

Cloudscapes in Passing

By Zahhar



Journeys Into Poetic Forms

Volume II, Series III: Villanelle & Related Forms

Revision 2 – May 2006

Front Cover

The front cover art was originally a photograph I found online. I don't recall where it was I found this photograph or who took it, as it has been a few years since I downloaded it. I do recall that it was on a photographer's website as an example of a full sized framed print that could be purchased. I have changed the image's hues and decolorized it, increased its resolution, and used filters to render the image impressionist in appearance. It resembles the original, but has a clearly changed character from the actual photograph.

Copyright © 2004 by Zahhar

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Author. Inquiries should be addressed to: Erin A. Thomas, 109 ½ S Pine St., CA, 95482, or by email: erin@mochinet.com

Acknowledgements	2
Introducing the Hybridanelle	3
Composites	6
<hr/>	
The Lotus Tree	7
i the grove	8
ii the sagess	9
iii full moon visit	10
iv astral visitation	11
The Phantom of Wheeler Camp	12
I The Child's Life	13
II The Child's Ghost	14
III Decades Later	15
Hybridanelles	17
<hr/>	
Inhumation	18
Stormlight	20
Fusion	22
Legacy	24
Terzanelles	26
<hr/>	
Pulp	27
Raven	28
The Release	29
Pestilence	30
Villanelles	31
<hr/>	
Helpless	32
Ephemeral	33
In the Shade of Suicide	34
To the Parent who Committed Suicide	35
Finalization	36
<hr/>	

Acknowledgements

Some of these poems have previously been accepted for publication:

Blackmail Press (online publication)
<http://www.homestead.com/NZPoetsOnline/index.html>
Legacy

24

Introducing the Hybridanelle

The hybridanelle (hi 'brid an ,nell) is a 38 line poetic form that is a combination of the Italian villanelle and Lewis Turco's terzanelle. It is created by interlacing the villanelle and terzanelle stanzaic structures together, kind of like shuffling cards, where the stanzas of each form are the individual cards. This means the villanelle and terzanelle refrains and end-line schemes leapfrog one another in the hybridanelle.

Instead of the villanelle-terzanelle end-line rhyme, the end-line scheme in the hybridanelle may use other types of parallelism, phonemic or associative. As such, in the hybridanelle, the end-line scheme is exactly that, an *end-line scheme*, not a rhyme scheme. In the next chapbook of this series I plan to dedicate some space for discussing and exemplifying many phonological alternatives to rhyme. Because rhyme is not necessary in the hybridanelle, I feel that this poetic form becomes more natural to the English language rather than being yet another hand-me-down from another language that does not share its linguistic characteristics.

There are two varieties of hybridanelle, type A and type B. Basically, the type A hybridanelle begins with a villanelle tercet and closes with a terzanelle quatrain, and the type B hybridanelle, which is the inverse of the type A, begins with a terzanelle tercet and closes with a villanelle quatrain.

The most useful way I have found to clarify all the points of a poetic form is to enumerate them:

General:

- 1) The hybridanelle is comprised of ten tercets and two closing quatrains, totaling twelve stanzas.
- 2) Lines may be in any length or meter within reason.
- 3) Hybridanelles may be written on any subject.

Type A:

- A1) The first line from the opening tercet is refrained as the third line of the third and seventh tercets as well as the penultimate quatrain. The third line from the opening tercet is refrained as the third line of the fifth and ninth tercets and also the fourth line of the penultimate quatrain.
- A2) The first line of the opening tercet begins an *a* end-line scheme, used by the first line of every odd numbered tercet along with the penultimate quatrain. The second line of the opening tercet begins a *b* end-line scheme, used by the second line of each odd numbered tercet along with the penultimate quatrain.

- A3) The first and third lines of the second tercet are refrained as the second and fourth lines of the closing quatrain, and they use end-line parallelism between them.
- A4) The even numbered tercets, starting with the fourth tercet, each refrain the second line of the preceding even numbered tercet as its third line. The first line of each of these tercets uses end-line parallelism with its refrained line.
- A5) The third line of the closing quatrain refrains the second line of the last tercet and uses end-line parallelism between its first line and that refrain.

A shorthand notation for the above points follows. Like letters indicate the end-line scheme, and uppercase letters followed by a superscript numeric notation indicate the refrains.

