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NO. 3

The LYRIC WEST

A Magazine of American Verse



IN THIS ISSUE

Siddie Joe Johnson | Noel Stearn

Lucile Perry Ames | A. B. Leigh

A. G. and others

THE ARTISTRY OF THE STANZA, XIII

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The Lyric West

Vol. VI, No. 3

A Magazine Of American Verse

December, 1926

Edited by Allison Gaw and Ethelean Tyson Gaw

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The Lyric West

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Among Our Contributors

Jessie Lemont has contributed to *Harpers Magazine*, *The Century Magazine*, *Poet-Lore*, and *The Catholic World*. Among her translations are two volumes, *Auguste Rodin*, and *Poems*, by Rainer Maria Rilke.

Faith Baldwin is well known for her prose as well as for her verse. Among her novels may be mentioned *Laurel of Stony Streams*, *Mavis of Green Hill*, *Magic and Mary Rose*, *Those Difficult Years*, and *Thresholds*.

Alice Ferrin Hensey, writing from the Belgian Congo, but formerly of Indiana, where she wrote and staged a number of pageants, is now the editor of a journal printed in French, Loukundo, and Lingala in Congo Belge and called *Ekim ea Tsango*.

Charles Howard Marsh is head of the Music Department in Redlands University, California. He has published volumes of songs as well as numerous articles on musical subjects.

Both Mary Brent Whiteside and Noel Stearn, whose exquisite verse has appeared frequently in THE LYRIC WEST, are well-known to the verse-reading public.

Will Chamberlain is the author of *Songs of the Sioux*, Lilian Lewis of *Protesilaus and Laodamia*, a poetic play, and A. B. Leigh of a volume now in press, *Silver Pastures*.

Ada Hastings Hedges is the winner of the Kathryn Wilson Prize for the best sonnet appearing last year in the *Muse and Mirror*.

This month we have one contributor from the Congo Belge, four from New York, one from Michigan, one from Wisconsin, one from South Dakota, one from Kansas, one from Georgia, one from Texas, one from New Mexico, two from Oregon, and five from California.

Siddie Joe Johnson

Christmas Shopping

I shall buy for those I love
(When the shops are gay again)
Tinsel stars that whisper of
Light on old Judea's plain;

Scarves enmeshing blue as deep
As the veil Madonna wore;
Ivory shepherds carved to keep
Hallowed watch for evermore;

Fragrances, embroidering
Every thought with frankincense;
Golden trinkets to which cling
Grace and old significance; —

These the things that I shall buy
When, against the wall of night,
All the stark December sky
Blossoms with the Christmas light.

Chard Powers Smith

Roman Marching Song

Like dawn across the universe my banner is unfurled.
My eagles scream like meteors across the heavens
hurled,
And like the marching gods my legions tramp across
the world.
Rome! Rome! Rome!

The campfires of my armies are the million watching
stars.
The earth's rent mountain-summits are my ancient
battle scars.
Jove's thunder is my battle tread; my javelin is Mars.
Rome! Rome! Rome!

Dawn steals across the battlefield behind my marching
drum,
Men stir and wake a family, and the world a single
home;
And women whisper at the gates, "The Roman peace is
come."
Rome! Rome! Rome!

I make a lantern of my walls to hold the human spark,
And east and west my galleys glint through glooms of
whale and shark,

And north and south my ægis lights the old chaotic
dark.

Rome! Rome! Rome!

I bind mankind together by the sign of axe and rods.

I smelt the living gold from every living flesh that
plods,

And raise of it one image — man a god among the gods.

Rome! Rome! Rome!

Mary Brent Whiteside

The Bulbul and the Child

Where lovely Nazareth rises still
In blue and azure, like a visible song.
Upon a gray and ivory hill,
An evening when soft rain had cooled the sands
And thirsting valleys, that had waited long,
There stood a lad, as any palm tree stands,
Where branches shook wet silver on His hands.

