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NO. 6

The
LYRIC WEST

A Magazine of American Verse



IN THIS ISSUE

Harold Wesley Melvin | Ruth Aughiltree

Miriam Allen de Ford | Mary J. Elmendorf

L. B. M. and others

IN REVIEW

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The Lyric West

Vol. VI, No. 6

A Magazine Of American Verse

March, 1927

Edited by Allison Gaw and Ethelean Tyson Gaw

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Among Our Contributors

Dana Burnet, for seven years on the staff of the *New York Evening Sun*, is the author of four volumes, *Poems*, *The Shining Adventure*, *The Lark*, and *It is a Strange House*.

The Pretensions of American Poets, by James Rorty, is scheduled to appear in the next issue of *The Saturday Review*.

Helen von Kolnitz Hyer has contributed to *Adventure*, *Nature Magazine*, *Child Life*, and *Poet Lore*, and has published a volume of verse, *Santee Songs*. Mrs. Hyer is associate curator of the Kent Scientific Museum at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Helene Mullins has contributed to *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Bookman*, and *The Conning Tower*, *New York World*. Her first volume of poems will come off the press in the near future.

Miriam Allen de Ford, a contributor to *The Nation*, *The Forum* and many poetry magazines, is the author of *Seven Little Blue Books* on Latin authors, and *Angels' Flight*, a play.

Harold Wesley Melvin is a member of the English faculty of Northeastern University.

Dean B. Lyman, Jr. is a member of the Faculty of the University of New York. It was erroneously stated in this

Louis Ginsberg, Ruth Aughiltree, John Russell McCarthy, and Sydney King Russell are well known to readers of THE LYRIC WEST and have been previously noted in this column.

Of the twenty-five contributors to this issue one comes from Massachusetts, five from New York, two from New Jersey, one from Washington, D. C., one from Ohio, one from Michigan, one from Colorado, one from Iowa, one from Washington, one from Arizona, eight from California and two from Oregon.

Harold Wesley Melvin

One Moment Facing Stars

The day's work done, the laborer now stands
A glorious moment on the hill and sees
The mighty tumult of the sunset fire.
Behind him lies the field he's plowed, in blue
And cooling shadow; and up the slope is borne
The scent of fresh-turned loam. He stands as still
As one who waits the earliest stars. With oak
And bending birch, with ant, with bee, with elk,
He is this moment fully earth's. . . spun swift
Away from Sun-and-Light to Dark-and-Stars!
Part of the living orb that rushes down
Through space about a Spark! a part of life,
Earth's life, that gazes for a breathless hour
Across the seas that wash the island stars!

The glowing dims, he turns to earth again.
Home from the hill he sits beside red coals,
Talks and forgets the emptiness of stars,
And burns the rush of space in laughter's fire!

Helene Mullins

A Singer is Silent

Chant Royal

Nay, leave the laurels on her lowered head,
Nor lift the mouth-band from her, though she sings
No more; nor pillage any lily-bed,
Gathering final gifts for her. Death brings
Not yet the hemlock-cup, and she is free
To rise, and roam the hillside dreamily,
To seek new themes among the delicate
Strewings of Spring, but she is satiate,
And listlessly she lingers in the shade.
Stand not before her, vexed, compassionate;
Cherish the few proud songs that she has made.

What grievous thing has touched her, that the red
Lips part no more to tell the wanderings
Of parted loves? what brutal hand has led
Her down dark paths where Grief's own hirelings
Foretold of grave disasters? what bold knee
Has bent to her, with mocking suavity,
That now she lies here, pale, inanimate,
Speaking no word, in sadness or in hate?
Nay, ask not what strange thing on her is laid,
Lest tears assail her, telling of her fate;
Cherish the few proud songs that she has made.

She is so young; few ecstasies have shed

Their petals over her; few sufferings
Have seasoned the pure flavor of her bread,
Yet now the swallows pass, with noisy wings,
The Spring comes by, with tales of mystery,
And still she rises not, nor seems to see
Occasion for a song. So let you wait
No longer, for the time is growing late,
But go, each one, to his appointed trade,
Nor in reproachful circles congregate.
Cherish the few proud songs that she has made.

Many like her are disinherited
Once they have made a few sweet offerings
In honor of the Muses; many tread
Steep roads, and bear the flags of foreign kings,
And die, without a single eulogy,
After a glorious youth. Calliope
Has wearied of this lovely laureate
Who finds all earthly moods inadequate,
And Thalia's friendship too begins to fade.
What more from her do you anticipate?
Cherish the few proud songs that she has made.

