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The Metrical Theories of Poe and Lanier

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THE METRICAL THEORIES OF POE AND LANIER:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY, CHICAGO,
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FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
SISTER MARY ALOYSIA, S.S.N.D.
1937
VITA

The writer of this thesis was born in Wisconsin. Elementary and High School education--the latter at St. Mary's Academy, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, and the major portion of undergraduate training was under the direction of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, of which order she is now a member. She has likewise attended Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; De Paul University, Chicago, Illinois; The University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1929 from St. Mary's College, now known as Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

For the past several years she has been teaching English at the Academy of Our Lady, Chicago, Illinois.
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INTRODUCTION

The opinions of critics at times present a puzzling problem. The student who examines the comments of those who were contemporaries of certain writers, comparing them or contrasting them with later verdicts, is faced with a maze of contradictory evidence. The sifting process of Time, however, gradually tends to unify the impression, and the correct decision results. This has been true largely with regard to Edgar Allan Poe, whose reputation during life was that of a writer of tales and critic, but whose poetry was to a great extent ignored, or fiercely attacked and even condemned as ridiculous, the last by no less a person than Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Gradually, foreign appreciation of his work, especially in France, made America curious. Not only appreciation, but influence was apparent in the Parnassian and Symbolist period, in the works of Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, and, "it has been said that the best of Poe's works was Charles Beaudelaire".¹ Now, however, his position in American letters is firmly fixed among the great, and he still is "the figure that casts from our shores the longest shadow across the world".² This shadow is of one who cannot be classed among the greatest of poets, for

his work lacks certain qualities requisite to great literature, but rather among the greatest of artists. Two quotations will perhaps elucidate this judgment:

W. C. Brownell in *American Prose Masters* calls Poe "the solitary artist of our elder literature", and explains his conception of "artist" by the following:

The truth is it is idle to endeavor to make a great writer of Poe because whatever his merits as a literary artist his writings lack the elements not only of a great, but of real, literature. They lack substance. Literature is more than an art.... Shakespeare, for example, is neither exclusively nor supremely an artist. M. Jules Lemaître informs us how much better in some respects—in artistic respects—Racine would have written Hamlet.

"No American poet with the possible exception of Lanier" writes Russell Blankenship in *American Literature as an Expression of the National Mind* has been able to write poetry so hauntingly beautiful in its liquid melody, and no reader with an ear attuned to the sheer music of English verse ever reads Poe's poetry without feeling increasingly that its author was master of the exact use of mood in the minimum of words.

He adds that "any poet who can achieve eight or nine acknowledged masterpieces in a slender volume of verses must be ranked among the world's great poetic craftsmen".

It is as a literary craftsman, then, whose poetry is remarkable for its music, that Poe interests us here, for it is

4) Ibid., p. 231.
precisely the craftsman in him that has given us such a detailed account of what he did, and consequently what he felt poetry as such should be and do. Possessed of a keenly analytical mind, one that delighted in solving riddles and deciphering code, he would enjoy outlining in detail his mental operations, and we have as a result, essays on verse that have attracted world wide interest.

Sidney Lanier, another poet of the South whose volume of poems is sheer music, has likewise written a study of English verse. Unlike Poe, he has given us no detailed exposition of the creation of any single poem, but his study is more thorough and more scientific. Why he should be so little known and appreciated must be explained in part at least by circumstance. Like Poe, his life was tragic, but his battle was far greater. The place and time of his birth is significant. The South has had seemingly little interest in literature as such at any time, but the period after the Civil War gave no encouragement whatever, and conditions were such as to make the creation of poetry as Lanier wrote it almost an impossibility. Moreover, New England, a more or less self-appointed Parnassus, has never been too generous in recognition of Southern genius. Poe recognized this fact when he said, "It was the misfortune of Mr. Pinckney to have been born too far south. Had he been a New Englander, it is probable that he would have been ranked as the
first of American lyrists." That is exaggerated, but it illustrates the point. John Macy, who has been fearless enough to give credit to whom credit is due, is perplexed to find in current manuals no mention of Father Tabb but a full page about Anne Bradstreet; a chapter on Bryant but only a page about Sidney Lanier.... But it seems well in books about literature, not to discuss writers admittedly dead in the spirit, whose names persist by the inertia of reputation.

In time, too, Lanier was unfortunate. As just stated, the decade and a half following the Civil War was not favorable nor inducive to artistic creation, and the North, victorious though it was, hardly in a frame of mind to acknowledge Southern achievement. North and South alike were becoming realistic, if not materialistic; therefore pure romance found no responsive sympathy. If Poe cried out against a lack of understanding, Lanier could have done so--and did, though not so bitterly--with even greater reason. He was a solitary figure, out of harmony with the tone of his age and of that which followed. He is overweighted with words, say his critics, his figures are too rich and too abundant, he is vague and elusive. But that may be said with equal truth of Francis Thompson, of Swinburne, of Keats, or even of Spenser; and as to vagueness, what of Robert Browning? A fault in one poet cannot be overlooked or become a virtue in another. A matter-of-fact, somewhat cynical and dis-

illusioned age found it hard to enter into the musical rhapsodies of "Marshes of Glynn" or "Sunrise", preferring the soulless and unmusical flood of free verse that followed in the wake of Walt Whitman. But much of that out-put will not endure, for even now, the older and more conventional verse forms are again in favor, as Grant C. Knight has pointed out. With this return to favor of metrical forms, it is quite possible that Lanier's theory, which gives greater freedom within the bounds of form, may exercise a wide influence, though of course not as spectacular as that of Whitman. It is this freedom without license that made Lanier such a favorite of Hamlin Garland, who says

Surrounded by those to whom he sang in unavailing phrase (for New England is essentially without the inborn sense of song), I reasoned then as I do now that no common soul could so come to a fellow man unheralded and unknown and exalt him, and in a way transform him, as Lanier had exalted and transformed me.9

He taught me freedom within law.... It is certainly the voice of an individual soul as are the wild, sweet lyrics of William Blake.10

If one's opinion is to be governed by the almost complete condemnation of Lanier one finds in such studies as Edmund Gosse's "Has America Produced a Poet?"11 or Robert Penn Warren's "The Blind Poet",12 or in the silence of others, then the invectives hurled against Poe must also be borne in mind.

10) Ibid., p. 151.
J. W. Krutch partially summarizes his study of the author of "The Raven" thus: "Poe is then only 'the jungle man' as Emerson called him, and his 'genius' contains a good deal more than 'two fifths sheer fudge' estimated by Lowell; and we have George Saintsbury's word that Henry James considered Poe's verses valueless.

At first thought it might seem that Lanier is not really comparable with Poe, but in the light of the foregoing considerations, and encouraged by the recent interest in the Georgia poet manifest in the late studies by Aubrey Harrison Starke and Lincoln Lorenz published in 1933 and 1936 respectively, this thesis was attempted. What Brander Matthews says of Poe may equally apply to Lanier: "His deficiencies need not be hidden--there is no profit in denying them--but his individual achievement is equally indisputable."

The achievement, then, of these two Southern writers in the theory of Poetry--with some slight consideration of practice by way of illustration, since the theory of each was an explanation, an "apology" for the manner in which he wrote, and hence cannot be absolutely separated--is the subject of this comparative study.

CHAPTER I

PROSODY

Robert Louis Stevenson wished that some Roman poet might return, and explain to us just how Latin verse is to be read—"'Aut Lacedaemonium Tarentum' for a case in point".1 Then, he felt, he might enjoy it. He had this knowledge with regard to English poetry, yet, (perhaps consequently) felt like so many others, poets or not, that our scansion is inadequate if not misleading and incorrect. Certain it is that the scansion of lines often brings results far different from those obtained in reading, and thus obviously, from those intended by the poet. In a letter to Edmund Clarence Stedman,2 Sidney Lanier gave as one reason for his writing The Science of English Verse that he hoped to publish some poems in the future which he feared would not be understood unless previously explained! It is fortunate for us that he did so, for this volume is a work of considerable importance, the excellence of which has been acknowledged by William Hayes Ward, Paul Elmer More, T.S.Omond, Harriet Monroe, and others, and has proved to be the starting point for further serious studies. Though some critics have found it involved, it is rather, very detailed but logical. A study of The Science of English Verse, compar-


7
ing Lanier's ideas with those of Poe as found in the *Rationale of Verse, Philosophy of Composition*, and *Marginalia* will form the content of this chapter.

The science forming the basis of English verse is a physical one—that of sound. For fundamentally, the pleasure derived from poetry is very largely a perception of the relations of sound, so that the beauty of tone is apparent entirely apart from the idea or meaning of the poem. Though conclusively demonstrated in the very first chapter of Lanier's work, the truth of the statement had been brought home to me rather pointedly some time ago on hearing Father Martin C. D'Arcy, S.J., Master of Campion Hall, Oxford, read Gerard Manley Hopkins' poetry. I found it very difficult to understand the words, so I very soon gave up the attempt, and found the music and beauty quite apparent without knowing what the poet said. Perhaps, too, the verses thus read more nearly approximated the tone-color\(^3\) intended by the author than an American rendering would have done. The appeal of *Kubla Khan* is that of sound rather than thought. The pleasure derived from the apprehension of sound results primarily from poetry read aloud, but as a musician can "hear" what he sees on the manuscript or score, so through the eye acting as agent, the printed poem appeals as sound to what Lanier terms the "imaginative ear". The physical

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3) Tone-color, as used by Lanier, is applied to the particular shade of tone of each vowel or consonant. Explained more fully on pages 30-31.
relations of sound, then, are the determining factors in verse. Four are distinguishable.

If a string is plucked, the following phenomena may be noted:

1) how long the string vibrates, determining the length or duration of the sound;
2) how far to each side the string moves, determining the loudness or intensity;
3) how fast it vibrates, determining how high or low the sound, or its pitch;
4) of what sets of vibration (since a string does not vibrate equally in all its segments) or of what timber the sound is composed, or its tone-color.

All these are perceived by the ear, though only three can be exactly measured: duration, pitch, and tone-color. Hence these are the three determinants of verse, namely, duration controlling rhythm; pitch, the tune of verse; and tone-color regulating rhyme, alliteration, syzygy, etc.

Two relations pertaining to duration can be distinguished: the proportionate time value of sounds as they actually exist, or primary rhythm; and secondary rhythm, or the arrangement into groups of such proportions. All these sound relations exist in music, and its notation adequately expresses all the primary and secondary relations of duration, as well as those of pitch, intensity, and tone-color.
There is really no difference between the sound relations of music and of poetry—the former indicated by notes, the latter by words—the difference lies in the nature of the sounds. At this point Lanier states explicitly the real difference between music and verse. This consists, first, "in the generic and specific tone-colors", secondly, in the tones of the speaking voice, for there are many more than those represented by the musical scale.

