<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmnDokAGe1o> – видеоклип «She walks in beauty».

**“She Walks in Beauty”**

In June, 1814, several months before he met and married his first wife, Anna Milbanke, Lord Byron attended a party at Lady Sitwell’s. While at the party, Lord Byron was inspired by the sight of his cousin, the beautiful Mrs. Wilmot, who was wearing a black spangled mourning dress. Lord Byron was struck by his cousin’s dark hair and fair face, the mingling of various lights and shades. This became the essence of his poem about her.

According to his friend, James W. Webster, “I did take him to Lady Sitwell’s party in Seymour Road. He there for the first time saw his cousin, the beautiful Mrs. Wilmot. When we returned to his rooms in Albany, he said little, but desired Fletcher to give him a tumbler of brandy, which he drank at one to Mrs. Wilmot’s health, then retired to rest, and was, I heard afterwards, in a sad state all night. The next day he wrote those charming lines upon her—She walks in Beauty like the Night…”

The poem was published in 1815. Also in that year Lord Byron wrote a number of songs to be set to traditional Jewish tunes by Isaac Nathan. Lord Byron included “She Walks in Beauty” with those poems.

**She Walks in Beauty**

1

She walks in beauty, like the night

Of cloudless climes and starry skies;

And all that's best of dark and bright

Meet in her aspect and her eyes:

Thus mellow'd to that tender light

Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

2

One shade the more, one ray the less,

Had half impair'd the nameless grace

Which waves in every raven tress,

Or softly lightens o'er her face;

Where thoughts serenely sweet express

How pure, how dear their dwelling place.

3

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,

So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,

The smiles that win, the tints that glow,

But tell of days in goodness spent,

A mind at peace with all below,

A heart whose love is innocent!

**Discussion of the Poem**

The first couple of lines can be confusing if not read properly. Too often readers stop at the end of the first line where there is no punctuation. This is an enjambed line, meaning that it continues without pause onto the second line. That she walks in beauty like the night may not make sense as night represents darkness. However, as the line continues, the night is a cloudless one with bright stars to create a beautiful mellow glow. The first two lines bring together the opposing qualities of darkness and light that are at play throughout the three verses.

The remaining lines of the first verse employ another set of enjambed lines that tell us that her face and eyes combine all that’s best of dark and bright. No mention is made here or elsewhere in the poem of any other physical features of the lady. The focus of the vision is upon the details of the lady’s face and eyes which reflect the mellowed and tender light. She has a remarkable quality of being able to contain the opposites of dark and bright.

The third and fourth lines are not only enjambed, but the fourth line begins with an irregularity in the meter called a metrical substitution. The fourth line starts with an accented syllable followed by an unaccented one, rather than the iambic meter of the other lines, an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one. The result is that the word “Meet” receives attention, an emphasis. The lady’s unique feature is that opposites “meet” in her in a wonderful way.

The second verse tells us that the glow of the lady’s face is nearly perfect. The shades and rays are in just the right proportion, and because they are, the lady possesses a nameless grace. This conveys the romantic idea that her inner beauty is mirrored by her outer beauty. Her thoughts are serene and sweet. She is pure and dear.

The last verse is split between three lines of physical description and three lines that describe the lady’s moral character. Here soft, calm glow reflects a life of peace and goodness. This is a repetition, an emphasis, of the theme that the lady’s physical beauty is a reflection of her inner beauty.

Lord Byron greatly admired his cousin’s serene qualities on that particular night and he has left us with an inspired poem.

The poem was written shortly before Lord Byron’s marriage to Anna Milbanke and published shortly after the marriage.