Among the faithful it is softly said
That she is merely pondering great things
To set to music. Be not comforted
By these fantastic, loyal reasonings,
Yet rouse her not up from her apathy
To take the laurels from her. It may be
That once more ere she sinks beneath the weight
Of Death's dark hand, her soul shall cultivate

A flower-like song. But if the funeral-spade
Must have a poor still mouth to suffocate,
Cherish the few proud songs that she has made.

Envoi

The breath of Time shall not obliterate
Her footsteps on the hill, though there be great
Brave singers yet to come. Oh, who has prayed
To see her crowned and robed in regal state?
Cherish the few proud songs that she has made.

Louis Ginsberg

Wet Lilacs

I have forgotten grief and all regret
Except a lane with lilacs dripping wet.
How beautiful it was to hear — how plain —
The low and silver fluting of the rain!
And then, as by a garden-wall we went,
The sunken flag-stones steamed luxurious scent;
Though birds were trickling notes from Heaven's edges,
The ghostly drizzle cobwebbed all the hedges. . . .
Here Eden was unbuilt once again, —
Its loveliness unravelled into rain . . .
So this I can remember of regret
And sorrow in a Spring with lilacs wet:
The gift of grief is Beauty's sweetest pain
Of haunted lilacs dripping in a lane.
And thus it was, when Love so proud was humbled,
That glimmering April twilight never crumbled;
Till now that rainy lilacs' dusk for me
Is harvesting a rich Eternity . . .

Verne Bright

The Bluebird

One was scarcely April
Upon a silver day
He came and sang within the wood
 A wild-sweet roundelay,
The hill was dim with violets
 Upon that day he came —
One spark of singing azure,
 He set the world aflame.

James Rorty

Spring Breakers

Spring is a warm tide lifted and borne
By the moon's kiss, the kiss of the yellow moon that
 leans
Above the troubled breathing of the sea.

Spring is a race, amid laughter of flowering foam,
And a crash on the rocks of the shore,
And a shout on the sands of the shore.

Spring opens the slough and makes the cresses green,
Spring casts the shooting stars in the meadow —
While the warm tides lift and pour,
While the bright waves clash their cymbals on the
 shore.

Lori Petri

Sheep

Sheep, cropping in a sheltered city park! . . .
Hushed, now, the strident voices of the town:
Bells tinkle on a windy Shropshire down,
And lovers lean at rustic bars, as dark
Brings huddled, woolly throngs to barn and fold.
Sheep . . . All the walls of time melt into mist,
And tattered lads weave dreams of amethyst,
The while they watch on lonely hills of old.
Sheep . . . Linked with sage and saint and avatar,
Since four at Bethlehem, one wintry night,
Looked up from their dim flocks to read the light
Of mystic portent flaming in a star.

Ruth Aughiltree

Mrs. Saml. Pepys Spends an Evening at Home

He's gone to my lord Sandwich's to sup.
I've strummed my lute, and stepped a dance till nine
With Moll, but had not heart to keep her up.
I've tried my ash brocade, a pattern fine
Enough for Lady Castlemaine. But oh!
It ill becomes me else I wear a patch,
And that has Sam forbid — But even so,
I think I'll try it, for a wife must catch
Each chance she can to make herself as fair
As other femmes.

After, I stood a while
And watched the link-boys pass, wishing that Sam
Had sent me to the play. (How he would smile
To see my fidgets!) Then I took a dram
Of russet cyder Sam's good uncle bought.
But still the hours hung heavy. So I pried
Into Sam's papers which this day he brought
Home from the office, and at once I spied
A smallish leather book, its pages scrawled
With senseless signs; then on a page my name
Popped out, and "Crew," and "Lady Bauld,"
And then some tags of French. The notion came
This will be Sam's true tale of what he'll see
And what he'll do from day to day, all writ

In this blind way to keep it hid from me!
He little guesses I know most of it!
He little thinks whose eye it was that peered
Into that shuttered room at Allingmain
One dim June dusk. *Ma foi!* that time I feared
He'd catch me catching him with Mistress Lane —
And it was I who passed him in the Fleet
Last Friday week when he went by with Pegg.

Poor Sam, he likes them young and over-sweet;
He likes a slender ankle, and a legg
That can look brave in silk, a rounded breast
Not too confined by lace, a peachblow skin,
A ready-kissing mouth, and for the rest —
Why, any comely wench can take him in
By flattery. Sam says he is a slave
To beauty. Well, mayhap he is, but yielding
Beauty, and must his filles de joie behave
As grand as titled dames. Kitty Feilding,
The talk of all the town, has yet an air
That I could never ape, though I should try
Till life was spent . . .

