

Stepping Stones

An Exploration of the Terzanelle and Villanelle

By Zahhar



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Front Cover

The front cover art was originally a color drawing of an oak tree at an educational site, <http://www.gridclub.com/>. It was used in an illustration concerning the oak tree's natural resistance to insects. I have decolorized it, removed a religious symbol from the trunk, increased its resolution and used filters to render the image more impressionist in nature. It only vaguely resembles the original.

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Origins and Details

Information about the villanelle

Information about the villanelle is abundant. Two good sources are *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (1993) and *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms* (2001). In the first, an article on the villanelle provides detailed information about the forms' development and mentions the most prominent European and American poets to publish villanelles since the 16th century. In the latter, a brief history of the form as relates to the first known author to publish the common 19 line variety of the villanelle, a French poet called Jean Passerat, is explored. 14 villanelles are also reproduced as anthologized examples. A simple search on the internet will also yield information about the form and lead scores of examples.

Since there is ample information available about the villanelle's history and origins, I will focus only on reiterating the form's technical points.

- 1) The villanelle is comprised of at least three tercets and a closing quatrain.
- 2) The first and third lines of the opening tercet begin the refrains and the a rhyme used by the villanelle body and closing quatrain. The second line of the opening tercet begins the b rhyme used by the villanelle body and closing quatrain.
- 3) The villanelle body is comprised of tercets appearing in pairs. The a rhyme is used by the first line of each tercet and the b rhyme by the second line. The first and third lines from the opening tercet are refrained as the third lines of the first and second tercets of each pair, respectively.
- 4) There must be a minimum of one tercet pair for the body, but there may be as many tercet pairs in the body as you think you can get away with.

Referencing the two sources mentioned above, you will find that Jean Passerat is likely responsible for the rigid 19 line model of the villanelle (only two tercet pairs). However, many poets have considered the villanelle a stanzaic form of poetry, using it as a form that may be expanded or contracted so long as the rhyme and refrain of the body are not compromised.

- 5) The closing quatrain uses the a rhyme in its first line, the b rhyme in its second line and refrains the first and third lines from the opening tercet as its third and fourth lines, respectively.
- 6) Lines may be in any length or meter within reason.
- 7) Villanelles may be written on any subject.

The above technical points may seem overly detailed, but they are illustrated in this form for the sake of clarity. A very pleasant shorthand notation for the first five points above is $A^1bA^2, abA^1, abA^2, \dots, abA^1A^2$, where like letters indicate the rhyme scheme, and uppercase letters followed by a superscript numeric notation indicate the refrains.

One of the main challenges with the villanelle is to find a way to make the refrains change meaning or contexts with each use in a way that keeps them from overwhelming the poem.

Information about the terzanelle

The terzanelle, invented by Lewis Turco in 1965, is a poetic form that combines the villanelle's refrain with the terza rima's end-line patterning. Turco's "Terzanelle", the original terzanelle poem titled for the name of the form, was first published in the summer edition of *The Michigan Quarterly Review* that same year. He has since written and published three more terzanelle poems, "Terzanelle in Thunderweather" (*The Book of Forms*: University Press of New England, 2000), "The Room" (*Poetry Miscellany*, 1978), and "Terzanelle of the Spider's Web" (*The Southern Review*, 1990).

Over the years, Turco's invention has become well known and popular. Hundreds of terzanelle poems may be found on the web by as many authors. Although Turco's "Terzanelle in Thunderweather" is often quoted as an example of the poem's structure, it is seldom—if ever—mentioned that Turco is in fact the inventor of this form.

Here are the rules by which a terzanelle may be written:

- 1) The terzanelle is comprised of at least two tercets and a closing quatrain.
- 2) The first and third lines of the opening tercet are refrained as the second and fourth lines of the closing quatrain.
- 3) The terzanelle body is comprised of tercets that each refrain the second line of the preceding tercet for its third line. The first line of each of these tercets is rhymed with its refrained line.
- 4) There must be a minimum of one tercet for the body, but there may be as many tercets in the body as you think you can get away with.

I'm taking a liberty here in defining the terzanelle body. While Turco created the terzanelle as a fixed form of 19 lines (four tercets in the body), it seems clear to me the terzanelle is stanzaic in nature. As such, I imagine the terzanelle may be expanded or contracted at will so long as the rhyme and refrain of the body are not compromised in the process.

- 5) The closing quatrain refrains the second line of the last tercet as its third line and rhymes its first line with that refrain.
- 6) Lines may be in any length or meter within reason.

7) Terzanelles may be written on any subject.

