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*The*  
LYRIC WEST

*A Magazine of American Verse*



IN THIS ISSUE

Ruth Aughtilree | Mable Holmes Parsons

Clifford Gessler | Margaret Duncan Dravo

*Muriel Wright and others*

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**THE NEUROSIS OF POETS**

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# The Lyric West

*Vol. V, No. 6*

A Magazine Of American Verse

March, 1926

Edited by Allison Gaw and Ethelean Tyson Gaw

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## Some Contributors in This Issue

Ruth Aughiltree, aside from her poetry which has appeared in *Contemporary Verse*, *Youth's Companion*, and elsewhere, is also the author of a series of mystery stories, *Old Windmills*.

Clifford Gessler is a member of the staff of the *Star-Bulletin*, Honolulu, T. H. His beautiful *Portrait* appeared in our issue of last April.

Ted Olson has been successively news editor of the San Francisco *Journal*, on the staff of the New York *Tribune*, and city editor of the Casper, Wyoming, *Tribune-Herald*. He is a member of the High Witan of the American College Quill Club and is associate editor of its quarterly.

Noel Stearn is a young poet of unusual sensitiveness to nature, who spends much of his time prospecting in the Sierras.

Mr. A. M. Stephen, who comes to our pages for the first time in this issue, is a resident of West Vancouver, British Columbia. His latest volume, *The Rosary of Pan*, has received high praise from critics both in England and America.

Edna Worthley Underwood, whose delightful rendering into English verse-form of Dr. Chi-Hwang Chu's *The Orient Visits New York*, in the January issue, has been so widely copied, returns to us, this time with a sequence of lyrics reminiscent of her recent stay in South America.

Harold Vinal is editor of *Voices; an Open Forum for the Poets*, and is the author of three volumes of verse, *White April*, *Voyage*, and *Island Born*. As publisher he is responsible for the first volumes of a number of new poets.

Of the twenty-one contributors of verse in this issue two come to us from New Jersey, five from New York, one from Wyoming, two from Oregon, nine from California, one from Canada, and one from Honolulu.

*Ruth Aughiltree*

## Who Cannot Hear

*Rondel*

---

None are so deaf as they who cannot hear  
Those tiny voices of tranquillity,  
Upraised in varied hymns of ecstasy,  
From flower and blade — a slender tune, but clear.

There are green songs of trees, that lift to freer  
Winds their chorals, or murmur with the sea;  
None are so deaf as they who cannot hear  
Those tiny voices of tranquillity.

There is the first bold crocus of the year,  
Shouting in yellow, sprung to liberty;  
The dandelion's wingéd rhapsody;  
The sweet flute-note when violets first appear.—  
None are so deaf as they who cannot hear  
Those tiny voices of tranquillity.

*Noel Stearn*

## Purple Mists

---

I know that for the purple mists  
Nor time nor love exists.

Here on the Michigamme hills  
Last night the sun had built his somber fire  
Against the windy loneliness that chills  
November, — and the silence in full choir  
Pealed forth a perfect stillness, — here I saw  
Through all the swamp-filled swales  
The purple mists come creeping, slowly creeping,  
And each one seemed to draw  
Dark veils, and shadow veils  
To hide her weeping.

When first I saw a purple mist  
Lying at love within a mountain's arms,  
I thought that she had been too often kissed,  
Too wanton with her charms  
Among those gruff sierras of the West,  
Too old and over-painted  
To cherish any sorrow in her breast,  
Or to be tainted  
With any gentle loveliness within her.  
But now I know, though many mountains win her,  
That for the purple mist  
Time and that dream called love do not exist.



Why should they come, these purple mists so gay,  
Here to the bleak old hill,  
Ancient and gray,  
Little and poor and stooped with clumping shoulders,  
Dozing away the days it must fulfill  
Until the heart of it is but a few strewn boulders  
Crooned to sleep by a rill?  
Why should they creep, these mists, with such a glitter,  
With such a brazen way?  
Why should they hide their faces in a veil  
And sign till all the popples slyly titter  
And tell the lovely tale  
In their own sly, malicious little way?

For in their fitful whisperings I heard  
How each year when November's chill has stirred  
These aged hills out of their summer doze,  
They slowly shuffle off their summer cloak  
To don the snows.  
And then the purple mists desert their lofty western  
    peaks  
(The popples whisper this part as a joke)  
And creep back here, where wistfully each seeks  
Her first, first love,  
Who, when the world was young,  
Towered so tall he tripped the haughty sun  
And with a careless shove  
Off to the southward flung  
The stumbling craven, who has never run  
Over the North again, and still slips by  
With side looks at these huddled relic hills.