I feel so triste, I swear
I sometimes wish we still were poor, and I
Baking and brewing, washing with my hands
My Sam's foul clothes, the while I was as gay
From morn till night, as queen of faery-lands.
I had but one silk gownd, and every day
I donned it, and we sat full lovingly
Beside our fire. There was not any talk

Of dukes and duchesses, and what cared we
Whom last the King smiled on? A little walk
Along the river was our chiefest joy.
But now — but now — Ah, why must tender hearts
That love so dear, grow cold? A casual toy
Is all I am to Sam. If e'er he starts
A-making love, I know he is repenting
Somewhat he's done, some black-eyed serving-maid
He's kissed behind a door; and I, relenting,
Grow sorry and less chill. This game we've played
For eight years now, and I —

What's that? What's
that?

Oh, Sam, you're home at last! You're tired, I know;
Sit by the hearth, put by your cloak and hat,
And let me mull some ale. . . Oh, Sam, I've missed you
so!

John Russell McCarthy

Without Garment of Flesh

God stands upon the hills

Gloriously,

God praises the hills

In a maple tree.

God hears the merry river,

Eager ears up,

God listens to the river,

In a buttercup.

God walks through the city

In gold and jade,

God trips through the city

In a saucy maid.

But woe is the desert:

How can God go

Alone in the desert

Where yellow winds blow?

Ah, proud is the desert! —

Through her bright haze

Without garment of flesh

God broods and prays.

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Dorothy Stott Shaw

Bayou Salade

There is a music of gold, — aspen
Over a gray monotone its clear melody flinging,
And a long, purple chord where spruce reaches up
To a peak that goes clean to the sky with a great,
white singing!

Madge Ohe

The Clavilux

(The Color Organ)

Colors unfolded,
Shaped and reborn,
Converged, intermingled,
Exquisitely torn, —
Swirl and revolve
On a pivot of fire;
Temptation they write,
The heart's desire.
Orange emerges;
Blue blazes forth;
Purple descends,
Borealis of the north.
Upward, downward,
Passionate the pace,
Crossways, sideways —
A mad color race.
Slow the motion;
Soft tints glide;
Changed the rhythm,
Peaceful the stride.
Organ of color,
Assemblage of light,
Moonbeams your kingdom,
Sun's strength your might —
Borrowing from a rainbow

Spangled hues —
Violets, yellows,
Crimsons, blues.

Dana Burnet

Lone Willow

How beautiful the lone tree is,
Leaning against the water, the great ocean water, the
great sea. . . !
If you think there is no music in the air;
If you do not see dancers dancing on the neck of a giant
sitting bowed for a black cliff;
If you cannot perceive the virgin who, just now, fell
swooning,
With an exquisite drift of hair,
Into the arms of her lover shaped from cloud
(Was it Leda falling into the embrace of the Swan?);
If you have failed to visualize the passionate Christ
who, for vague, aesthetic reasons,
Is about to jump into the abyss;
If you do not see the goat-footed man running with
leaves in his hands down the breast of a huge
goddess he was too little to annoy;
If (because of the veils of dust before your eyes!) you
cannot see Life wanting its gesture and Beauty
posing for its legend; —
Then. . . . I say, then
You had better go play tennis on the hotel courts
Where the girl in the tan skirt
Is waiting to absorb you.

Eleanor Mary Titus

Evening

The world wears jewels in her hair tonight.
Oak trees hang a network of leaves
Above my head;
And in the sky the infant moon
Sleeps in the arms of the hills.

Sydney King Russell

Sonnet

Beauty like sand is slipping through my fingers,
Beauty like chaff is flying on the wind,
And round my heart a subtle fragrance lingers —
My ears with strangest melodies are dinned.
Beauty is singing in the wood and meadow
And crying by the opalescent sea;
Beauty is flying swiftly from her shadow,
Flinging rich crumbs of loveliness to me.
Oh, lovers lying with averted eyes
Among the grasses, soon the holy hour
Will pass, and love lay off the dear disguise,
While dust will swallow up the passion flower.
Moments like sands are slipping softly past;
Too frail are love and loveliness to last.

Miriam Allen de Ford

All Passes

A thousand years before us men were born,
And loved, and wept, and laughed, and toiled, and died.
A thousand years from now these things shall be.
And we who grasp this tiny transient morn,
This fleeting eve, imagine in our pride
That it can interest Life that we were we!

Poor passing beings, food for cosmic scorn,
Who wake athirst and sleep unsatisfied,
What subject we must make for ribaldry
To the long-seeing gods, who, laughter-torn,
Lay our brief chronicle of days beside
The record of the May-fly and the bee!

B. Y. Williams

A Sing-Song Girl

Just a sing-song girl of China —
I, who wait to see her pass,
Hear her ricksha bell's soft tinkle,
Catch a gleam of polished brass.
Cigarette smoke skyward blowing,
Wafted by a painted fan,
Like a banner marks her going
Down the street of old Tsinan.