After this "foundation", each phase of sound relation is treated separately, as it concerns verse alone; rhythm first. Lanier illustrates clearly the distinction between primary and secondary rhythm by the simple clock tick. The beats are mechanically and exactly even, yet if listened to for some time they seem to have formed a grouping of two—not tick, tick, tick, tick, but tick, tack, tick, tack, with apparently greater intensity and a slight variation in pitch on every second beat of each group. That this grouping or secondary rhythm is purely imaginative may be seen by the ease with which by concentrating the attention, the very same clock may appear to change its sound, and instead of tick, tack, tick, tack, we hear tick, tack, tick, tack.

When speaking of rhythm in poetry, it is this secondary rhythm that is meant, but what is only apparent in the clock tick is found here in reality, namely, the change in pitch and intensity, or accent, which marks the rhythm. But there can be no grouping of time elements unless there is a fundamen-
tal or primary relationship of time recurrence. Lanier demonstrates that nothing except time can be the basis for this grouping. Furthermore, in music no one has ever thought of writing by accents or using any other basis than time. Each printed syllable is the symbol of a verse sound which can be recognized as having definite time relation to every other syllable, or primary rhythm, since all pronunciation must occupy a certain amount of time. If one sound equals another, they may be said to have the proportion of 1 to 1; if one is twice as long, 1 to 2; if three times, 1 to 3, etc.

Classic verse is spoken of as being quantitative. The duration was or "is alleged to have been"\(^4\) not only of a single proportion, 1 to 2, but the long syllables were always long, and the short always short. Our purpose here is not the determining of the correctness of this statement, but comparison with English. It is obvious not only that there exist more quantitative proportions in English, but also that the value of a given syllable in different words is variable. With these points in mind, it is evident, that English verse is quantitative, using that term with a denotation other than that understood by the classicists. Though varying, the quantities are universally recognized—first because all verse-sound signs (the printed syllables) are primarily rhythmical; secondly,

because standard usage fixes a secondary rhythm by accenting certain syllables.

Although Poe likewise considers verse to be based on quantity, he feels that a learned discussion of rhythm is superfluous, for it is something universally accepted and appreciated. He finds fault with those who deduce rules of metrics from classic verse alone, instead of "from Nature and common sense", building a system of "rules that contradict each other every five minutes and for nearly all of which may be found twice as many exceptions as examples".5 Thus the rule that a vowel before two consonants is long, is a very artificial and somewhat absurd way of saying that it is more difficult and takes more time to pronounce two consonants than one. He ridicules this deduction—as Poe can—by a reductio ad absurdum. He would imagine students a thousand years hence—English being a dead language—analyzing the line

Among trunks grouped in myriads round

and recognizing that trunks is short, would formulate the rule that "u when found imbedded among nine consonants, was short."6

While agreeing with Lanier that English verse is quantitative, Poe's reasoning follows a different procedure. He builds on a foundation of the enjoyment of fitness or equality of sounds is the pleasure we derive from Music; verse being

"an inferior and less capable Music". The spondee may be regarded as the expression of this equality, or as the fundamental concept of verse rhythm. But since an endless succession of spondees would grow unbearably monotonous, for variety's sake syllables differing in accent would be placed near each other, according as they were easy or difficult to pronounce, i.e., long or short. These accented syllables are long, and if not naturally so, then unnaturally because of the stress we give them. Lanier shows that accent does not imply a lengthening of the time occupied in the pronunciation of the syllable, but can be achieved by increase in intensity or difference in pitch. In this respect, Poe's contention seems more in accord with usage. T.S. Omond considers that "our habitual inclination in English is to make quantity follow accent". George L. Raymond's idea that accent is necessarily accompanied by an increase in quantity can readily be shown to be untrue.

In reading, as in music, Lanier goes on to say, sounds are grouped not only according to secondary rhythm, but into phrases, which are separated from each other by silences, or rests, a very important phase of verse which Poe entirely disregards as if it did not exist. The function of the phrase or logical group is to bring a pleasant change in the rhythm

7) Ibid., p. 220.
8) English Metrics, R. Pelton, Tunbridge Wells, 1903, p. 46.
which would soon grow monotonous if maintained without exception. The phrase, a tertiary rhythm, is marked not only by silences, but also by a change in pitch of the last sound. But here it is necessary to note the difference between rhythmic accent and this particular type which may be called logical. The first occurs regularly to mark the bar by increased intensity, thus establishing a definite rhythm; the second, an increase of pitch, occurs irregularly and may even be placed on different words or syllables by different readers, with the effect of disestablishing the regular meter. Usually, however, they occur at the same syllable, and the function of the logical accent is to mark the rhythmic in a greater degree.

The fourth division of rhythm that Lanier distinguishes is the line. This is marked by rests, by rhyme, or by a change of pitch. Rhyme as a rhythmical device must be distinguished from its use for pleasure merely. In the case of the run-on-line, the unit as recognized by the eye differs from that recognized by the ear. Poe again quarrels with the prosodists who attempt to scan poetry by considering each line as it stands, with the result that they find nothing, at times, but exceptions. A line, he holds, is entirely an arbitrary thing, and any division is correct and good, excepting the line of one foot, for its rhythm exists only in comparison with other lines. Just as any other unit, it must be complete within itself. But since a line may be divided variously, it is unfair to cite a
single line, especially of the run-on type, and point out its incorrectness. Meter, both writers explain as having to do with length of line, not with rhythm.

The fifth order that Lanier discusses is the stanza, which has unlimited possibilities of arrangement and of metrical pattern; and the sixth order, which comprises all the others, is the poem. In regard to stanza, we find in the *Philosophy of Composition*

Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere rhythm, it is still clear that the possible varieties of meter and stanza are absolutely infinite,—and yet, for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an original thing.10

A system of marking rhythm in verse is of special interest to both these poets, and they assign the same reason to the necessity of having such a system. The habits of reading differ, and in the case of words of one syllable especially, notation may make clear the poet's intention. Poe notes that some persons stress monosyllables, and I have observed the peculiar habit (in an educated person of my acquaintance) of stressing adjectives. The scansion generally accepted and taught is quite inadequate, for poetry which is read with a remarkably and beautifully musical flow, when marked by its laws, becomes a jumble of shifted accents and contradictions.

Yet another reason for marking the scansion is the fact that it is a very rare occurrence, and from the point of view of monotony happily so, to find a poem that throughout follows the rhythmic beat indicated as the pattern. In this connection, Poe says a rather startling thing.

Even in the most musical lines we find the succession interrupted. The iambic pentameters of Pope, for example (1) will be found on examination, frequently varied by trochees in the beginning, or by (what seem to be) anapaests in the body, of the line.11

If then, in the "musical" verses of Pope we find this, much more will be found in the lines of Shakespeare, Keats, Francis Thompson, and many others. Accounting for "feet" in these poems or in the markedly rhythmic nursery rhymes according to the ordinary system is a difficult thing, and their simplicity, as in "Baa, baa, black sheep" offers a complication of rhythms to anyone attempting to mark them in the ordinary manner. Perhaps, too, the classic writers gave themselves more freedom than we suppose, and their poetry may not have sounded as we read it.

Poe maintains that for variety, then, not only the accents may be interchanged, as for example placing a trochee next to an iambus, but within the foot the number of syllables may be increased provided only that they occupy the same amount of time. He himself does this frequently; the first perhaps

most daringly in the line in "Al Aaraaf" to which he calls our
attention:

Headlong\thither\ward o\ver\ the star\ry sea.\n
The pattern of the poem is iambic, but here two consecutive
trochees have been introduced into the iambic scheme. "Bells",
"Annabel Lee", "Ulalume", give frequent instances of the latter
variation. However, changing the number of syllables does not
change the nature of the foot. To explain: the iambic foot is
made up of a long syllable followed by a short one, the whole
foot therefore being equal to three short syllables. But the
anapaest is composed of a long syllable followed by two short
ones, hence its value is four short syllables. But four cannot
be equal to three, and hence in spite of prosodists, an anapaest
may not be used in place of an iambus. Two things are to be
noted here. First, Poe retains the feet commonly mentioned by
prosodists, namely, the spondee, iambus, trochee, anapaest, and
dactyl, discarding the pyrrhic, which cannot exist, for the two
short syllables can be short only in relation to some long syl-
lable, of which there is none; secondly, his scansion is strict-
ly quantitative. If an anapaest may not be used for an iambus,
how then does Poe explain such a line as this from "Annabel Lee"

In a kingdom by\the sea?\n
If carefully noted, it becomes apparent that in a king occupies
the same time as the other two feet, that is, in a being only

12) Ibid., p. 235.
as long as a short syllable; this he styles a "bastard" iambus. He distinguishes still another type of foot besides the bastard, which he finds may exist in a trochee.

Many are the thoughts that come to me. Many are the thoughts that come to me. From the remainder of the poem of which this is the first line, the plan is found to be trochaic tetrameter. Many are the thoughts that come to me. He calls this a "quick" trochee, for it is not the same as the bastard, having one more syllable, yet it, too, is no longer a trochee. With this idea applicable to anapaests and occasionally even to dactyls, Poe maintains that there is no rhythm so complicated that it cannot be scanned by the laws (not rules) of verse. One other feature of classical prosody is present in our poetry—the caesura, "the most important foot in all verse", which he regards not as a break, but as a pause, in as much as the caesura is always held as long as the preceding feet. One might illustrate this by his use of it in the refrain of "The Raven":

Quoth the Raven, Nevermore.

What is Poe's suggestion for marking the flow of words—which is merely a way of showing that their rhythm is correct? He proposes a numerical system whereby the relative value of each syllable may be indicated not only in regard to other syllables in the foot, but every other possible value.

13) Ibid., p. 236.
14) Ibid., p. 216.
The unit of measure is the long syllable, which will remain unmarked, as would the spondee, since it is composed of two such sounds. Short syllables in verse are considered just half of the value of the long. Hence in the trochee and iambus, the small figure 2 would be placed below the unaccented syllable indicating that it should be given one half the time of the unmarked. The more exactly verse approximates this time proportion, the more perfect it will be. In the dactyl and anapaest each of the short syllables is equal to half a long, which will again be shown by placing the 2 under both. In the bastard dactyl and anapaest, where three short syllables instead of two are equal to one long, the mark would be a 3 below each syllable. In the bastard trochee or iambus, each of the two syllables is half a short syllable, hence a fourth of long, to be marked 4. But the quick trochee uses three syllables in place of a short or half of long; thus 6 would be the mark for each syllable, the time being one-sixth of long. The value of the caesura is to be indicated above by a small figure representing the value of the foot which it represents.

