference to the opportunities which they afford for literary effect and will discuss the development of the form, its literary exploitation, and the rather surprising manner of its eventual disappearance as a productive verse form. Examples have been chosen from throughout the chronological span of the alliterative tradition in Scotland: Richard Holland's *The Buke of the Howlat* (*c*.1450) and the anonymous poems of the later fifteenth century (the other two long poems already mentioned and the short comic pieces *Kynd Kittok* and *The Gyre-Carling*); Douglas's Eighth Prologue (1513); and finally, from the reign of James VI, the *Invectiues Capitane Allexander Montgomeree and Pollvart* (*c*.1580) and John Stewart's *Ane Schersing Ovt of Trew Felicitie* (*c*.1585).[7]

---

5 For some landmark attempts to find order in the apparent chaos, see, for example, Lewis, "The Fifteenth-Century Heroic Line"; Conner, *English Prosody from Chaucer to Wyatt*; and Cable, *The English Alliterative Tradition*, esp. chaps. 4 and 5.

6 This investigation is confined to the Scottish alliterative line as used in the rhyming stanzaic poems. See my "*The Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*: The Final Fling of the Heroic Line" for an examination of the prosody of this poem.

7 I shall ignore Henryson's *Sum Practysis* and Montgomerie's *Anser* because of their peculiar textual difficulties (resulting from, in the first case, the parodic treatment of medical jargon and, in the second, garbled Gaelic) and possible corruption; the Montgomerie poem is, in any case, a mere single-verse squib. For a brief discussion of the Lyndsay passage in the context of an examination of his use of varying metres throughout the play, see McClure, "Lyndsay's Dramatic Use of Prosody," 139. Quotations are taken from the following editions: Holland: Bawcutt and Riddy, eds., *Longer Scottish Poems*, 1:43-84; Douglas: Coldwell, ed., *Virgil's Aeneid Translated into Scottish Verse by Gavin Douglas*, 3:117-22; Montgomerie: Parkinson, ed., *Alexander Montgomerie: Poems*, Stewart: Crockett, ed., *Poems of John Stewart of Baldynneis*; *Rauf Coilyear*: Walsh, ed., *The Tale of Ralph the Collier*; *Golagros and Gawane*: Hanna, ed., *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane*; *Kynd Kittok* and *The Gyre-Carling*: Ritchie, ed., *The Bannatyne Manuscript*, 3:10-11 & 13-14. Differences between readings, however, sometimes affect the issue of prosodic analysis, and will be discussed as they arise.

The basic format of the alliterative line is too well known to require any recapit-ulation here; equally well known are the differences between the line as used in Old English and in Middle English and Middle Scots. The most fundamental of these changes in its implications for the nature of the verse form was that affecting alliter-ation, which could now extend to the fourth stressed syllable[8] and to unstressed syl-lables: by being relieved of its strictly defined function of highlighting the stresses, the pattern was freed to become an independent stylistic feature in its own right.[9] The cumulative effect of this and the other familiar changes was to allow for a much greater flexibility in the line than was possible in Old English.

The virtue of this development is that it allowed poets far more scope for their prosodic inventiveness; the other side of the coin, however, is that the limits of what was metrically acceptable became much more nebulous and the criteria for distinguish-ing metrical from unmetrical lines (or even, at the most elementary level, good from bad lines) more elusive. Yet some such criteria must exist. Anybody can write a series of lines in iambic pentameter, but only a few can write lines in which the prosodic patterns in themselves have aesthetic merit. By the same token, anybody can write four-beat lines with alliteration, but it is surely incontrovertible, even without knowledge of the context in which they appear, that a line like

> Quod I, "My hony, hald abak and handill me nought sair"[10]

is skilfully composed on its own terms whereas one like

> And than to the ailhouss agane scho ran the pitscheris to pour[11]

---

8   That the absence of alliteration on the last stressed syllable was not a mere *absence* but a feature that arose for a definite reason and purpose was argued by Turville-Petre: in brief, no such device as alliteration was necessary to indicate the position of the last stress since it almost invariably occurred in the last word of the line, with the non-alliterating stressed syllable therefore serving to mark the end of a metrical and grammatical unit; Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival*, 17. The insight was recapitulated by Crépin in his perceptive article "From 'swutol sang scopes,'" which refines several of Turville-Petre's points.

9   For a recent discussion see Cable, *The English Alliterative Tradition*, esp. chap. 4. For an illuminating examination of the range of variations in some English texts, see Matonis, "Non-aa/ax Patterns."

10 Dunbar, *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*, l. 223.

11 *Kynd Kittok*, l. 34. The date of Ritchie's exemplar, the Bannatyne Manuscript, is 1568. An earlier text of this poem, the Chepman and Myllar print of 1507, omits the initial *And*; but it is still an amateurish line. On this text, see van Buuren, "The Chepman and Myllar Texts of Dunbar," and the National Library of Scotland's online feature "The First Scottish Books," available at http://www.nls.uk/firstscottishbooks/index.html.

is merely amateurish. Yet since assuredly neither resembles anything that would have been tolerable in Old English poetry, on what grounds can one pass judgement? Some answers will, it is hoped, emerge in the course of the article.

In the ensuing discussion, the term *stress* is taken to refer to the property imparted to syllables by a reinforced contraction of the intercostal muscles (which control the descent of the rib cage). All the Germanic languages are *stress-timed*; that is, they show a definite tendency, demonstrable by experimental measurement, for stresses to occur at approximately equal intervals of time. (The contrast is with *syllable-timed* languages such as French.)[12] The rhythm of all poetry in English — using that word in its comprehensive sense of Old English and everything descended from it, including Scots — is based on the artistic exploitation of this fundamental fact of the language's structure: in the native poetic metre of Old English (and of the other early Germanic languages) it was exploited by the method of arranging in pairs (lines) grammatical units each containing two stressed syllables, and marking the stressed syllables by alliteration. A factor which is wholly distinct from stress, though often confused with it, is *pitch prominence*, the audible 'underlining' of a syllable by the configuration of the rising-and-falling melody of the voice. In some accents such syllables are simply uttered on a higher pitch than their neighbours, but other accents impart pitch prominence by different patterns: a well-known characteristic of Welsh English, for instance, is that pitch prominence is imparted by a *downward* movement of the intonation curve.[13]

Essential to an understanding of poetic prosody is the fact that stress and pitch prominence are physiologically unrelated (one is a function of the intercostal muscles, the other of the vocal cords), differently perceived (stress is *felt* whereas pitch prominence is *heard*), and mutually independent. A failure to recognize this fact — or a failure to devise a terminology which takes it into account — has led to the wholly erroneous and misleading notion of 'degrees of stress.' In fact, stress is either present or absent, but the degree of pitch prominence, in association with still other factors

---

12   For a statement of this linguistic fact in the context of a ground-breaking discussion of metrics, see Abercrombie, "A Phonetician's View," *passim*. The phonetic facts of stress-timed and syllable-timed rhythms have been further discussed and refined in, for example, Catford, *Fundamental Problems in Phonetics*, and Dauer, "Stress-Timing and Syllable-Timing."