Just a sing-song girl of China,
Dressed in ivory brocade,
Wrapped about with rare embroideries
Cunningly carved pins of jade
Ornament her jetty tresses;
All the mystery and grace
Of the Orient she expresses
In her piquant little face.

Just a sing-song girl of China,
In her ricksha speeding by
To a feast perhaps — exquisite
In her loveliness — but why
Should dark almond eyes soft-gleaming
And a little fluttering fan
Leave me all the morning dreaming
In a street of old Tsinan?

William A. Brewer, Jr.

Marionette-Play

He perched upon the mantel — dug his heels
Into some cranny of the roughened brick.
His stage, the upraised hearthstone, now reveals
 (By light of lamps laid on the floor) the trick
Of marionette-play from above. We sprawl
 In darkness on the rugs and watch the play.
“Well — what’s all this?” The ribboned doll in shawl
 And cap struts woodenly before us. “Say,
You leave my lettuces alone! You think
 My garden is a charity bazaar?”
And then she tips us all a wooden wink —
 We laugh, it seems so real from where we are!
And so the play goes on — and all unknown
 To us ourselves, the dolls become so real
We gasp in unison when one long groan
 Bespeaks the death of him who tried to steal
Good Mrs. Cutty’s greens, and who was shot
 By Officer O’Toole who caught him, there.
And so at last the curtain drops — and not
 Until one laughs and speaks of all the care
It’s taken, do we jump aghast — so vast
 We seem — our voices strange.

Oh gods, who rule
Us marionettes — and do you jump aghast
 When our show ends, disastrous to the fool?

Frances Gaines

God's Country

The beauty of the Desert!

She is a queen, seated upon the painted mountains,
Aloof, indifferent.

What is man, that she should woo his allegiance
By soft green meadows and cool streams of water?
She needs not his love:

For she looks into the face of the heavens,
And turns not away from the glowing sun.

All the long day she laves herself in its golden light,
So that her garments of sand are as cloth of gold.

At night the great stars swing down near to her,
Brilliant and full of fire,
Silent, filled with thoughts of God.

And from long gazing upon them the great desert is
like unto them,

Radiant with fiery colors,

Scintillating like a jewel,

Full of mystery, deep in silence, compelling,
irresistible!

The desert stoops not to woo men.

They are drawn, compelled by her vivid beauty,
Her stirring silences —

They can never escape from the lure that she holds out
—

The lure of searching for the unknown,

Of conquering the great mountain sentinels that she
has set up to bound her kingdom
And finding the riches they guard —
Priceless treasures of beauty, and silence, and peace.

In the Spring is she most appealing —
This desert queen.
Then from her painted cliffs rush foaming streams,
Singing songs of cooling and refreshment,
Sweet to human ears.
And then is the golden sand, her royal robe,
Wondrously decked with flowers;
For the haughtiest queens tire of cloth of gold
And love a sprigged gown in Spring!
So she garbs herself in blossoms:
Verbenas trailing their pink over the whole gown;
Clumps of exquisite lilies, white and gold;
Trailing scarves of blue lupin — blue as the clear,
rain-washed Spring sky!
She seems to love the frail flowers on her golden gown,
And to pity them that they so soon must die.
She sends warm breezes to play over them,
And bees to sip their sweetness, that they may not
waste it utterly,
Her streams refresh them and murmur to them
merrily;
And with the dark comes grateful coolness, while close,
close gleam the stars.

O far-away New England, men have been homesick for
you in this desert land!

Sick for your gentle green hills with their nestling
villages,
Your woods of pointed firs, your rocky, sea-washed
shore;
And in their longing they have called you God's
Country.
But I, who love you too, must ever see your landscapes
as made by man:
Little fields, cut off by laboriously raised stone walls:
Little villages of trim white cottages, each with an
elm-tree planted by its door;
Great, smoke-beclouded, factory-filled cities,
Where want and numbing toil cry out to heaven,
And only the church-spires remind men there is a God.

Here, here is God's Country! — fair, unbounded,
glowing as He made it,
Filling the soul with awe and strength and joy.
The desert lures men but to point them to their God,
Showing them how false is the friendship of crowds,
How close to Heaven her silence and her peace.