Poe claims for this accentuation that there is no meter, classical or modern, which cannot be scanned correctly, by which he means that the scansion flow and the reading flow will exactly co-ordinate, and not only that, but the poet's intention as to relative value of syllables and consequently the rhythmic plan of not only the poem, but of lines and parts of
lines will be correctly understood.

A word may be said here of a matter which is discussed in connection with the bastard foot, and which at that time must have been a bit startling, as it always would be to such poets as count the number of syllables in writing verse. Since the very purpose of introducing an additional syllable is to produce variety, and to have a pleasant effect on the ear, synaeresis is foolish, and all such words as "heav'n", "silv'ry", "murm'ring", etc., are out of place. Such words are to be employed in their ordinary pronunciation, avoiding such artificiality.

In order to insure a correct judgment of the rhythm intended, the poet should be careful to establish it beyond a doubt in the first line, or at least in a sufficient number of feet at the beginning of the first line. Then he may modify the pattern, not without consideration of the result, but rather occasionally, intentionally, but never so often as to destroy the general impression of the rhythm that is the norm. "That rhythm is erroneous (at some point more or less obvious) which any ordinary reader can, without design, read improperly." 15 There are many otherwise beautiful poems that would have been improved had the poets observed this rule, one which seems almost too obvious to state.

15) Ibid., p. 237.
While undoubtedly Poe's theory is more pliable than the general expositions of versification and while it is an explanation which is at the same time more exact, its main faults seem to be that it would require more thinking than a normal rate of reading would allow, in order to decide the fourth or the sixth of long. The result, too, of reading exactly as marked would be almost as jerky and unnatural as the ordinary singsong of verse scansion. But the main fault is one which he himself condemns—that it is artificial, since the condition on which it rests is not an actual one:

It will be seen that the length of a syllable, depending on the facility or difficulty of its enunciation, must have great variations in various syllables; but for the purposes of verse we suppose a long syllable equal to two short ones:—for the natural deviation from this relativity we correct in perusal.16

If there are great variations, but if in poetry we assume something which is not a fact, and if we must correct that error in reading, then Poe stands self-condemned.

Yet this must not blind us to the merits to which Poe directs our attention: the plan represents the rhythm as it exists without meeting contradiction at each turn, and thus the reading and scansion flow are more nearly the same, as noted above.

In the creation or the writing of poetry, the freedom—comparative, at least—which he holds out is inducive to

16) Ibid., p. 221. The underscorings do not appear in the original.
more beautiful verse, breaking away, as did all the Romanticists, from the type of versification so monotonously followed for years. The fact that no other great American poets at that time produced very musical verse is not the fault of the system.

Yet no one could write musical masterpieces if he were to bind himself to a consciousness of the exact mathematical numeration of each measure implied in the relative time values. That must be done intuitively. If making verse "on one's fingers" is bad, this equally bad mathematical process is the last thing that Poe would suggest to the versifier.

Though beginning from the same point, Lanier is far more radical. He disregards the classic rhythms. It is notable that the only term he uses to any extent in his treatise is iambus; this because it is so markedly characteristic of our language that King James gave the injunction that verse was to be written in iambic rhythm—as though no other existed. Instead Lanier shows that all English verse has a rhythm of three or four beats to the bar. The poet chooses a particular rhythm which he must clearly mark in the opening bars. Beginnings made with words of one syllable may be variously interpreted, so that the reader may not be able at once to decide the pattern.

All such equivocal beginnings are bad. The resources of our language as to rhythm are so copious that not the laziest ballad-maker need ever be at a loss for means of indicating the intended movement of verse with unmistakable clearness.17

How like Poe! When this intended movement has been shown beyond doubt, then the poet may change. In music that is done very freely.

Many time relations exist in verse—which would be far better represented than by the limited "classical feet." All these may be accounted for in a simple classification based on the rhythms commonly found in music, namely three units of time or four to the measure or bar. There is no mode that cannot be fitted into one of these. Three-rhythm may be represented as of three types: \[ \text{[]} \text{[]} \text{[]} \text{or} \text{[]} \text{[]} \text{or} \text{[]} \text{[]} ; \text{and four-rhythm of two:} \[ \text{[]} \text{[]} \text{[]} \text{[]} \text{or} \text{[]} \text{[]} \text{[]} \text{[]}. \text{Two-rhythm, about which some may question, is contained in the four, with the advantage of avoiding the monotony resulting from such frequent recurrence of the accent. The three rhythm is the common form and nearly all great short poems and all long poems in English have been written in this meter. Of the pyrrhic foot Lanier says: "Among several acute remarks which peer through the mass of error in Poe's *Rationale of Verse* is one which ridicules the idea that any such measure as the Pyrrhic exists in English poetry."\[18\]

The type of measure—whatever it be—is determined not by the number of sounds, but by the number of "time-units" in the bar, nor is it necessary to have the same form, provided the time value be the same. Here again he agrees with Poe, and im-

plicitly too, disapproves of synaeresis. How much simpler this, than to distinguish between the trochee, the bastard trochee and the quick trochee. The time value of the bar—and this is im-
important—may be composed of sounds or silences. This point, as
noted above, Poe completely ignores, and yet it is readily seen
that in the normal reading of verse no person maintains the con-
tinual flow that the scansion of Poe’s theory, including the
caesura as a pause, would demand. Just as in normal speech we
must pause for breath, or for emphasis, so in verse. Perhaps
no better illustration of the actuality of the rest could be
given than by citing that first line of Tennyson’s famous poem

Break, break, break.

Few readers would hold each sound for its entire value, and e-
ven the "orthodox" books on versification, (which, incidentally,
do not agree on the scansion of this poem) use some mark to in-
dicate a cessation of sound before each successive word. The
simplest mode of scansion would be our ordinary musical nota-
tion. In these days of music and sight-singing in the elemen-
tary schools, the time value of notes would offer no difficulty
to the reader. There is a further advantage. Since there are
notes and rests representing an almost unlimited variety of
time units, it would be possible to mark words exactly as read,
eliminating roughness, while at the same time, it would allow
for individual difference. Certain words might be given a
greater value by one reader, or, on the other hand, a longer rest would be taken, and by a simple adjustment extending over the remainder of the bar, possibly evenly distributed over the remaining sounds, the proper rhythm would be maintained, thus allowing more than one correct reading. As may be seen readily, the number of patterns in rhythm is limited, so that the poet cannot hope to show much originality there. It is in the phrase group existing as such by its thought or by alliteration—which Poe uses cleverly but about which he says nothing—that Lanier finds "matters of the subtlest ego"; everyone is bound by foot and line, "but these irregular groupings of the third order let down the bars and turn Pegasus out into the universe".19

Meter or length of line is an affair of the ear. In Shakespeare's later blank verse, with its abundance of run-on lines, the effect is rhythmic but not metrical. Lanier says:

> I am strongly inclined to believe that English poetry might be the gainer if we would at once frankly recognize this rhythmic but unmetric verse as a strictly-rhythmized prose, and print it as such without the deceptive line-division.... A development of English rhythm lies, I feel sure, in this direction.20

Before going on to a consideration of rhyme, illustrations of the above mentioned theories might be made here.

In Poe's "Silence" the interchange of feet and the introduction of additional syllables is well exemplified:

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19) Ibid., p. 234.
20) Ibid., p. 235.
There are some qualities—some incorporate things;

That have a double life which thus is made.

A type of that twin entity which springs

From matter and light, evinced in solid and shade.

There is a two-fold Silence—sea and shore—

Body and soul.

It is quite unnecessary to show that this beginning any normal reader can misinterpret, and many would, though the plan of iambic pentameter is soon apparent. "To My Mother" has further instances of the same effect.

That a line is an arbitrary thing is illustrated, as is the caesura, in "Ulalume";

The skies they were ashen and sober;

The leaves they were crisped and sere,—

The leaves they were withering and sere:
The of the second line clearly completes the foot begun with sober; and sere of the second line must be held for the value of three short beats; and again the of the third line completes the foot begun with sere.

In "The Bells" practically every idea for variety and pleasurable surprise has been successfully introduced. The appearance on the printed page alone shows the pliability of verse
when not too closely bound. One of the most musical and onomatopoetic of all poems, the epitome of rhythmic and metrical success in the works of Poe, yet it is this very poem which if scanned according to the two modes here explained shows the superiority of Lanier's system of accentuation over Poe's.

Hear the mellow wedding bells!

Golden bells!

What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!

Through the balmy air of night

How they ring out their delight!

How they ring out their delight!

-----

The longer swing demanded by the four-rhythm here, is much more imitative of the ringing of a bell than is the faster and more uneven effect produced by reading as Poe's accentuation would have it. This is even more evident in the stanzas de-
scribing the brazen and iron bells. The only portion of the poem where the quicker accents might be better is in the first stanza. Sleigh bells are small, and the strokes of the tongue would be very rapid. In "The Raven", too, the even tempo of Lanier's reading would serve to intensify the "weak and weary" mood.

As one turns the pages of the Poems of Sidney Lanier, the impression of variability is strong—just as in "The Bells". "A Message of range and of sweep"21 is true of any number of poems, and there is a restful smoothness, a "legato", in the lines where Lanier has freely followed the inspiration of music, which quite distinguishes them from any written before him; or we find dancing rhythms, which appear in later works, among them Richard Hovey's "Spring". Miss Pearl E. Brown22 has shown that almost all of Lanier's meters can be "satisfactorily accounted for by classic scansion", but it is absurd to suppose that read with classic accentuation they could have the leisure intended by Lanier or which they have when read in musical tempo, nor is it anything but logical to say that had Lanier written with classic metrics in mind, we would have no "Sunrise", no "Marshes of Glynn", and no "Symphony".

Many passages might be selected to show the grace and power of pure musical melody and flow which Lanier mastered,

21) Sunrise, line 4.
especially in "Sunrise", his last poem, but these lines from "Marshes of Glynn" are equally significant:

Oh, now, unafraid, I am fain to face
The vast sweet visage of space.
To the edge of the wood I am drawn, I am drawn,
Where the gray beach glimmering runs, as a belt of the dawn,
For a mete and a mark
To the forest-dark:
So:
Affable live-oak, leaning low,—
Thus—with your favor—soft, with a reverent hand,
(Not lightly touching your person, Lord of the land!)
Bending your beauty aside, with a step I stand
On the firm-packed sand,
Free
By a world of marsh that borders a world of sea.

The beauty of the accent which does not displace the evenness of beat may be seen in

And now from the Vast of the Lord will the waters of sleep
Roll in on the souls of men.

And the use of the rest, the most natural thing in reading—

Out of the hills of Habersham
Down the valleys of Hall,

I hurry amain to reach the plain.