A¹bA²;C¹D¹C²;abA¹;cE¹D¹;abA²;eF¹E¹;abA¹;fG¹F¹;abA²;gH¹G¹;abA¹A²;hC¹H¹C²

Type B:

- B1) The first and third lines of the opening tercet are refrained as the second and fourth lines of the penultimate quatrain and use end-line parallelism between them.
- B2) The odd numbered tercets, starting with the third tercet, each refrain the second line of the preceding odd numbered tercet as its third line. The first line of each of these tercets uses end-line parallelism with its refrained line.
- B3) The third line of the penultimate quatrain refrains the second line of the ninth tercet and uses end-line parallelism between its first line and that refrain.
- B4) The first line from the second tercet is refrained as the third line of the fourth and eighth tercets as well as the closing quatrain. The third line from the second tercet is refrained as the third line of the sixth and tenth tercets and also the fourth line of the closing quatrain.
- B5) The first line of the second tercet begins a c end-line scheme, used by the first line of every even numbered tercet along with the closing quatrain. The second line of the second tercet begins a d end-line scheme, used by the second line of each even numbered tercet along with the closing quatrain.

The shorthand notation for the above points is as follows:

A¹B¹A²;C¹dC²;bE¹B¹;cdC¹;eF¹E¹;cdC²;fG¹F¹;cdC¹;gH¹G¹;cdC²;hA¹H¹A²;cdC¹C²

Type A hybridanelles are exemplified by the poems “The Phantom of Wheeler Camp” (part III), “Stormlight”, and “Legacy”. Type B hybridanelles are exemplified by “Inhumation” and “Fusion”.

Although a fixed meter is not a requirement of this form, a consistent meter or set of meters contributes greatly to the way the hybridanelle flows. This is a form of poetry that is not very forgiving of clumsy phraseologies or word flow.

All except for one of the hybridanelles in this chapbook use phonological parallelism for their end-line schemes. The one hybridanelle that uses associative parallelism instead of phonological is the one called "Legacy". With associative parallelism, words relate to one another in some way. In "Legacy", the parallelisms are synonymic (alike in meaning) and metonymic (related through attributes).

What makes this form fascinating is the way elaborate end-line schemes can be used to create patterns of sound and meaning, moods, that are completely unprecedented in English poetry.

Because the villanelle and terzanelle refrains weave through alternating stanzas in the hybridanelle, there is greater distance between the refrains. This makes it much easier to setup new contexts for the refrained lines, which can give those lines a fresh feel every time they are encountered—I have had some people read my hybridanelles without even realizing that there were refraining lines—yet the power of the refrains is not at all lost. If anything their power is increased because they do not overwhelm the reader or audience.

Although the hybridanelle is inspired by the established villanelle and terzanelle forms, the hybridanelle makes significant variations from those forms. This is a new form with an entire spectrum of new possibilities.

Composites

These are two ambitious poems that are arranged in segments, where each segment is a villanelle, terzanelle, or hybridanelle. Some information about the inspiration behind each of these two poems is provided below:

The Lotus Tree: In the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park in California near Usal Beach there stands an unusual grove of old growth redwoods. These trees are bent and twisted in remarkable ways, such that they hardly resemble redwoods at all at first. Their extreme unusualness in configuration makes them breathtakingly beautiful and at the same time somewhat ominous to walk among. Near the top of this grove is one redwood in particular that seems to defy all the laws of nature in the way it stands and grows. There is also something special about this particular tree energetically. It feels as if it is somehow aware when you stand next to it. It seems to have a presence.

This poem describes an experience I had when I decided to visit the grove and this redwood tree during the full moon of the 2004 Spring solstice. After sitting in the boughs of this tree for about two hours during the moon's zenith, I hiked down to the campground at Usal Beach and fell asleep in my car which was parked beneath some alders that were still in hibernation.

The Phantom of Wheeler Camp: There is a hiking trail in the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park called the Lost Coast Trail that runs about 18 miles along the coast between Usal Beach and Needle Rock. There are beautiful beaches with campgrounds along this trail that can only be accessed on foot. One such beach, by far the largest of them, is called Wheeler Camp, which was once the site of a corporate owned lumber town in the 1950s, so relatively recently. This lumber company, called Wolf Creek Timber Company, effectively clear-cut the entire region, removing all but a small handful of the old growth redwoods. I imagine these were redwoods that were considered unusable or inaccessible at the time.

A close friend of mine encountered a spirit there and was severely affected by her encounter, leaving her afraid to return on her own to visit the park. This encounter affected her so severely that she went into a six month long emotional-mental breakdown. She is even today still affected by the encounter in ways that are difficult to describe.

I hiked out to Wheeler Camp during the early Autumn of 2004 and spent about a week there with her with the hope of developing an understanding myself of what may have happened, what she may have encountered. I myself could sense the presence of something, but the presence did not affect me nearly much as it did her. The presence felt like a child to me, an abused child. The location where the presence and its intense disturbance felt the strongest I later learned was the site of the foreman's home in the 1950s.