Again, there is a pleasant shorthand notation for the first five points above. For a 19 line terzanelle, this would be $A^1B^1A^2, bC^1B^1, cD^1C^1, dE^1D^1, eF^1E^1, fA^1F^1A^2$, where like letters indicate the rhyme scheme, and uppercase letters followed by a superscript numeric notation indicate the refrains.

As with the villanelle, one of the primary challenges with the terzanelle is finding a way to change the meaning or context of each refrain. In one way the terzanelle is a little easier than the villanelle in that there is a fresh refrain to work with for each tercet. In another way the terzanelle is much more difficult than the villanelle because the refrains from the opening tercet need to be woven in with a refrain from the final tercet in the quatrain. This alone has proven to be the most challenging aspect of the terzanelle for me.

My one liberty

I allow myself one liberty from the constraints of the villanelle and terzanelle rules in that I often use alternative end-line schemes in place of the established rhyme scheme. When I do this, I still adhere very strictly to the prosodic end-line pattern of each form, but using methods other than rhyme.

During the two and a half years I spent working with the ghazal, I wavered only two or three times from the rigid use of rhyme. This gave me the opportunity to really beat against the bounds of what can be accomplished using rhyme in English. Options in rhyme are very limited in English, unlike other languages where rhymes are abundantly available for extended rhyme schemes like those of the villanelle and the ghazal.

Alternative end-line schemes provide a fresh pool of words from which to draw. For instance, assonance and consonance are quite abundant in English. To give an example, there are only a few decent rhymes available for the word “void”, but there are at least three times as many words available that assonate both accentually and quantitatively, such as “noise” and “coin”, and there are probably three or four times as many words beyond this that assonate at least accentually, such as “choice” and “hoist”.

Consonance is often referred to as “slant-rhyme”, or “near-rhyme”. Clear examples of consonant words are “void”, “paid”, “cried” and “rude”. Consonant words seem to be even more readily available in English than assonant words. For me, they also come more naturally to the mind without having to mine through reference materials for options.

I try to use assonance, consonance and their various combinations (one of which is rhyme) to create, or at least affect, certain moods. Most of the time this ends up being a great deal more work than I ever would have expected, but sometimes I’m pleasantly surprised by a sudden ease of articulation using these methods. It has been the same with me in using just rhyme. At first it seemed overwhelmingly impossible, especially with the ghazal, but as I continued the practice it became more and more natural.

Terzanelles

The terzanelles here are presented in the order they were written. This should hopefully mean that the quality of the work improves as you read through them. A little information about the inspiration behind each terzanelle is provided below.

Fragments: The inspiration for this piece should be pretty clear by the epigraph. I originally heard the riddle of the sphinx in my early teens, probably between 11 and 13 years old. The idea to write a poem inspired by that riddle came to me probably by the time I was 14 years old. So, this idea stewed in my mind for close to 18 years. When I discovered the terzanelle in July of 2001, I instantly recognized the form as a perfect match for the original inspiration, where each part of a 5 to 7 part poem described the day's progression as a metaphor for the various periods, fragments, in a human life. I decided to write 7 parts because I wanted to try to capture some aspect of the trans migratory process, beginning before birth and ending after death.

Moonpines: I spent every full moon over a period of about six months quietly sitting or walking in the depths of the old growth Montgomery Redwood Grove in Mendocino County, California. What always filled me full of wonder was the site of a giant redwood fully lit by the moon deep within the quiet moon-shade of the forest. This has many metaphorical applications, not the least of which is that rare person who somehow shines from out the darkness in the gentle light of compassion, understanding, and beneficence.

Baby Grand: A piano belonging to of a friend of mine is nearly a century old. It's surface, scratched and scarred, hints at without revealing its long history. I've tried to capture my impression of this piano and its hidden history in a sort of pen-portrait. But, this is just the surface.

Aeolian Strains: A wind-harp in New Mexico called "Tempest Song" sits in the parking lot of a large Native American shopping center. I drove halfway across the continent to see it and to listen to it being played by the wind. It was drowned out, marginalized, by out-door music played on loud-speakers. A broken string betrayed its neglect. And, it seemed lonely, so lonely that I couldn't help but ache for it. So many unique, beautiful beings in our world, in our societies, have fallen to just such a fate.

Way Station: A series of dreams spanning the course of my life have taken me time and again to a sort of way station on the path of personal progress, spiritual progress. Nothing in this poem is what it is. All is impermanent. I have a feeling such way stations exist for all of us.

A Modern Troubadour's Lament: This is my response to those poets who have throughout the years tried to convince me to abandon verse forms and "just write what you feel, man". Such people have managed to instill a sort of inferiority complex in me by belittling my efforts in verse and even my fairly rounded goals with poetry. I have long felt that their poor attitude toward verse forms and writers is deeply mistaken. Frustrations built up over many years are released with some force in this poem. So, here's what I feel, man.

