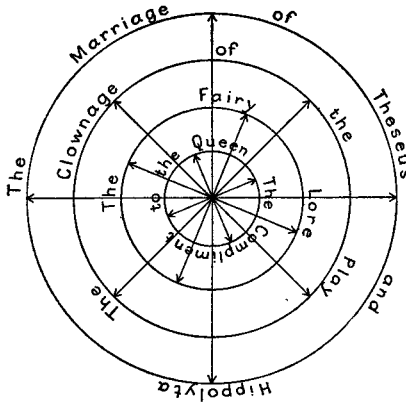


ment paid to the Queen, simply leaving the axis in the middle. I should, however, most certainly have given a circle to the main-plot, the story of the Athenian lovers, and not have drawn the spokes as far as the circle which represents the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta. In Mr. Gollancz's drawing this gives an impression as if there was cross-love in their case too. My drawing therefore would be like this:



The spokes of the great wheel represent the story of the four Athenian lovers and their cross-love. There are cross-lines in all the four circles, because there is a story of cross-love in each of them. This is Mr. Gollancz's idea.

Amsterdam.

C. VAN HEERIKHUIZEN

SOME NOTES ON THE METRE OF SHELLEY'S *SENSITIVE PLANT*.

I.

The "rare" Ben Jonson has more than one title to fame in literature. Besides being a great dramatist, he produced remarkably fine lyrical poems and some prose, warmly praised on account of its sound and pregnant style. It is less generally known, that he was also a meritorious metrical artist and made several interesting experiments in metre. Saintsbury even calls him a "great practical prosodist" and claims for him the honour of being the first to use Tennyson's famous *In Memoriam* metre regularly and with octosyllables. That also Shelley was to a certain extent indebted to him for the less famous, but by no means less melodious metre, in which *the Sensitive Plant* was written, the following comparison may prove.

The stanza of *The Sensitive Plant* is a quatrain, rhyming aabb; each line consists of four feet, the staple being iambic, but very freely and irregularly equivalenced with anapaests. All these points we find again in Jonson's peculiar piece: *Witches' Doings*.¹⁾

That octosyllabic iambic lines should be varied by an occasional anapaest

¹⁾ The poem occurs in "*The Masque of Queens*" after the words: (Dame): "Then fall to"
"But first relate me, what you have sought
"Where you have been, and what you have brought,

For convenience 'sake I refer to it throughout under the title: "*Witches' Doings*" (as used for it by G. Beaumont).

is no uncommon thing at all in English verse. It has repeatedly been pointed out, that Coleridge was not, as he thought, quite original, when he used this device in his *Christabel*, but that the practice is to be found from *Genesis* and *Exodus* downwards. What is, however, characteristic for the metre of the poems under consideration, is the arrangement in four-lined stanzas and the frequency of the anapaestic substitution.

In both regards *The Sensitive Plant* shows an advance upon the older poem. Shelley has developed the inherent metrical possibilities of Jonson's stanza and made it, so to say, more independent of the old continuous octosyllabic couplets. The anapaests are more numerous, especially in the first part, where at times they almost entirely replace the iambs, so that the line becomes much longer, though it can always be scanned as having four feet. Unlike Jonson, Shelley moreover repeatedly makes the second line run on into the third, without any punctuation mark. He also occasionally lengthens the stanza to one of five lines, rhyming aabbb, while the one instance of a lengthened stanza in the *Witches' Doings* shows a form in keeping with the continuous couplet metre: it has six lines with the rhyme scheme: aabbbcc. It may be noted here, that the arrangement in stanzas must have been quite naturally suggested to Jonson by the dramatic form of his poem, eleven hags being supposed to tell each in turn, what they have done before their orgies begin.

As was observed, however, these peculiarities constitute rather a development of Jonson's stanza than a deviation from it and we may safely say, that *the Sensitive Plant* was written in the same metre as the *Witches' Doings*.

But there are more points of resemblance, slight in themselves, it may be, yet all contributing to the impression, that there exists a certain affinity between Jonson's poem and Shelley's — notably the third part — however different the two may be as regards subject-matter. The following points deserve notice:

1. In the *Witches' Doings* we find such peculiar constructions as:

"thē māđ dōg's fōām, the fig tree wild",
 "ā deāđ mān 's ēyes, thē scrēēch owl's ēggs",
 "and the feathers black."

(post-position of the adjective, Saxon Genitive with a half-accented or common syllable between two strongly accented ones.)

These are fully paralleled by the following taken from the third part of *the Sensitive Plant*:

"thē wēt grōūnd cōld, and hemlock dank",
 "the water snake's belly, ā swēet flōwer's stēm"
 "of the garden fair" etc.

2. In both poems we are struck by the uncommonly frequent use of the conjunction: 'and', but this may perhaps be explained by the fact, that this unaccented prop-word greatly facilitates the formation of anapaests.