The Lotus Tree

Every time I meet a tree, if I am truly awake, I stand in awe before it. I listen to its voice, a silent sermon moving me to the depths, touching my heart, and stirring up within my soul a yearning to give my all

—Macrina Wiederkehr

i

the grove

twisted by the briny winds, the elder redwoods twine;
a grove of serpent gestures, writhing wood and bark,
lean above a shaded trail that weaves a crooked line.

shifting through the canopy, capricious streamers shine
in slanted golden hues with patterns vague and sparse;
twisted by the briny winds, the elder redwoods twine.

broken twigs and fallen needles lie in shades of brown,
a fragrant forest floor where old dryadic hearts
lean above a shaded trail that weaves a crooked line.

rolling rumbles from the sea reveal a distant rune;
an incantation thunders on the ocean's marge;
twisted by the briny winds, the elder redwoods twine.

phantom figures haunt the gloom, enfolded deep in fern;
contorted trunks and boughs, by ancient fires charred,
lean above a shaded trail that weaves a crooked line.

light and bright amid her peers, one sages stands alone
and looms a splendid sight, the redwood matriarch;
twisted by the briny winds, the elder redwoods twine,
lean above a shaded trail that weaves a crooked line.

ii

the sagess

boughs extend and rise in whorls around her ancient heart
to form a vibrant grove from one enormous trunk,
every branch a thriving tree upheld by one support.

like some unusual bloom that magic airs have sprung,
redwood spires unfold in rings the way a lotus flares
to form a vibrant grove from one enormous trunk.

heaving mystic in the shade through dim uncounted years
between misshapen guards that keep a timeless watch,
redwood spires unfold in rings the way a lotus flares.

her presence holds the air with light opaque and soft;
bright awareness radiates to permeate the gloom
between misshapen guards that keep a timeless watch.

rooted deeply in the ridge, she rises from the loam
a living wooden sculpture shaped by wind and earth;
bright awareness radiates to permeate the gloom.

a creature from the dreaming sings above the surf;
boughs extend and rise in whorls around her ancient heart,
a living wooden sculpture shaped by wind and earth,
every branch a thriving tree upheld by one support.

iii

full moon visit

trancing moonbeams phase and shift amid these agéd trees;
i walk a path of dream through scattered glints of light,
bound to meet within the gloom a whorl of rising boughs.

rumbles cast a gentle spell with rhythmic wane and rise,
invoking tranquil thought while, framed within the mind,
trancing moonbeams phase and shift amid these agéd trees.

spirits seem to guide the way among these hidden spires,
as something seemed to lead me here at just this time,
bound to meet within the gloom a whorl of rising boughs.

secret breezes play the leaves in subtle soughs and sighs;
their motions mold the moon so fluid patterns glide;
trancing moonbeams phase and shift amid these agéd trees.

whispers led me to this place to share unfettered woes;
i climb the rising trail that weaves below the pines,
bound to meet within the gloom a whorl of rising boughs.

left with little else to give, i sing melodic lays
that merge with wind and sea beneath the partial sky;
trancing moonbeams phase and shift amid these agéd trees,
bound to meet within the gloom a whorl of rising boughs.

iv

astral visitation

features indistinct and vague appear to me in dream;
she visits from the void suffused in snowy light,
reaching out to bless my sleep beneath the moonlit dome.

i shared the gift of song within her wooden shrine;
touched within her timeless soul, now open to my sense,
she visits from the void suffused in snowy light.

gold and silver seal the gift i hold before her glance,
a locket made of dream; she holds the hidden gem,
touched within her timeless soul, now open to my sense.

i say, “it’s all my tears”—my every pain and fret
manifest as gentle hues inside a shifting frame,
a locket made of dream; she holds the hidden gem.

“this is something of myself”, her subtle tones inform;
she offers me a charm of iridescent wings
manifest as gentle hues inside a shifting frame.

in rest beneath a grove where leafless alders lean,
features indistinct and vague appear to me in dream;
she offers me a charm of iridescent wings,
reaching out to bless my sleep beneath the moonlit dome.

The Phantom of Wheeler Camp

For Bonnie

There is memory in the forest.

—Margaret Widdemer

Grief is a mute sense of panic.

—Marion Roach

I

The Child's Life

The ancient redwoods fall like crashing thunder,
Hauled to the clanging mill that pays for his evening meals;
Dismayed, he sees his refuge torn asunder.

Each morning rugged hands awake from slumber,
Heeding a daily call to climb the canyons and kill;
The ancient redwoods fall like crashing thunder.

How can a child teach his father wonder,
Who razes pillared hills, destroying enchanted halls?
Dismayed, he sees his refuge torn asunder.