13   For a comprehensive study of pitch variation and its function in English, see Bolinger, *Intonation and Its Parts*.

such as duration and sonority,[14] can result in infinitely varying ranges of what is sometimes called *salience*, the overall extent to which a syllable makes an impact on the consciousness of the hearer (or that of a reader who is not merely skimming but actually 'auditorizing' the words while reading). In this respect, a syllable which is stressed but not pitch-prominent ("When forty winters *shall* besiege thy brow") will be less salient than one of which the reverse is true ("And dig *deep* trenches in thy beauty's field").[15] On the other hand, the actual *rhythm* — colloquially, the 'beat' — of the line will be conditioned by the placing of the stresses, entirely irrespective of the degree to which the stressed syllables have salience imparted by other factors.[16]

In verse consisting of fixed patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables — homomorphic verse, to adopt a useful term from McIntosh[17] — the traditional approach to assessing a poet's prosodic skill is that of first identifying the metrical framework of the poem, next identifying the points at which variations or deviations from the basic pattern are visible or (adding another factor) those at which the pattern has been adhered to only at the cost of an impropriety at another level, such as a distortion of normal word order, and finally, assessing the effectiveness from a literary point of view of the poet's metrical practices, be they conformist or adventurous in terms of the metrical framework chosen. In the familiar case of iambic pentameter, the basic framework is a sequence of five unstressed syllables alternating with five stressed syllables. Such features as the use of promoted and demoted syllables, or the contrastive use of long and short syllables in stressed position, do not change the form, for although stress patterning is prescribed, *other* features which can affect the weighting of syllables, such as vowel quality, syllable duration, and intonational highlighting, are subject to no prescription

---

14 Duration, i.e., the distinction between long and short syllables (by no means the same thing as stressed and unstressed, though in ME and ModE it is only in stressed syllables that the distinction is operative) is a key factor in prosody: in OE the rule existed that a short stressed syllable alone was insufficient to stand as a 'lift' (*yfel guma* [evil man] would not have been a possible half-line), and a fertile source of stylistic possibilities is the selective use of long and short syllables. Sonority, i.e., the 'carrying power' of one sound as compared to another (e.g., [l] showing greater sonority than [t], or [a] than [i]), is not a *prosodic* feature, though it, too, can readily be exploited for aesthetic effect.

15 Shakespeare, Sonnet 2:1-2.

16 The issue of silent stresses is not examined here since they do not operate in the type of verse being discussed. For a more detailed exposition and discussion of the principles and their application in the prosodic analysis of Middle Scots texts, see McClure, "Dunbar's Metrical Technique," "Middle Scots Prosody," "Blind Hary's Metrics," and "Lyndsay's Dramatic Use of Prosody."

17 McIntosh, "Early Middle English Alliterative Verse."

whatever. Such features as hypermetrical syllables, trochaic feet, monosyllabic feet, or double iambs, by contrast, *do* constitute actual departures from the pattern; but they are frequent, and sometimes used to good effect.

Mutatis mutandis, exactly the same principles should be applicable to the technique of assessing alliterative verse: the basic requirements of the verse form being identified and defined, the poet's individual handling of the conventions, and (if applicable) the results of breaching them, can then be assessed for their literary effectiveness. The first non-negotiable condition for a poet of alliterative verse is the presence of four stresses per line: just as a poet who undertakes to write in iambic pentameter may not on a merely random or accidental basis depart from the 5*xa* pattern, one writing alliterative verse may not vary the number of stresses from four. This is surely non-problematic, but what it leaves out is the importance of the unstressed syllables. No prescription decrees any exact number, but in practice the limits within which the actual number may vary without the result calling attention to itself are fairly narrow. A basic condition is that there must be *some* unstressed syllables: a half-line of two stressed syllables alone is never found. On the other hand, they must not be too numerous, for given the fact of isochronous stress on which all poetry in Germanic languages is based, the number of unstressed syllables which may be placed between stresses in practice rarely exceeds three. More would result in an unbecomingly rushed utterance and, unless a definite effect were intended, could be perceived as a clear metrical defect. For instance, the breakneck pace of the four unstressed syllables in

The **stedis** | *sta*-kerit in the | *stour* / for | *stre*-king on | *stray*   (*GG* 919)[18]

is surely intended for an onomatopoeia; but in

He **gad**-derit ane | *menȝ*-ie of | *mod*-wartis / to | *warp* **doun** the | *tour*
(*GC* 7)[19]

---

18   As in earlier papers, I use the following notational conventions. Italics indicate a stressed syllable; bold type, one with pitch prominence. The vertical lines indicate foot divisions: 'foot' in the phonetic sense (which is not the sense it has in traditional metrics) of the stretch of speech beginning with a stress and extending to the next stress. The grammatical break between the two parts of a line — a convention which, though more relaxed in ME and MSc than in OE verse, was rarely abandoned entirely — is marked by the intonation patterns; there is no necessity for it to coincide with a foot division: I indicate it by a virgule. Abbreviated references to the poems are as follows: *BH*: *The Buke of the Howlat*; *GC*: *The Gyre-Carling*; *GG*: *Golagros and Gawane; KK*: *Kynd Kittok*; and *RC*: *Rauf Coilyear*.

19   Even if the intended pronunciation of the first verb is *gadrit*, as it is sometimes spelled, the clutter of unstressed syllables in the anacrusis still makes for an awkward line.

the necessity of charging through as many as five unstressed syllables before reaching the first stress makes the line simply inept. A number of successive instances of feet with an abundance of unstressed syllables would also strike the hearer's ear forcibly; for example, in

I | *dreid* me **sa** he | *dan*-tit the, / thow | *durst* not with him | *deill*   (*RC* 598)

the sequence of tetrasyllabic feet may well be deployed to deliberately humorous effect, appropriate to Charlemagne's sarcastic reprimand of Roland; and with some goodwill, one might accept the possibility that