Helen von Kolnitz Hyer

High Priestess

Her intellect was diamond-faceted,
Playing like forked lightning here and there
In science and philosophy and art.
With lightning's brilliance, in a shining word,
She could illuminate new realms of thought.
She gathered at her feet enchanted throngs
Of youthful worshippers, whose incense burned
In votive adoration at her shrine.
She had the gift of artful listening,
Holding confessional like any priest.
To Youth she seemed infallible, and wise
With ageless wisdom, for she read between
His halting lines and found his vibrant dreams,
The lustrous beauty of his keen desires.
Her friendships flamed like meteors, and like
Swift meteors they vanished into space.
Youth only knew in each she found some flaw
Betraying the deep trust her spirit gave;
So she was always first, remembered, sought,
Considered, honored, trusted, and adored.
How could Youth know her brilliancy was fed
By jealous fires — that she must be the first
Even by undermining those she loved?
For everything she ever said or did
Was governed by her head and not her heart.
Her generosity was pride; she posed

As Lady Bountiful bestowing gifts.
Not hers was the confessional's sanctity.
The little hidden failings she had learned,
Could she but chance to use them for her gain,
Were marshalled forth, distorted, twisted, racked,
Shredded, and built upon by devious ways
Outside of truth, and held as monstrous things
For all the world to gaze on and deplore,
And shun their owner as a thing unclean —
Raising *her* higher on her pedestal
As a sublime revealer of the truth.

Too late Youth learned that not her friends,
But she, played the Betrayer. Growing cynical,
One day he wrote her epitaph —
“Pity her, for she could not keep a friend.”

Gerald R. Oswald

Predatory

I fled, a long-jawed simianoid,
Across the star-mocked plain;
A pack of fervid wolves deployed
Away and closed again.

A yelp, red tearing at my throat;
I gasped, my soul was sore;
Then I flung off the cosmic mesh,
And here I stand once more.

Although your eyes are soft and bright,
Their gleaming wakes my fears —
Beneath your tresses' awful night
I see the pointed ears.

Philip Gray

Measure of Beauty

Beauty measured out more sparingly
Were sufficient gift, I said, for me.
Seeing one snow-diademed hill-peak,
Dared I ever greater grandeur seek?
When one valley bore the sun's caress,
Where, I thought, is deeper blessedness?
I could never bear, I said, too much
Of the poignancy of beauty's touch.
Then . . . as though I had not seen enough,
Mountains jostling mountains, huge and rough,
Shouted to me, called their glory out . . .
Such wild laughter put my fears to rout.
Valleys shamelessly danced in the wind.
I shall look, I said, till I go blind;
I shall drink my fill from beauty's cup,
Every drop, till I have drunk it up.
Suddenly, your eyes . . . oh, they were wet! . . .
Filled my own with greater beauty yet:
Mountains, valleys, and the cloudless skies
Got somehow confused inside your eyes
With some other, tenderer loveliness
And your tears were stars and a caress.
All the shouting died within my throat;
Though I sang I could not sound a note.
Then you, sitting silent, wondering there,
Touched me . . . It was more than I could bear.

Beauty measured out more sparingly
Were, I cried, sufficient gift for me!

Mary J. Elmendorf

The Ideal

You are my wide and shining sky,
I am your sea:
Whatever moods upon you lie
Float down to me.

From my heart your blue eyes blot
Grim crags and hoar;
I dream you are my mate — and not
The stolid shore.

You shut the gates of stellar space
Against my waves;
I hide forever from your face
My coral caves.

You fling your laughing moons to me
To cool my lips;
I send you silver clouds to be
Your phantom ships.

Folk say who never seaward go,
“They love too much —
Look, there they meet!” But sailors know
We never touch.

Pauline Curran

Blarney and Blather

The colleen ran to the top o' the hill
“Just for seein’ the beauty o’ the brazen sun” —
To the tip o’ the top with the whip-poor-will,
Where the travelin’ stars drop one by one.

And she faced her east and she faced her west
With a strainin’ heart that would not be still,
“Now, would he be the one to be speakin’ in jest?”
She was askin’ the wee folks over the hill.

’Tis only the wee folks that might be aware,
As singin’ she came (not countin’ the hours),
Of the tendrils of moonlight in her hair
And the tears like dew on the listenin’ flowers.

“Oh, joy is a bubble, but why should I fret?
His blarney and blather will always be bold!
But singin’,” she said, “makes the rain less wet.
’Tis singin’ that’s sweet when the wind is cold.”

Margaret Skavlan

Aspiration

My own ideas like gold-fish pass,
Look large, I hope, through bowl of glass,
And flip their little tails.
Ah, could I have a deep-sea mind! —
Where mighty thoughts the world would find —
Majestic, spouting whales!

Our Younger Singers

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Hugh Nibley

The Freight Train

Color is dead, Romance is dead, and all
Their retinue — here comes the funeral line,
Murky and distant things that glimly shine;
Smothered, obscured in one long dusky pall,
The wheels and couplings rattle, gripe, and brawl;
Upon the solemn funeral air of pine
Lies incense blasphemous. Such fate is thine,
O sweet Romance! — How miserable thy fall!