The sentient forest beings fade in number;
Heavy machines befoul and ravenous saws defile;
The ancient redwoods fall like crashing thunder.

He dreams of ending all this senseless plunder;
His hope decays and fails, for no-one cares what he feels;
Dismayed, he sees his refuge torn asunder.

His world is carted off as squares of lumber;
Helpless, alone, reviled, he grieves to no avail—
The ancient redwoods fall like crashing thunder;
Dismayed, he sees his refuge torn asunder.

II

The Child's Ghost

Suddenly all is dim; he wanders in psychic dream
Among the barren hills of senseless slaughter,
Broken by savage harm, now one with his blighted home.

In death he holds a grief which never falters,
Transformed into a sprite that floats where the saplings sprout
Among the barren hills of senseless slaughter.

The loss has crushed his heart till nothing can soothe the hurt,
For every old-growth tree was slain for profit,
Transformed into a sprite that floats where the saplings sprout.

Two thousand years of forest-song, melodic,
Vanished amid the moist and constantly shifting mist,
For every old-growth tree was slain for profit.

Visitors sense his ghost, a subtle and somber guest,
An apparition vaguely seen then faded,
Vanished amid the moist and constantly shifting mist.

His anguish grew as all he loved fell wasted;
Suddenly all is dim; he wanders in psychic dream,
An apparition vaguely seen then faded,
Broken by savage harm, now one with his blighted home.

III

Decades Later

Eroding skid roads slowly change to forest;
Alders emerge from sleep and conifers climb the slopes,
Obscuring man's destructive greed from notice.

A gentle woman dreams in the canyon shadows dim;
Her heart is touched by something lost in torment,
And shaken by the gleam, her spirit succumbs to gloom.

She wakes and walks beneath the new-growth foliage
With heavy-hearted step on trails where, defined and steep,
Eroding skid roads slowly change to forest.

Dismay beyond her own fell just for moments
And brushed her troubled mind with losses forever mourned;
Her heart is touched by something lost in torment.

Her vision blurs with feelings strangely foreign,
A pain she can't escape that distorts her mental scope,
Obscuring man's destructive greed from notice.

A grieving spirit groaned within the molested ground,
Responding to the aura of her presence,
And brushed her troubled mind with losses forever mourned.

She stumbles home—her limbs grow weak and torpid—
Hardly able to cope where, as the semesters creep,
Eroding skid roads slowly change to forest.

The very heart of nature stands attendance;
Coyotes hold their poise and ravens serenely pose,
Responding to the aura of her presence.

So few would guess the ancients all were corded
To see these living shapes in place of their eldership
Obscuring man's destructive greed from notice.

The air around her sighs the whispering subtle soughs
Of sorrows that a broken shade remembers;
Coyotes hold their poise and ravens serenely pose.

Her thoughts are framed with images emotive,
An endless foggy drip and trails where the branches droop;
Eroding skid roads slowly change to forest,
Obscuring man's destructive greed from notice.

Long after mists have cooled the campfire embers,
A gentle woman dreams in the canyon shadows dim
Of sorrows that a broken shade remembers,
And shaken by the gleam, her spirit succumbs to gloom.

Hybridanelles

Part of my commitment to my villanelle-terzanelle project is the creation and exploration of at least one carefully thought out new poetic form that uses elements from these two existing forms. The hybridanelle is this creation.

Some information about the inspiration behind each hybridanelle is provided below:

Inhumation: I spent a year in the children's unit of Camarillo State Hospital between the ages of 13 and 14. It was a locked ward with grating on the windows. My room faced the bulk of the hospital grounds, and the walls were made from cinderblocks, painted over with a bluish gray.

They drugged me out of my mind with psychotropic medications. My capacity for clear and stable thought was so scrambled by the catalogue of medications that were being tested out on me that I found it very difficult to sleep at night. Most nights were spent just staring out the window or into the dark of the room. Every morning a rooster from somewhere nearby would herald the dawn, a sound I eventually came to dread for various reasons.

Stormlight: As a teenage runaway on the open highways, I once passed the night in an abandoned old home in the Midwest during a magnificent storm. There was something about this storm that resembled my state of mind at the time, and this for some reason inspired in me a strange sort of comfort.

Fusion: My girlfriend was going through a divorce when we met. As we became involved, her soon-to-be ex-husband killed himself by hanging. His remains were cremated and interred by the roots of a sapling sequoia, which had been planted by her father a couple years earlier on his property. I can't shake the feeling that I have somehow contributed to the state of mind that led this man to his suicide by becoming involved with his estranged wife. This poem in many ways is an attempt to make peace with his departed spirit.