He saw a cloud of filmy wings
Go skyward in a glimmering flight,
While dark against the many-tinted light,
A bulbul soared among the delicate things,
And creatures colored as the sea foam is
Straightway were prey of his.
Then, where the air turned silver, high and long
Fell showers of song,
Like arrows of sharp gold,
Shaped to a rhythm infinitely old
Yet like a flame to hold —
Arrows immeasurably swift and bright
In audible flight,
That pierced His being through and through
Yet left His shaken heart-strings tuned anew,

And Mary pondered when He said to her,
“So lovely things must break

For very beauty's sake —
Small, lovely things — to build a lovelier.”
And then He told her of the wings that went,
Dyed with soft fires, to their death.
And is it God's mysterious intent
That weaker creatures, fragile as a breath,
Should perish that a bulbul's throat
Might shape an arrowy note?
“Then is all greater loveliness,” He said,
“Wrought out of beauty — dead.”

Charles Howard Marsh

A Venetian Night

Amethystine vistas,
Mysterious golden murk,
Pinnacled and fairy-towered —
Purple mountains fading into blue
As the pageant of sunset passes,
Bringing in its healing train
The blessed stillness of the night,
Dream-laden and wistful; —
And ever at shut of day,
When all things are homing,
Comes the wonder where you are —
Where, under the blue of heaven?
And I wonder too
If the dream we lived is still on you. . . .

How can one measure a dream? —
A beautiful, intangible, ineffable dream? —
A dream that sings through days and nights
Like a scarlet poppy in a field of green?
I cannot see a dawn
But that one dawn comes dreaming back,
That lyrical dawn in Venice.

Do you remember the grey old palace opposite our
window —
Its Gothic windows and its tiled roof —

Its chimney clusters and its crumbling walls,
Seamed and graven with the very history of Life?
Do you remember the vermilion shutters on the
 window opposite,
And the burnt-sienna grating on the water-gate of the
 canal?

The canal was a shining palette
Set with greens and blues and violets
And mirrored reds and cadmiums,
Mixed to living rhythms by black palette-knives,
The gondolas.
What pageantry and pomp those old buildings had
 looked upon!
What sorrow and heart-ache and love!

And do you remember our little room itself? —
The worn stone floor,
The furniture of a day long gone,
The old silken hangings of the bed,
Faded and frayed, but beautiful still?
Hark! Do you hear from the canal
A gondolier calling, calling?
Down the empty, echoing corridors of the passing years
Do you not hear another calling, calling, calling,
In the soft Italian dusk of that old room,
Tapestried with a myriad dreams,
Redolent of a thousand loves?

I wondered then, I wonder now,
Did ever Venice, wise-old in love,
Ere see a love like ours?

Like April rain in the hush of night, you came —
Like a nightingale's song in a moonlit glen, you came —
Beautiful as that,
Pure as that,
With all the innocent trust of a child,
With all the exquisite beauty of a woman.
And then,
Before your Christ-like purity,
The winds and waves of passion's storm were stilled
And all the primal savagery that lurks in man's
 heritage
Melted like snow before the sun of your immaculate
 love.
The wonder of it thrills me now!
Your soft warm kisses, more a union of spirit than a
 contact of flesh —
Your firm white hands. . . .
Ah, how it all comes back!
The faint splash of water, the *lapis* sky, the purple
 silence. . . .
Contentedly you lay,
The white flower of your face surrounded by the golden
 petals of your hair,
As the first grey light of dawn
Illumined with dutiful precedence and fairy delicacy
Your golden hair.
Quietly, reverentially I kissed you,
And the love-light kindled in your half-closed eyes;
Your soft arm sought my neck,
Prolonging our lips' delight.
I wonder,

Could the kisses of Beatrice, of Helen, have been so
wonderful?
Oh for the pen of a Dante or of a Shelley,
Or the brush of a Leonardo!
What surpassing masterpieces would they have created
with such inspiration!
But I, a pauper in words,
A beggar in expression,
Could only adore.
What were the singing lines I wrote
Compared to the lyric joy of your lips?
What knowledge of perspective and chiaroscuro could
possibly reproduce
The mystic light of your eyes
Like violet dusk at the marge of a reed-lined pool?
Oh night of Beauty!
Magic twilight of Italy!
What a group of jewels, those hours,
In their magnificent setting of Venetian night!

Do you remember the coming of the dawn,
Tremulous and uncertain?
And do you remember . . . ? —
Yes, of course you do, even as I shall always remember,
Always, always.
Not all the corrosion of life's passing years
Can wear away the faintest outline of that magic
tracery of dream,
Sculptured of moonlight and love,
Fragrant with distant music over purple canals,

Fraught with the knowledge of only one night
together —

One little heart-beat of eternity
Crowded between sunset and dawn,
But holding like a crystal chalice
The wine of our devotion,
The elixir of our love.