Ruler of countless ages, now you sleep;
Shrill and profaning is the funeral song:
Grunting black horses lug the train of dead.
There is the throbbing valley, loud and deep,
I see it coming — coffins jerked along,
Crude coffins, stencilled, coal-stained, drably red.

(Los Angeles High School.)

Seth Jehiel Felt

Pastoral Song

There will be larks now at the early spring;
The sun will bring a flush to all the sky,
And in the stillness just before the dawn
A cock will give his throaty morning cry.

So I am longing to be there with them,
The little larks, the cloud-lined, rosy dawn —
And you, with your sweet smile and gentle eyes,
Walking a-down a hill from out the sun.

(Polytechnic High School, Long Beach, California.)

XV.

Stanzaic Unity

Unity in a stanza, in the comprehensive sense of the term, may be defined as that combination of elements in it that leads the auditor or reader to feel with esthetic pleasure, upon reaching its end, that he has finished one entire and rounded poetic segment. This segment may be complete in itself, as in the case of Landor's celebrated quatrain written on his seventy-fifth birthday:

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife:
Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks and I am ready to depart.

This, we feel, is a synopsis of an ideal life and needs no omissions or additions either for thought or for form, being

both as to intellectual content and as to sound a perfect whole. Or again, the sezment may be one complete subdivision of a larger thought-group, as in the case of each of the two stanzas of Browning's *Natural Magic*:

All I can say is — I saw it!

The room was as bare as your hand.

I locked in the swart little lady. — I swear

From the head to the foot of her — well, quite as bare!

“No Nautch shall cheat me,” said I. “taking my stand

At this bolt which I draw!” And this bolt — I withdraw
it,

And there laughs the lady, not bare. but embowered

With — who knows what verdure, o'erfruited,
o'erflowered?

Impossible! Only — I saw it!

All I can sing is — I feel it!

This life was as blank as that room;

I let you pass in here. Precaution, indeed?

Walls, ceiling, and floor, — not a chance for a weed!

Wide opens the entrance: where's cold now, where's
gloom?

No May to sow seed here, no June to reveal it.

Behold you enshrined in these blooms of your bringing,

These fruits of your bearing — nay, birds of your
winging!

A fairy-tale! Only — I feel it!

At the end of the first stanza we have that same pleasurable sense of having been told an incident in all of its essentials, and in a rounded metrical pattern that respectively opens and terminates with the opening and termination of the

incident. And at the end of the second stanza we experience a similar pleasurable sense of having had presented to us, in all of its essentials, a parallel emotional experience of the poet, in a metrical pattern similarly coextensive with the narrative of that experience. Further, this second pleasure is enhanced by a recognition (in part probably subconscious) that the incident of the first stanza has, with studied art, prefigured explanatorily the emotion of the second, that for each detail of the first incident there is a parallel detail in the following description, and that the metrical music of the second stanza is not only complete in itself but repeats the musical pattern in which the first stanza has been cast.

It is evident that this sense of esthetic satisfaction that arises from what I have called, in the broadest sense of the term, stanzaic unity is highly complex, being always derived from at least two elements, and often more. The first of these elements we term logical unity or unity of thought. This is present when all of the essential facts or details needed for the picture or conception are given and in an easily comprehensible order. This type of unity is of course in no way peculiar to poetry. Every modern textbook on rhetoric emphasizes the necessity for thought-unity in the prose paragraph. From this point of view each of the three stanzas quoted above is merely a paragraph written in metre. Further, prose rhetoric advises that for clarity the paragraph be opened or closed with a simple, clear sentence or phrase giving briefly the main point in the sentences so grouped, a so-called "topic sentence" that points and emphasizes the logical unity. Such a sentence or phrase is sometimes, though not often, present in the stanza also, as

in the "I saw it" (indicating an observed incident to follow) and "I feel it" (indicating and differentiating an emotional conception to follow) in the two Browning stanzas above.

But the fact that these stanzas are also paragraphs by virtue of their logical unity must not blind us to that other unity of metrical pattern which they possess and by virtue of which they are, not merely paragraphs, but complete stanzas, a term having no analogue in prose. It is only this perfection of metrical pattern or "tune," peculiar to the stanza, that we can call "stanzaic unity" in the true, limited sense of the term. And in this sense many stanzas have stanzaic or pattern unity although they lack logical or paragraphic unity. Consider, for instance, the opening of Collin's *Ode to Evening*.

If aught of oaten stop or pastoral song

May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,

Like thy own solemn springs,

Thy springs and dying gales,

O nymph reserv'd, while now the bright-hair'd sun

Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,

With brede ethereal wove,

Overhang his wavy bed:

Now air is hush'd, save where the weak-ey'd bat,

With short shrill shriek, flits by on leathern wing,

Or where the beetle winds

His small but sullen horn,

As oft he rises 'midst the twilight path,

Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum:

Now teach me, maid compos'd,

To breathe some soften'd strain,

Whose numbers, stealing thro' thy dark'ning vale,

May not unreemly with its stillness suit,

As, musing slow, I hail

Thy genial lov'd return!