Fragments

*What walks on four legs in the morning,
Two legs in the afternoon,
And three legs in the evening?*

—Riddle of the Sphinx

Dawn

Faint light appears along horizon's edge;
With steady pace the still light brighter glows;
New promise comes with daybreak like a pledge.

Tide of gentle rising luminance flows;
Deep darkness slowly fades away from sight;
With steady pace the still light brighter glows.

Dim shapes concealed beneath the veil of night
Form into clarity with even stride;
Deep darkness slowly fades away from sight.

New life, from stasis, forth emerges wide;
Fresh understandings of brave life to be
Form into clarity with even stride.

Illuminance continues rising free;
And vivid hope within the heart inspires
Fresh understandings of brave life to be.

To utter brilliance from the slightest fires,
Faint light appears along horizon's edge
And vivid hope within the heart inspires;
New promise comes with daybreak like a pledge.

Sunrise

Great new brilliant birthing springs resilient;
Erased is doubt from whence the light ensues;
Wondrous blooming sunlight climbs ebullient.

To resplendence from the first light's pastel hues
This shining marvel heart and soul entrance;
Erased is doubt from whence the light ensues.

Deep knowing brooded warm of life's advance
Until horizon's edge erupted fire;
This shining marvel heart and soul entrance.

From thence the sun shall rise in tranquil gyre,
As such it streamed beneath the realm of sight
Until horizon's edge erupted fire.

A glorious new day has taken flight;
Fresh living streams exultant into view,
As such it streamed beneath the realm of sight.

Hopes inmost and profound are realized true;
Great new brilliant birthing springs resilient;
Fresh living streams exultant into view;
Wondrous blooming sunlight climbs ebullient.

Morningtide

Exploring gently, day's new light grows strong;
Forth climbs the sun into sky's vast expanse;
Slow shrink the shadows as the day wears long.

Deep feeling forms with day's glowing advance,
The sense of vibrant strength that shines in youth;
Forth climbs the sun into sky's vast expanse.

Warmth deepens in the bold sun's rising sooth,
And warmth within the heart of life instills
The sense of vibrant strength that shines in youth.

Lambency wondrous tender hope distills;
In fervent luminance the land is bathed
And warmth within the heart of life instills.

Life's essence in all steadiness is lathed
As fullness of the day is slowly reached,
In fervent luminance the land is bathed.

Life's greatest depths of meaning are beseeched;
Exploring gently, day's new light grows strong
As fullness of the day is slowly reached,
Slow shrink the shadows as the day wears long.

Noontide

Day reaches utmost fullness of its run;
The land lie brightly blazoned neath the sky
Where at resplendent zenith burns the sun.

Shadows vanish before the fulgence high;
Great living light of day its prime has gained;
The land lie brightly blazoned neath the sky.

Deep feeling of life's richness is attained
In radiance magnificently made,
Great living light of day its prime has gained.

The airy land in stillness bright is staid,
And deepest gentle warmth all life imbues
In radiance magnificently made.

Full strength of living in the heart ensues
As brilliant glows the day from boundless height
And deepest gentle warmth all life imbues.

Grand sense of freedom wonderful takes flight;
Day reaches utmost fullness of its run
As brilliant glows the day from boundless height
Where at resplendent zenith burns the sun.

Eventide

Slow fades the greater power of the day;
Bright sun forth to horizon makes return;
Life's prime has gently passed in subtle sway.

Soft breezes whisper through day's paced adjourn;
Calm cools the land with fading strength of light;
Bright sun forth to horizon makes return.

Reflections vivid come of living's height
As nearer draws the daytide's closing end,
Calm cools the land with fading strength of light.

A calmness settles deep as shadows scend,
And peaceful reckoning rises within
As nearer draws the daytide's closing end.

Now mostly lived, life's fullness goes to thin
As placid grows the sky in day's advance,
And peaceful reckoning rises within.

Staid iridescence dims in far expanse;
Slow fades the greater power of the day
As placid grows the sky in day's advance,
Life's prime has gently passed in subtle sway.

Sunset

In paced decline withdraws the mighty sun;
All land and sky reflect the dying light,
Resplendent glory of the day is done.

Day's utmost beauties saved till now take flight
Like effulgent gates of heaven gleaming,
All land and sky reflect the dying light.

Life's swan song of light shines brightly dreaming,
Reflections stream of day's long cavalcade
Like effulgent gates of heaven gleaming.