And so each purple mist in memory  
Pictures those great strong canyons where she lay,  
Re-lives her first fierce thrills,  
And at the end of day,  
When she is sure the furtive sun is busy  
Building his evening fire,  
She creeps into the swamps, ashamed but dizzy  
With old desire.

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*Anne Hendrickson*

## Winter

---

A great white carnival tent;  
The snow —  
Silver confetti  
Carelessly tossed  
To drift scintillantly.

*Floy Bernice Palmer*

## The Spanish Exile

---

The dim night, the dark night,  
The swaying of the trees;  
Across the vale there softly came  
A moaning little breeze.  
And down beside the silver lake  
Beneath the evening stars,  
I thought I heard, there, gently rise  
The twang of old guitars —

The soft twang, the gay twang,  
The twang of old guitars;  
The men in velvet suits who sat  
And sang beneath the stars.  
The air was soft and warmly damp,  
The winds bespoke the rain,  
And romance wandered through the night  
And whispered tales of Spain.

The soft songs, the gay songs,  
The songs of long ago,  
When Spanish maidens wildly danced  
Beside the firelight's glow.  
And you and I, we sat apart  
And listened to the strain  
Of music, and we dreamed once more  
That we were yet in Spain.

The sweet dreams, the gay dreams,  
The dreams of youth and love;  
The south wind murmured tenderly;  
The stars were bright above.  
And hand in hand we wandered down  
A love-enchanted lane,  
And there, alone, we lived once more,  
The youth and love of Spain.

*Grace E. Bush*

## Interpretations After Music

*To Sol Cohen, Violinist*

---

*Mi-Carême*

Paris!

Carnival!

Mad joy!

Music flung abroad like a sparkling, jeweled scarf!

*Dansons, dansons, Ma'amselle!*

Ah, the music catches us,

And whirls us in its mad embrace;

On, on, dizzy with joy!

Forget all the rest of the world!

Tonight it is we live, n'est-ce pas?

Why think of tomorrow?

Confetti in colored showers

Like butterflies!

See the crowd as it streams down the Faubourg!

And there at last is the Queen!

But she is not so pretty as you, I swear!

Ah! . . . Kiss me again!

*Hobgoblin*

Elf!

Elf, with wings of silver!

Small fantastic steps,

As you dance alone on a ribbon of moonlight!

. . . . A thread of eerie music

That drifts away as I listen! . . . .

A branch rustles in the darkness,

And instantly you are gone . . .

Tiptoe! . . . . under a toadstool!

*Ruth Clay Price*

## Beach Musings

### *I. Driftwood*

---

When shall I understand  
    The sand?  
I would be, if I could,  
    *Driftwood:*  
All the world I would lay  
    Away;  
Deep in sand I would rest,  
    Close-pressed;  
Feel the dark and the light  
    Of night;  
Wind would speak, and the sea,  
    To me;  
I would live with the sun  
    As one;  
I would be, if I could,  
    *Driftwood:*  
Then I might understand  
    The sand.



## *II. On The Sand*

Do ghost lobsters mock this scrap,  
Once a well-made lobster trap?

Shall I ever laugh to naught  
This strange trap where I am caught?

Are you held by tide and shore,  
Earth-bound, moon-caught, evermore?

Answer, old indifferent sea,  
Knowing lobsters, traps, and me.

Mable Holmes Parsons

## Le Jongleur

---

I fled the haunted gardens, day by day,  
    Left them to dreaming silences and shade,  
Forsook their dimming glory and display  
    Of state, the wishing-well and ancient glade.

Day after day I sought the corridor,  
    And that one portrait hanging fragile there,  
Of my chateau. I am but purchaser;  
    The duchess she — a presence more than fair.

Why had I come from *outré mer* to buy  
    This storied loveliness? And why must she  
Lean so far forward from her frame that I  
    Each day returned for what she'd say to me?

Ah then, one morn, at dawn, my heart awoke,  
And my heart heard and all her heart bespoke.

\* \* \* \*

*“Voici, Duchesse, voici — les jongleurs!”*  
Arrestingly there lingered over me  
The voice, the tone, that somewhere I had known.  
The Duchesse (I am she) had welcomed guests  
From Burgundy. And Guillaume, he was there. . . .  
Now what might be *this* braggart-beggar bell

Who tolled his wares? *Ennuyé*, I slowly turned  
And crossed, whence I had stood, the terrace floor  
Where petaled drift-glow, in a patterned spray,  
In intricate inlay, wrought wistfully,  
Of gold on porphyry, was carpet for our feet.  
I paused beside a priceless balustrade  
(’Twas Niccolo Pisano’s early work,  
Before his gifts adored the Virgin’s God) —  
A train of Maenads, Bacchus’ followers;  
’Tis claimed, as fine as vase of Pisa’s pride.  
A moment thus, the while I idly marked  
A play of sun-discs on a sunken pool  
And my white peacock’s spread of frosted scorn.