God | *luk*-it and **saw** hir | *latt*-in **in** / and | *luch* his **hairt** | *sair*   (*KK* 21)

is similarly intended, though the line hardly shows the same degree of prosodic skill: stress and pitch prominence virtually coincide in the *Rauf* line, with only one unstressed syllable, *sa*, likely to be highlighted by the intonation; but the *Kittok* poet has not only allowed himself four pitch-prominent syllables other than those bearing stress but placed a stress on one syllable, *latt-[in]*, which would take much less intonational emphasis than the demoted syllables on either side of it. In his indispensable examination of styles and stylistic levels in Middle Scots poetry, A. J. Aitken describes *The Gyre-Carling* and *Kynd Kittok* as "doggerelised variants" of the alliterative stanza because of their seemingly random irregularities and suggests that this characteristic is used "for motives of parody, most likely" — that is, in some sense deliberate.[20] Certainly, the imaginative exuberance and comic energy of the poems makes it impossible to believe that their writers were simply incompetent.[21] However, by no stretch of the imagination can their metrics as such be described as graceful or subtle; nor is it possible (at least in most cases) to argue that specific phonaesthetic effects are intended, as they appear to be in the *Golagros and Gawane* and *Rauf Coilyear* lines just cited and in others to be examined shortly. Perhaps the most favourable judgement possible on the metre of these two burlesque poems is that it carries the story along with an appropriate boisterous vigour.

---

20 Aitken, "The Language of Older Scots Poetry," 24. Mackay likewise calls them doggerel; see Mackay, "The Alliterative Tradition in Middle Scots Verse."

21 I have often observed that students reading *KK* for the first time find an unexpected touch of pathos in the final apostrophe to the reader, imparting some depth to the poem and raising it to a higher level than mere slapstick. For a most intriguing discussion of *GC* and its significance, see Williams, "James V, David Lyndsay and the Bannatyne Manuscript Poem of the Gyre Carling."

Another factor which operates in this context is the possible tension between *line* stress and *sentence* stress: the ordering of stressed and unstressed syllables necessary for a passage of verse does not always coincide exactly with that which would arise if the same passage were spoken as conversational prose. Promoted and demoted syllables are the means by which this factor is accommodated in homomorphic verse, and heteromorphic verse is no different in principle. Some degree of conflict between the prosody required by the verse structure and that which would emerge if the line were spoken without constraint is an integral part of poetry, and an aspect of any poet's art is the ability to judge the degree of conflict which is acceptable in any given literary context. The implication for the four-beat lines of alliterative verse is that the number of words likely, or certain, to take sentence stress in a line should not as a rule vary by much from four: two in each half-line. *Bot scho wes rycht gend* (*KK* 1) is by that token a less than satisfactory half-line, since it contains only one word of semantic importance, necessitating the placing of a stress on a mere pronoun. (Placing stress on *rycht* and *gend* would be even worse.) Conversely, a half-line with more than two words which invite sentence stress may present the reader with the difficulty of determining which should take the metrical stress. In *Quhy hes thow not that husband brocht, as I the bad?* (*RC* 597), lacking any clue from alliteration, the choice of which two to eliminate from *quhy*, *not*, *hus-*, *brocht*, *I* and *bad* would seem at first to be almost arbitrary, particularly as four of the possibly stressed syllables occur on the same side of the grammatical break. Yet the asymmetry of the line and the abundance of potentially stressed syllables, far from being careless or random, in fact invite a very satisfyingly dramatic reading: a strong intonational prominence, but not stress, on *Quhy*, running rapidly to a stressed *not* (actually *nocht*: the internal rhyme in the half-line adds to the effect) and a quick trip from there to the main verb *brocht*, semantically the most important word in the half-line, are followed by an iambic leap onto *I*, endowed with stress, intonational prominence, and no doubt a raised voice as well, with truly regal emphasis, and a forcefully slow pace, contrasting with the angry rush of the first half, over the remainder of the line. The natural stress and intonation pattern of the last three monosyllables irresistibly suggests the thump of a kingly fist on the arm of the throne:

Quhy hes thow | *not* that **hus**-band | *brocht,* / as | *I* the | *bad*? (*RC* 597)

The next factor is the presence of alliteration. Again, the basic requirement is that there must be some: *Kynd Kittok* is a very clear example of a poem which is stylistically

defective in that the poet fails to maintain the alliterative pattern throughout. Beyond this, however, the norms are much more elusive than are those affecting the issue of stressing. In Old English verse, alliteration was virtually confined to stressed syllables: on the rare occasions when it occurred on unstressed syllables it was an extraneous decoration. Self-evidently, the most 'natural' place to expect alliteration is still on the stressed syllables. Yet Middle English and Middle Scots poets clearly considered themselves entirely free to place it on unstressed syllables not only as well as, but also instead of, stressed ones: examples can readily be found, not only of lines in which far more than four syllables show alliteration, but also of lines in which an unstressed syllable forms part of an alliterative pattern while an adjacent stressed one does not. The alliterating syllable, too, may in such cases be semantically important and therefore pitch-prominent: more so, perhaps, than the non-alliterating stressed syllable. Yet though this is certain to mislead the reader initially, it is not necessarily a defect; indeed, the frequency with which this stylistic device occurs in Middle Scots shows that it was accepted as a normal part of verse of this type. It is simply another respect in which a poet may experiment freely — with the concomitant risk that such experiments may or may not be successful.

The interplay of alliteration and stress is, in fact, one of the most productive sources of stylistic effects in poetry of this kind. Mackay cites a number of interesting examples from *The Buke of the Howlat*, the first certain occurrence of the thirteen-line stanza in Scottish poetry, of lines which have as many as six syllables capable of taking sentence stress, the alliterative pattern in some cases extending over five or all six of them.[22] Most of them are found, on examination, to fall with no strain whatsoever into the four-stress pattern; but the alliteration in some cases confirms this, yet in others seems almost deliberately to counter it. The presence of contrastive stress may determine unequivocally where the beats should fall:

> Put **first** fro | *po*-verte to| *pryce* / and | *princ*-is **awne** | *per*   (*BH* 951)

is a possible example, the opposing words *poverte* and *pryce* naturally requiring emphasis (and the alliteration in this case confirming it, since the same consonant in *put* is surely a mere accident). Even clearer examples are

> All | *se* **fowle** and | *seid* **fowle** / was | *nocht* for to | *seike*   (*BH* 238)

and

---

22   Mackay, "The Alliterative Tradition in Middle Scots Verse."

We | *cum* **pure**, we | *gang* **pure**, / baith | *king* and | *com*-moun.   (*BH* 983)[23]

In some cases the alliteration provides no guide, but the relative semantic impor-tance of the words shows clearly where the stress should be placed. This may provide the clue when alliteration occurs on unstressed as well as stressed syllables, as in

Come **four** | *fa*-sandis **full** | *fair* / in the | *first* | *front*.   (*BH* 158)