Shadows begin to blur in overshade
As sun's last rays fall from horizon's rim
Reflections stream of day's long cavalcade.

Upon sky's faintest vapors colors swim
Emblazoning the firmament's expanse
As sun's last rays fall from horizon's rim.

Great culmination of day's long romance,
In paced decline withdraws the mighty sun
Emblazoning the firmament's expanse,
Resplendent glory of the day is done.

Dusk

Soft iridescence fades from heaven's height;
To darkness deep the sky gradates from day
When cross the sky folds purple edge of night.

In firmament's expanse the vapors gray
As silhouettes within the distance form;
To darkness deep the sky gradates from day.

Depthless tranquility broods deep and warm,
Day's essence long in memory remains
As silhouettes within the distance form.

Into a milky hue the daylight wanes
As clarity to vagueness makes return,
Day's essence long in memory remains.

In dimness issued forth from sun's inurn
New hopes pierce the dark in twilight's failing
As clarity to vagueness makes return.

Till horizon all alone lay paling
Soft iridescence fades from heaven's height;
New hopes pierce the dark in twilight's failing
When cross the sky folds purple edge of night.

Moonpines

*Montgomery Redwood Grove at Full Moon
Mendocino County, CA
Winter, Spring and Summer of 2003*

Gently gleaming from shadowed depths, a single pillar shines,
Held in place by the full moon's gaze, suspended on the night;
Bold within the enshrouded gloom, the silent moonbeam climbs.

Vaulted high into moonstone heights, both bark and bough alike
Etch mosaics of subtle hue in countless shapes and shades,
Held in place by the full moon's gaze, suspended on the night.

Shifting softly with light subdued, the moon with traces vague
Brushes ever so faint the forms where rays, diffuse and dim,
Etch mosaics of subtle hue in countless shapes and shades.

Slowly walking, devoid of thought, low glimmers skim the skin,
Moonlight faint as a whisper's breath, with tingle and tickle touch,
Brushes ever so faint the forms where rays diffuse and dim.

Sitting down where the wood is deep amid the moonshade hush,
Downy zephyrous breezes join the opal-toned caress,
Moonlight faint as a whisper's breath with tingle and tickle touch.

Sudden, deep in the patterned depths one massive tree is blessed,
Caught entranced by the moon's embrace, and all my heart is thrilled;
Downy zephyrous breezes join the opal-toned caress.

Here my spirit escapes the mind and laves in peace until
Gently gleaming from shadowed depths, a single pillar shines,
Caught entranced by the moon's embrace, and all my heart is thrilled;
Bold within the enshrouded gloom, the silent moonbeam climbs.

Baby Grand

For Bonnie

Set in spruce and maple, with veneer of stained mahogany,
Her strings take on the fullness of rushing northern winds,
Sprawling open spaces strung in true and timeless harmony.

Within a rounded casing, beneath the sloping lid,
Gleaming golden iron holds a harp to mountain resonance;
Her strings take on the fullness of rushing northern winds.

Careful fingers fashioned every nuance, carved in elegance,
Where Cristofori's vision lies fixed within the frame;
Gleaming golden iron holds a harp to mountain resonance.

Her scarred veneer remembers what men forget with time;
Tuners come and temper troubled chords back into melody
Where Cristofori's vision lies fixed within the frame.

Colors fade and sully, yet she never loses empathy;
Her chords are kept in concert with nature's subtle tones;
Tuners come and temper troubled chords back into melody.

Despite the many winters, her timbre never wanes;
Set in spruce and maple, with veneer of stained mahogany,
Her chords are kept in concert with nature's subtle tones,
Sprawling open spaces strung in true and timeless harmony.

Aeolian Strains

Neglected with a broken string, the harp turns toward the wind,
And plays the subtle song of distant desert moods;
A song that's lost amid the sound of reckless worldly din.

This singing weather-vane, the song of which would soothe,
Stands in a field of novelties, an oracle ignored,
And plays the subtle song of distant desert moods.

An art piece with a living soul, from mystic magic born,
The voice of whispered dreams, harmonic and serene,
Stands in a field of novelties, an oracle ignored.

In random moments brief, the mad rush grants reprieve,
Enough to hear the vibrant strings exhale with gentle breath
The voice of whispered dreams, harmonic and serene.

Or, gusts are sprung upon the chords that bring a bold caress,
Where heavy song is raised in timbres manifold,
Enough to hear the vibrant strings exhale with gentle breath.

She's like a fallen angel, lamenting all alone—
Neglected with a broken string, the harp turns toward the wind,
Where heavy song is raised in timbres manifold,
A song that's lost amid the sound of reckless worldly din.