Legacy: I have always felt that the land itself contains the memories of our ancestors. We may through the process of procreation continue the biological line of our ancestry, but I have for a long time felt that the collective experience and emotional states of our ancestries is somehow remembered and passed on in a different manner. There is no reason to assume that members of one line cannot be touched and affected by the experiences and feelings of the ancestry of another potentially opposing line. How this might be accomplished is anyone's guess. One thing I am beginning to realize about the subtle realm, or "the spirit world", is that it defies cognitive understanding.

Either way, it seems to me that the legacy of our ancestors is shared with all posterity. We are the collective progeny of our collective ancestry. Their passionate voices are in our hearts and minds, resounding within our spirits. Perhaps the dichotomy of past wars and conflicts exists within each of us.

Inhumation

locked wards cower in the distant gloom;
grated windows pattern all my dreams;
heavy haze distorts my heavy mood.

my eyes are weary of watching faded lights;
i wait throughout the dismal night to hear
the call of a rooster just beyond my sight.

silence is an ever-present drone;
tempered springs betray my slightest move;
grated windows pattern all my dreams.

these cinderblocks enfold my spirit in lime;
interred in tomblike walls of concrete halls,
my eyes are weary of watching faded lights.

thoughts amid this broken darkness brood;
restless motions lurk within the shade;
tempered springs betray my slightest move.

this is the crypt where my rotting soul is set,
thus laid to rest beyond that twilight hail,
the call of a rooster just beyond my sight.

time is fractured into mental shards,
strewn against the darkness of my view;
restless motions lurk within the shade.

and the images betray my heart with lies
that flash against my mind as crumbled hopes;
my eyes are weary of watching faded lights.

here i watch them phase in empty hues,
omens of a future laid in brick
strewn against the darkness of my view.

this lucid static is comfort of a sort
that's lost with every sunrise when i hear
the call of a rooster just beyond my sight.

black within the slowly rising brume,
locked wards cower in the distant gloom,
omens of a future laid in brick;
heavy haze distorts my heavy mood.

i dread the sound that will end another night,
a sound that seals my fate within this hell—
my eyes are weary of watching faded lights—
the call of a rooster just beyond my sight.

Stormlight

Frantic flashes illustrate my view,
Random moments shot into the light;
Thunder crushes every hope anew.

I pass the night in a frail abandoned home,
A weary vagrant teen deprived of will
Awaiting the dawn within its quaking hold.

Visions strobe throughout the empty room,
Shadows briefly singed by every bolt;
Frantic flashes illustrate my view.

I curl within my bag against the wall;
There's nothing left for the winds to rip from me,
A weary vagrant teen deprived of will.

Etched amid the suffocating gloom,
Monster clouds roll black against the night;
Thunder crushes every hope anew.

I've struggled to grasp what life could ever mean
As memory and mind are stripped away;
There's nothing left for the winds to rip from me.

Leafless limbs are drawn in sepia hues;
Stark against the darkness of my thought,
Frantic flashes illustrate my view.

I watch and listen, numb and half-aware,
My slumber but vivid streaks of fitful dream,
As memory and mind are stripped away.

Anxious waiting constantly resumes;
Shocked repeatedly from fugue to doubt,
Thunder crushes every hope anew.

I try to manage what rest I can redeem,
Protected from the storm by shifting frames,
My slumber but vivid streaks of fitful dream.

Desolation roars the whole night through;
Forces seem to tear the world apart;
Frantic flashes illustrate my view;
Thunder crushes every hope anew.

Uncertain shadows pose in countless forms;
I pass the night in a frail abandoned home,
Protected from the storm by shifting frames,
Awaiting the dawn within its quaking hold.

Fusion

For Tyler Schell Joslyn (1969—2004)

(poem temporarily removed pending publication)

(cont. poem temporarily removed pending publication)

Legacy

an essence rises from the land into our spirits
a touch like the raven's down dispersed by a maiden flight
that permeates our souls with an otherworldly memory

*in one ear seethes resentment deep and bitter
reflections of a suffering long endured
and in the other burns remorse as sour*

this land is an amalgam of disembodied psyches
its rivers and rocks infused with their enigmatic drift
an essence rises from the land into our spirits

*as one hand grips a wound too deep to bear
the other twists a blade that lightly glimmers
reflections of a suffering long endured*

we drink of water filled with transcendental engrams
a sense emerges in all who share in its natural course
that permeates our souls with an otherworldly memory

*while one arm holds a steady hand for moments
and all the warriors freeze in sober pause
the other twists a blade that lightly glimmers*

like sea-mist on the wind our minds are touched by phantoms
immersed in their love and hate—a plight we cannot escape
an essence rises from the land into our spirits