This pattern, with an alliterating but unstressed syllable immediately preceding the first stress and two adjacent stressed syllables in the second half-line, is something of a hallmark of the poem. Similarly, in

He | *grat* **grys**-ly | *grym* / and | *gaif* a **gret** | *yowle*   (*BH* 53)

the quadruple alliteration on *gr-*, expanded to a reverse rhyme in *grysly grym*, and the unexpected absence of alliteration on the final onomatopoeic word, gives a power-fully harsh phonaesthetic effect. In this line the heavy alliteration is used for a definite purpose, admirably achieved. In contrast, the line

Bad birnis | *burdis* up- | *braid* / with a | *blyth* | *cheir*   (*BH* 680)[24]

would indubitably have been better without the grammatically and semantically, as well as alliteratively, unnecessary *birnis*. A subordinate alliterative pattern on unstressed syllables may intertwine with alliteration on a different sound for the stresses, but again the relative semantic importance of the words shows where the stresses should fall:

Of **fewe** | *wordis*, **full** | *wys* / and | *wor*-thy thai | *war.*   (*BH* 175)

In other cases, the alliteration may create tension by occurring on unstressed and *not* on stressed syllables, as in

---

23 Alternatively: . . . | *king* and **com**- | *moun.* Very frequently in poetry of this period a rhyming sylla-ble is the second and normally unstressed syllable of a disyllabic word; and the relatively unobtrusive device of retaining the *intonation* pattern while shifting the *stress* onto the last syllable is a ready means of preserving the rhyme.

24 Half-lines illustrating this 'double iamb' pattern were impossible in OE, since the verse types con-taining two adjacent lifts, C and D, required that the second be followed by a dip. Such half-lines are fairly common in MSc, however, and by no means unknown in ME; cf. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: *as hit now hat* (10), *bi þis burn rych* (20), *quen þay han mayn drynk* (497), *þat on þat self nyȝt* (751), etc. Instances where one or both of the words taking stress have final *-e* or *-es* are much more abundant.

      I **dar** do | *nocht* on the | *day* / bot | *droupe* as a | *doule*   (*BH* 59)

and

      The **gud** | *king* gaif the | *gaist* / to | *God* for to | *reid.*   (*BH* 463)

In the latter example the semantic force of *gud* and *gaif* is so slight that the alliteration may be considered fortuitous, but this is hardly true of *dar* in the earlier line. Occasionally it happens that a genuinely ambiguous line arises in which alliteration gives no help at all. In

      Come to the haly graf throw Goddis gret grace   (*BH* 471)

it is unclear, in the absence of alliteration, whether the first stress should fall on *Come* or on *ha-*, and the line can hardly be said to be satisfactory in either case: in the first, because the rush of four unstressed syllables preceding *graf* would give a disrespectfully rushed pace to the word *haly*, and in the second, though as [h] is the alliterating sound of the preceding line there is perhaps a better case for this reading, because a demotion of the verb *come* seems to belie its importance in the context — to *come to the haly graf* is, as the preceding line has established, *the behest he hecht to the king*. In contrasting cases, the difficulty of a line where the established rhythmic pattern and the natural prosody of the words do not readily coincide to give the expected four-beat line may be compounded by a superabundance of alliteration. In

      Braid | *burdis* and | *benkis* / our-**beld** with | *ban*-couris of | *gold*   (*BH* 672)

it is certainly possible to read *-beld* as a demoted syllable, but such an unusual and resonant word seems too conspicuous for such a proceeding to be intended or desirable, and thus this line is perhaps designed to have one or even two extra feet to emphasize the imposing nature of the image it portrays:

      | *Braid* | *burdis* and | *benkis* / our-| *beld* with | *ban*-couris of | *gold.*

In the howlat's first utterance in the poem, this is unmistakably the case:

      | *Wa* is | *me,* | *wretche* in this | *warld,* | *wil*-some of | *wane*!   (*BH* 43)

Such a line with three self-contained phrases, each with two alliterating syllables capable of taking sentence stress, surely cannot have been intended as a four-beat line, and the poet is clearly introducing his main character with a dramatic breach of the normal pattern.

Though the Scottish alliterative poems form a 'set' only contingently and not in any fundamental sense, the practice of searching for thematic links among them is a popular and productive scholarly pursuit.[25] It is observable that both *Golagros and Gawane* and *Rauf Coilyear* (and on a comic level *Kynd Kittok*, too) share with *The Buke of the Howlat*, as a plot element, the presence of a character who in some respect transgresses the prescribed social boundaries.[26] The verse form itself, that is, in some sense had by the end of the fifteenth century acquired associations with the theme of subversiveness; and it is conceivable that this is deliberately evoked by Gavin Douglas in the Prologue to the "Aucht Buke" of *Eneados*. Among the poets under discussion here, Douglas is unmistakeably the one who takes the greatest liberties with the conventional rules of the four-beat alliterative line, straining them to, if not well beyond, their normal limits; and, interestingly, for him the use of this line was an occasional experiment rather than a stock-in-trade.[27]

Of | *dref*-lyng and | *dremys* / quhat | *dow* it to en- | *dyte*?
For, as I | *len*-yt in a | *ley* / in | *Lent* this last | *nycht*,
I | *slaid* on a | *swe*-vynnyng, / | *slum*-myrrand a | *lite*,
And **sone** a | *sel*-couth | *seg* / I | *saw* to my | *sycht*,
| *Swown*-and as he | *swelt* wald, / | *sowp*-yt in | *syte*
(Was **ne**-vir | *wrocht* in this | *warld* / mair | *wo*-full a | *wycht*),
Ram-and, | "*Res*-son and | *rycht* / is | *rent* by **fals** | *ryte*,
Frend-schip | *flem*-yt is in | *Frans*, / and | *faith* hes the | *flycht*,

alternatively: | *Frend*-schip **flem**-yt is in | *Frans*, / and | *faith* hes the | *flycht*,

Leys, | *lur*-danry and | *lust* / ar our | *laid* | *starn*,

alternatively: | *Leys*, | *lur*-danry / and | *lust* ar our | *laid* **starn**

       . . . .

"**Lan**-gour | *lent* is in | *land*, / all | *lycht*-nes is | *lost*,
Stur-tyn | *stu*-dy hes the | *steir*, / di- | *stroy*-and our | *sport*,
Mus-yng | *marris* our | *myrth* / **half** | *mang*-it al | *most*;
So | *thochtis* **threthis** in | *thra* / our | *brestis* our- | *thwort*,

---

25 See, for example, McDiarmid, "*Rauf Colyear, Golagros and Gawane,* Hary's *Wallace*."

26 The most complex treatment of the theme occurs in *GG* where Kay and even Arthur, as well as Golagros, can be seen as guilty of such a transgression. I owe this argument in the present context to a suggestion by one of *Florilegium*'s anonymous reviewers.