He waited me, nor raised a second call.  
Oh, most unsuitably, he wore repose  
Of manner — a quaint incongruous dignity.  
Yet, facing me, his deepened gaze besought —  
Was it to foretell I should have need of him?  
I cried, “How came *les jongleurs* here?”  
His strange regard, poignant, measuring,  
Had found my furtive wish and clung to it  
And bade it do his will. . . “Ah, well,” I said,  
“You may proceed. I deem the company  
Disposed to grant you time and smiles, if well  
You do your turns.”

I left him then, yet bore  
The gesture of his gaze upon my conscious  
Shoulder, as I moved away . . . *Why noted he?*  
And I — I’d no resentment, no disdain!

My body sweetened with its sense of him:  
Some mystic dragoman he seemed, and come  
To kiss the scented velvet of my hands,  
To trip the wont and wording of my play,  
To rouse — what breeding disavows and hides.  
To them, my guests, I was of Parian,  
Symmetrical and pure. To him — to him —  
Could I. . . .

“Begin!” He caught my halted word.  
Rewound his garment deftly with its cord,  
And smiled — if one may name a gleam so sad  
A smile. Then lifted he his turbaned head.  
He waved his hand. Uprose, as at command,  
A tree with roses trimmed. Aroma spilled  
A twilight over our voluptuous day.  
Yet when we made applause, the tree dissolved  
And of the roses naught but breath was there.  
“Ah, see?” (one supple hand did check)  
“God doth resent applause and patronage.  
So man defeats the marvels He doth raise.”

Could I erstwhile have heard *him* say — those words?  
Myself (what is it?) that *myself* profanes? . . . .

Lo, suddenly, a serpent and a dove!  
I grow intoxicate and faint, and sway  
To circling rhythms of that drunken head.  
The dusky amber of the staring eye  
Is monstrous fascination; such his dart.  
How like a spiral staff upon its tip

He spins! How wicked-wantonly he coils!  
How pitiful, how pitiful the thing,  
The bird, the toy, the lewd magician hurls  
The viper for his sport! One woman cries,  
“Look — and pray!”

“Nay!” — And once again  
My turbaned magian smiled. . . . The serpent lay  
Uncoiled. The dove plumed peacefully her wing.  
“Disarm the snake and save the bird — *then* pray!”  
Whereat, I knew he’d come to speak to me,  
To warn me of Burgundy! . . . .

I lost them all.  
I saw a cypress tree beside a door  
Where petals make May snow, and bells forewarn  
Of semblances that pass where souls are born.  
I saw *one* kneeling by a shrine, with throat  
And two white hands upraised, that did invoke  
A benediction. And I saw a priest.  
So near to her (tall and sombre-eyed;  
Encarmined were his youthful cheeks) —  
Beheld him then go, suffering, from her —  
No touch, no word, in sacrilege. And she  
(Oh, like Our Lady’s lily was her bloom!)  
Arose and passed. . . down. . . down. . . down  
The wide still temple stairs, to dream of him  
And in her garden spend her dreams in prayers  
Then *someone laughed*. . . . And I awoke to hate!  
It was a courtier I knew full well,  
Guillaume — read he that rôle in jonglerie?

While *he*, with turban — *il parle mon langage*.  
Had I so distantly been tossed and blown,  
As dust to dust, from Persia to France?  
“Mon Dieu, this is my heart, *my man, my mate*,  
And (shame!) I am *la duchesse d’ Angoulême!*”  
So ran my thoughts. . . God knows, I’ll have my jest!  
“Enough!” I gaily cried. “Thou smotest the thief  
In time!” — He gravely bowed: “Madame has said,”  
His eyes as cool as April rain in mine.  
And yet his April coolness sped the fires  
I hid beneath my robes of race and pride.  
Somewhere, all-chaste desire I had known for him  
Within the shelter of a shrine, and I  
Was still unmated, waiting . . . Oh, how vain  
Such necromancy amid this cursed state! . . .  
I looked, while he, inclining low his brow,  
Uncovered, one time more, his eyes to mine —  
Searching me as winds search treeless hills  
That lift themselves above the thirsting plains.  
I held his heart . . . I felt my garden stir  
As if a fleckless hem of Mary’s robe  
Had brushed it, going by. While I — I . . .

He beckoned *les jongleurs*, his dignity  
As matchless as the King’s. I cloaked my cry  
Beneath my jest — I’d still my gift of phrase. . .  
I sought my watchful guests, nor turned to note  
His going. . . .