With fitting ceremonial
We drank from the shining cup,
We drank to the full its glowing nectar,
And in the morning
(What a tawdry, earthy pulling-back of spirit was in
that pale light!)

You went out, into the damp grey day,
Pure and unsullied, even as you came.
What was it you said about no regrets? —
Ah yes, I remember —
“One should never regret beauty.”
But when you went,
Ah, God! All the longing and the heart-ache
That Venice ever knew
Seemed heaped about me in that little room that had
been
The shrine of our devotion,
The altar of our worship.
You had gone
As surely as the yielding of night,
As irrevocably as the passing of life.

.

And now through the dragging years
The old dream rises,
And memories
Like the splash of sun-lit fountains in the pool of my
 heart
Sparkle and merge,
Giving back in jeweled splendor of light
The exquisite mirage of a remembered dream,
The singing patterns of a golden night of love.

Edith B. Spaulding

Northumberland

“Follow, my love, come over the strand.”—Old Ballad.

*The years of this work-a-day world are so long
(Follow, my love, come over the strand),
So come to the land of romance and of song,
Whose queen is the Flower of Northumberland.*

To the realm of Olden Days,
Where, our glamoured eyes before,
Shining in the hearth-fire’s blaze
Lives our varied legend-lore.
There old Sherwood’s archers stand,
Clad in green, with bow in hand,
Led by gallant Robin Hood;
There the Kendal yeomen good,
Stout of heart and strong of limb,
Armed with clothyard shafts appear;
Or in groves primeval, dim,
Fair-haired Yseult hurls the spear.

*O, what does it matter our locks may be gray?
(Follow, my love, come over the strand) —
Shall we lose our allegiance to dawn of the day,
To dreams, and the Flower of Northumberland?*

More than tale of Alfred bold
Or Lochroyan’s silver strand

Love we best the legends old
Of our own Northumberland.
Tales of Percy, who would ride
Hunting on the Border-side —
Songs of her whose weary lot
Mourned the vows of love forgot.
Hers a garland sad to wear,
Woven of the willow green —
But in our romance-land fair,
It has crowned her maiden-queen.

*Shall we ever again know the fullness of joy
(Follow, my love, come over the strand)
That was ours when together, a girl and a boy,
We dreamed of the Flower of Northumberland?*

Noel Stearn

Second Hand

What if little barnacles have
Sailed the seas of Hind
While I have idled inland
With solid earth to tread?
What if they have weathered
Full many a treacherous wind
While I have lived in houses — yes,
And slept in a bed?

What if little barnacles have
Wandered fearful waters
Where maybe nymphs grew personal
In weird, unheard-of seas?
The most prodigious barnacle
Can't see the Siren's daughters!
And oh, my own adventures,
Fantastic sea adventures,
My fearful, fierce adventures
I take with inland ease!

Jessie Lemont

Storm

Valkyries, veiled in grey clouds edged with gold
Swept by the swift wind forward, fleetly ride
Across the sky — a darkly spreading tide
Surging to battle as in eons old.
Thunder sounds where their horses' hoofs have sped;
The lightning leaps along their singing spears;
The rain-fall is the torrent of their tears
Descending on the dim fields of the dead.
When the wild clash and clamour dies away,
Signalling far across the silent sky
Pennant on pennant streams forth; floating high
The rainbow colours lift in long array;
While fired by upflung torches — one by one —
Flame mounts from the High Altar of the Sun.

Ada Hastings Hedges

Evening

Now that the early rains have brought once more
The firelight and the intimate, sheltered gloom
Of curtains drawn, a charm not known before
Dwells in the shadows of my quiet room.
Moving against the murmur of the rain,
The velvet rustle of the wood-flame weaves
A subtle harmony, while down the pane
There comes the vagrant splash of dripping leaves.

In this immediate peace there is no word
That for some deep and strangely scented night
In June, old loneliness shall be deferred;
Even the certainty has taken flight
That there is yet a tryst I shall fulfil
With heartbreak waiting on an April hill.

Faith Baldwin

Winter Sunset

Not long ago the sunset, like a bird,
Took wings . . and flew . . to nest in bush and tree;
Men named it — Autumn. It has passed. And now
The sky is like a bowl of ice-blue glass
From which wine spills — red, royal wine; and wine,
Like laughter, golden; green wine, delicate;
Slow purple wine, more strange than young men's
dreams.