27 The same is true of Dunbar, whose *Tua Mariit Wemen* is his unique example of a poem entirely in lines of this form.

Bail-full | *bes*-synes baith | *blyss* / and | *blith*-nes can | *bost*.
Thar is na | *sege* for na | *schame* / that | *schrynkis* at | *schort*,
May he | *cum* to hys | *cast* / be | *clok*-yng, but | *cost*,
He **rakkis** | *now*-der the | *rycht* / nor | *rak*-les re- | *port*;

alternatively: He | *rakkis* **now**-der the | *rycht* / nor | *rak*-les re- | *port*;
                         | *All* is **weill** | *done*, **God wate**, / | *weild* he hys | *will*.

alternatively: **All** is | *weill* **done, God** | *wate*, / | *weild* he hys | *will*.

(8 Prol. 1-9, 14-22)

The first stanza opens, interestingly, with a line which, were it not for the extra unstressed syllable in *Of dreflyng and dremys*, could be read as perfectly good deca-syllabic pentameter. This could be said of many lines in the alliterative corpus, but the fact just *might* have a special significance here: in the context of a poem about decep-tion and delusion, and one with a strongly ironic and satirical tone, could it be that Douglas intended momentarily to trick his readers with a line which seems to con-form to his normal practice but immediately leads into a poem in a very different prosodic format? The next few lines are entirely conventional. In line 2 the fourth allit-eration falls not on the last stressed syllable but on an unstressed syllable preceding it, and in line 3 the last stress alliterates not with the rest of that line but with the previous one; but these details are not even remarkable. The start of the dream is marked by a feature which occurs for the first time in the poem, the presence of a pitch-prominent and alliterating syllable in the anacrusis; but this in itself is common-place, as many of the examples above have shown. Suddenly and dramatically, how-ever, when the *selcouth seg* begins to speak, the normal patterns are radically disrupted. The first undercutting of expectations occurs in line 7: line 5 had also begun with a present participle, but there the word was stressed, whereas in line 7, alliteration notwithstanding, it forms the anacrusis. This is not problematic, but in the next line the reader is faced with the choice of denying stress to a much more important word at the beginning of the line or crushing a verb into a spate of five unstressed syllables. Line 9 seems at first sight to be much more straightforward, with four alliterating syllables which are also the obvious candidates for both line stress and sentence stress, but this reading would entail the two cardinal sins of demoting the rhyming syllable and defying the prescription of a grammatical break between the second and the third stress. On the other hand, to preserve these, the reader is obliged to demote one (presumably the first) of three equally important members of a list and, by assigning stress to the last two syllables, separate the elements of what is virtually

a compound word. Clearly, Douglas's intention here is to make the prosodic chaos mirror the disorder which his dream mentor is forcefully denouncing.

Four of the first five lines of the second stanza repeat, with only tiny variations, the pattern of a heavy anacrusis consisting of a disyllabic word with a demoted (and alliterating) first syllable, a format which, repeated to this extent, imparts an awkward, laboured feel to the lines. This is somewhat relaxed in the remainder of the long-line section, but here, too, an occasional trick is played: in line 21, either the first stressed syllable must be a non-alliterating one (*now-[der]*) or a rush of three unstressed syllables must break the easy rhythm of the last few di- and trisyllabic feet,[28] and in line 22 the most natural way of reading the line,

| *All* is **weill** | *done*, **God wate**, / | *weild* he hys | *will*,   (8 Prol. 22)

demotes the first two alliterating syllables.

Sequences of grammatically symmetrical lines calling for the repetition of a distinctive prosodic format occur again and again in the poem; but again and again Douglas establishes a pattern only to trip the reader up with a line that refuses to fit — one with an extreme asymmetry between its two halves:

For **droucht** had | *drun*-kyn vp his | *dam* / in the | *dry* | ʒeir;   (8 Prol. 41)

one where the prescription of two stresses on each side of the grammatical break seems impossible to apply without defying the natural prosody:

By-and | *bes*-sely, / and | *bane*, **buge**, | *be*-vir and | *byce*,   (8 Prol. 58)

or one where so many words have semantic importance that it becomes almost impossible to make a principled choice of the syllable which should be demoted:

Sum **schip**-part | *slais* the **lardis** | *scheip* / and | *says* he is a | *sanct*.[29]   (8 Prol. 44)

A line with a most unusual pattern, though one which does not break any rules —

| *Baill* hes **ba**-nyst | *blyth*-nes, / | *bost* **great** | *brag* **blawys** —   (8 Prol. 80)

is followed two lines later by one with a similar grammatical structure which seems to call for a repetition of the same pattern, but if the call is heeded, a matching of alliteration and stress is lost:

---

28 Unless *nowder* can be pronounced as *nor*; but most likely Douglas would have ensured that the word was so written if that was the pronunciation he intended.

29 In the last three examples, the suggested scansions are debatable.

| *Dig*-nyte is | *laid* **dovn**, / | *darth* to the | *dur* drawis. (8 Prol. 82)

In this Prologue, that is, Douglas provides two successive counters to the reader's expectations: first by introducing a stanza of which his work provides no other examples, and then by departing radically from its prosodic conventions. A verse form which had been used, in both serious and parodic works, to relate tales in which social expectations are subverted becomes the medium for a depiction of social and moral disorder; but then the medium itself is undercut by the astonishing liberties which Douglas proceeds to take with the expected forms of the verse. Manifestly, the alliterative long line is being exploited in this Prologue by a boldly adventurous poet intent on conveying a subversive and disorienting vision with a strong overtone of burlesque humour.

Strikingly, however, as if Douglas (and Dunbar) had taken the four-beat alliterative line to limits beyond which it could not go and still retain any trace of its original identity, its appearance in the hands of the poets at James VI's court shows a remarkable domestication and restraint imposed on the line. James's remarks on the form, which he calls "tumbling verse," show his usual sound observation:[30]

> Ze man obserue that thir *Tumbling* verse flowis not on that fassoun, as vtheris dois. For all vtheris keipis the reule quhilk I gaue before, To wit, the first fute short the secound lang, and sa furth. Quhair as thir has twa short, and ane lang throuch all the lyne, quhen they keip ordour: albeit the maist pairt of thame be out of ordour, & keipis na kynde nor reule of *Flovving*, & for that cause are callit *Tumbling* verse.[31]

Given that by *lang* and *short* he meant *stressed* and *unstressed*, what he is saying here is that the nearest approach to regularity of any kind found in the alliterative lines (earlier in the same passage, James associates "tumbling verse" with alliteration: "the maist pairt of zour lyne, sall rynne vpon a letter") is a tendency to an anapaestic rhythm, but that this is rarely observed and that stressed and unstressed syllables follow each other in seemingly random patterns.[32]

Here as elsewhere James's chief exemplar is Montgomerie, and the passage which he later quotes as a sample of "flyting or Inuectiues" is the second stanza of

---

30 For discussion of James's thoughts on metrics as expressed in his *Reulis and Cautelis,* see McClure, "Middle Scots Prosody"; for a detailed examination of this particular passage, see Parkinson, "Alexander Montgomerie, James VI, and 'Tumbling Verse.'"