\* \* \* \*

There are star-buds in the cool  
Of the evening by the pool.  
There is hawthorn, and I've heard  
The certain wooing of a bird.  
And oh, my lover and my dear,  
It was the duchess led us here. . . .

*Adrian Huffman*

## To Llasta

---

I who so loved the open road  
    That somehow called to me  
In voices only those may know  
    Who are of Romany  
    (The mountains and the sea),  
Must walk in file with men that frown  
    And silent be.

I who so loved the open tent  
    Of stars above my head —  
The four winds for my shanty walls,  
    And leaf-mould for my bed,  
    Four granite walls instead  
Must bear — why! such a tomb would shame  
    The Gypsy dead!

Yet I, who so loved the open tent  
    Of wondrous magnitude,  
Can rest, to know these stones will let  
    No foreign thought intrude,  
    When, with your spirit brood,  
A phantom queen, you come to bless  
    My solitude.



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*Edna Worthley Underwood*

# By the Carib Sea

*A Sequence*

---

*Written in Panama and Colombia, South America*

I

*Cartagena de las Indias*

By an ancient city's wall  
Where the counted centuries fall,  
    But with haunting grace of line  
    With such faded colors, shine,  
        *I found — once — your face.*

Beyond rippled, quaint, a street;  
Roofs — dim violet, yellow — meet.  
    Where the wind slips like a flame,  
    Burning as the breath of shame,  
        *I heard — once — your voice.*

Nights are lovelier here than days:  
Gardens — hot, spice-scented ways.  
    “Come! I want you — like your sea —  
    Breathing there in agony.”  
        *Then your eyes met mine.*

They were deep, deep with regret  
Such as I had not known yet,  
    Dark with scorn which pity kept  
    From a hate too deep, which slept.  
        *I spoke then to you.*

I pray pagans like to me,  
Who woo Beauty tragically,  
    May not find you, slender, tall,  
    By that painted city's wall —  
        *Face I found so cruel-sweet,*  
        *Wherein God and Mammon meet.*

## II

### *A Deserted Palace of Dead Lovers*

A garden there lies by a tropic sea,  
And the garden wall is high,  
Where all alone in the sullen dusk  
I can hear the peacocks cry.

They are burnished, some of them, blue and jade,  
But one it is white as the snow.  
How they trembled and watched it, foolish, afraid:  
*"Is it ghost of the love we know?"*

Then they prayed: *"O Moon, Great Moon, shine not  
Save over the Carib Sea!"*  
Now its rising gold, their impassioned words,  
Hold some magic wistfully.

But the garden is sadder beneath its light,  
And the painted palace there,  
With its rosewood, statues, brocades, aches  
For their forms upon the stair.

Oh redder far than the wounds of Christ  
Are the roses beside the gate,  
Which they entered to fling fame, fortune, far —  
Just for love — for an unknown fate!

They flame like a banner of lust tonight

Out-hung to the moon and the sea;  
I can sense afresh their defiance of death —  
Their gift flung down to me.

### III

#### *A South American Harbor*

When the deep Andean valleys were red,  
And the sky was an amethyst overhead,  
And the sea at our feet had turned jade-green,  
More burnished and rich than a peacock screen,  
Your words spread out like a golden fan  
Made in the prodigal days of Han.

How great was my folly now I know!  
I thought I was watching a flamingo —  
Over there where the tangled jungles lie  
And the lost day drinks the sky.

#### IV

##### *The Hour Before the Hurricane*

Sad, shaken, this — the Field of Proserpine,  
    Gray, twilight-covered, where the night-stars die,  
    Where suns come not, though countless flowers fly  
Their long, white, silken petals, cold and fine.  
Swift-footed Love comes not with quest divine,  
    Nor hurried form of youth sways gracefully;  
    The ghost-flowers wilder shake their petals free,  
And lonelier the long sea-meadows shine.

Smooth, sterile meadows! Now the winds are still  
    In fear before the greater ruin of Death,  
    Who comes a conqueror, armed *cap-a-pie*.  
Behold! Black, copper-corsleted, with will  
    His feet crush down foam-flowers that faint for  
    breath,  
    And storm — and night — blot out the Carib  
    Sea.

V

*Clouds Above the Carib Sea*

The clouds above the Carib Sea, my Love,  
Are white chrysanthemums some king might own,  
Some King of Tang, whose lacquered palace shone  
Like petals down the winds of twilight blown.

No, no! The clouds above the Carib Sea, my Love,  
Are curled like fingers that caress, caress,  
The body of a beauty who has sinned  
Too freely, but with what fine wantoness.

The clouds above the Carib Sea, my Love,  
Are palaces, proud-pinnacled, of height divine,  
Of Agra marble, flushed with rose, with wine,  
Some Mogul chose to build for arms that twine  
What time the hours of sullen evening shine.