I do not think that the second line rest is any longer than would naturally be used. The rest within the line is found in

Opinion, let me alone: I am not thine,

from "Remonstrance".
It would mar the music of any of these bars in which uniform rhythm is found to read them all in the time proportions of Poe's plan. For example--

And now from the Vast of the Lord will the waters of sleep
Roll in on the souls of men.

Nothing but a spondee would be possible in the second last foot, and \( \text{of} \) is assuredly not a long syllable. Poe might even accuse Lanier of attempting to write in classical style. In "Remonstrance",

\[
\text{I am not thine}
\]

is more natural a reading than

\[
\text{I am not thine.}
\]

But enough has been said of rhythm. The question of pitch which Lanier next takes up for discussion is not strictly one of prosody, and may be more fittingly reserved for the chapter of this study dealing with music and verse.

The last point which the science of sound explains is tone-color, which accounts for rhyme. Lanier shows by quotations from early works on versification that "color" was the term used for rhyme long before science gave that name to the phenomenon, or even before science examined it. Just as the eye can distinguish red from green, so can the ear between one sound and another. For example, the identical tone played on
a clarinet, then an oboe, or played on two different clarinets, or even by two players on the same instrument has a different "coloring" in each case. Since the human voice is the most perfect of musical instruments, clearly the range of tone-color will be very wide. As different treatment will result in different colors, so printed words specify the particular shade of tone, or tone-color to be produced by the vocal apparatus.

On the subject of rhyme the two poets are remarkably accordant. Both agree that the primary function of verse is the marking of the line for the ear, and they vary only slightly in assigning the secondary function, which ultimately arises from an identical concept, that of pleasurable surprise. Lanier sees its efficacy in marking the tertiary division of the line, or the end of the phrase. Poe with greater detail, says

Perfection of rhyme is attainable only in the combination of the two elements, Equality and Unexpectedness. But as evil cannot exist without good, so unexpectedness must arise from expectedness. We do not contend for mere arbitrariness of rhyme. In the first place we must have equi-distant or regularly recurring rhymes to form the basis, expectedness, out of which arises the element, unexpectedness, by the introduction of rhymes, not arbitrarily, but with an eye to the greatest amount of unexpectedness.23

This in theory; in practice, we find in "The Raven"

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain sets the pattern, but

Thrilled me, filled me with fantastic terrors24

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23) Marginalia, Complete Works, op. cit., vol. xvi, p. 86.  
is unexpected, and at the same time, marks the phrase. In Lanier,

Vanishing, swerving, evermore curving again into sight—or even more skillfully

Say yea!—Let them lash me, Hamish?—Nay!—Husband the lashing will heal.

The endless couplet rhyming so characteristic of Pope and other writers of the eighteenth century reminded Poe of charity school children marching endlessly, two by two, with clasped hands.25

Since his interest lies in the science of rhyme, Lanier has developed that phase by a careful analysis of correct rhyme, i.e., the tone-color of the final vowel of the rhyming words must be identical, as must the sounds that follow, but those preceding must differ. If rhyme is not perfect, there is nothing to do but discard it. The poet's ear must decide on its perfection and position. Rhymes used even fifty years ago may no longer be satisfactory.

Tone-color controls more than rhyme, however, and the choice of consonants that flow into each other, of vowels that harmonize, alliteration and syzygy, all rest on the physical laws of color of tone. There is a remarkable sensitiveness in both poets to the sound of vowels. Lanier says:

Few points in the physical well being of a formal poem require more artistic care than the insidious recurrence of the same vowel color in consecutive and neighboring words, to the extent of wearying the ear or its imagination.26

And Poe notices that so few poets give careful attention to their vowel sounds even though they use alliteration well, on that basis criticising these lines from Milton's "Comus"

May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore
by suggesting that onyx would be preferable to beryl since the o is fixed in the ear by the last two words of the preceding line.27

As with rhyme, no fixed rule controls this choice of vowel sound excepting that of the effect produced, Poe implies, and Lanier states:

For the artist in verse there is no law: the perception and love of beauty constitute the whole outfit. In all cases, the appeal is to the ear; but the ear should for that purpose, be educated up to the highest possible plane of culture.28

It is superfluous to point out the practice of each in this delicate use of tone-color, for anyone who has had a mere introduction to these Southern poets has sensed this, even if he has not analyzed it. But while Poe seems to have felt all this instinctively and studied to introduce it as much as

pleasure would allow, it was Lanier who did not rest satisfied with his own intuition, but went to science to discover the laws which control verse and which would sanction his endeavors. Lanier has been accused of being superficial rather than scholarly. It is unfair to apply our standards of scholarship to his work, as a pioneer, but even the most critical can find nothing superficial in the Science of English Verse. Considering every feature as worthy of study in order to find a definite law of operation, he has offered opportunities for poets and possibilities for poetry that Poe did not attempt. Hence, besides being more accurate than Poe, he indicates the paths along which verse might advance far beyond the achievement known in his day.

More than that, it is remarkable that Lanier is given full credit by students of prosody, and experimenters in the field of rhythm—prose and poetry—build on his plan though they may not agree with every phase of it. For example, Robert Bridges finds that English verse has quantity, but that this quantity differs from the classical. Stress, he says, is in reality its basis, for it and not the number of syllables is the determining law. Though he insists that an explanation resting entirely on "quantity" is futile, he speaks of verse that is unpleasant rhythmically; and of the possibility of writing correct poetry in which the number of syllables may vary

provided they occupy the same time. It is interesting to find in some of the later studies on this science that Poe is mentioned very seldom, but that Lanier is invariably honored with high praise. Katherine Wilson's entire treatise30 is a development of "music and poetry", with musical notation used throughout. Henry Lanz31 insists on graphic representation of scansion though his system is far harder to read. Such treatises as John Hubert Scott's32 or Helen Griffin's33 are but further confirmations of the value of Lanier's work. Gay Wilson Allen's book American Prosody, published just last year,34 points to Poe's theory as worthy of note because the very first in America, but considers them of little value, because of the many errors; Lanier, however, he places definitely high in rank because of his real service to versification. Not only rhythm, but music, intensity and even pitch are referred to in the monograph by Helen Griffin.

Whether we accept Poe's Philosophy of Composition as an explanation of what really happened in writing "The Raven" or as just another instance of his love of analysis, he did a service to poetry in acknowledging that it does not result from

32) "Rhythmic Verse", University of Iowa Humanistic Studies, vol. III, 2, May 25, 1925
CHAPTER II
MUSIC AND POETRY

Notwithstanding diligent and careful inquiry, certain years of Poe's life have obstinately remained shadowed in mystery. It is not surprising then to discover how little is known of even his immediate ancestry. From the meagre knowledge gleaned by his biographers from history in the case of his paternal grandfather, and from contemporary newspapers giving accounts or criticisms of the theatrical career of his father, mother and maternal grandmother, we learn one thing which serves us here. Mrs. Arnold, Poe's grandmother, who came to the American stage from Covent Garden, won from both her audiences and the critics enthusiastic praise for her performances, many of which were in comic opera roles, or in vocal concerts. Though Elizabeth Arnold Poe's reputation as an actress seems to have been an enviable one at the time, she by no means developed her dramatic talent to the exclusion of music. Her first appearance on the stage, when she sang several popular songs, was at a concert of her mother's, and she continued to sing through the years that followed. It is true that Poe was a young child when his mother died (we know nothing of the time of his grandmother's death), but who can doubt that even at this early age music had made its impression on the sensitive boy undoubtedly gifted with some degree of musical talent? Of musical atmosphere in the Allan home we know little.
Lanier was blessed with a richer and fuller musical heritage. In the early records of the family while yet in England are names of several who chose music as their profession, even attaining to the rank of court musician, and love of the art seems to have remained a family trait. If the contention generally held that *Tiger Lilies* is largely autobiographical is correct, then the atmosphere in which Lanier was reared was one soothed and elevated by melody and harmony.

We know of his personal enthusiasm, almost reverence, for music, to the extent that for some time he felt destined to follow its call. As a child he had experimented with instruments and sung the hymns and songs familiar to Southern families. Later on in life he became proficient at the organ, and although the violin was always his favorite, it was the flute he mastered. This he had learned to play as a boy, taking it with him when a soldier, perfecting himself in its art with very little if any instruction, until during the last few years of his life he was without doubt America's ranking flutist. People marvelled at the violin quality he at times achieved in the flute tones. As a member of one and another of the leading orchestras, he was introduced to a knowledge and ardent admiration of the words of the master composers, thus coming more and more to such a love of all that music holds, that he seems almost to have thought in its terms. Nothing is more plausible than that the poetry which he finally recognized as his life's
work, should reflect in every line his musical soul, that he
should see the relations, the parallels, between the two arts,
and that statements such as these should appear in his writings:

to abandon immediately the idea that music is a
species of language—which is not true—and to sub­
stitute for that the converse idea that language is
a species of music.¹

And as music takes up the thread which language
drops so it is where Shakespeare ends that Beethoven
begins.²

We shall probably never know to what extent Poe's
knowledge of music was developed. That it was developed to some
extent is evident from his writings in which he not only refers
to it with appreciation, but shows his recognition of the sim­
ilarity of the art to poetry. Not very important perhaps, but
surely interesting, is Killis Campbell's statement that Poe
played the flute,³ a fact mentioned also in Hervey Allen's
biography.⁴

The sensitiveness in both Poe and Lanier may be par­
tially accounted for by their Southern birth. The very speech
of the South has a resonance and musical appeal quite peculiar,
and the "folk songs" of the Negro must have been familiar and
left an impression. Bird songs, too, played their part at least
as far as Lanier is concerned.

1) Music and Poetry, Charles Scribner's Sons, N.Y., 1909, p.3.
2) Ibid., p. 24.
3) The Mind of Poe and Other Studies, Harvard University Press,
Cambridge, Mass., 1933, p. 43.
4) Israfel, the Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe, Farrar and
In the early history of music and poetry, the two arts were more closely allied than now. The lyre or harp was as generally employed to enrich poetry as the piano or organ accompaniment now forms the setting, so to speak, to the voice of a singer. Though the music often consisted in the monotonous plucking of a single string, before the development of polyphonic music, or later, of several strings much in the manner perhaps in which a banjo is often strummed now, it was music at its greatest development. When serious consideration was given to its possibilities apart from poetry, music advanced almost unbelievably through melodic and harmonic stages hitherto deemed impossible. Had poetry not been bound unnaturally, it too would have attempted new forms and new effects. So far, the separation of the two arts was extremely advantageous.

Yet, in a certain sense they have never been really segregated, and the soul of the musician is always that of a poet. Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Wagner, are but a few of the masters who have won fame through compositions inspired by the works of poets, and some of the loveliest lyrics have been set to music by poets themselves. Poe believed firmly that the two could not be completely disunited without serious loss to poetry.

