

Revising Closed Form Poetry

Original lines of a Shakespearean sonnet quatrain:

Lord Helios, his ever-lasting chariot ablaze
Flies bright and true, scorching the very sky
The stars forever retreating under his gaze
Constellations cantering through the dark forest on high.

1. Scan the lines:

Lord Helios, his ever-lasting chariot ablaze
Flies bright and true, scorching the very sky
The stars forever retreating under his gaze
Constellations cantering through the dark forest on high.

2. Analyze the rhythm and start reworking the meter:

Lord Helios, his ~~ever-lasting~~ chariot ablaze
Flies bright and true, scorching the very sky
The stars ~~forever~~ retreating under~~neath~~ his gaze
~~The~~ Constellations cantering ~~through the dark forest~~ on high ~~by~~.

3. Revised editions!

Lord Helios, his chariot ablaze

Flies bright and true, scorching the very sky

The stars retreating underneath his gaze

The Constellations cantering on by.

...

The stars flee freely from beneath his gaze

And constellations canter through the night.

...

The stars a-canter in his fiery gaze

As dawn comes forth, the night once more will die.

Concrete Steps to Revise a Closed-Form Poem:

1. Identify all concrete imagery and all metaphors and similes.
(Did you sacrifice them for meter and rhyme?)
2. Scan the lines. Have someone (or two someones) scan them also. Compare notes. Remember that if you vary the meter, it will draw attention—preferably to something significant. Remember, also, that you must establish and maintain the pattern. Varying the pattern should not be the rule; it should be the exception—a rare one!
3. Rhyme: Identify any places where your syntax is awkward or unnatural sounding (which can often happen as you work within a rhyme scheme). Fix them!
 - a. To keep the rhyming word where it is, you'll have to rework the syntax around it—perhaps even change the meaning or emphasis of the line.
 - b. Consider a different rhyming word (try <http://www.rhymezone.com>).
 - c. Consider reworking both of the rhyming lines with a different rhyming pair.
 - d.
4. Meter: Where you need to fix the rhythm, try these approaches—
 - a. If you need one unstressed beat, try an article (a, an, the) or a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so yet).
 - b. Consider substituting a word or phrase for a synonymous one that fits the meter.
(Choose carefully, considering denotations and connotations—different words reveal different tones! Also be careful to avoid awkward syntax.)
 - c. Consider changing the meaning of the line or the direction of the poem if the above tactics don't work.
5. Please add any other practical tips that helped you/your team make revisions (pass it forward!):