And yet — my Love — all, all, Time batters down,  
And years — they are the same as clouds that frown —  
As clouds, wind-blown, across the Carib Sea.

*Frances Hull Topping*

## Ariel

---

Sometimes my thoughts  
Are gay-plumed, swift-winged birds;  
A flash, and they are flown  
Ere I can give them words.

Perhaps, some day,  
When they have grown less wary,  
I may encage a few,  
And start an aviary.

*Mavis Clare Barnett*

## The Critic

---

### I

This is his verse? And you would have me tell  
    Why we're enchanted by the sound of it?  
    "Wine-jar", is the word not exquisite?  
The word "leaf", is it not incredible?  
Being a critic I should know the spell  
    His youth unjaded yet by time and wit  
    Wrought in him till he was content to sit  
Listening for wheels of chariots in a dell?

I could have made such rimes, too, in my youth,  
    For I dreamed under laurel in my day.  
How is it some men stumble on the truth,  
    Themselves astonished by what they have to say,  
While some of us are left to understand  
Too well the Greek in Keats, the light in Shelley's  
    hand?



## II

Or why this lad so secretly would lie  
    To watch old battles through his laurel-tree? —  
    Was Hector louder to him than the bee?  
How can I say? I thought once to espy  
The bright-mailed gods and heroes running by,  
    And I, too, ran with them from Arcady  
    To steer at last into the violet sea,  
Keeping upon my oar one butterfly. . . .

I knew the shadow on the temple door  
    Slanting from great jars. I have gone alone,  
Although I never go there any more,  
    To hunt for hoof-prints underneath a stone.  
There are few of us alive who have not wondered  
In some sane moment down what legend it has  
    thundered.

### III

I have read his verses through and now I sit  
Here with his book, not my book, after all.  
His Troy's a dust-heap, now I've heard it fall.  
No sound of any war comes out of it.  
Perhaps the poorest critic in his wit  
Might say it was ridiculous and small;  
Eternity behind a child's block-wall,  
A sun put out because a lantern's lit.

The red, red berries on his berry-bush  
Are never shaken when the centaurs rush;  
The broken chariot wheels before his town  
Are shining though Achilles' blood is brown.  
My heroes would not prattle as his do,  
But what's a critic's wisdom when a poet knew?

#### IV

Stones for his hunger, salt to quench his thirst,  
His cry for spaces answered with a cell!  
He who thought he had a tale to tell  
Blew out the rainbow, and a bubble burst.  
Laboring at the rime, no doubt he cursed  
The limitations of a laurel dell,  
And when we call this line incredible,  
Of all his dreams perchance it is the worst.

Because he has written this or that word down  
Do you think a man has lessened his desire  
To shout about the world of Troy on fire?  
There are towers yet of a further burning town,  
Even now while we, the critics, sit here prating,  
With a better dream he has gone back to creating.

*A. M. Stephen*

## Ere Twilight Comes

---

O may there be no twilight in our days,  
    No veiling of that first great light of dawn  
    Whose white fire touched the peaks of time  
With ardent rays!

O, may there be no faltering of the wings,  
    No echo of a golden lyre unstrung,  
    No broken shadows of a vision seen  
In other Springs!

There may be planets ruled by other suns;  
    There may be roses red as this I know;  
    Fair winds to bear my barque beyond  
The wave that runs.

Yet, if there rise a sudden wind which numbs  
    The master hand that held the wandering fire,  
    O, let Love close my eyes in death  
Ere twilight comes!

*Clifford Gessler*

## You Will Remember

---

When you are old you will remember me  
Who burn tall candles now, and strange, before  
The intolerably bright altar of your beauty.  
You will remember dusky music poured  
Wantonly on the pale sand by the sea  
Under the pallid stars, in praise of you;  
And you will smile a little sadly then,  
For thinking on remembrance of those nights  
Of your proud youth, so lovely and so cool,  
Where rapturous horns of surf murmur your name  
To me, who cry in answer from the shore.

*Harold Vinal*

## Apparition

---

She was mirage and dream and little more,  
Moving, it seemed, to dirges played on strings  
Of frozen basses in the empty wings  
Of tragic theaters behind bolt and door.  
She was, at best, a phantom in the mind,  
Astonished if one looked at her or spoke —  
A statue in a niche, a figure shrined  
Between the dark and light — not air, but smoke.

And so she came and went, and though men turned  
To gaze at her and marvel, she was one  
Too virtuous to be at all concerned.  
She crossed the stage of Life, and there were none  
Who spoke of her as woman, or could boast  
Of her as being more than just a ghost.