The sky is like a bowl of ice-blue glass.
Wine spills upon the altar-cloth of earth,
Upon the black, imploring arms of trees . . .
Trees in a windless hour breathless as
Suspended heartbeats, standing gravely there,
The dark mysterious priests, the naked priests
Wine-drenched, their roots in secrecy, who wait
The voiceless coming of petitioned night.

Geraldine Seelemire

Wolf-Dawn

Dawn slunk along the hills,
A lean, grey wolf
Lips drawn back, eyes steel
Into the valley.

At night
The wolf hid in the hills
With foam on his jaws
And his rough coat smeared with blood.

Lucile Perry Ames

Two in a Garden

Against the lamplight, as the door
Swung open, stood a man,
And silhouetted waited there
The time a gentleman
Must take in drawing on a glove
And settling a cane,
Before he pulled a heavy door
To blot the light again.

Then down the mossy flags he stepped,
Between the hollyhocks,
Which stood like gaudy sentinels
To guard the four-o'clocks.
On every side the willow trees
Rained beauty over him,
And overhead the moon shone white
And luminously dim,
All haloed like a saint's sweet head . . .
While with his cane he cut
To right, to left, among the bloom,
And broke and flayed each shut
And tender blossom, till its scent
Rose up and followed him
Like little faint, reproachful wraiths.
The moon, all haloed dim
And misty like a saint's sweet head,

Looked down and brightened, for
A pleasant thing it is to see
So many blossoms pour
Their sweetness out upon the night
For such a gentleman.

A shadow slipped out from the hedge
And, silent-footed, ran
Beside the man. The locusts swayed
In shivering ecstasy,
And overhead the haloed moon
Shone on them tenderly.

He reached the gate, and hung his cane
Upon a faultless arm,
And touched the latch — nor did he feel
A sinking of alarm . . .

The shadow sidled nearer then,
And daintily the moon
Shone on a slender stroke of steel.
Now, in the marsh, a loon
Began its senseless, pleading wail,
And all the flower-wraiths
Fled terror-struck and tried to find
Their little flower-graves.

Humped against the garden wall
There lay an ugly thing
Which might have been a man but that
It was not anything.

Near in the pathway lay the cane
That with so sure a stroke
Had clipped so many flower-heads.
From somewhere came a choke
And gurgle as if water sank
Into the thirsty earth.
And water possibly it was;
For what is color worth
When blood is no more richly-hued
Than water on a night
When shadows lie beneath a moon
All luminously white?

Alice Ferrin Hensey

Jungle-Trailing Along the Equator

Fair exquisite girl
Like a glorious rose-flushed pearl,
With tawny crown of spun-silk hair,
Madonna brow and empress air —
Will you jungle-trail with me?

Fair exquisite girl,
When the red moon blazes through,
And two spotted leopards snarl
Near the writhing python's "bed,"
And the owl whoops, "You! You! You!"
Will you jungle-trail with me?

Fair exquisite girl,
When Great River's wild and black,
And the hissing lightning leaps
Lurid across the equator's track,
And dark shivering trees down-crash —
Will you jungle-trail with me?

Fair exquisite girl —
This the supreme last test —
When gray sea-hounds gay sail home,
And glad dancers whirl and glide
On wide, new-waxed, moon-white decks,

And lark-tones ache in your throat —
Hark! *Home* is calling — *calling!*
Will you jungle-trail with me?

Bessie Pryor Palmer

Comparisons

Love fared like the lowering sky;
Not a gold-ringed cloud crept by;
Sad-toned doves attuned the day —
Close, but sounding far away.

(Think, if Love had journeyed by!)

Morning lent but little light;
Noontide less; then duskless night.
Nature, prone to understand,
Drained the cup within my hand.
(Think, oh think, if Love should die!)

But my heart drooped not for long:
Up from Somewhere came a song!
Now the clock in trochees ticked it;
Now a train in dactyls clicked it,
(Never mind if Love's unkind!)

Then I sang, exultant, free
Of the small hurts holding me:
 "Never mind
 If Love's unkind.
Think, oh think, had Love passed by;
Think, my heart, if Love should die!
 Never, never, never mind!"

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Lucile Perry Ames

Morning

A bough drops its load and snaps back,

Icicles drip in the sun . . .