Way Station

I found myself among the northern pine,
A place that calls me from the waking world,
Amid the buildings of a nameless town.

There is some comfort here to which I'm pulled
That oftentimes has brought me to this place,
A place that calls me from the waking world.

And here I pass along the streets in peace,
Surrounded by a subtle solitude
That oftentimes has brought me to this place.

A forest climbs the hills on every side
Arising fold on fold above these homes,
Surrounded by a subtle solitude.

This land is somehow more than what it seems;
I sense it all will vanish like the clouds,
Arising fold on fold above these homes.

And still I roam with glee the narrow roads,
Yet always knowing I can never stay;
I sense it all will vanish like the clouds.

Each time I come, I cannot help my joy,
Feeling at home and full of silent hope,
Yet always knowing I can never stay.

Throughout my life, beyond the veil of sleep,
I found myself among the northern pine,
Feeling at home and full of silent hope
Amid the buildings of a nameless town.

A Modern Troubadour's Lament

A schism rent the quiet past and left behind confusion,
And egocentric demagogues stepped in to fill the void,
Which brought about the gushing flood of poets in profusion.

Imposters seized the Poet's name with rough and savage noise,
Demoting prosody to verse with ignorant assumption,
And egocentric demagogues stepped in to fill the void.

A few sang random songs of self with hearts full of presumption,
While others clipped and nipped at prose, indignant and inept,
Demoting prosody to verse with ignorant assumption.

The ones who wrote evolving verse, now looked on with contempt,
Were robbed of all integrity and broadly disregarded,
While others clipped and nipped at prose, indignant and inept.

An art emergent and alive had simply been discarded,
For poets wont to learn that art and dream in measured strains
Were robbed of all integrity and broadly disregarded.

So it became unpopular to work in magic frames,
Thus stunting art's development through future generations
For poets wont to learn that art and dream in measured strains.

The masses heard the demagogues and heeded their frustrations,
And poetry itself became subjected to reform,
Thus stunting art's development through future generations.

The name of Poet once was rare, not for the average born—
A schism rent the quiet past and left behind confusion,
And poetry itself became subjected to reform,
Which brought about the gushing flood of poets in profusion.

Villanelles

As with the terzanelles, these villanelles are presented in the order they were written. Again, this will hopefully mean that they become more mature as you read through them. A little information about the inspiration behind each villanelle is provided below.

Your Loss: A friend of mine was jilted by her fiancé, who then married her closest friend. Her self-esteem was heavily impacted by the experience. I wanted to help in some way, so I wrote this to her ex-fiancé, and to all people such as him (myself included, unfortunately) who turn their back on something of a truly lasting value for something essentially superficial. As it turned out, his new relationship ended up being fraught with dysfunction, distress and disappointment.

For Me Alone: There was a woman who attended an open mic I used to frequent whom I was completely taken by. She could have done whatever she wanted to me and I would have taken all love or abuse from her with sheer unfettered joy. She took a liking to me, but not the kind of liking I was hoping for at the time. However, she *did* sing for me! Her voice mixed with her beauty and closeness is an experience I will never, ever forget.

Equine Dreaming: My current and hopefully lifelong partner has an unusual relationship with horses. This takes a metaphysical metaphorical approach to describing an experience we had together during the night a day's hike deep into the Sierra Mountains near a spring.

Path by Moon: Being predominantly a night person, I have often taken long nature walks by moonlight. Here I explore the general mood of such walks and offer some of the experiences up as an allegorical invitation to walk the path less traveled.

Silent Consolements: This draws directly from my relationship with nature. It has always felt to me as if the spirit of nature has nurtured me since the beginning, even as my own kind left me abandoned and helpless. Here I illustrate aspects of nature both harsh and beautiful, impassive and striking, and try to tie these contrasted characteristics in with the same spirit that has nurtured, comforted and guided the heart and soul, the entire being, of an infant, child and man who was in this sense raised by the wild.

Night Walk: This draws from many of the same experiences used to write *Path by Moon*, but with a different focus. Where *Path by Moon* offers a sort of invitation to walk the path less traveled, this poem strives to relate a sense of safety and comfort to the mysterious forested night so often looked on with fear and misgiving. Granted, one must by some means become aligned with benevolent subtle beings for such places to become places of safety and comfort as opposed to places of danger and disaster.

Cloud: Something about the way sunlit grounded clouds obscure and discolor the environment has always struck me as a sort of profound, naturally expressed sympathy. Here I try to use a particular experience to convey this sense and impression.