Contenting myself with the certainty that Music, in its various modes of meter, rhythm, and rhyme, is of so vast a moment in Poetry as never to be wisely rejected—is so vitally important an adjunct, that he is simply silly who declines its absolute essential-

ity. It is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic sentiment, it struggles—the creation of supernal Beauty. It may be, indeed, that here this sublime end is, now and then, attained in fact. We are often made to feel, with a shivering delight, that from an earthly harp are stricken notes that cannot have been unfamiliar to the angels. And thus there can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense, we shall find the widest field for the poetic development. The old Bards and Minnesingers had advantages which we do not possess—and Thomas Moore, singing his own songs, was in the most legitimate manner, perfecting them as poems. 6

One cannot help speculating on the possibility of Poe's having considered musical settings for some of his poetry, or on his having attempted musical composition. At any rate, he has produced poetry which verily sings. That the idea of music combined with poetry as in the reference to Thomas Moore is merely a phase in his theory developed at a later period is clear from the preface to the volume of poems published when at West Point: "Music when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music without the idea is simply music; the idea without the music is prose from its very definiteness."

It is quite unnecessary to dwell on anything so obvious as the effect of the musical "modes of meter, rhythm and rhyme" on the poetry of Poe. If the art of dancing can become interpretative of the ideas and rhythms of poetry alone—experiment has shown that it can—Poe's work would offer great pos-

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sibilities. Apart from these features pertaining more to what might be termed the technique of poetry, music had another contribution to make. In reading Poe's theory, one is impressed by the frequent recurrence of the idea that true poetry must be a striving toward the supernal, and the nearer it approximates this goal, the more truly it accomplishes its perfection. But the supernal, the celestial, is of its nature beyond the apprehension of mortal man, and no matter what strides one may make in the understanding and appreciation of its nebulous beauty, it will always retain an immeasurably large element of vagueness. Not only to the senses is celestial beauty inaccessible, but no soul has ever conceived it or ever will. Music is essentially vague, hence it is most capable of expressing the mysterious, the fleeting, the yearned-for, the unattainable supernal beauty. Hence the more musical poetry is the more is it truly poetic, and the more nearly does it approach the expression of the unexpressable. As Emile Lauvrière has stated it,

Or le rôle de la musique n'est-il pas justement d'emprinter tout ce qu'il y a de vague, de juyant, d'incommunicable dans l'âme humaine? Voilà pourquoi la musique doit être, selon Poe, l'inseparable alliée de la poésie.8

Here then lies the explanation of the vagueness of so much of Poe's work. To become definite is at once to deprive musical expression of its ethereal quality, which is essential.9

9) Marginalia, op. cit., p. 29.
Therefore the indefiniteness of setting, of character, at times even of ideas, and because of this, "Andrew Lang believed Poe had nothing to give 'but music--lyric music and vague emotion devoid of human passion'". 10

Beginning with the idea that "language is a species of music, Lanier could produce musical effects without sacrificing the definiteness of thought. Nowhere in Lanier can one find anything approximating in its ambiguousness

I dwelt alone
In a world of moan. 11

On the contrary, the very abundance of the details in his poetry is a fault which he recognized. There is nothing shadowy or hazy in his picture of the marshes of Glynn, and though the "Song of the Chattahoochee" is very clear in its thought, it compares favorably with any remarkably musical poem by Poe or any other writer.

Since the emotions and the intellect are two distinct gifts of man, though one influences the other, and since the appeal to each is made in a different manner, one can achieve both the vagueness of emotion demanded by Poe and still be definite. If poetry is musical, it will arouse the emotions with or without an idea. If the idea is clearly expressed, so that the reader is not distracted by the very effort to grasp the

11) Edgar Allan Poe, Eulalie, lines 1, 2.
thought, as often occurs in reading Browning or Thompson and at times Lanier, a definite emotion will be aroused corresponding to the idea, but not only that, a certain vague pleasurable emotion which one never wishes to analyze results from the response to the music of the rhythm or tone-color. Though the supernal toward which the poet should strive is indefinite, that very straining if done by the intellect may result in making it less so. Things that are vague are unsatisfying from their very lack of substance, and though the poetry of Poe will always cause admiration and wonder, just as surely will it always arouse a taste of the abnormal emotional life of Poe, which may be interesting as a variation, but is unpleasant and even loses its effect if it becomes a steady diet. The character of Poe will always remain an enigma. Is it more than a coincidence that his poetry would stress this abnormal emotional response? "There are moods when the imperfection of Lanier pleases more than the perfection of Poe—even from the artistic standpoint" says Edwin Mims. 12

The most interesting application of musical theory to poetry made by Lanier, with the exception, of course, of basing all ideas of rhythm and rhyme on the science of sound, is that of pitch controlling speech tunes. 13 The Cantonese, we are told, have a clearly specified set of nine tones on which all

their speech is "sung." Though our conversation is not so rigidly governed, the presence and importance of variation in pitch needs no demonstration. The absence of the tone of voice as much as that of facial expression has often caused a written statement to be misinterpreted. Certain cadences of speech could produce pleasing melodies if the intervals were widened.

No real study of speech tunes has yet been made that has resulted in the formulation of a system. Here, as in a strictly rhythmized prose, Lanier sees possibilities for the development of English poetry. He says:

Shakespeare's sonnets create in our voices as we read them such faint-changing, indefinable, strange and beautiful tunes that we seem to be speaking some language out of a finer and brighter star than our own. 14

Shakespeare's dramas, too, have their own tunes, and when performed by actors of note, have been rendered in such a manner that definite intervals of the musical scale could be recognized.

Clearly defined in my memory is the "reading" in monologue of Shakespeare's plays by an English actor forced because of paralysis to abandon his career; for it was the "thirds" and "fourths" so easily distinguishable that made me awaken to the consciousness that speech and song are variations of the same principle.

On this subject of music and poetry King James is quoted by Lanier: "Zour eare maun be the onely igure, as of all

14) Ibid., p. 279.
the other parts of Flowing, the verie twichestane quhaireof is musique."15

In writing the words for the "Centennial Cantata" Lanier had an opportunity of demonstrating the theories he had been propounding. He did not compose the music, but with Beethoven's in mind, he expressed in the simplest language of any of his greater poems, the sublime ideas an occasional ode of this nature would call forth. Not content, he indicated in the copy sent to Mr. Dudley Buck the type of musical arrangement the words suggested to him, or better, that he heard while he wrote. The words, therefore, cannot stand by themselves, and the best one can do in reading them now is to try to hear the music suggested by the marginal notes. When the ode was published, several weeks before the celebration, Lanier was severely criticized. But as the great chorus of chosen voices finished the Cantata, admiration succeeded criticism, and people understood. Mr. Gilmore, then president of Johns-Hopkins, wrote: "Lanier had triumphed. It was an opportunity of a lifetime to test upon a grand scale his theory of verse. He came off victorious."16 Even England praised the Ode!17

As we have seen, both Poe and Lanier were very successful in the use of alliteration and rhyme as an aid to orig-

15) Ibid., p. 315.
inality in marking line or phrase. As a means of obtaining mu-
sical effects, these together with syzygy and careful use of
vowel tones are indispensable. Even the casual reader will
sense how important a place these phases of tone-color hold in
the theory of each poet. When one notices that in "The Raven"
or "Song of the Chattahoochee" it is the exceptional line that
lacks them one need look no farther to discover what the poets
thought of the practicality of their use.

Two sets of poems stand as parallel expressions or il-
lustrations of the theory of music and poetry: "Israfel" and
"Life and Song"; "The Bells" and "Symphony". In the first, both
poets have presented a musical instrument as a symbolic repre-
sentation of the heart of the poet singer:

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell
"Whose heart-strings are a lute;"
None sing so wildly well
As the angel Israfel,
And the giddy stars (so legends tell)
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
Of his voice, all mute.

And Lanier

If life were caught by a clarionet
And a wild heart, throbbing in the reed,
Should thrill its joy and trill its fret,
And utter its heart in every deed,

Then would this breathing clarionet
Type what the poet fain would be.

The ideal toward which each poet strains finds expression here;
Poe's, a craving for the celestial because earth is so unsatis-
fying--
Our flowers are merely--flowers,  
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss  
Is the sunshine of ours.

Heavenly music is the goal, not attainable here below, surrounded as we are and bound down by so much that is unsympathetic and inimical, but it is the natural thing in the eternal realms:

If I could dwell  
Where Israfel  
Hath dwelt, and he where I,  
He might not sing so wildly well  
A mortal melody,  
While a bolder note than this might swell  
From my lyre within the sky.

Lanier's ideal, likewise expressed in the metaphor of music, lacks this yearning, craving and discontented tone. His ideal "to wholly live his minstrelsy" though equally unattainable, leaves no vague unrest. That no one has ever "clearly sung his true, true thought" so that others cried out "His song was only living aloud" finds no despondent echo. Deep longing is expressed in an outburst of music, yet no vain "If" nor regretful complaints. Singing as best he can, success lies in the satisfaction which sincere effort brings to the earnest who persevere no matter what the obstacles.

The other set of poems is illustrative of musical theory rather than explanatory. John Phelps Fruit says of Poe:

Poe made so much of music in his doctrine, yet he never humanized the note of a musical instrument, as did Dryden in "The Song for St. Cecilia's Day".... He took the common bells--the more praise to his
artistic judgment—and rang them through all the
diapason of human sentiment.18

The silver bells—"What a world of merriment their melody fore­
tells"—are followed in the poem by golden wedding bells, har­
bingers with their harmony of a world of happiness. But the
brazen alarum bells tell a tale of terror with "clamorous ap­
pealing", "in mad expostulation". Then comes the solemnity ex­
pressed in the "monody" of the iron bells that toll out melan­
choly in their "throbbing and sobbing". Nor does the mood alone
change, but the rhythm, carefully regulated by the words and
the sounds, heightens the mood. By this change of rhythm, Poe
has shown how music may express those indefinable feelings—too
subtle to be more than partially manifested by words.

Lanier used different instruments of the orchestra in
"Symphony" to express not a wide range of human sentiment as in
"The Bells", but kindred sentiments in the characteristic way
of each instrument in turn. The poem protests against the in­
roads of Trade, blighting Humanity; and cries out for the only
real cure—Love. "We're all for love" throb the violins sup­
ported by the "mightier strings".

So sank the strings to gentle throbbing

Of long chords change-marked with sobbing—

How perfectly that last line translates the idea and music into
words! Then falls the sound of the "velvet flute-notes", "all

18) John Phelps Fruit, The Mind and Art of Poe's Poetry,
for heart". The "breeze among the reeds", the "bold straightforward horn", the hautboy, the "ancient wise bassoons", alone and in "symphony" in their own peculiar manner and typical rhythmic effect plead for the Dove that will enable the cure to be effective. Lanier concludes with "Music is Love in search of a word". When it finds that word, we may add, as it did in the works of these two musicians, it is poetry.