But where is the scar in the earth

Where I wept when the day was done?

Will Chamberlain

To Edna, Pointing Out Pictures

This Maxfield Parrish *Daybreak* dream
Is of high art the golden cream,
But in the deep pools of your eyes
Brood nameless prints of Paradise.
What treasure for a soul to know
The witchery of old Corot,
But — May enchantment never cease!
I follow you — my masterpiece.
I note your comments on Landseer,
Who for lost dogs will start a tear,
But no art ever, anywhere,
Could snatch the luster of your hair.
Raphael, Turner — matchless twain!
You voice the splendor of their reign,
Though artist proud nor gravely meek
May solve the tinting of your cheek.
“You know this one, *The Angelus*;
In humbleness how glorious!
’Twere worship just to glimpse Millet.”
I whisper: “Even now I pray.”
“*The Vampire!* How it does distil
A menace meet to ruin, kill!”
You do not linger long at it —
Babes, angels, mastiffs are more fit.
Sargent has made his *Prophets* speak,
Or almost, to the minds that seek,

But you, with not a sentence stirred,
Express the gallery's last word.
You pause before a Remington,
With prairie magic wildly spun,
While I — I halt before a girl
Whose glory sets my pulse a-whirl,
They peer down at me from their frames —
Cherubs, madonnas, old men, dames.
Spellbound I mark the flight of art
The while a twitching thralls my heart.
Perhaps I should be circumspect.
Your wisdom seems to say, "Reflect,
O man, reflect, and thus renew!"
I do so, Edna — but of you.

Olive Brooks

A Woman Looks at Weather

After Sunset

Pink and lavender clouds
Behind the slim, grey cottonwood. . . .
Do you think silver lace
Over rose and mauve georgette
Would be becoming?

Sudden Snow

Already the junipers
Have powdered hair,
Piled high
For a costume party.

Blue Evening

The dark hill
Has flung a purple mantilla
Over her shoulder
The gold clasp of a prospector's fire
Holds it in place.

A. B. Leigh

In Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon

*In Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon,
One twilight touched with stars,
I saw you by the fountain,
Filling the earthen jars;
And loitering in the nightfall
Alone with dreams and you,
You told me how a queen had died
Because she was untrue.*

In Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon
He from his wine-drowned feast
Had raged into the gardens
In madness like a beast.
They watched the king and guarded —
His Captain played the king
And held the kingdom welded;
And nightly came to bring

Reports of royal matters
To tell the dawn-like queen;
And every night together
The two were loitering seen
Where shadowy paths led deeper
To distant bowers and cool,
Where fountains fell in music
Into a lilied pool.

In robes of silver tissues,
And sweet with galbanum,
Agleam with shining jewels
Each dusk the Queen would come.
Beyond, the mad king bellowed;
The envious guards looked on;
The lovers lingered loving
Till came the soft-eyed dawn.

One night the mad king saw them.
His madness lifted — fled.
He called the startled Captain
And to him trembling said:
“I owe you much — my kingdom.
In battles side by side
We two have fought together,
Our souls been tested — tried.

“In you I’ve ever trusted;
My faith in you I hold.
I will forget your folly
As some strange tale that’s told.
But envious guards have seen you
Night after night pass by,
You with the Queen — her lover;
And so the Queen must die.

“Release the guards and bid them
Go to the Queen’s retreat.
There now the Queen is waiting

For kisses hot and sweet.
Send there the guards and bid them
Kiss her till night's hour flies —
Give her her fill of kisses —
Kiss her until she dies.”

*In Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon,
One twilight touched with stars,
You told this story to me
While filling water jars
From fountains by the gateway
Where traffic flowed a tide;
And others stopped to hear you
Tell how a queen had died.*

Lilian Lewis

My Mistress Whimsey

My mistress Whimsey, when she goes
Abroad, is clad in far fair clothes.
She wears a poppy on her shoe,
And on her belt a cockatoo;
Her bonnet's trimmed with just the tip
Of a wild humming-bird's sweet lip;
While on her petticoat small shells
Shake in the breeze like silver bells.
Her jacket's made of faery cloth
(And that's made from the dust of moth).
Her stockings too are very green,
And halfway up their length is seen,
Embroidered in a lovely way,
A shilling and a sapphire bay.
My mistress Whimsey too wears rings
And yellow bangles and such things,
Spun from the glass from an old mill
In ruins 'neath a goblin's hill.
My mistress Whimsey, as you see,
Is quite enchanting utterly.