31 James VI, *Reulis and Cautelis*, in *The Poems of James VI*, ed. Craigie, 1:76.

32 James VI, *Reulis and Cautelis*, 1:76.

Montgomerie's *Secund Invective* against Polwart.[33] But though the exuberant and imaginative scatology and vulgarity of Montgomerie's writing leave nothing to be desired, the rough "hurland ouer heuch"[34] quality which might be expected in the verse itself is surprisingly muted. 'Domestication' and 'restraint' are not words which spring to mind in reference to this poet, least of all in his flyting vein; but when he assumes the alliterative line during his flyting with Polwart, his handling of the patterns of stress and alliteration shows nothing of the initiative of Douglas or even Holland:[35]

> **Vyld**, | *ven*-ymous | *vip*-per, / **wan**- | *threi*-vinest of | *thingis*,
> **Half** ane | *elph*, **half** ane | *aip*, / of | *na*-ture de- | *ny*-it,
> Thou | *flyttis* and þow | *freittis*, / þow | *fartis* and þow | *flingis*.
> (*Secund Invective,* II.1-3)

The opening line, with its alliterating anacrusis and change in the alliterating consonant from *v* to *th* in the second half, is perfectly competent, but neither alliteration nor metre performs more than its basic function and in no way attracts the reader's special attention. The second line repeats the trick of changing the alliteration halfway through, this time from zero to *n*; this device makes the alliteration less prominent, but in the third line it returns in full strength.[36] Both lines contain a conspicuous medial caesura, highlighting the insulting word with which the first half-line ends. The heavy alliteration of line 3 is not entirely typical of this section of the *Flyting*: alliteration is less marked here than in the *First Invective*, beginning *Fals feckles fowlmart, loe heir a defyance*, which is in a different verse form, namely, eight-line stanzas rhyming *ababbcbc*. Throughout this section, few lines contain more than four

---

33 James VI, *Reulis and Cautelis*, in *The Poems of James VI*, ed. Craigie, 1:81.

34 James VI, *Reulis and Cautelis*, 1:75.

35 The existence of several early editions of the Montgomerie-Polwart exchange faces both editors and critics with the necessity of making choices between different readings. The exemplar used by Parkinson for his recent STS edition, *Alexander Montgomerie: Poems*, is the Tullibardine MS, dating from the 1580s, but Cranstoun's earlier STS edition, *The Poems of Alexander Montgomerie*, uses the 1629 printed edition. For Parkinson's arguments in favour of his chosen text, see *Alexander Montgomerie: Poems*, 2:6-9. Predictably the differences between the two texts sometimes include differences in metre, and a close comparative study would raise interesting issues of possible authorial or editorial revision. In the present discussion, I follow Parkinson's edition while also noting significant metrical differences between it and the alternative text.

36 Interestingly, the corresponding line in the 1629 printed edition, *Thou flait with a countrey, the quhilk was the kings*, stands out for having less, rather than more, alliteration than the two preceding lines; see *The Poems of Alexander Montgomerie*, ed. Cranstoun, p. 68, l. 263.

alliterating syllables, several contain fewer, and some lines have no alliteration at all. The stress patterning, too, is rarely exploited to any particular effect, and certain lines stand out conspicuously from what emerges very early in the passage as a predominant pattern of dactylic feet.[37] Examples include the following:

> Saw **re**-venis | *ruge* at þis | *rat* / be ane | *rone* | *ruite*,
> (*Secund Invective,* II.28)[38]

with its heavy anacrusis containing a new and arresting piece of information and its final two successive stressed monosyllables; and

> Be | *phle*-gitoun, the **se**-vin | *star*-nis / and þe | *Chair*-l- | **vane**
> (*Secund Invective,* II.184)[39]

with its cataract of unstressed syllables, including a demoted one, in the first foot and its defiance of the natural status of *the sevin starnis* as a half-line; or the almost impossible *The king of pharie with þe court of the elph quene*, which whether scanned as

> The **king** of | *pha*-rie with þe | *court* of the | *elph* | *quene*
> (*Secund Invective,* II.20)

or as

> The | *king* of | *pha*-rie with þe | *court* of the | *elph* **quene**

(or in any other imaginable way), defies any natural linkage between line stress and sentence stress. Such exceptional lines notwithstanding, the most conspicuous feature of the entire *Secund Invective* is not any imaginative exploitation of the potentialities of heteromorphy, but an adoption in its place of virtual homomorphy. Apart from the absence of the clever end-to-middle rhymes, there is essentially no prosodic difference between a passage like

---

37   The sound-value of the verb ending written *-is* (and the homonymous noun plural ending) at this period is debatable, but certainly it was not *normally* pronounced as a syllable.

38   The corresponding line in the 1629 text is *Saw reavens rugand at that ratton be a ron ruit*, a much more irregular line; see *The Poems of Alexander Montgomerie*, ed. Cranstoun, p. 69, l. 288.

39   This time it is the printed text which is the more regular: the corresponding line is *Be the windes, and the weirds, and the Charlewaine*; see *The Poems of Alexander Montgomerie*, ed. Cranstoun, p. 73, l. 418. Although the noun plural ending *-is* (in the Tullibardine MS followed by Parkinson) was by the late 16th century not normally pronounced as a syllable, as noted, the word *starnis* was disyllabic, with a syllabic *n*: this is still characteristic of Scottish accents in words like *turn*. The same is true of the *-l-* in *Chairlvane*.