*one eye sees arrows pierce men to their rest
another watches bullets drop their targets
and all the warriors freeze in sober pause*

the waking world is brim with long forgotten relics
their shapes reduced to the dust we breathe from the fragrant air
that permeates our souls with an otherworldly memory

*one hero's war-lance slaughters human objects
the rage that sent it warm upon the blood
another watches bullets drop their targets*

all ancestries are fused in our subconscious insights
we dream their atrocities—their advances and retreats
an essence rises from the land into our spirits
that permeates our souls with an otherworldly memory

*each side is long remembered in our veins
in one ear seethes resentment deep and bitter
the rage that sent it warm upon the blood
and in the other burns remorse as sour*

Terzanelles

One thing I've enjoyed doing with the terzanelle is experimenting with different meters and combinations of meter to see how the feel and flow of the terzanelle is effected. This process of experimentation has helped me to learn a lot about meter and how it can work to effect the rhythm of a poem in various ways. This is part of the reason why I have made long-term studies out of particular forms; this process seems to have the capacity to further and further refine one's understanding and use of such devices as meter and rhythm over time.

Some information about the inspiration behind each terzanelle is provided below:

Pulp: Before the age of twelve, I remember being able to read very quickly and retain huge amounts of information. After many years of being forced to take large concoctions of psychotropic medication as a child, that has been lost for good. I was an angry child and teenager, and because my mind was turned into such a spinning pinwheel of confusion, I couldn't communicate my feelings in any intelligible manner, oftentimes leaving me to take out my frustration and rage on my own person.

Raven: There has always been something about the raven that intrigued me, that humored and moved me. In some of the darkest moments of my life the call of a raven would snap me out of my brooding, drawing my attention to the stern glare of the great big black bird in flight or at the top of a telephone pole. I don't understand the cheer their presence evokes in me, at least for a moment, no matter how dark my frame of mind. Since there is said to be a spirit of humanity, it seemed to make sense to me that there must be a similar spirit of ravenity. If so, then I think I might have some neat sort of relationship with that spirit.

The Release: When my ex-girlfriend was ten years old, her father fell down a ventilation shaft while exploring an abandoned copper mine alone near Yerrington, Nevada. It took over two weeks for search and rescue to locate and retrieve his body. She never got the sort of closure that comes with being able to see the body of the deceased; she never even got to visit the site of his demise. For years she felt compelled to visit the place where he had died in hopes of finding closure, and after much research, we managed to locate and visit the site. The mine had been "sealed"—charges had been laid throughout the mine's extensive system of tunnels and detonated, collapsing the entire side of the mountain in on itself to form a canyon. She was now twenty years old.

Pestilence: A man I was acquainted with indirectly was a devout member of a Christian church. His indoctrination convinced him that certain harmless aspects of his own nature and even some of the circumstances of his life were fundamentally "wrong". This delusional sense of judgement weighed heavily on him until he finally broke and killed himself. I was enraged at how the compassionate spirit of Christ was basically used to crush and destroy this man through religious indoctrination.

Pulp

they made his mind a molding mess
a slow and solemn nest of thought
a brooding storm of deep distress

confusion ruled his darkened heart
enraged at what his mind became
a slow and solemn nest of thought

as reason weakened and decayed
he bashed his limbs and tore his flesh
enraged at what his mind became

his anguish flared a bitter flame
when it would surge with burning force
he bashed his limbs and tore his flesh

he wished for death with yearning fierce
a wish he never could perform
when it would surge with burning force

he longed to leave his broken form
destroyed by psychiatric drugs
a wish he never could perform

the poisons flowed within his blood
they made his mind a molding mess
destroyed by psychiatric drugs
a brooding storm of deep distress

Raven

rugged feathers brush against my neck
something perches staunchly on my shoulder
croaking wisdom through an unseen beak

it seems an ancient being shrewd and sober
black as empty space between the stars
something perches staunchly on my shoulder

i sense a stern reproach to all my fears
dreads that formed from countless gripping losses
black as empty space between the stars

with rigid countenance it keenly watches
game to see me through each anxious qualm
dreads that formed from countless gripping losses

it came from somewhere in the subtle realm
skies abruptly filled with calling ravens
game to see me through each anxious qualm

this spirit somehow heard my lamentations
cries of savage pain that shook the clouds
skies abruptly filled with calling ravens

they soothe my grief in smooth or raucous chords
offered ever since they found me wailing
cries of savage pain that shook the clouds

this spirit and their spirits ever sailing
pass to me a gift of light and song
offered ever since they found me wailing

with rough and yet a clear enlightened tongue
subtle caws resounding in my spirit
pass to me a gift of light and song

whenever all is still i feel and hear it
rugged feathers brush against my neck
subtle caws resounding in my spirit
croaking wisdom through an unseen beak

The Release

For Bonnie

His shade is drawn from the earth by the light of his daughter's love,
From deep in the crushing blackness, where he left his broken body,
Free at last from the silence to wander the stars *alive!*

He lost his footing and fell, in a moment of fatal folly,
Lost below in a mineshaft where no-one could hear his cries
From deep in the crushing blackness, where he left his broken body.