Norma Miller

Diana Knows

A woman never quite loves a dawn,
Nor noon somnolence,
Nor the colors of sunset,
For somewhere within her
There is a sly being
Like a slendor white cat,
That likes to come out in silence
And look at the night
While men sleep heavily
After their labors.

Our Younger Singers

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Beatrice Tibeau

Sea Moods

Flash of white wings against the sky of blue,
Splash of white foam on the sea of blue,
Dash of white sails by the winds borne on
Over the blue.

Flashing and splashing and dashing,
Wings and waters and winds
Over the blue.

Surge of the wings that span the deep,
Dirge of the tides that draw from the deep,
Scourge of the winds that roar and sweep
Over the deep.

Surging and dirging and scourging,
Wings and water and winds
Over the deep.

(Long Beach High School, Long Beach, California.)

Seth Jehiel Felt

Into Your Beautiful Stillness

Into your beautiful stillness,
Smiling, you led me on,
Unveiling the fires of loveliness to me,
Weaving for me unknown visions
Visions like pale wood-blossoms,
Or the half-finished songs of a thrush
Into your beautiful stillness
Like a conqueror you heralded me,
I who have asked only to stand outside,
Content at your portal forever.

(Polytechnic High School, Long Beach, California.)

The Artistry of the Stanza

XIII

A Study in Rhyme Emphasis

To attempt to weigh so subtle a thing as a rhyme emphasis, the aesthetic reaction produced in a fairly sensitive human mind by the rhyme-linking of two or more words, is to attempt a feat more delicate than any performed by the most skilfully devised apparatus in the physicist's laboratory. In the absolute sense this can be accomplished by no instrument known to the scientist. Yet many of the most exquisite effects of verse depend upon such variations of rhyme emphasis, and the analysis of their sources is worth the endeavor, and is, indeed, essential as a preliminary to attacking some of our further problems in this series. It is therefore the aim of the present article to suggest in a broad way, and by contrasted examples, some of the elements that in different cases enter into this highly complex problem. Under the circumstances it will be necessary to discuss the matter in a somewhat technical way, a type of treatment that in these articles we attempt to reduce to a minimum. May the spirit of Christmas illumine our path for us and for our readers!

We may consider two very distinct varieties of rhyme music, each having its own artistic effect appropriate to a specific type of thought or mood. The first may be represented by Charles Wolfe's *The Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna*. We quote the poem in full.

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.

We buried him darkly at dead of night,
The sod with our bayonets turning;
By the struggling moonbeam's misty light,
And the lantern dimly burning.

No useless coffin enclosed his breast,
Not in sheet nor in shroud we wound him,
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest
With his martial cloak around him.

Few and short were the prayers we said,
And we spoke not a word of sorrow;
But we steadfastly gazed on the face that was dead,
And we bitterly thought of the morrow.

We thought, as we hollowed his narrow bed,
And smoothed down his lonely pillow,
That the foe and the stranger would tread o'er his
head,
And we far away on the billow!

Lightly they'll talk of the spirit that's gone,
And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him—
But little he'll reck, if they let him sleep on
In the grave where a Briton has laid him.

But half of our weary task was done
When the clock struck the hour for retiring;
And we heard the distant and random gun
That the foe was sullenly firing.

Slowly and sadly we laid him down,
From the field of his fame fresh and gory;
We carved not a line, and we raised not a stone —
But we left him alone in his glory.

Here the subject, the funeral of a military hero — the night scene — the mood of solemnity, well nigh of gloom — all demand appropriate metrical setting. The first stanza opens tentatively with imperfect rhymes, *note, shot, hurried, buried*. The poem then settles into its stride, the perfect rhymes coming, *abab*, with insistent regularity at absolutely predictable intervals — almost with the solemn precision of the muffled drum-beat that, under less perilous conditions, would have attended the general's funeral cortege to the grave. If the reader will examine the heavily emphatic rhymes from the second stanza to the end of the

poem, he will observe that they occur under the following conditions:

1. Each pair of rhymes marks the end of a pair of balanced lines — the two *a* rhymes falling at the end of tetrameters, and the two *b*'s of trimeters.