*Ted Olson*

## Two Unlamented

---

Be not afraid. There can be no ghosts here.  
There are no ghosts where love has never been.  
Lift the latch boldly, firmly, and go in.  
Dust will companion you, but have no fear  
Of shadowy hands on yours, of eyes that peer  
Shyly from long-shut casements, of the thin,  
Far tinkle of a ghostly mandolin  
Chording the ghostly tunes of yesteryear.

No ghosts are here. No furtive shade survives  
Two who were dust before their years were done.  
Too pale of blood for passionate good or sin,  
They lie in graves as narrow as their lives,  
One with the mire, who never before were one.  
There are no ghosts where love has never been.

*Effie Whyte Watt*

## Desert Cry

---

Brown mountains rising from the sea,  
Majestic ranges, and a sinking sun,  
In that far western southland;  
Tall deodars etched against a purple sky,  
And slim palms rustling in the autumn wind, . . . and I  
Standing alone, silent by a darkening sea;  
Need I ask how  
A Hand that can adorn a desert waste  
And throw a flood-light of a thousand hues  
Against an evening sky,  
Lighting with tender flame each full rose-bower,  
Can leave *my* soul so bare of beauty and of power?



*David P. Berenberg*

## Fragment

---

Song of the heart too full for love and pain,  
Too full of beauty that is bitterness,  
Song of the lawless love that must be slain,  
    Leaving my soul a waste of loneliness,  
        Song of my lost white cities, bury me,  
        Break over me as if you were the sea.

*Irene Stewart*

## My Soul

---

My soul is a frail elf  
With tousled hair  
And long thin arms  
Which clasp thin knees  
Like pale weed-stems  
Twining in a dark place.

*Margaret Duncan Dravo*

## Rainy Sunday

---

Do you remember the day in February  
That it rained and rained?  
It was a Sunday and we stayed in doors beside the fire,  
And just when the sun should have been setting,  
A sulphurous, cinnamon candle  
Was lit somewhere in the heavens,  
And you went out and called to me, "Come!"  
And we stood on the terrace and looked about us,  
On a world blanketed with black gauze,  
Rubbed to a dull lustre of lemon and silver  
Through taupe and gold chiffon!  
It was just like living a fairy tale!  
The bare trees had been dipped in mercury!  
The wet road running by the door  
Was an onyx and platinum path that might have led to  
the moon!  
Drops, dull as cat's eyes,  
Dripped, dripped,  
Everywhere. . . .  
We looked at each other;  
Our flesh was the color of old ivory!  
We wanted to exclaim, but instead  
We only caught our breath and stared. . . .  
It only lasted a minute,  
And we laughed afterward,  
But I tell you,

I should not have been surprised  
If the Angel Gabriel had appeared beside us,  
Or if a silver-green dragon belching almond-colored fire  
Had lunged at us down the lane!

*Vincent Jones*

## Spring Inspection

---

In the meadow, mountain shaded,  
    Tossing amid the clover billows,  
Perfume-drenched and honey-raided,  
    Stand the silken, martial willows.

What do you suppose they tell us,  
    Nodding there so gypsy-minded?  
“Willow folk are mighty zealous,  
    Though we are so bitter-rinded.

“Guard we all your water courses,  
    High or low the elevation —  
Slender soldiers, mighty forces,  
Faithful in our moist relation.

“Come and see our ranks parading,  
    Spring inspection now’s in order;  
Watery hosts are fast invading,  
    Safe we hold the precious border.”

*Geraldine Seelemire*

## Bitter Creek

---

The train,  
Like a querulous old red cow,  
Comes bawling around the shoulder of a hill,  
And belches forth Jonah into a sea of sand in the  
    middle of Nevada.  
Then, with head down,  
She chases a prairie dog between two frail, mauve hills,  
And bellows her way into the distance  
With her tail hooked over the wind. . . .

Our Younger Singers

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*Naneen Burnap*

## Seeing

---

I must be lashed with colour  
Until I can see aright  
The day's dancing defiance  
Of the darkness of the night.

I must see blues that sing  
And swearing boastful reds,  
To forget the remembered paleness  
Of sheets on new-made beds.

For all the stirring strangeness  
Life must hold for me  
May only be waiting  
For me to learn to see.

*(Los Angeles High School.)*

*Julia Birk*

## Episode

---

Staccato stars peeped out . . .  
They were eager for the ball.  
Queen Moon swept in, arrayed  
In a glistening silver train.  
Alas! In the midst of the minuet  
One poor star-nymph most inadvertently  
Trode upon that train.

Now she sits, disgraced,  
Over in the corner by the mountain.