3. More important it is, that although Jonson's poem is a short one, consisting of only twelve stanzas, we find in it several unconventional words, such as:

"hemlock, henbane, charnel, toad, mandrake" etc. which also occur in the third part of *the Sensitive Plant*.

4. There is a stanza in the *Witches' Doings* which in more than one respect shows such a curious resemblance to one of Shelley's, that I will quote them here in full:

FROM THE *Witches' Doings*:

"A *murderer* yonder was hung in chains,
The sun and the *wind* had shrunk his veins;
I bit *off* a sinew; I clipped his hair,
I brought *off* his *rags* that danced in the air".

FROM *the Sensitive Plant* III:

"Their moss rotted *off* them, flake by flake,
Till the thick stalk stuck like a *murderer's* stake,
Where *rags* of loose flesh yet tremble on high,
Infecting the *winds* that wander by".

It is remarkable, that this was the only stanza in *the Sensitive Plant* afterwards cancelled by Mrs. Shelley, but it is unknown, whether she acted on her husband's authority.

The points mentioned here will, I think, suffice to show that the resemblance is by no means restricted to the metre, though this latter remains of course the principal consideration. And yet it would be rash to conclude, that Shelley deliberately took Jonson's grim little extravaganza as a metrical example, when he wrote his wonderfully sweet and melodious *Sensitive Plant*. We know, however, that he was deeply read in the Elisabethan poets and dramatists and the circumstance, that Jonson's poem is largely concerned with the horrible, may be considered an additional reason, why this particular piece should have haunted his memory. For Shelley was always strangely attracted by ghastly subjects, as appears from his correspondence and the testimony of his friends, as well as from many a passage in his works. It seems therefore probable, that we have here another example of that unconscious indebtedness to an older writer which is so frequently found in literature and especially in poetry. Together with the rhythm of the *Witches' Doings* some vague reminiscences of its words, its figures of style and its ideas were apparently awakened in Shelley's mind, when he treated somewhat similar matters, as is the case in the third part of *the Sensitive Plant* which describes the utter ruin of the garden, the dying of its beautiful flowers and the growth in their stead of a poisonous and loathsome vegetation.

II.

The stanza of the *Witches' Doings* and *the Sensitive Plant* was also used by a later poet: Francis Thompson (1859–1907), who ardently admired Shelley and wrote an essay on him, remarkable for its beautiful style and deep insight. His works show many traces of Shelley's influence, but nowhere, I think, is the resemblance more striking and consistent than in *the Poppy* when compared with *the Sensitive Plant*.

Thompson's treatment of the metre is in many points exactly the same as Jonson's and Shelley's; only he still further liberated the stanza from the influence of the old octosyllabic couplets. Besides the frequency of the

anapaests, the running-on of the second line into the third and the occasional lengthening of the stanza to one of five lines, rhyming a a b b b, we find in *the Poppy* a stanza with the rhyme-scheme a b b a, another with a a a a and one of six lines rhyming a a a b b b, while it also occurs that the rhymes of one stanza are carried on into the following or entirely repeated in it (a a b b—b b c c and a a b b—a a b b b). It seems to me, that Thompson went too far in these deviations from the original form, because they by no means contribute to the melodiousness of the verse.

It is noteworthy, that the adoption of the stanza has here once more led to a similarity in style and diction. When we compare *the Poppy* with parts of *the Sensitive Plant*, we find almost exact counterparts of all the points of resemblance which we noticed between this latter poem and Jonson's *Witches' Doings*.

The constructions mentioned under nr. 1 are paralleled by the following from *the Poppy*:

"to earth's bosom bare"

"with bŭrnt mōūth rēd" "ā swīft chīld's whīm"

"īñ Lōve's gŭest hāll" "this token fair and fit" etc.

The conjunction 'and' is again very much in evidence and this distinctive feature comes more to the front here by the frequent use of the words "Like" and "Till" for which both Shelley and Thompson show a marked preference, especially at the beginning of a line.

How much Thompson is indebted to *the Sensitive Plant* for the rhythm of *the Poppy* and in a less degree also for the choice of words, figures of style etc. may finally be proved best by a juxtaposition of the opening stanza of each poem and a few more separate lines:

The Poppy.

Summer set lip to earth's bosom bare,
And left the flushed print in a poppy
there:

Like a yawn of fire from the grass it
came,

And the fanning wind puffed it to flap-
ping flame.

And his smile, as nymphs from their
laving meres,

Trembled up from a bath of tears;

Tossed on the waves of his troubled heart.

'T will pass with the passing of my face.

The Sensitive Plant.

A Sensitive plant in a garden grew,
And the young winds fed it with silver
dew,

And it opened its fan-like leaves to the
light

And closed them beneath the kisses of
night.