2. The rhymes always occur on words important to the thought — usually on nouns or parts of verbs, once on a strong adjective, twice on strong adverbs, once on a strong prepositional phrase. This accords with the principle enunciated (a little too sweepingly) by Dr. C. T. Winchester, in one of the rare critical references to the subject: "Rhyme inevitably emphasizes in meaning somewhat the words on which it falls, and therefore ought never — save for humorous effect — to fall on unimportant words."*

3. In these important words the rhymes always occur on syllables having the main accent, i.e., there are no such rhymes as *pageantry, revelry*.

4. In each stanza not only do each pair of rhyme words have vowels in the accented syllables that stand out in heavy contrast with the accented vowels in the opposed pair of rhyme words (e.g., in the second quatrain, *night*, *turning*, *light*, *burning*), but further, the rhymes are contrasted in that the odd pair (the *a*'s) are always monosyllabic and the even pair (the *b*'s) always dissyllabic.

5. In the rhyme scheme the heavy dissyllabic rhymes occur in the most emphatic positions, namely, at the ends of the second and fourth lines, the last word of the last line having terminal emphasis in the stanza.

6. The second and fourth lines are always heavily end-stopt; that is, the last word ends an important grammatical construction (note in this position the preponderance of semicolons), and a new grammatical construction begins with the following line. The first and third lines are usually also end-stopt, although not so heavily; that is, they end grammatical constructions, but the following line is nevertheless rather closely connected in sense with its predecessor, as is indicated by the preponderance of mere commas at the end of the odd verses. This very general end-stopping of the metrical units of the poem tends to make the rhyme-words stand out in relief by requiring a slight natural pause after each.

**Some Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 263.

7. After the opening stanza the *b* lines, the second and fourth, are always perfectly rhymed. The only imperfect rhyme* occurs (in the concluding stanza) at a point where the ear most easily accepts it, that is, at the end of the third line, a position in which it is quickly covered (somewhat in the fashion of the resolution of a musical discord) by the ensuing satisfactory answer of the heavy double rhyme of the fourth line to the second, which gives a perfect musical close to the stanza and the poem. How much more important is the rhyming of the

fourth line than that of the third may be tested by first substituting *shaft* for *stone*, and then, after restoring *stone*, by replacing *with his glory* by *with his honor* or *in his splendor*. The first experiment, giving *abcb*, is musically fairly acceptable. The second, producing a form *abac*, which ends on a discord, will be felt to be aesthetically impossible.

The conditions above pointed out all tend to give rhymes high emphasis. We may complete the list by recalling that in a preceding article two other means to the same effect have been noted, namely, bringing the rhyming words close together (as in the couplets capping the *ababcc* of Byron's *The Isles of Greece*), and employing in succession a number of words on the same rhyme sound (as in the *ababcc* of Wordsworth's *The Afflictions of Margaret*.)

*Technically a rhyme is perfect when there is an identity of sound between the two vowels under the main stress in the two words respectively, accompanied by an identity of sound in everything that follows those two vowels; but a dissimilarity between the two words in what precedes those accented vowels; as, *breast, rest*, or *upbraid him, laid him*. A rhyme is imperfect when there is a resemblance in sound between the two words but the conditions of the perfect rhyme are not completely fulfilled; as, *note, shot*, or *hurried, buried*.

The opposed type of handling rhymed verse, regularly and yet with considerable freedom of rhyme emphasis, may be illustrated by Shelley's matchless *To a Skylark*.

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!

Bird thou never wert,

That from heaven, or near it,

Pourest thy full heart

In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher

From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest. . .

. .

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of heaven
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen — but yet I hear thy shrill delight.

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see — we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is
overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see,
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody. . . .

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged
thieves.

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous and clear and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine;
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine. . . .

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then — as I am listening now.