Here clearly none of the stanzas, and especially not the fourth, can be said to have logical or paragraphic unity,

since the sentence begun in the first line does not even reach its main verb until line fourteen!*

Yet in each stanza the pattern, $a_5b_5c_3d_3$, is exactly duplicated. It cannot therefore be denied that each stanza has stanzaic or pattern unity. But the form has so little individuality for the ear that as a unit it makes little impression on the listener. This is the reason why the pattern offers so little resistance to the continuation of the thought beyond its bounds, so that the metrical effect becomes merely a subdued music imprinted with soothing iteration on the on-flowing thought current.* On the other hand, a stanza with a strong pattern individuality tends much more insistently to be a self-contained logical whole.

What, then, are the elements that will create and increase the pleasurable impression of stanzaic or pattern unity?

1. The fundamental requisite is, a certain recognizable succession of metrical effects. But, as we see in the *Ode to Evening*, this, although basic, is by itself very spineless to modern ears. The mere succession of two unrhymed iambic pentameter lines followed by two unrhymed iambic trimeters, the alternation of the two line-lengths being continued indefinitely, requires strengthening by other devices.

2. The introduction of rhyme, of course, immediately strengthens the individuality of the form. But the simplest method of doing this, namely, the piling together of a series of couplets, will accomplish little. Examine Wordsworth's lines,

*It should be noted that "Now air is hush'd" (line 9) is coordinate with "While now the bright-hair'd sun" (line 5) and has a subordinating "while" understood before it.

*The subdual of the stanzaic individuality by the elimination of rhyme and other heightening devices is of course intentional. The author is consciously seeking to "breathe some softened strain" in consonance with the "stillness" of the scene. Collins nowhere else

uses such a rhymeless form.

She was a phantom of delight
When first she beamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

Except for the suggestion of summary in the last two lines (a matter of rhetoric, not of stanzaic structure), this also might be continued indefinitely. To be effective for unity, the rhymes should be pervasive or binding. Thus, Shakespeare's song in *Twelfth Night* cross-links its third and sixth lines.

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O, stay and hear! your true love's coming,
That can sing both high and low:
Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.

$(a_4 a_4 b_3 c_4 c_4 b_3)$

Again, Burns's *Mary Morison* consists of two quatrains linked by the continuance of the dominant rhyme of the first as the subdominant rhyme of the second.

O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glances let me see,
That makes the miser's treasure poor:

How blythely wad I bide the stour
 A weary slave frae sun to sun,
 Could I the rich reward secure,
 The lovely Mary Morison!

Yestreen, when to the trembling string
 The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',
 To thee my fancy took its wing,
 I sat, but neither heard nor saw:
 Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,
 And yon the toast of a' the town,
 I sigh'd, and said amang them a',
 'Ye arena Mary Morison.'

$(a_4 b_4 a_4 b_4 c_4 b_4 c_4)$

Ben Johnson's Drink to me only with thine eyes is in a stanza of two quatrains very intricately woven together by one dominant rhyme continued throughout and by two subdominant rhymes cross-linking the quatrains separately.

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
 And I will pledge with mine;
 Or leave a kiss but in the cup
 And I'll not look for wine.
 The thirst that from the soul doth rise
 Doth ask a drink divine;
 But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
 I would not change for thine.

$(a_4 b_3 c_4 b_3 a_4 b_2 c_4 b_3)$

Subtler in its music is the lovely stanza of Noyes, *Psyche of Our Day*, again in two balanced quatrains, each quatrain rhyming its subdominants within itself but being cross-linked to the other quatrain by two pairs of rhymes in dominant positions.

So was it always in the years
 When love began, when love began,
 With eyes that were not touched of tears,
 And lips that still could sing —
 And all around us in the May
 The child-god with his laughter ran,
 And every bloom on every spray
 Betrayed his fluttering wing.

$(a_4 b_4 a_4 c_3 d_4 b_4 d_4 c_3)$

Still more unusual for a poem of length is the eight-line combination that occurs in J. W. Mackail's version of Cupid and Psyche, in which every line in the first quatrain is cross-linked, not in its own, but in the balancing quatrain that succeeds.

Surely the world was good,
 And lip and passion and speech
 Still seemed to sparkle and quiver
 In sun-lit dew of the morn;
 And the wood-nymphs danced through the wood,
 And the sea-wind sang to the beach,
 And the wise reeds talked to the river
 When this tale came to be born.