> All boundis quhair þow byddis to baill salbe brocht.
> Thy gall and thy gwysorne to þe glaidis salbe gevin,
> Ay schort be thy sollace, with schame be thou socht.
> In hell mot þow hawnt and hyd the from heavin,
>   (*Secund Invective,* II.96-99)

and one like

> Schort mischappin schit that schuip sick ane swnʒie,
> Als proud as ʒe prunʒie ʒour pen salbe plukkit.
> Cum kis quhair I cuckit and change me þat cwnʒie,
> ʒour gruntill lyk grunʒie is gracles and gukkit.
>   (*First Invective*, I.17-20)

Montgomerie's venomous wit is as sharp in this thirteen-line stanza passage as ever, but the verse form which he has chosen here makes very little special contribution to it. And when Polwart takes up the format for his answer, his version of the four-beat line is even more consistently homomorphic: the gaily tripping dactyllic pattern of

> Bot of his conditionis to carp for a quhyll
> And compt ʒow his qualiteis compassit with cair,
> Appardoun me, poettis, to alter my styil
> And wissill my wers for fylling the air
>   (VII.1-4)

soon generates its own delightful momentum, so that when arriving at a line like

> And | *als* his **ass** | *earis* / an | *signe* in **schort** | *space*
>   (VII.59)

we do not even think of avoiding the inappropriate stress on *als* by reading the first half-line with the stresses on the two final syllables (cf. Douglas's *in the dry ʒeir*), as we would if this were alliterative verse in the traditional sense.

The old alliterative long line, that is, while it certainly lasted longer in Scotland than in England, by the time it reached its final stages even in Scotland was on the verge of losing its distinctive identity and becoming assimilated to a well-established pattern of homomorphic verse. James shows no knowledge of the great Scottish poets of the pre-Reformation and early Reformation periods, except for Lyndsay,[40] and since he cites Montgomerie's lines to exemplify "tumbling verse," one wonders how

---

40   See McClure, "'O Phoenix Escossois': James VI as Poet."

he would have responded to Douglas's or Dunbar's uses of the alliterative line. Montgomerie, by contrast, was clearly familiar with the work of his great predecessors,[41] and the relatively restrained form of the thirteen-line alliterative stanza in his work as compared to the most inventive of theirs must have been a matter of deliberate choice. Could he have simply recognized that the limits had been reached in their poetry, and deliberately attempted to test the expressive power of the line in a much more strictly rule-bound form? And the very last occurrence of the stanza, Stewart's introduction to his *Schersing Ovt of Trew Felicitie*, though composed with a high degree of technical skill, is hardly recognizable as a specimen of the metre sung at Hrothgar's court:

> Quhan **ver**-ray | *ve*-reyit I | *vas* vith | *vret*-ing of | *verse*,
> And | *lang* **tyme** haid | *mu*-sit my | *me*-tir till | *mend*,
> Pro- | *found*-lie per- | *turb*-**it**, **paine** | *throch* did me | *perse*,
> Sen | *sen*-ten-less | *say*-ing **so** | *schort*-lie var | *send*
> Vith | *raw*-ing **ruid** | *rak*-les **roch** | *rail*-ing re- | *herse*
> To ane | *prince* pre-**clair** | *peir*-les Im- | *pro*-perlie | *pend*.
> Syne | *said* I, "sic | *scrib*-bling **Quhy** | *sould* I so | *scherse*?
> Sum | *pur*-pois **mair** | *pru*-dent var | *meit* till in- | *tend*."
> So I | *pa*-pir And | *pen* again | *spe*-delie | *tuk* [. . .]
>
> (1-9)

The hand of the virtuoso who wrote the sonnet *Dull dolor dalie dois delyt destroy* is readily recognizable in the alliterative patterns. The first line shows an unusual and elaborate design, with two initial [v]s, far apart in the line and the first in a demoted syllable, framing a sequence of no less than four initial [w]s: even acknowledging that one of these occurs in a mere preposition, another in a promoted syllable, and a third as part of a cluster,[42] this is a striking preponderance of one initial consonant in a short space. The third provides an interesting illustration of the extent to which stress and alliteration had by now parted company in placing the first two occurrences

---

41 Parkinson cites an apparent verbal echo of Douglas's Eighth Prologue in the *Secund Invective*; see *Alexander Montgomerie: Poems*, ed. Parkinson, 2:139.

42 However, Murray's description of a surviving pronunciation of the former cluster [wr], in parts of Scotland which had not adopted the North-Eastern change to [vr], suggests that an epenthetic schwa had arisen, giving a pronunciation like [wərəŋ]; see Murray, *The Dialect of the Southern Counties of Scotland*, 130. Whether this had already emerged by Stewart's time is impossible to ascertain, but what can certainly be assumed is that the initial [w] in a word like *wreit* had not disappeared.

of the alliterating consonant on unstressed prefixes: this line has four stressed syllables and four occurrences of the alliterating sound, but only *once* do the two coincide, and that in the only position where they would *never* coincide in the original form of the verse. The next few lines show a Stewartian superabundance of alliteration, and even when this is relaxed for the final two long lines, an interlinked alliteration on [p] and [m] in line 8 and a cross-line linkage by alliteration on the final stressed syllables of lines 8 and 9 ensure that individual touches are still present. With respect to stress patterning, however, almost no special use is made of the heteromorphy which had once been an essential characteristic of verse of this type: after the first line, the pattern, repeated with only single-syllable variations until the refrain, is of an eleven-syllable line with the second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh stressed.

One of the fundamental questions in the history of English metrics is the evolutionary development from conflict to productive interaction of the relationship between, on the one hand, the old heteromorphic four-beat line with alliteration which had arisen out of the inherent structure of the language and, on the other, the set of patterns based on homomorphic feet and end-rhyme imported from French. The life-story of the four-beat line in Scotland — its development along existing and well-established lines by Holland and the anonymous authors of *Rauf* and *Golagros*, its exuberant and almost anarchic efflorescence in the hands of the virtuosi Dunbar and Douglas, and its final decorous yielding to the assimilatory pressure of a familiar pattern of homomorphic verse — casts an intriguing illumination on one chapter of this history.

University of Aberdeen

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Chepman and Myllar Prints, "The First Scottish Books," National Library of Scotland. Available at http://www.nls.uk/firstscottishbooks/index.html

Douglas, Gavin. *Virgil's Aeneid Translated into Scottish Verse by Gavin Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld*. Ed. David F. C. Coldwell. Scottish Text Society, 3rd ser., nos. 25, 27, 28, 30. Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood, 1957-1964.

Dunbar, William. *The Poems of William Dunbar*. Ed. Priscilla Bawcutt. Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, Univ. of Glasgow, 1998.

Golagros and Gawane, The Knightly Tale of. Ed. Ralph Hanna. Scottish Text Society, 5th ser., no. 7. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008.

The Gyre-Carling. In *The Bannatyne Manuscript*, 4 vols., edited by W. Tod Ritchie, 3:13-14. Scottish Text Society, new ser., no. 23. Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood, 1928.

Holland, Richard. *The Buke of the Howlat*. In *Longer Scottish Poems*. Vol. 1, *1375-1650*, edited by Priscilla Bawcutt and Felicity Riddy, 43-84. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987.