In time they found his remains; they had ferreted many days;
His carcass was raised from darkness, but his ghost remained enshrouded,
Lost below in a mineshaft where no-one could hear his cries.

He stirred in motionless airs while his loved ones were left confounded,
Gripped by senseless bereavement; his presence could not be felt;
His carcass was raised from darkness, but his ghost remained enshrouded.

His daughter held to the hope that she one day could reconnect;
She called to him in her longing to in some way touch his spirit,
Gripped by senseless bereavement; his presence could not be felt.

Her sorrow numbed and distressed, as a part of her heart grew frigid,
Held too long in a stasis where time had no way to soothe;
She called to him in her longing to in some way touch his spirit.

We come to find where he died, and the moment she nears his tomb,
The canyon reflects his spirit, a release from dim confusion,
Held too long in a stasis where time had no way to soothe.

And now with a touched amazement, I gaze on their bright reunion;
His shade is drawn from the earth by the light of his daughter's love;
The canyon reflects his spirit, a release from dim confusion,
Free at last from the silence to wander the stars *alive!*

Pestilence

You say that all ungodly heathens each will burn in hell;
You thump a text of godly truth, four dozen times revised,
And set a rash of standards used to harm instead of heal.

You doom your congregation members each to rot in life
With gangrene hearts of secret guilt and mental cysts of doubt;
You thump a text of godly truth, four dozen times revised.

You spread delusion like disease is spread in times of drought,
Infecting all who heed your words and take to your belief
With gangrene hearts of secret guilt and mental cysts of doubt.

You bring a plague of righteousness and theocratic grief,
Condemning all who can't conform to narrow-minded views,
Infecting all who heed your words and take to your belief.

You claim with poisoned breath to grant elixirs made of vows,
Then judge within your spirits those who hold a different thought,
Condemning all who can't conform to narrow-minded views.

You boldly claim to understand the hidden heart of god;
You say that all ungodly heathens each will burn in hell,
Then judge within your spirits those who hold a different thought
And set a rash of standards used to harm instead of heal.

Villanelles

I've found that varied meters work in the villanelle very differently than they do the terzanelle. The rotating refrain and end-line scheme of the terzanelle allows varied meters to move along with a sort of leapfrog effect. In the villanelle like meters seem to work best when used in parallel with the rhyme scheme, although I did attempt to break free of this metrical parallelism with the poem "In the Shade of Suicide" just to see what would happen.

Some information about the inspiration behind each villanelle is provided below.

Helpless: As far back as I can remember I have been intimately attracted to beautiful women, completely helpless to their supple loveliness. This honestly goes back clear to the beginning of my conscious memory. The thing is, physical beauty is in a constant state of decay. No matter who I'm with, it feels as if I'm doomed to lose physical interest eventually. I can't help but envy those who are capable of seeing and appreciating beauty in someone even as he or she goes through the process of age and decay. They are truly blessed, far more than they probably realize.

Ephemeral: Life, existence, has always seemed to me like a stone skipping across a pond, doomed to sink beneath the water eventually no matter how many times the rock skips, no matter how many times the rock cheats the water of its prize. But, a skipping stone is thrown by someone, or something, right?

In the Shade of Suicide: When I was ten years old, my father committed suicide while spending the night in a drunk tank. I looked up some information about the particular jail he hung himself in and saw some pictures of the cells. I've always imagined his ghost there in the place where he died, sobbing in the darkness the way he used to sob at the foot of my or my sister's bed after coming home drunk from the bars and flipping out abusively on us kids for a few hours. It's always made sense to me in a strange sort of way that the same thing that would cause him to lose control and abuse the children he loved could also cause him to lose control and take his own life.

To the Parent who Committed Suicide: Having lost my own father to suicide, and having known people who have lost a parent to suicide, when my girlfriend's estranged husband hung himself to death with both his toddler children in the house, I was struck by the blind audacity of it. I can't help but ponder the future of his children, what they're lives will be like as they grow up without their father. I couldn't help but to try to write something that might deter one or two parents from suicide in the future.

Helpless

My heart is moved by that which wastes away;
My soul is rendered incomplete by beauty
And yearns in vain for that which cannot stay.