Pilgrim: In a sense, we are all on pilgrimage. It seems to me that most of us will never reach the sacred grounds of meaning that we journey toward. Here I use images inspired by a particular elder and his experiences, a friend who strikes me as having reached an amazing balance with nature and life, and who seems to have reached those sacred grounds in the very pilgrimage itself. And, I try to see through him that person that I one day hope to become.

Culture: An attempt at pure allegory for the current state of American culture, and perhaps for most cultures in today's world. The original bigger-than-life ideal and dream of America has been long since moored and abandoned to rust and mold.

Frostbite: A sort of stop-frame tale of a journey into the spiritually frozen outer-scape of the world only to be forced by necessity and circumstance to journey into an even more frozen and desolated inner-scape of the self. Pain and strife converge to force an appeal to some higher compassion, and something profound was gained, even as much was just as profoundly lost. One may live after experiencing frostbite, but that which is lost to frostbite is forever lost, whether that loss be physical or spiritual.

Presence: The logical follow-up to *Frostbite*, in a sense. The plea was made, a higher benevolence heard, and its profound compassion was rendered. Now a presence walks with and guides one who was ironically blessed by the very pain and torment that led to a desperate, earnest supplication.

Transmigrant Memory: As I mentioned in the little description for *Equine Dreaming*, my girlfriend has a unique relationship with horses. I have often fancied that she is somehow the human transmigration of a powerful mare. In my mind's eye I can see what she once might have been, and in some ways I can experience it myself. So I share this vision with her in hopes that it may mean something to her.

Your Loss

For Alexandra

How could you turn your heart from love so grand?
A love as hers you will not know again;
Your loss is greater than you understand.

Her burning love for you would all withstand;
Never a love so pure will you attain;
How could you turn your heart from love so grand?

Unto the end would she have kept your hand,
And never with another ever lain;
Your loss is greater than you understand.

She would not in her days her love remand;
A truer love in life you will not gain;
How could you turn your heart from love so grand?

No deeper love than hers is in the land;
Perdurable, through time would it remain;
Your loss is greater than you understand.

You've left her with a broken heart to stand
In emptiness alone with all her pain;
How could you turn your heart from love so grand?
Your loss is greater than you understand.

For Me Alone

For Juline

Her voice like golden harps of heaven rang,
As on a bench we sat within the night;
For me, for me alone her heart she sang.

To lucid resonance from mystic tang
Her depths of beauty shone transcendent light;
Her voice like golden harps of heaven rang.

Within my chest a soft celestial pang
Lay cradled twixt deep longing and delight;
For me, for me alone her heart she sang.

Angelic sweetness round us seemed to hang;
Divinely wrought with chords of richness bright
Her voice like golden harps of heaven rang.

Tremendous joys from depths inside me sprang;
My heart, in rapture, soared to starry height;
For me, for me alone her heart she sang.

As if emerging from an ageless pang,
I woke to living there before her sight;
Her voice like golden harps of heaven rang;
For me, for me alone her heart she sang.

Equine Dreaming

For Bonnie

Shaded by the swaying pines, moonlit slivers phase and shift;
Water capers from the spring, sliding by with gentle sound—
Thrilling whispers shiver past; firm embrace bestows her gift.

Poised nearby, the unicorn drinks where crystal waters drift,
Golden horn and silver fleece lightly gleaming all around,
Shaded by the swaying pines; moonlit slivers phase and shift.

Dancing, leaping cloud to cloud, held aloft by feathered lift,
Flying horses fill the night, sharing in the joy she found—
Thrilling whispers shiver past; firm embrace bestows her gift.

Swung beneath broad ivory wings, pearly hoofs had formed a rift;
Chance and magic joined to coax water from a stony mound,
Shaded by the swaying pines; moonlit slivers phase and shift.

Subtle whinnies on the breeze blend with warbling water-sift,
Joined by neighs and clops until mystic equine tones abound—
Thrilling whispers shiver past; firm embrace bestows her gift.

Horses wing the spangled depths, prancing lightly, sure and swift;
Shaken loose, a feather floats, lightly falling to the ground,
Shaded by the swaying pines; moonlit slivers phase and shift—
Thrilling whispers shiver past; firm embrace bestows her gift.

Path by Moon

Walk with me on this moonlit path, long throughout the night,
Woven amid rich undergrowth, beneath the oak and pine,
Winding among the brooks and streams, faintly sheened with light.

Only the moon reveals this way, else concealed from mind,
Leading away from wasted ways—this path is ours alone;
Walk with me on this moonlit path, long throughout the night.

Frequently followed trails are trudged, trampled void of life;
Ours is a path of subtle sounds, profuse beneath the moon,
Winding among the brooks and streams, faintly sheened with light.