James VI. *The Poems of James VI. of Scotland*. Ed. James Craigie. Scottish Text Society, 3rd ser., nos. 22, 26. Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood, 1955-1958.

Kynd Kittok, The Ballat of. In *The Bannatyne Manuscript*. Vol. 3, edited by W. Tod Ritchie, 10-11. Scottish Text Society, new ser., no. 23. Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood, 1928.

Montgomerie, Alexander. *Alexander Montgomerie: Poems*. 2 vols. Ed. David J. Parkinson. Scottish Text Society, 4th ser., nos. 28-29. Edinburgh: STS, 2000.

———. *The Poems of Alexander Montgomerie*. Ed. James Cranstoun. Scottish Text Society, 1st ser., nos. 9, 10, 11. Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood, 1887.

Rauf Coilyear: The Tale of Ralph the Collier: An Alliterative Romance. Ed. Elizabeth Walsh. New York: Peter Lang, 1989.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon. Rev. ed. Norman Davis. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.

Stewart, John, of Baldynneis. *Poems of John Stewart of Baldynneis, from the MS. in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh*. Ed. Thomas Crockett. Scottish Text Society, new ser., no. 5. Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood, 1913.

Secondary Sources

Abercrombie, David. "A Phonetician's View of Verse Structure." *Linguistics* 6 (1964): 5-13. Reprinted in David Abercrombie, *Studies in Phonetics and Linguistics*, 16-25. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965.

Aitken, A. J. "The Language of Older Scots Poetry." In *Scotland and the Lowland Tongue: Studies in the Language and Literature of Lowland Scotland in Honour of David D. Murison*, edited by J. Derrick McClure, 18-49. Aberdeen: Aberdeen Univ. Press, 1983.

Bolinger, Dwight. *Intonation and Its Parts: Melody in Spoken English*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1986.

Cable, Thomas. *The English Alliterative Tradition*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.

Catford, J. C. *Fundamental Problems in Phonetics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press; Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1977.

Conner, Jack. *English Prosody from Chaucer to Wyatt*. The Hague: Mouton, 1974.

Crépin, André. "From 'swutol sang scopes' to 'rum ram ruf,' or the Problems of Alliteration." In *Actes du 2ᵉ colloque de langue et de littérature écossaises (moyen âge et Renaissance), Université de Strasbourg, 5-11 juillet 1978*, edited by Jean-Jacques Blanchot and Claude Graf, 113-24. Strasbourg: Université de Strasbourg, 1978.

Dauer, R. M. "Stress-Timing and Syllable-Timing Reanalyzed." *Journal of Phonetics* 11 (1983): 51-62.

Jack, R. D. S. "Arthur's Pilgrimage: A Study of *Golagros and Gawane*." In *Studies in Scottish Literature* 12 (1974): 3-20.

Lewis, C. S. "The Fifteenth-Century Heroic Line." *Essays and Studies* 24 (1938): 28-41.

MacDonald, A. A. "Alliterative Poetry and its Context: The Case of William Dunbar." In *Loyal Letters: Studies on Mediaeval Alliterative Poetry & Prose*, edited by L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald, 261-79. Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1994.

Mackay, Margaret. "The Alliterative Tradition in Middle Scots Verse." PhD diss., Univ. of Edinburgh, 1975.

Matonis, A. T. E. "Non-aa/ax Patterns in Middle English Alliterative Long-Line Verse." In *English Historical Metrics*, edited by C. B. McCully and J. J. Anderson, 134-49. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996.

McClure, J. Derrick. "Blind Hary's Metrics." In *Older Scots Literature*, edited by Sally Mapstone, 147-64. Edinburgh: John Donald, 2005.

———. "Dunbar's Metrical Technique." In *William Dunbar, 'The Nobill Poyet': Essays in Honour of Priscilla Bawcutt*, edited by Sally Mapstone, 150-66. East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2001.

———. "Lyndsay's Dramatic Use of Prosody in *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*." In *Langage Cleir Illumynate: Scottish Poetry from Barbour to Drummond, 1375-1630*, edited by Nicola Royan, 117-44. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2007.

———. "Middle Scots Prosody: Theory or Pragmatism?" *Scottish Language* 22 (2003): 46-58.

———. "'O Phoenix Escossois': James VI as Poet." In *A Day Estivall: Essays on the Music, Poetry and History of Scotland and England, & Poems Previously Unpublished, in Honour of Helena Mennie Shire*, edited by Alisoun Gardner-Medwin and Janet Hadley Williams, 96-111. Aberdeen: Aberdeen Univ. Press, 1990.

———. "*The Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*: The Final Fling of the Heroic Line." Paper presented at the Twelfth International Conference on Scottish Language and Literature, Mediaeval and Renaissance, Edinburgh University, July 2008; forthcoming in the Proceedings of the conference.

McDiarmid, Matthew P., ed. *Hary's Wallace*. 2 vols. Scottish Text Society, 4th ser., nos. 4-5. Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood, 1968-1969.

———. "*Rauf Colyear, Golagros and Gawane,* Hary's *Wallace*: Their Themes of Independence and Religion." *Studies in Scottish Literature* 26 (1991): 328-33.

McIntosh, Angus. "Early Middle English Alliterative Verse." In *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: Seven Essays*, edited by David Lawton, 20-33. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982.

Murray, James A. H. *The Dialect of the Southern Counties of Scotland: Its Pronunciation, Grammar, and Historical Relations*. London: Asher, for the Philological Society, 1873. Reprint of a monograph published in 1872 as that year's *Transactions of the Philological Society*.

Parkinson, David. "Alexander Montgomerie, James VI, and 'Tumbling Verse'." In *Loyal Letters: Studies on Mediaeval Alliterative Poetry and Prose*, edited by L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald, 281-95. Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1994.

Riddy, Felicity. "The Alliterative Revival." In *The History of Scottish Literature*. Vol. 1, *Origins to 1600 (Mediæval and Renaissance)*, edited by R. D. S. Jack, 39-54. Aberdeen: Aberdeen Univ. Press, 1988.

Royan, Nicola. "'Mark your Meroure be Me': Richard Holland's *Buke of the Howlat*." In *A Companion to Medieval Scottish Poetry*, edited by Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams, 49-62. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006.

Turville-Petre, Thorlac. *The Alliterative Revival*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer; Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977.

Williams, J. E. H. "James V, David Lyndsay and the Bannatyne Manuscript Poem of the Gyre Carling." *Studies in Scottish Literature* 26 (1991): 164-71.

Van Buuren, Catherine. "The Chepman and Myllar Texts of Dunbar." In *William Dunbar, 'The Nobill Poyet': Essays in Honour of Priscilla Bawcutt*, edited by Sally Mapstone, 24-39. East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2001.