*(Long Beach Polytechnic High School.)*



## The Artistry of the Stanza

### VI

#### *The Stanza as a Pure Art-Form*

In our past articles in this series we have been concerned with the possible relation between stanza-form and the thought which that form, in any given case, enshrines — the stanzaic jewel-box in its adornment matching the thought-jewel within and re-enforcing it either by onomatopoeic effects or by symbolism, or appearing particularly well adapted to it by reason of connotative values derived from facts in that stanza-form's past history. To carry our figure a little further, suppose the jewel-box contains a pearl. The box might then be lined with material that will especially well reflect the peculiar pearl-hue; or it may be created in the form of a shell because that is the natural home of a pearl; or it may be, in the mind of the owner, of all her jewel-cases the one that especially should contain that gem because she happens to know that in the past a number of famous pearls, rather than diamonds or rubies, have lain in its bed. Broadly, these three situations may mirror for us the respective values of metrical onomatopoeia, symbolism, and historical connotation that may relate a given stanza to a given thought-jewel within.

But the jewel-box may not contain its peculiar reflective lining, it may not be carved in the form of a shell, it may not have behind it such a peculiar history relating it to pearls; and yet it may be an exquisite product of the artificer's skill, a beautiful work of art in its own right. And if the pearl be removed, no less will the casket retain its own inherent loveliness of form and structure. And so, a beautiful stanza-form loses none of its intrinsic loveliness if one considers it apart from any function of re-enforcing any especial thought-content. Thus, for instance, the Spenserian

stanza has its own peculiar charm derived from the aesthetics of its own structure, whether it be taken from the first or the fourth Book of *The Faery Queene*, from Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, from Shelley's *Adonais*, or from Tennyson's *The Lotos-Eaters*. And as the jewel-box cannot be deprived of its beauty of line and proportion except by some physical injury that shall alter its contour, so the music of the Spenserian stanza, as such, will persist, whatever its thought-content, so long as nothing interferes with the music of its regular sequence of eight iambic pentameters and the concluding alexandrine (or six-beat iambic line), interspersed with its especial music of rhyme-chimes.

Consider, in illustration, the second and third stanzas of Tennyson's *The Lotos-Eaters*.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,  
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;  
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,  
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.  
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow  
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,  
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,  
Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,  
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown  
In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale  
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down  
Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale  
And meadow, set with slender galingale;  
A land where all things always seem'd the same!  
And round about the keel with faces pale,  
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,  
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Here, in the first of the quoted stanzas eight iambic pentameter lines bring us successively to the rhyme-words

*smoke, go, broke, below, flow, tops, snow, and drops*, after which the slightly longer alexandrine brings us, with just a trace of hesitancy, to the final *copse*. In the second of the two stanzas a series of eight iambic pentameters brings us successively to *adown, dale, down, vale, galingale, same, pale, and flame*, and again a ninth line, an alexandrine, brings us, once more a little tardily, to the climactic *came*. Now, if we represent the lines that rhyme with each other by the same letter of the alphabet, and the number of iambic feet in the line by a subscript number, we may write a formula for the first of the two stanzas as follows:  $a_5 b_5 a_5 b_5 b_5 c_5 b_5 c_5 c_6$ . Comparison with the second stanza will show that this formula will equally well represent it also. We have then produced a generalized stanzaic formula that expresses what we may call the characteristic Spenserian stanza "tune," its special succession of accentual rhythms, accompanied by its own special order of rhyme-chimes. It is evident that the successive stanzas, so long as they remain Spenserian stanzas, are parallel with each other in their general order of metrical and rhyme sequences; it is evident also that they constantly vary from each other in their detailed effects of rhyme tone-color, since the individual rhyme-words, and with them their vowel and consonantal music, are constantly changing as the different pictures pass successively through the repetitions of the Spenserian stanza form.

The jewel-box stanza represented by this abstract, almost algebraic Spenserian stanza formula,  $a_5 b_5 a_5 b_5 b_5 c_5 b_5 c_5 c_6$ , thus deprived of its jewel, the thought-content, may now be examined for its aesthetic values on the basis of principles fundamental to art in general. So *any stanza, wholly irrespective of its thought-content, may be viewed as a musical composition of rhythms and possibly of rhymes, a pure art form, and may be evaluated as such*. Upon this fact a number of the succeeding articles in this study will be based. We shall

examine a series of these jewel-boxes from which the jewels have been removed, attempting to study the artistry of each; and we hope later to replace some jewels in their caskets, and once more, and from a different angle, consider the relation between the two.

*A. G.*

## The Neurosis of Poets

(Idealism springs from a divine discontent with things as they are. The revolt is primarily personal; even when rising into the cosmic it nevertheless roots in personal emotion. Poetry, to ring true, must spring from genuine feeling—a feeling frequently poignant with suffering. These truisms the following contributed article voices from a novel angle.— *The Editors.*)

I read a group of poems today — at least they fulfilled almost all the established requirements for poetry. The meter was carefully and accurately wrought, the rhymes were perfect, many of the words and phrases have been accepted as particularly poetic for over two hundred years, and. . . . Well, I have read advertisements for vacuum cleaners that came nearer to being poetry.