An urgency eclipses simple joy,
And caught within its raging rush unruly,
My heart is moved by that which wastes away.

How often I have heaved the heavy sigh,
A heedless hope that heats within profusely
And yearns in vain for that which cannot stay.

Today, as when a half unconscious boy,
Enslaved by aches that govern absolutely,
My heart is moved by that which wastes away.

My sense is charmed by figures slight and spry,
The fairest features doomed to rot unduly,
And yearns in vain for that which cannot stay.

I'm plagued by wonton wants that just destroy,
That urge with fiendish force until, all gloomy,
My heart is moved by that which wastes away
And yearns in vain for that which cannot stay.

Ephemeral

Who launched the flat gray stone across the pond,
A stone now manifest and in the air
Barely above the water, gliding on?

Was it the misty void, though folded soft
Within its mystic lair of dark allure,
Who launched the flat gray stone across the pond?

A stone's gray flight can never last for long,
Its hue in contrast with the liquid mire,
Barely above the water, gliding on.

Do waters ponder, when it lands awash
And splashes up in flight again to soar,
Who launched the flat gray stone across the pond?

Momentum slows for every skimming rock,
Too soon to sleep enfolded in the mere,
Barely above the water, gliding on.

Once it is lost from view, its motion stopped,
Ripples expand and fade; and, no-one's there,
Who launched the flat gray stone across the pond
Barely above the water, gliding on.

In the Shade of Suicide

For Robert L. Thomas

steel bars seal the concrete cell
dim lighting casts a haze on everything
suffocating hope until the pulse is still

here unheard there sobs a secret weeping soul
the air is weighed beyond all comforting
steel bars seal the concrete cell

some can sense a lost control
regrets cascade and crush in heavy throng
suffocating hope until the pulse is still

year by passing year brief glances rise and fall
a faded figure sometimes seen to hang
steel bars seal the concrete cell

wrenched within their drunken pall
detainees wake to hear a gasping lung
suffocating hope until the pulse is still

violence born of sorrow echoes through the hall
the final act of him who kicked and swung
steel bars seal the concrete cell
suffocating hope until the pulse is still

To the Parent who Committed Suicide

You'll never know what they will come to be,
The children of your heart who live without your love;
At best, you leave behind but stings of grief.

You'll never share their triumph or defeat
And smile when again they rise with new resolve;
You'll never know what they will come to be.

You'll never comfort them in times of need
Or feel the subtle joy that always comes thereof;
At best, you leave behind but stings of grief.

You'll never see them strive to meet their dreams,
The hopes within their soul they struggle to achieve;
You'll never know what they will come to be.

You'll never beam a parent's prideful glee,
To see them find their way and how they learn to live;
At best, you leave behind but stings of grief.

You lost them as you swung your failing feet,
And now you're just a void that they will always have;
You'll never know what they will come to be;
At best, you leave behind but stings of grief.

Finalization

This concludes Volume II of Series III. The poems contained in this volume span a difficult time in my life, and it seems that the poems for Volume III may span an even more difficult time. I would give anything to avoid experiencing first-hand the sort of experiences that have provided inspiration for “Pestilence” and “To the Parent who Committed Suicide”. I sometimes wish that I were a bland everyday little creature full of blissfully ignorant mundanity, content to blather on about banalities.

This is not my path. The conditions of my life have led me to see the world with an animists perspective, a world of spirits and interacting spirits, a subtle universe with a thin physical façade, worn and cracked from exposure, that we choose for some reason to call “reality”.

Lately difficult decisions and an unfolding tragedy have caused me to peer into the confusion of this subtle universe in hopes of gaining some understanding of the conditions that have led here; it slowly becomes clear to me that those conditions which have led here, for all involved, are conditions that were led to by previous conditions, and so on. There’s just no end to the mass of circumstances that goes back as far as the mind can reach. Wherever I look for a cause, I’ll find one.

So I focus on solutions as best I can, even if its just to call out an injustice or shed light on what seems like a previously unlit way of thinking. For me this calms the turmoil of my current condition a little at a time. I hope this will have ripple effects. This is *part* of the reason I am studying poetry as intensively as I am.

Volume III will probably contain mostly hybridanelles, and probably also a tailored version of an article I wrote that discusses alternatives to rhyme for end-line parallelism in place of a given rhyme scheme. As this and the previous volume demonstrate, I’ve been playing around with alternatives to rhyme quite a bit, and I’ve been learning a lot about it. I’d like to share some of what I’ve been learning.

Contact

To see more or to contact Erin (Zahhar):

<http://www.mochinet.com/Writing/CB/>

Or write:

Erin A. Thomas
109 ½ S Pine St.
Ukiah, CA 95482, USA