In Poe's works, he kept his music within popular bounds, never wandering too far afield from the limits set down by his romantic predecessors and contemporaries, nor from the taste of his audience; thus his music is within the range of most readers, and his poems have remained popular wherever they are read, that is, generally. In other words, it is the music as much as the mood that has constituted the appeal of his poems. As regards Lanier, the exuberance of his musically aroused emotions was not sufficiently checked, a fault which limits the number of readers. On hearing a fellow student in a Lanier course declare that the poetry was beyond his reach, I was surprised and puzzled—until I learned that he did not know music. A real study of the Science of English Verse would be the only other approach to an appreciation and enjoyment, which even then would be limited.

To compare Lanier's volleying verse with his appoggiaturas on his flute is perhaps fanciful, but the relations between his work as a poet and as a performer in music are extremely intimate. Our com-
prehension of Lanier's poetry must always be partly measured by our comprehension of music.\(^19\) says Stanley T. Williams, associate professor of English at Yale. But for those who can follow, what a wealth of enjoyment to be experienced over and over again, with too much variety of thought and emotion to become monotonous.

To a degree at least, each poet has achieved what he wished to do, and has created poetry in which music is as essential as the words themselves. It is the common ground on which they meet. Lanier spoke of "The Bells" as "pure music"\(^20\) and undoubtedly delighted in reading other poems of Poe, who just as surely would have recognized the sheer music that sings all through the pages of the poems of Lanier—had he lived to review them.

\(^{19}\) American Writers on American Literature, ed. by John Macy, Horace Liveright, Inc., New York, 1931, p. 337.

\(^{20}\) Music and Poetry, op. cit., p. 204.
CHAPTER III

TRUTH AND BEAUTY

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that about no one phase of literature has there been so much argument as concerning the function of truth and beauty. Critics are far from agreed as to just what constitutes truth or beauty, though in the case of the latter, there seems to have been a more or less general understanding, until the advent of certain too realistic writers, when it became difficult to justify their works in the light of its requirements. Truth has denoted everything from the starkest realism to the preaching of morals, or to such presentations as are found in "The Day of Doom" by Michael Wigglesworth. In the realm of poetry, it is generally agreed, there shall be even more of beauty than in the other types of literature, but whether or not truth is appropriate—whether or not it hampers or conflicts with beauty—is a moot question.

Bearing in mind the ideas of Poe explained in the last chapter with regard to Music—that even the mood shall not be too definite—there will be a very limited possibility of anything as concrete as truth. Through the pages of Poe's prose works, but most especially in his Criticisms, in the Poetic Principles, and the Philosophy of Composition, appear and reappear his theory of poetry as a vehicle for truth. It may be summarized thus:
The province of the intellect is truth; that of the conscience, or the moral sense, duty. Between the two is taste, whose function is the recognition and appreciation of beauty. Taste has nothing to do with either duty or truth. Duty is didactic. Poe does not specifically discuss why duty is to be rejected as the primary object of poetry, yet he does explain why truth cannot be; but since duty and truth are allied, his reason for the latter holds for the former. Duty, we know, appeals to the will through the intellect, which recognizes it as good; then only does the will embrace it. Truth to be effectively grasped by the intellect must be presented in a clear, logical, calm and unimpassioned manner to the mind equally logical, calm and unimpassioned. But that frame of mind and that quiescent state of the imagination and emotions is the direct opposite of what is required not only for the creation but also the enjoyment of poetry, for a poem is successful in so far as it excites in the reader the counterpart of the emotion experienced or intended by the writer. But the clear, straight-forward, concise manner in which truth is best presented is proper to prose rather than to poetry. Since effects should result directly from their causes, that is, through means best adapted to achieving those effects, truth should be presented in its most efficient literary medium, prose. That is certainly true of, let us say, mathematical or scientific fact, but some truths there are which may arouse in the soul the deepest emotions and hence can be a proper subject for poetry.
Poetry appealing to Taste shall have as its object pleasure or beauty, from which belief follows Poe's definition of poetry—the "Rhythmical Creation of Beauty".\(^1\) By Beauty he would have us understand the "excitement, or pleasurable elevation of the soul",\(^2\) not of the heart or mind. Passion is excluded from the realm of Poetry, for it is the excitement of the heart. Only the elevation of the soul remains, and the more intensely the soul is excited, the more real the pleasure. The very deepest experience of joy may so affect the soul as to cause tears, proving that sadness is very closely akin to joy. Attention has been directed to this same truth by French critics of drama, who show that comedy—after the first outburst of laughter has passed—will on analysis be seen to have tragedy as its foundation. Sadness or melancholy, then, is the impression produced by the most perfect beauty. The poem by its very nature tending toward the highest and loftiest, will have sadness as its most perfect "atmosphere". Death is universally understood to be the saddest of all the subjects appropriate to poetry—(as is witnessed to by the frequency with which poets of all time have written of it). In order to arouse the highest pleasure, death must be associated with beauty; therefore, since a beautiful woman is the loveliest creation, the death of a beautiful woman is the most perfect subject for a poem.

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1) *Poetic Principles*, op. cit., p. 275; also *Criticisms*, vol. ix, p. 75.
Though this process of reasoning was applied to the choice of mood and subject in "The Raven", Poe undoubtedly intended it as a general principle, for the idea appears again and again in other poems. It is strange, in the light of this dictum, that so many have interpreted Poe's character as the amorous type with many loves, as if each poem were a bit of autobiography, relating his experience with one and another beautiful maiden, all of whom, remarkably, left him by death. An explanation or an attempt to prove a prototype in the life of Poe for Annabel Lee, Ulalume, Lenore, is not only unnecessary but uncalled for, unless like others, we are either to overlook or discount his theory. But we have no right to select one phase to discredit it, and accept the rest at face value. Again, whether or not we believe that this process of thought occurred in the manner narrated at the time of planning "The Raven", that is, after all, of little consequence. The fact that it represents Poe's ideas concerning Beauty in poetry is of far greater importance.

Although beauty is the primary factor in poetry, Poe does not absolutely exclude truth. He admits possibilities for its presentation in an artistic way which will not detract from, or hinder the effectiveness of, the poem, but these possibilities exist only when truth or moral is secondary, an "under-current"; it may never distract by its prominence. The theme or sentiment of a poem may have a moral or mystic significance
which lifts it to the ideal or supernal toward which the poet tends. Conversely, certain truths are essentially beautiful, Poe implies in the Preface to *Eureka* when he says: "I offer this Book of Truths, not in its character of Truth-Teller, but for the Beauty that abounds in its Truth". Strangely, Poe wished the reader to consider this work a poem. He had to warn us, however, that the character of Truth-Teller was a minor one. We might have mistaken it to be otherwise. When the truth or moral does not abound in beauty, in Poe's sense of the word, it may still be presented as an aid to the general impression by way of contrast, as discords are used in music, but the poet must not permit the dissonant tone to predominate. This secondary presentation of truth may even be didactic in its purpose, doing its share for morality provided it does so by showing that evil is opposed to and destructive of propriety, fitness and harmony, all essential to Beauty. We find Poe criticizing a species of poetry which we cannot be brought to admire. Some natural phenomenon is observed, and the poet tests his ingenuity to find a parallel in the moral world. In general, we may assume, that the more successful he is in sustaining the parallel, the farther he departs from the true province of the Muse.

With a slight variation,

Now in describing no artificial life, in relating no history, in not singing the passion of love,

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4) *Criticism*, vol. ix, p. 292.
the poet has merely shown himself the profound artist, has merely evinced a proper consciousness that such are not the legitimate themes of poetry.

But Dante, Goethe, and other great poets have found these to be legitimate themes.

Poe's canon of a poem existing apart from truth, purely for the poem's sake, is presented as far from lacking in dignity--but rather as the noblest expression of the poetic sentiment. For proof, we are bidden to look into our own soul; there we shall find that nothing nobler exists. That is hardly convincing. Given two poems of equal poetic art or form, the first called into being merely for the sake of the poem, the other weighted with a burning ideal to arouse the souls of men, no seer is needed to decide the greater. "Art for Art's sake" has in Poe one of its strongest advocates.

One more requirement for perfection is indicated. In order to render the poem with its theme of beauty or melancholy or other emotion most efficacious, Poe argues for unity or totality of impression. Every word, every thought, must be directly or indirectly conducive to the intended effect, if the soul is to be sufficiently excited. For that reason, both the very short and the very long poem are failures. The first is deficient because the soul is not fully moved by the too brief stimulus to allow for an enduring impression. The second, the

5) Bryant
long poem, is a contradiction—it does not exist. The true poem elevates the soul by the intensity of its beauty, which intensity by its very essence is brief. Totality of impression, too, demands that nothing intervene. Anything too long to be completed in one reading will have its unity broken. What we consider a long poem is only a series of short ones connected by something which is hardly prose, but is certainly not poetry. For this reason, perhaps too because epics are largely didactic, or at least deal with morality and truth more than merely subserviently, Poe said: "For my part, I would much rather have written the best song of a nation than its noblest epic",7 a statement that will find a parallel in the opinions of few, if any, critics.

In "Sonnet--To Science", one of the early poems of Poe, we find the clearest expression in verse of all that has been said here. It is quite safe to say that in his later years he would not have considered these ideas as proper matter for a poem.

Science! true daughter of Old Time thou art!
Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes,
Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,
Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?
How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise
Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
To seek the treasure in the jewelled skies,
Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?
Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?
And driven the Hamadryad from the wood

7) Criticism, vol. ix, p. 44.
To seek a shelter in some happier star?
   Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
   The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
   The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree?

When we turn to Lanier, studying his statements à propos to this question, we marvel at the "length and the breadth and the sweep" of the almost unlimited expanse in which he moves. In the vast field of Art, certainly in literature, there are few who have so highly esteemed the power and destiny of the artist as has Lanier. One thinks of those who have painted Christ on their knees, or of Caedmon, inspired by angelic vision. In The English Novel, Shakespeare and His Forerunners, and Music and Poetry, we find re-iterated the ideals which burned in Lanier and which he so faithfully followed that Charles Kent could truthfully say "Naught but good can come of knowing him and naught but loftier living can come of loving him". What he thought the work of literature should be he summarized when outlining aims for students' theses:

   That they keep steadily in view as their ultimate object that strengthening of manhood, that enlarging of sympathy, that glorifying of moral purpose, which the student unconsciously gains, not from any direct didacticism, but from this constant association with our finest ideals and loftiest souls.