Though it may seem to fade, this trail, dim where shadows glide,
More is revealed with each new step—this path is ours alone;
Walk with me on this moonlit path, long throughout the night.

Spanning afar to no place known, past the common strife,
Ours is a path that leads beyond to places deep within,
Winding among the brooks and streams, faintly sheened with light.

Steal far away with me and tread with long unfolding stride;
Let us decide a private route that ranges realms unknown;
Walk with me on this moonlit path, long throughout the night,
Winding among the brooks and streams, faintly sheened with light.

Silent Consolements

Vaulting crags called down to one, who cried within the crib,
Squalling shrieks of unmet need that hailed to no avail;
Voiceless hopes were whispered on the rasping desert winds.

Scents from coarsely pillared halls would sooth with subtle kiss;
Lakes like mirrors mimed the stars from vales in mountains tall;
Vaulting crags called down to one, who cried within the crib.

Shadows pooled in pulseless ponds where aimless fancies swim;
Hints of sagebrush shrugged the dark where with a fragrant lull
Voiceless hopes were whispered on the rasping desert winds.

Streams in yawning canyons raced beneath their tufting mists,
Leaping down cascading cliffs, and guarding every fall,
Vaulting crags called down to one, who cried within the crib.

Dawn and dusk each passed in turn with burning pastel drift;
Colors paused on peak and plain where passing all the while
Voiceless hopes were whispered on the rasping desert winds.

Life began in bleak despair, too deep for one to live;
Sorrows crushed a tiny heart, but soundless through the pall,
Vaulting crags called down to one, who cried within the crib—
Voiceless hopes were whispered on the rasping desert winds.

Night Walk

Shadows yield the slightest of sound, concealed by the foliage dense;
Sudden streaks of webbed silhouettes wing their erratic ways,
Granting but the hint of a glimpse, just flickers against the depths.

Breezes tease the murmuring leaves with nearly quiescent breath;
Something circles within the dark, voicing a mouse-like noise—
Shadows yield the slightest of sound, concealed by the foliage dense.

Hidden motions mix in the trees, beyond their perceived intent;
Random figures startle the sight, shapes that evade the eyes,
Granting but the hint of a glimpse, just flickers against the depths.

Careful steps, disturbing the ground, reveal an abstracted quest;
Footfall echoes fade in the gloom, fused with the souging haze—
Shadows yield the slightest of sound, concealed by the foliage dense.

Shifting shadows catch in the mind from sources beyond detect;
Steps take pause to ponder and peer, balanced for briefest poise,
Granting but the hint of a glimpse, just flickers against the depths.

Formless thoughts disperse in the void, meandering overhead;
Flutters indistinct to the sense waft on the air like sighs;
Shadows yield the slightest of sound, concealed by the foliage dense,
Granting but the hint of a glimpse, just flickers against the depths.

Cloud

Colors mingle into mist beneath the heavy skies;
Trees appear and disappear in swimming swirls of vapor,
Veiled in part among the white as silhouettes of gray.

Nearby firs rise tall and loom with enigmatic poise;
Bold madrones of vibrant hue succumb to near erasure;
Colors mingle into mist beneath the heavy skies.

Drifting drizzle floats to ground like silken linens, moist,
Folding deep in haze the homes of half a dozen neighbors,
Veiled in part among the white as silhouettes of gray.

Passing low, a raven flies within the shifting void,
Slowly fading from the view where, growing ever fainter,
Colors mingle into mist beneath the heavy skies.

Plumes of steam above the trees and spanning fleece enjoin;
Placid noses graze the grass amid the phasing layers,
Veiled in part among the white as silhouettes of gray.

Clumsy words cannot express such sympathy by voice;
Comfort broods within the soul here in the hands of nature—
Colors mingle into mist beneath the heavy skies,
Veiled in part among the white as silhouettes of gray.

Pilgrim

Lonesome pilgrim on the path, where does the journey end?
With eyes on distant clouds, across the broad horizon,
Firm you grasp a walking stick, and wander with the wind.

Since you left the seething swarm, a peace has filled your mind;
Beneath the sprawling stars you watch the turning heavens—
Lonesome pilgrim on the path, where does the journey end?

Wisdom lights your countenance, where thoughts are unconcerned;
Each morning fills your view with glowing gold or crimson;
Firm you grasp a walking stick, and wander with the wind.

Weathered though your face may be, your gaze is clear and kind;
You've seen days grow and fade on undulating oceans;
Lonesome pilgrim on the path, where does the journey end?

Lucid understanding gleams within your eyes, unstrained;
Reflections streaming through, the sights that met your vision;
Firm you grasp a walking stick, and wander with the wind.