And the rose like a nymph to the bath
address,

Which unveiled the depth of her glowing
breast¹⁾.

Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

{ And white with the whiteness of whāt
is dead. . . .
You might hear by the heaving of her
breast. . . .

¹⁾ Cf. F. Thompson *Sister Songs* I 87:

"Some on the brown, glowing breast"

"Of that Indian maid, the pansy."

Whether we have an instance of studied imitation here, it would be difficult to decide, although there are more reasons for this supposition than in the case of Shelley and Jonson. But it is beyond doubt, that it was *the Sensitive Plant* which Thompson consciously or unconsciously took as his model, when he wrote *the Poppy*. His great knowledge of Shelley's works, the curious resemblance there exists between the two poems in more than one respect besides their common metre and the fact, that the stanza is very rarely used by other writers¹⁾, all lead us to this conclusion.

III.

Of the three poems compared here *the Sensitive Plant* is of course by far the finest and most important, even when considered, quite apart from contents, graphic power etc., purely from a metrical point of view. Thompson's poem is in this respect, perhaps, the least successful, Ben Jonson's little composition being metrically much simpler, but at the same time more euphonious and fluent, while, as I contended, *the Sensitive Plant* stands supreme.

Shelley never was a serious student of metre as Tennyson or Keats were — the music came to him nearly always quite spontaneously. With unerring instinct he used all the devices of the art almost without an effort. That he was eminently successful in making his verse melodious will be readily granted by every attentive reader who has an ear for word-music. In "the Sensitive Plant" this faculty is shown to perfection; all critics agree on this head, but the melodiousness of poetry can of course hardly be demonstrated or proved, it is largely a matter of feeling, or rather of hearing. Every poet — be it unconsciously or by design — uses such expedients as assonance, alliteration, substitution of feet, internal rhyme and many more, but the question is not, whether he employs these at all or more or less frequently, but whether they are applied in the right place and in accordance with the sense of the verses and the mysterious laws of harmony. The reasons, why a poet has succeeded in these matters, for the most part escape analysis; they are usually more conspicuous, where the artist has failed than where he has been successful, especially when we can contrast parallel cases. We then generally find the fault to lie in laboured and over-lavish embellishment. Repetition of a particular vowel-sound may for instance greatly aid the melodious flow of a verse, but in *the Poppy* there are some stanzas, in which this device is used to excess and where the poet thus overshoots the mark. A few lines may be quoted here:

1. "A' fair fit gift is this, meseems",
"You give this withering flower of dreams"

in which the monotonous succession of [i] sounds, made worse by the following [u] sounds, far from contributing to the harmony, positively impairs it. We find the same redundancy of repeated vowels together with internal rhyme, alliteration and repetition of words in the following lines, likewise taken from *the Poppy*:

¹⁾ I know at present of only one other example, a short poem by Blake *Laughing Song*.

2. "O frankly fickle, and fickle true",
 "Do you know what the days will do to you?"
 "To your love and you what the days will do",
 "O frankly fickle and fickle true?"
- and in:
3. "The goodly grain and the sun-flushed sleeper"
 "The reaper reaps, and Time the reaper",
- the next stanza having again:
4. "Time shall reap, but after the reaper"
 "The world shall glean of me, me the sleeper".

In the last two groups of verses the repetition of vowels and words may be due to a desire of the poet to suggest the inexorable, ever recurring movement of the "reaping". In nr. 3 where the device is kept within bounds the effect is fairly achieved, but the long succession of [ɪ] sounds in the last line of nr. 4 is hardly supported by the sense and very crude, whereas for the monotonous vowel sequence in 2 and especially in 1 there is no reason at all.

The harshness of these verses becomes the more obvious by a comparison with such a perfect stanza as the following, taken almost at random from "the Sensitive Plant":

The plumèd insects swift and free,
 Like golden boats on a sunny sea,
 Laden with light and odour, which pass
 Over the gleam of the living grass.,

where the subtle vowel-music and unobtrusive alliteration very effectively aid the beautiful rhythm. The full [ou] sounds are cunningly arranged so as to avoid monotony and harmonize remarkably well with the surrounding vowels. It will also be noted, that the vowels of the rhyme-words stand by themselves; the conspicuous or repeated presence of such a vowel in the body of the verse often blurs and weakens the rhyme, instead of strengthening it. In *the Sensitive Plant* this kind of vowel-repetition is hardly ever found, unless internal rhyme or a special effect is aimed at.

Shelley's excellence as a metrical artist also manifests itself in his skilful management of substitution and variation of feet. It stands to reason, that deviations from the main foot of a stanza cannot be introduced inconsiderately. They must give new life to the metre and be in suggestive accordance with the sense of the verse. Although we can of course hardly arrive at a definite conclusion as to the value and adequacy of the variations used by a poet, this being more a question for the individual taste to decide, a few quotations may be given here, be it only to elucidate my meaning.