So vivid and ever-present is this burning ideal that Lanier is not content to follow it as closely as possible, but it

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8) Marshes of Glynn, line 30.
breaks through any restraint and writes itself into his poems. Yet its realization is beyond the reach of even the greatest artist:

Full bright ye shine, insuperable stars,
Yet, if a man look hard upon you, none
With total lustre blazeth,

His ray, opaqued with intermittent mist
Of defect.11

Yet no despondency rises from that knowledge, for a man is judged by his best. A beacon must be beyond one's reach if it is to guide one to a goal.

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp
Or what's a heaven for?12

The poet, then as a true artist, must first of all so live that he may sing from the fullness of his heart a song of beauty which is universal because of its truth.

His song was only living aloud,
His work, a singing with his hand. 13

He will meet with opposition, but

The lute's fixt fret, that runs athwart fret
The strain and purpose of the string,
For governance and nice consort
Doth bar his wilful wavering.14

Thus he will become as was Beethoven, "Sole Hymner of the whole of life".15 His purpose must be to make man better, to aid him in his search for the ultimate good.

11) Crystal, lines 18-20; 24-25.
12) Robert Browning, Andrea del Sarto, lines 97-98.
13) Life as Song, lines 19-20.
14) Opposition, lines 5-8.
15) To Beethoven, line 8.
Kinsman, learn this:
The artist's market is the heart of man;
The artist's price, some little good of man;
Tease not thy vision with vain search for ends.
The End of Means is art that works by love,
The End of Ends...In God's Beginning's lost.16

With man's heart as his market, the artist's responsibility is
great--

--O dear artists, ye

--Whether in forms of curve or hue
Or tone your gospels be--
Say wrong This work is not of me,
But God: it is not true, it is not true.

Awful is Art because 'tis free.

Each artist--gift of terror! owns his will.17

From lines such as these comes an understanding of the dignity
of the poet's vocation as it inspired Lanier, so that he con-
ceived of artistic beauty and moral beauty as rays from the same
light. The lover of artistic beauty must of necessity be a lov-
er of moral beauty. But even that is not sufficiently noble.

Lanier went further, exclaiming:

He, in short, who has not come to that stage of quiet
eternal frenzy in which the beauty of holiness and
the holiness of beauty mean one thing, burn in one
fire, shine as one light within him, he is not yet
the great artist.18

Morality and the presentation of truth are thus en-
tirely appropriate to poetry. To the young artist, hesitating
to introduce them, fearing to limit his art and consequently his

16) Clover, lines 120-125.
17) Individuality, lines 62, 76.
18) English Novel, and the Principles of Its Development,
fame, Lanier brings encouragement by pointing out that the greatest works of literature are at once not only moral, but often moralizing. The preponderance of the moral, even the didactic, in the Scriptures, has made possible their being universally accepted as of the highest literary value in spite of our receiving them in translation. The most supremely beautiful works of Shakespeare are his latest plays giving us in glowing poetry the beauty of large forgiveness. Even Keats has not detracted from the art of the "Ode to a Grecian Urn" by moralizing. Indeed precisely in so far as a creation fails in the moral tone does its creator vitiate the art. On this basis Lanier rests the argument for his proposition that Pamela is not so artistic as has been claimed. The moral tone must be correct. Poetry "so conceived and so dedicated" will make the poet the great teacher through whose instruction we shall learn to harmonize all opposition; it will become what Aristotle claimed for it—"more philosophical than philosophy and more historical than history". 19

If there be a conflict between morality and artistic beauty, art itself will lose unless the moral side win. Yet Poe's works find a justification in spite of appearances to the contrary, for Lanier sees a legitimate place in literature for what he terms the un-moral, or what we might designate as the indifferent—neither bad nor good. This may be pleasurable,

19) Shakespeare and His Forerunners, op. cit., p. 329.
even lovely, and in the absence of the eternal conflict of truth, restful. As compared with morally beautiful literature, the un-moral takes secondary rank, for because of the absence of this quality, it fails in the highest attainment.

A distinction made by Lanier between truth and reality finds no place in the writings of Poe. Shakespeare is true, though unreal; even Poe may be true—yet hardly real. Several decades earlier than Lanier when Poe wrote, there was scarcely need to discuss this question, for realism had not yet attained its later prominence.

With "Art for Art's sake" Lanier had not the slightest sympathy, for often it is merely a case of la poudre aux yeux—those who write so cleverly in its defense are automatically believed to be artists. One finds a parallel in Poe's denunciation of critics who were not poets presuming to judge poetry.

Does Poe's doctrine of sadness and melancholy find any echo in Lanier? Not directly. There is a place for them, but they are not essential. Poe sees sadness as the most perfect of poetic moods, as the desideratum of "tone" for poetry. Lanier sees sorrow as "the nourisher of poetry and music". It is in sorrow that the soul is most deeply moved, though the song resulting need not be sad. There is no melancholy in the nightingale's singing, yet it carols in the dark.

20) Ibid., p. 256.
One further quotation from Lanier should be introduced here. It concerns the advantage of the shorter poem:

Whatever may be said of Edgar Poe's theory of the impossibility of a long poem, or that all long poems are merely series of short poems connected by something that is not poetry, it may at least with safety be asserted that at a time when trade has lengthened life by shortening leisure, the ideal of the lyric poem is a brief, sweet, intense, electric flashing of the lyric idea upon the hurrying intelligence of men, so that vivid truth may attack even an unwilling retina, and perpetuate itself thereupon even after the hasty eyelid has closed to shut out the sight. 21

All Lanier's poems, with the exception of "Psalm of the West", and "Jacquerie", are short, and even those could be read at one sitting. Undoubtedly it is simpler to sustain great poetic heights for a short time and it is equally true that some of the world's loveliest creations are short lyrics, yet it is almost heretical to carry the doctrine to the extent to which Poe carries it, and dispel from the realm of great poetry such works as those of Virgil, Dante, or Milton.

Little expression of the appropriateness of Nature to poetry is found in the theorizing of these poets, but into their poems is written their beliefs in its regard. Poe, if he ushers in Nature at all, does so in the same manner that he introduces his characters. Annabel Lee, Helen, and Ulalume may as well be one woman as three; there is no personality to distinguish one from the other. Nature in the same way is used merely as an atmosphere, to heighten effects, and the "full

orbed moon", the "mossy banks and meandering paths", the "woodland of Weir", "the sad valley" all are as vague as Helen and Ulalume. That constitutes their universality. "Weir" may be Europe or Australia or America, with characteristic features of landscape flashing upon the imagination of the reader. Again we may almost hear Poe inveigh against portraying any definite background since it would not conform to unity with the mood.

The marsh lands and the peculiar features of Georgian and other Southern landscape were so poetic as they appeared to Lanier that he felt a power urging him to reveal their attractiveness. This was true beauty, not alone existing in Nature but at once raising the soul to the "highest height", to the God of Nature, and thence to fellowship with the souls of men. Lanier has been criticized for his provinciality, but the emotions aroused by his contemplations are as universal as any. Here again, judgments should not be discriminating. No one feels that he cannot read Sussex Gorse with appreciation because he has never been in England. The grim, bleak landscape known to Thomas Hardy became in his powerful writing a force to make him great--and widely read. Nature is great, is good, is poetic--write of it, depict it for others--is Lanier's creed.

In comparing the two attitudes toward Truth and Beauty, we see at once that both Poe and Lanier may be called in a sense, worshippers of beauty, but what a soulless, shadowy figure is that at whose shrine Poe bowed when compared with that
which Lanier loved. It is the perfection of art in the statue of Hermione weighed against the living queen. Poe remained bound by narrow limits, within which, it is true, he attained to near perfection, but Lanier was drawn to attempt far greater depths and heights—even the contemplation of divinity. Yet nowhere is there an excuse for mediocre craftsmanship, nor in the contemplation of moral beauty or truth is it necessary that the expression be less perfect. Infinite Beauty was to Lanier a very true and inspiring reality, notwithstanding the efforts of would-be astute judges, in reality iconoclasts, to have us understand Lanier as the ideal pagan for whom Nature was the consoler, the inspirer, the very Alpha and Omega.

Poe's conception of beauty, his bare recognition of truth, left no room for a sympathetic insight into the interests or sufferings of his neighbor, his fellow-man. Brooding over sadness tended to increase egoism. Nowhere in his prose or poetry does one discover any realization of the existence of problems in his day. Excepting for his style, he could be fitted into any period of American history, for the simple reason that he does not reflect the period in which he wrote. Lanier's thirst for truth which is beauty, and for beauty which is truth, brought him to an appreciation of the sorrows of others, and roused by this sorrow, as a true nightingale he could sing—beautifully—begging for a cessation of the causes of those sufferings. Chaucer, Spenser, Dryden—any number might be men-
tioned—could be placed at only one period in literary history, and that almost infallibly, so clear is the reflection of their age in the works they produced. So too with Lanier. Not all his poetry deals with Southern post-War problems, yet even those are universally appealing. Even though this may not be the highest form of poetic material, a theory which allows for its expression besides those themes which are obviously poetic, is one which challenges the creative art of any poet.

Sorrow at the death of a love is truly a thought to which the unlettered savage as well as the savant will respond, for sadness ever finds an answer in every soul. But Lanier strikes other strings—joy, exultation, love, sympathy. Poe's formative years had known too little love and his nature was not the kind which would be led thereby to an understanding of the tragedies in the lives of others. He was wise in perfecting his art within a narrower range, without attempting what was beyond the capacities he found within himself. Rather cleverly, he hid his limitations by the formulation of critical standards, which as Joseph Wood Krutch suggests, are as personal as his poetry and stories, representative of his own work rather than of literature in general. Though the "sheer beauty" theory, which certainly did its part in rescuing poetry from what it had come to in the rationalistic eighteenth century, was typical in the romantic development, no American poet had ever carried it

to the extent that Poe did, nor had written so wholly under its influence. Following the axiom of criticism that a writer's work is to be judged solely by what he intended to do, we must apply to Poe some verdict of near-perfection; which is too high praise for Lanier. On the other hand, are we to disregard aim, even if partial failure attended it? We cannot, for though not all Lanier's lines, in number considerably surpassing Poe's, are as polished as we might wish, many could not be improved by anyone. Another principle of criticism would have us modify our verdict based on achievement by a consideration of ideals, or attempts. "Not failure, but low aim is crime" here as in life. Lanier attempted far more than Poe in subject as in quantity, though it is true, his success varies. However, it is not the province of this study to determine the greater poet; it is rather, a comparison of theory. Lanier insists as much as does Poe on the essentiality of the presence of Beauty, but it is a Beauty that is greater, for it is broader in scope and higher in vision. The difference between the two theories is the idea developed beautifully by Robert Browning when he causes Andrea del Sarto to bemoan his inferiority as an artist—which he recognizes only too well, despite his knowledge that he outranks all in perfection of line and form. The soul of it all is weak. There he fails.