Steeped in clarity profound, you neither seek nor find;
The moonlight's phasing hues reveal the way you've chosen;
Lonesome pilgrim on the path, where does the journey end?
Firm you grasp a walking stick, and wander with the wind.

Culture

Moored by a molding rope to a broken, sunken dock,
The hulking vessel looms alone within the twilight,
Rigid against the chains disappearing in the murk.

Motionless on the wave, immobile to wind or wake,
The broad leviathan sleeps in stolid stern disquiet,
Moored by a molding rope to a broken, sunken dock.

Empty, the long gray halls; dormant, each towering stack;
Barren, the massive holds; she seems a vacant islet,
Rigid against the chains disappearing in the murk.

Weathered and worn with time, cracking paint crazes the deck,
Coating that splits in decay throughout this rusting giant,
Moored by a molding rope to a broken, sunken dock.

She once had parted seas with a freedom none forsook,
And here this titan rots, never again to migrate,
Rigid against the chains disappearing in the murk.

Finally, as light withdraws, the specter fades in the dark,
Bound to a grueling fate, even her dream was finite,
Moored by a molding rope to a broken, sunken dock,
Rigid against the chains disappearing in the murk.

Frostbite

I have collapsed in prayer to an unknown force,
The weight of woes upon me, in strain beneath the strife,
And pleaded to the stars in timbres hoarse.

It seemed in vain, the winds tore deep and fierce;
Succumbed to frigid sorrow, on bitter steppes and wide,
I have collapsed in prayer to an unknown force.

An insignificant voice pealed forth my case
Against the growing silence, into the blurring heights,
And pleaded to the stars in timbres hoarse.

Defeated and alone, I stayed my course
Until the will expired; unable to revive,
I have collapsed in prayer to an unknown force.

This long-lived soul fell under glacial curse,
That once had dared entreaty, with no room left for pride,
And pleaded to the stars in timbres hoarse.

There on the frozen wastes I learned of grace,
Where deep and hidden terrors lurk just beneath the ice—
I have collapsed in prayer to an unknown force,
And pleaded to the stars in timbres hoarse.

Presence

A gentle guiding whisper touched my mind,
Behind the din and chaos, where subtle voices speak,
And counseled with a wisdom firm and kind.

Although I faced the world without a friend,
Among the thronging masses, alone within my grief,
A gentle guiding whisper touched my mind.

A being came from somewhere far beyond,
Beyond this realm of vision, a place we cannot see,
And counseled with a wisdom firm and kind.

My heart was pulled to view the spaces grand,
Where filled with awe I trembled, while always there unseen,
A gentle guiding whisper touched my mind.

Where dreams and waking vision merge and blend
A shade has often offered encouragement discreet
And counseled with a wisdom firm and kind.

I ventured far and wide a vagabond,
And when I ached with hunger or shivered in the breeze,
A gentle guiding whisper touched my mind
And counseled with a wisdom firm and kind.

Transmigrant Memory

For Bonnie

Horses race upon the fields; thunder rolls within the earth,
Where laughing neighs are echoed up the canyons to the peaks;
Lightning flashes in her eyes, dark eyes full of silent mirth.

She storms amid the thronging herd; all the valley holds its breath,
Where jays watch from the aspens, ravens from the elder oaks;
Horses race upon the fields; thunder rolls within the earth.

Billowed sepia-colored mane whips across her chestnut cloth
And dances in the ether, blown in long unfurling arcs;
Lightning flashes in her eyes, dark eyes full of silent mirth.

Each passing nimbus rains a mist, morphing like some giant wraith,
And shadows cast below them briefly dim the verdant brooks;
Horses race upon the fields; thunder rolls within the earth.

Feelings flood her human heart; karman wrought a human path;
Where deep within her nature something equine rears and strikes,
Lightning flashes in her eyes, dark eyes full of silent mirth.

A knowing broods within her soul, welling up to issue forth,
And somehow she remembers; visions fill her heart with aches—
Horses race upon the fields; thunder rolls within the earth;
Lightning flashes in her eyes, dark eyes full of silent mirth.

Wrapping It Up

This is the first chapbook in a series of what may end up being as many as six. Volume II of Series III will continue the exploration of terzanelles and villanelles. I intend to format it very similarly and include about the same number of terzanelles and villanelles. When I finished my ghazal project in June of 2003, I looked forward to my project with the terzanelle and villanelle forms thinking they would be much easier to write than the ghazals. I was quite wrong. These two forms have been considerably more challenging for me. It could be a while before I have enough material for Volume II, which I am hoping to have finished within the first quarter of 2005.

Thoughts

Thoughts

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