That unique lyricist, E. E. Cummings, says that poets and artists are unfortunate persons who are trying to capitalize their neuroses. That was the trouble with these poems — there was no neurosis. In its place was a sickening, sweetish sentimentality.

Now a taste for the neurotic is a highly developed taste. It may even be a perverted or decadent taste; but when one has acquired it, anything that does not have its flavor seems unendurably flat. It is like biting into Eskimo pie when one's mouth is fixed for roquefort. It is possible that there are forms of life, a sponge or a paramoecium, for instance, that cannot distinguish Eskimo pie from roquefort cheese; and there are people, perhaps, who cannot recognize this neurotic flavor in poetry and, therefore, try to measure it by some rule. But those who know detect it by its essence. They do not go by rule or form or weight or size or color. Verse is a thing that may be manufactured out of words; but poetry grows only out of the wounds and the hunger, out of the neurosis of those who have

a passion for beauty.

What, then, is this neurosis with which poets are afflicted? A neurosis is an injury to a nerve that in no apparent way changes its structure. It is an injury to the spirit or emotional nature that can be detected by no physical means. The poet, or creative artist of any kind, has an extremely sensitive emotional nature and is, therefore, very easily wounded. He has a craving for beauty that is never satisfied.

When the physical body is injured, nature produces an extra growth, an excrescence, to protect and heal the wound. An organ or a gland that is undernourished will sometimes enlarge itself in an effort to make up the deficiency. And so the artist tries to heal *his* wounds and appease his craving by creating beauty for himself. Beauty is as essential to his well-being as bread; and when this hunger is upon him, with pigments, or tones, or words, or whatever medium he chooses he tries to give tangible form to the beauty he craves. Sometimes he depicts the horror and misery and ugliness that cause his suffering, or as a contrast to the thing he really desires.

But whatever form his work may take, it is created primarily to satisfy the artists's own need. Fame or money or whatever else may accrue is only a secondary consideration. This is the thing that distinguishes the genuine from the spurious work of art. When the artist begins to produce for money or because an editor or an admiring public clamors for his work, he begins to lose the true touch. Though he be ever so skilful a craftsman his work lacks the vital essence; it may have a very high degree of artistry, but it is not genuine art.

This accounts for the fact that some who have shown great promise early in their careers have dwindled out in mediocrity or dismal failure. This is the reason that some of our most exquisite flowers of art have been produced in an environment of poverty and squalor, because at such a time the creator's

need to protect himself in a shell of his own imagination has been most acute. He produces it because it is possible to endure existence in such a place only by thus protecting himself. If he is unable to create this illusion he becomes insane or commits suicide.

This does not argue that poverty and squalor produce art. They do not. It is the highly emotional nature who has had enough contact with beauty to appreciate it and crave it, that produces art. What he produces depends upon the difference between the thing he desires and the thing he has; plus his ability to give his thought and emotions external form. When he can surround himself with the things he desires, then his need to create is gone. He may, out of habit, continue to do the same kind of work, but the originality and vitality that make the work worth while have gone out of it.

But there are those who crave a beauty that exists nowhere upon the earth. They have a truly incurable malady. Always seeming to glimpse the thing they want upon a distant hill, they lead a harassed and wandering existence — eternal vagabonds. This passion for beauty, or for the illusion of beauty, may become a torment that never lets them rest, and they will follow it wherever it leads, through want and privation, through danger and crime and degradation.

And then there are those who realize that the things they covet exist only in their own minds, and so they find a measure of contentment in spinning out their dreams. With increasing skill in handling their medium, with broader experiences in life, they go on and on. They are the great creators who never let success spoil them, because in their own minds they are still unsatisfied.

*Muriel Wright*

## Editorially Speaking

The Editors of THE LYRIC WEST are encumbered with a quaint modesty that forbids them to announce to the world that they are publishing the “best” or the “only literary” or the “most representative” of poetry magazines after the manner of certain of our editorial brethren. Still, as evidence of the influence of the magazine we do point with what we believe is justifiable pride to the fact that a poem, *The Orient Visits New York*, by Dr. Chi-Hwang of China, English verse-form by Edna Worthley Underwood, which appeared in the number of THE LYRIC WEST published in Los Angeles on January fifth last, had in less than a month been reprinted, in whole or part, in forty-one newspapers and reviews, including *The Literary Digest*.



## **Error**

In our “Younger Singers” Department in the February issue, the poem, *That Day*, by Elinor Fuller, should have been accredited to The Finch School, 61 East 77th St., New York City.