The opening stanza of *the Sensitive Plant*, quoted above (p. 5) ends with the line:

"And closèd them beneath the kisses of night" and this slow, impressive iamb ("and closed") is here not only conducive to the harmony of the stanza, but also very suggestive of rest and quiet after the swift anapaestic movement

of the three preceding lines, especially if the voice is made to dwell a little on the word "closed".

In the second stanza we have something similar:

"And the Spring arose on the garden fair",
 "Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere";
 "And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast"
 "Röse from the dreams of its wintry rest".

The strong stressed "röse" — instead of the regular iamb or anapaest — with its long vowel and gently ascending tone produces a metrical effect quite in keeping with the slow awakening and growth of the plants. The peculiar arrangement of feet (— ∪ ∪ — ∪ ∪ — ∪ ∪ —) makes the line also admirably fitted as an emphatic conclusion to a stanza and Shelley uses it as such several times (e. g.:

"Grēw īn thāt gārdēn īn pērfēct prīme".
 "Crādīlēd wīthīn thē ēmbrāce ōf nīght").

But Thompson makes use of the identical rhythm for the initial line of his poem and as such it is, in my opinion, less fit ("Sūmmēr sēt līp tō Eārth's bōsōm bāre"), as also in the following verses from "the Poppy":

"And joy, like a mew, sea-rocked apart",
 "Tōssed oñ thē wāves ōf hīs trōublēd hēart",

where the quiet and even tenour, imparted to the line by the strong-stressed beginning and iambic conclusion, is not called for by the contents—rather these would require an impetuous, rapid movement.

The following stanzas from *the Sensitive Plant* afford yet other instances of excellent adaptation of the rhythm to the meaning and sentiment of the verse:

"And Indian plants, of scent and hue"
 "The sweetest that ever were fed on dew",
 "Leaf after leaf, day after day",
 "Were massed into the common clay".

in which the slow retarding movement of the last and especially of the third line corresponds to the sadness and long duration of the process described. As also in:

"And on the fourth the Sensitive Plant"
 "Felt the sound of the funeral chant",
 "And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow",
 "And the sobs of the mourners, deep and low".

where the mournful impression is intensified by the repetition of the monotonous rhythm and the vowel-sounds.

Thompson, in *the Poppy* was less felicitous, when he had to render somewhat similar sentiments, as in:

"But between the clasp of his hand and hers"
 "*Lay, felt not*, twenty withered years".

or in the lines about the cruel "reaping of Time", already alluded to.

In general it may be said, that in *the Poppy* Thompson has closely followed the rhythm and many of the metrical devices used by Shelley, but without the latter's marvellous instinctive judgment. But from the foregoing one-sided remarks a reader, not yet acquainted with Thompson, might get the impression, that he was at most only a second-rate artist. This would be doing the amiable and very interesting poet an injustice. Compared with such a rare, highly-finished masterpiece as *the Sensitive Plant*, Thompson's short lyric *the Poppy* can of course scarcely hold its own, but in spite of slight metrical blemishes it is a very beautiful poem. Francis Thompson stands out among modern poets by his originality, his deep sincere feeling and the wealth of his imagery. Most of his work amply repays attentive reading and his two great poems: *Sister Songs* and *the Hound of Heaven* have, in England and America, already become classics.

Brielle.

A. G. V. KRANENDONK.

UNEDITED LETTERS.

III.

Letter from H. Saint John to J. d'Ayrolles.

Sir

Whitehall 22^d Sept. 1710.

Her Maty: having been pleased upon the Resignation of Mr. Boyle to appoint me to be one of her Principal Secretaries of State, and the foreign affairs belonging to his Province coming likewise under my care, I am to desire you will be pleased to address to me such matters and advices as occur in your parts for her Maty's: Service; which I shall have the honour to lay before the Queen and to send you from time to time her Maty's Commands upon them, and in all other things I shall not be wanting to show you that I am Sr

Yr most obedient
Humble Servant
H. St John.

Mr. D'ayrolle
P. S.

Mr.

Mr. Boyle has put into my hands Your Letters to him of the 26 and 30th, which came in this day. I shall be able to answer them more particularly by next Post.

128 Ef.

From "that I am Sr" onward the letter is in Saint John's handwriting. James d'Ayrolles was British ambassador in Switzerland. Saint John is of course the later Lord Bolingbroke, Boyle the later Lord Orrery.

Letter from Washington Irving to Commodore M. C. Percy.

Direction: Commodore M. C. Percy U. S. N. New-York.

(Boston) Sunnyside May 24th 1836.

My dear Commodore,

The following is the passage in your paper on the enlargement of Geographical Science to which I alluded in conversation with you a few days since.