$(a_3 b_3 c_4 d_3 a_4 b_3 c_4 d_3)$

In all of these cases the form demands continuation to the end and a cessation at that point as certainly as a clock with a Westminster chime leaves the listener protesting against the incomplete twelve strokes at the three-quarter hour and satisfied with the full air of sixteen notes when the sixty minutes have elapsed.

3. Naturally, whatever serves to emphasize the end of the stanza will serve also to heighten the impression of completeness or unity that one will feel on reaching its end.

Here therefore must be classified also all of the Climax devices previously discussed in Articles XI and XII, namely, the enrichment of the conclusion by added rhyme effects, internal or capping; the lengthening of the last line; and the use of the refrain, the repetend, the echo and linked echo, and the chorus. Since the shortened last line, discussed in Article XIV, also serves to differentiate the end, it also must be here included, especially in cases where it is strengthened by other emphasizing devices.

4. The refrain is sometimes used to mark the beginning of the stanza rather than the close, and even occasionally occurs in both places. In the latter case it may conveniently be classified as a Frame device. Metrical effects may also be employed with Frame values. A very unusual case in

which a framing repetend is combined with a pervasive uniform rhyme is to be found in a dialogue poem by "Ignoto," *The Shepherd's Description of Love*, printed in the old Elizabethan miscellany, *England's Helicon*.

Meliboeus. Shepherd, what's Love, I pray thee tell?

Faustus. It is that fountain and that well

Where pleasure and repentance dwell;

It is perhaps that sauncing bell

That tolls all in to heaven or hell:

And this is Love, as I hear tell.

Meliboeus. Yet what is Love, I prithee say?

Faustus. It is a work on holiday,

It is December match'd with May,

When lusty bloods in fresh array

Hear ten months after of the play:

And this is Love, as I hear say. *Etc.*

It will be noticed also that in Browning's *Natural Magic*, quoted above, in addition to the logical unity with its

topic-phrase, there are also three types of unifying form-device employed. In each stanza the fifth and sixth lines are transversely rhyme-linked to the first and second, the ninth is rhyme-linked with the first and sixth, and the whole is framed by the repetend effects of “I saw it” and “I feel it” at beginning and end, the phrasal frame effects being further emphasized by metrical frame effects in that the trimeters of the first two lines are returned to, after the intervening tetrameters, in a final concluding trimeter. No wonder it produces an effect of unity! And this from a poet reputed by the superficial to “care little for form”!

Finally, we are confronted with the question, What is the relation between stanzaic unity and the length of the stanza? On the general question of maximum length Aristotle laid down the cardinal principle in the very beginnings of conscious literary criticism. An animal organism of vast size cannot be beautiful, he tells us, “for as the eye cannot take it all in at once, the unity and sense of the whole is lost for the spectator; as for instance if there were one [an animal] a thousand miles long. As therefore in the case of animate bodies and organisms a certain magnitude is necessary, and a magnitude which may be easily embraced in one view; so in the plot [of a tragedy] a certain length is necessary, and *a length which can be easily embraced by the memory.*”* The same principle unquestionably applies to the stanza: it must be short enough to be apprehended as a whole. To the reader the appearance of the form on the printed page of course counts for something; but in general, metrical and rhyme and repetend effects must be apprehended consecutively in time, and further, the memory is operating subconsciously *while the attention is centered on thought rather than form.* These peculiar conditions as a rule make it obligatory that a well unified stanza should be fairly brief. Exactly what are the limits for the operation of the memory will depend, first, on the mental

development of the reader or listener; second, on the distinctiveness of the form; and third, on the types of triplet, quatrain, cross-linking effects, and the like, to which the literature of the given language has most habituated the recipient. In general, however, it is significant that the longest stanza in common use is the fourteen-line sonnet, a highly marked form, especially in the Italian type. It is probable that there is a sound psychological foundation for this fact.

A. G.

*Butcher's translation in his *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, pp. 31–33.

Brief Reviews

Nellie Barnes' *American Indian Love Lyrics and Other Verse*, from Macmillan, should be interesting to any reader for the reason that Mary Austin points out in her introduction — “for the further light it throws on the origin of patterns, social, decorative, or literary, in living human impulses.” I am happy to have read it myself for the beauty and charm of the songs and because the volume gives me my first real appreciation of the artistry and depth of the whole *Amerindian* rhythmic thought.

Some Places Where the Lyric West May Be Purchased

BOSTON:

Smith and McCance, 5 Ashburton Street.

Marjorie Knapp Book Shop, 110 Mt. Vernon Street.

NEW YORK CITY:

Brentano's, Fifth Avenue and 27th Street.

WASHINGTON, D. C.:

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L. B. M.