This celebration of the joyous flight of the lark is contrasted in almost every possible respect with Wolfe's poem. In a spirit of exalted exultation at the contemplation of sheer beauty, although with a tinge of melancholy at human limitations, it paints the upward singing vault into the sunset. And so the

spirit of the versification is likewise one of freedom, although with careful preservation of the lyrical form. Here is no earthy tread; the very verse-form soars and floats on wings. Especially interesting is the long fifth line, metrically the equivalent in time length of the combined third and fourth. The stanza is really a masked six-line form, *a3b3a3b3c3b3*. The two *a* rhymes help to energize the rhythmic form, and the omission of an *a* at the point *c* gives a periodic relief that prevents any sense of mechanical regularity. The main pause in the stanza (as indicated by high punctuation marks) plays to and fro freely and spontaneously, and any line may be freely run-on, while even at one point a complete stanza is run-on into the next. As in *The Burial of Moore*, the rhyme words in a given stanza are generally in high contrast; and again double rhymes stand out against single rhymes. But the double rhymes are now in the odd lines (the *a*'s), where the normal rhyme emphasis is less — so much less, in fact, that when in the fifth and ninth of the quoted stanzas monosyllabic rhymes are substituted, we are scarcely, if at all, conscious of it. The dominant *b* rhymes are now almost without exception the lighter monosyllabics, making the whole rhyme effect much more airy than in Wolfe's poem. The sole striking exception is in stanza 2, where the *b* rhymes are *springest*, *wingest*, *singest*, and it is notable that this stanza is also the only one in the poem in which physical action is expressed strenuously, so that one feels the heavy *b* rhymes here to be in place for musical intensification of the thought. Further, Shelley rhymes freely on secondary accent, as in *thee*, *see*, *melody*, thus still further lightening the delicate rhyme effects.

If we examine the use here of imperfect rhymes, too, we shall learn much concerning this technique, for we may measure comparative emphasis on rhyme words partly by the strength of our protest, when the rhyme is violated. Imperfection in *a* rhymes, as in the first and third of the

quoted stanzas, we scarcely notice. In the *b* groups imperfect rhymes may occur under any of three conditions. Let us indicate the imperfect rhyme by *x*. We may then have *xbb*, as in stanza 1 (*wert, heart, art*). This satisfies the ear completely, the imperfection quickly disappearing from memory under the influence of the perfect *b* pair that follows. Again we may have *bxb*, as in stanza 7 (*leaves, gives, thieves*). This, in general, we accept as an agreeable variant. As a somewhat special case of this type note the eighth quoted stanza (*grass, was, surpass*), where *was* has its rhyme force diminished by its verbal colorlessness and by the closely run-on effect that throws the stress on *joyous* in the following line and helps to obscure the imperfection. Finally, there are several instances in the poem of the third case, *bbx*, as in stanza 4 (*sphere, clear, there*). This is less musical than either of the other two sequences, as the imperfection stands out against a rhyme already very clearly established and is not covered by any following rhyme effect; yet we accept it when the variation is slight. When, however, as in the fifth stanza (*loud, cloud, overflowed*), the sonorous tone-color of the last word over-emphasizes the variation, we are stirred to protest; and in the final stanza (*know, flow, now*), the reader with a keen ear for the music of words cannot help feeling that the effect is not the happiest possible for a rounded conclusion.

We may then sum up the chief lessons of the *Skylark* as to form by repeating that, as in the sombre *Burial of Sir John Moore*, the chosen stanzaic form is always kept clearly defined and the rhymes stand in generally marked contrast; but that, in harmony with the buoyant and beauty-worshipping spirit of the poem, lightness and variety are obtained by the systematic omission of the third *a* rhyme, by freely shifting the main pause and the subordinate pauses, by reducing the dominant *b* rhymes to monosyllables, and by employing various gradations of rhyme emphasis. And as to rhyme emphasis we

may once more point out that it is strengthened by association with lines of equal metrical length; by the use under the rhyme of significant words; by the use of syllables under the primary accent; by contrast with neighboring rhymes; by increase in the number of rhyming syllables in the rhyme words and by increase in sonorousness; by locating them, in interlacing rhyme orders, in the *b* positions; by following them with end-stop; by perfection of rhyme; by placing the rhymes in closer succession; and by increasing the number of words rhyming on the same sound. Conversely, it follows that rhyme emphasis may be reduced by the reverse processes.

Finally, suppose that, instead of preserving the stanzaic outline clearly, as in the two poems above discussed, the poet wishes for special reasons to obscure the form by suppression of the rhymes. So, in *My Last Duchess*, Browning elected to write in couplets and then destroyed the couplet effect in order to obtain a conversational tone. In this regard this poem is worth careful study — a hint that we shall leave the reader to follow out in detail from the suggestions already given if he so desires.

A. G.

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Of The Lyric West: a Magazine of American Verse, published monthly, (except July and August), at Los Angeles, California, for October 1, 1926. STATE OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES. ss.

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