23) Andrea del Sarto, op. cit.
What of the world's great literature if interpreted by these respective theories? If Lanier's be followed, some works considered artistic will be relegated to a lower rank because of an error in truth or moral tone, but the number will not be very great. It might be a rather simple matter to cite such works in the field of the novel or drama, especially from the eighteenth century or similar period, when there was evidence not only of bad taste and crudity, but of a tone which really offends Beauty since it offends morality. Among the world's great poetry, however, instances of such offences are even rarer. A few productions of the pagan classic era might be noted, those of Ovid, for example, or some at the time of the Renaissance, and here and there one or another, but we will have little to change in our ideas of what is great poetry. On the other hand, if Poe's views are to be the standard, a complete revolution would result. The *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid* must henceforth be considered as consisting of flashes of poetry, connected by something which is not prose, but certainly not poetry. With these will fall Dante's great epic, and Milton's. The fall of man, and the great truths of heaven, hell and purgatory are not subjects for poetry. Poems which fulfill the requirement of brevity, but which have fired men to deeds of greatness because of a truth they taught are likewise merely secondary in rank. The psalms of Scripture must yield, for they are largely didactic. Matthew Arnold's famous adage of
"the best" with its stress on life as it is "best" lived must be discarded. Much of English literature will lose rank, for according to Voltaire, "no nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation" \(^\text{24}\) -- a quality which he considered of great merit. W.C. Brownell makes this observation in *American Prose Masters*:

> Who is to decide, for example, between the "Ode to a Nightingale" and the "Ode to Immortality"? Poe's theory, however, and its elaborate working out, involve the reference that "The Raven" is a finer poem than either, since Wordsworth's ode is actually joyous, and the idea of "The Raven" on the other hand, sadder than anything in Keats'. \(^\text{25}\)

But the point is clear.

As to any possible influence by virtue of their theory, the results produced would be characteristic--Poe inspiring poetry of possibly consummate perfection within a very narrowly inscribed scope, Lanier opening out spaces and possibilities nothing short of divinity itself, sufficient to provide inspiration until poets shall have ceased to create here below.

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24) Quoted by Matthew Arnold in "Essay on Wordsworth" from the *Essays in Criticism*, series 2, p. 141.
CONCLUSION

Similarities and contrasts in the metrical theories of Poe and Lanier may now be summarized, showing their value on a comparative scale. In prosody the two views are based on quantity. That Lanier did not build his *Science of English Verse* on Poe's earlier study is emphatically stated by Lanier himself.¹ The absurdity of the assertion—which called forth Lanier's interesting reply—is apparent to the student who carefully examines the two discussions.

Time is the foundation of rhythm. Poe begins with the artificial assumption that the long syllable is twice the value of the short. Both of these may be substituted by two syllables, each of which is just one half the value of that which is displaced. This rhythm is to be represented by a numerical system of scansion. Lanier finds that the basic physical laws of music are applicable to poetry, and hence the laws of music govern verse. The variations of time patterns, with the great variety of time divisions will produce a poetry more in accord with the actual reading of verse, oral or silent. The simplest system of scansion is naturally, musical notation. With time as the basis of rhythm, it is possible and correct to vary the type of rhythm within the line provided the time equalize that consumed in the pattern foot which is definitely set at the

opening of the poem. This indication at the outset is considered by both writers to be very important. The advantage of Lanier's system is that it allows for a more smooth and graceful rhythm, and does not rest on a false premise. Suggested no doubt by the musical notation, Lanier's recognition of the rest is a valuable addition to prosody, because it is actually employed in the reading of poetry, especially at the end of a phrase. Both Poe and Lanier point out that the creator's originality and genius will have freest play in the phrase, line, and stanza, in the development of which, musical success will be achieved partially by close attention to sound, evidenced by skilful use of rhyme, alliteration, etc. Lanier sees a possibility for the development of English poetry in rhythmized but rhymeless forms. His study is truly named the Science of English Verse, based as it is on the physical laws of sound; and because of its explanation along the lines of science it is at once truer, freer, and more accurate. The poet is not bound by a series of rules, but understanding the fundamental law he does freely anything which does not violate that law. Though neither poet, perhaps, intended to forecast the poetry of the future, Lanier has unintentionally done so. If free verse can have any justification from the rules of prosody, his, (though he would shudder to think of the possibility) would grant it sooner than Poe's. John Hubert Scott quotes Amy Lowell's statement concerning the rhythmic basis of free verse:
These cadences are made up of time units which are in no sense syllabic. I mean that the number of syllables of each unit is immaterial. The words must be hurried or delayed in reading to fill out the swing, that is all. The time units are also an irregular measurement within the main cadence.  

The rhymed verse of the future, returning to orthodoxy from the abandon of free verse, will be what Lanier dreamed of and worked to produce. Aubrey Harrison Starke says in this respect:

> Looking back now, we can see that Lanier as well as Whitman must be recognized as a leader of the attack upon the citadels of the past, the one calling to his standard those who would overthrow form altogether, the other those who would master form and create new, freer, and still more beautiful forms.  

Lanier's system, to conclude this phase of the theory, is far more flexible and yielding, and at the same time, less disturbing because it would sooner become second nature. Consciousness of method is not the highest stage of art.

The place of music in poetry is an essential one, for the two are allied arts. The poet is a singer who must work as does a composed of songs—under the spell of words and music. Poe thinks of music as the perfect background and accompaniment of poetry, and intrinsically, as the fittest means to express the supernal, the highest aim of poetry, since music is the best medium of expression for what is elusive and inexpressible. It does so, however, in a manner somewhat vague, and consequently,

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2) *Rhythmic Prose*, University of Iowa Humanistic Studies, vol. iii, 1. 1925-7, p. 15.

3) *Sidney Lanier*, op. cit., p. 358.
ideas shall not only be carefully couched in the most pleasing sounds, but there shall be present that vagueness characteristic of music. Lanier understands language, and consequently poetry, as a species of music. Music is not a species of language, as is commonly stated. His most original contribution to poetry as allied with music is the consideration of tune as a possible path along which poetry may advance. Tennyson, according to Wilfrid Ward's verbal account (he was a boyhood neighbor to the poet laureate) entoned his poetry. Since poetry appeals to the imaginative ear, who knows but Lanier was right? To this phase of poetry little if any attention has been given, hence the future alone will be able to answer. However, the possibility of speech tunes playing an important part in verse has been commented on in recent discussions, and the formation and development of speech choirs may be the first real step in the direction to which Lanier pointed. One cannot ascertain what may result from the first experiments. It is possible that nothing will result excepting an improvement in speech tunes. Since the conception of both poets is that music is an intrinsic thing in poetry, they agree on the most important point.

Comments on Truth and Beauty reveal a wide difference of view. Here Lanier stands as the supreme artist "in schmerzlicher Sehnsucht nach dem Idealen". The beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty are but two aspects of the

same idea. The beauty of God, of mankind, of duty, of love, of nature, all are themes for the poet. Poe's detachment from truth, from human interests and problems, from conduct, in his effort to perfect the one emotional idea of beauty of which he was master, has kept him from becoming a great artist.

Edmund Gosse said of Lanier

I persist in thinking that these are elaborate and learned experiments by an exceedingly clever man, one who had read so much and felt so much that he could simulate poetical expression with extraordinary skill. But of the real thing, of the genuine article, not a trace.

The first assertion is almost correct as an analysis of Poe; the second would be an exaggeration even of Poe and is absurd applied to Lanier. I have found no parallel to this condemnation, nor does his statement take Lanier's theories into consideration. One wonders if Gosse had ever studied them. These theories hold out to the poet an invitation to "the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh and the skies".

There are limits, but they do not cripple genius as would those within which Poe moved. "There had been fine things done in literature, but he (Lanier) was the first to realize the transcendent dignity and worth of the poet and his work" said Edwin Mims.

He expressed this realization in very definite terms in both prose and poetry, and declared just as emphatically, the

5) "Has America Produced a Poet?" op. cit., p. 180.
6) Marshes of Glynn, line 74.
7) Sidney Lanier, op. cit., p. 298.
function and place of truth and morality in poetry. Poe with equal emphasis but supported with fewer logical arguments, declared that truth is not and cannot be the primary object of poetry. Beauty alone is legitimate, and most effective, especially in its highest manifestation, sadness. As shown in the last chapter, such a theory would upset all our accepted ideas of the world's literature—a price too great.

A writer cannot hope to wield influence if he is not widely read. Here Poe enjoys an advantage, for he had a wide prestige in England, France, Italy, even Denmark, besides his popularity in this country. He is still perhaps, the most widely read poet America has produced, partially because of the curiosity aroused in his abnormality. That in itself is hardly a healthful influence. Of Lanier there has been less both of American and European recognition, but Bliss Perry says of him: "Whatever the flaws in his affluent verse, it has grown constantly in favor, and he is after Poe, the best known poet of the South".\(^8\) Interest in his work has certainly been apparent in the last few years, in spite of the fact that, like Tennyson, he proposes ideals that seem almost absurd to this realistic, materialistic age.

Poe's importance has resulted less from his theory than from his poetry. Though generally read, his contribution to literature has been recognized as lacking in real substance,

\(^8\) American Spirit in Literature, Yale University, New Haven, 1918, p. 8.
though the form is excellent. His theory is equally soulless. Those who have in the last few years experimented in rhythm to determine its relation to metrics do not so much as consider the Rationale. Lanier's poetry thus far has been less read, but his theory has received wide recognition, and is still considered very valuable, notwithstanding the great strides made through scientific research and experiment. When Edwin Mims wrote his life of Lanier published in 1905, he said at the outset:

Lanier influenced to some extent the minor poets of his era; who knows but that in some era of creative art—which let us hope is not far off—his subtle investigations and experiments in the domain where music and verse converge may prove the starting point of some greater poet's work?9

As if in echo, in the most recent biography, Lincoln Lorenz says

Ironically, today his technique indirectly influences poets by whom he is little known and probably in the future his creative spirit will similarly affect others to whom it will be a new discovery.10

No poet has gone to quite the lengths Lanier did to establish a scientific basis for his art. Most studies were made by men not poets, with the exception of the work done by Robert Bridges. The advance made in music shows that science does not cripple art, for if anywhere one finds minute regulations it is

in the realm of music. As investigations go on in the field of rhythm, Lanier's *Science of English Verse* still has its great contribution to make, and it is safe to say that it will always hold an important place in the study of metrics. It is not perfect, but combined with the remainder of his theory and in comparison with that of Poe, it is a more correct, more real and more human interpretation of English verse of the past and the present, and a freer and happier guide for the future.
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The thesis, "The Metrical Theories of Poe and Lanier, A Comparative Study," written by Sister Mary Aloysia, S.S.N.D., has been accepted by the Graduate School with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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