

= Villanelle =

A villanelle (also known as villanesque) is a nineteen @-@ line poetic form consisting of five tercets followed by a quatrain . There are two refrains and two repeating rhymes , with the first and third line of the first tercet repeated alternately until the last stanza , which includes both repeated lines . The villanelle is an example of a fixed verse form . The word derives from Latin , then Italian , and is related to the initial subject of the form being the pastoral .

The form started as a simple ballad @-@ like song with no fixed form ; this fixed quality would only come much later , from the poem " Villanelle (J 'ay perdu ma Tourterelle) " (1606) by Jean Passerat . From this point , its evolution into the " fixed form " used in the present day is debated . Despite its French origins , the majority of villanelles have been written in English , a trend which began in the late nineteenth century . The villanelle has been noted as a form that frequently treats the subject of obsessions , and one which appeals to outsiders ; its defining feature of repetition prevents it from having a conventional tone .

= = Etymology = =

The word villanelle derives from the Italian villanella , referring to a rustic song or dance , and which comes from villano , meaning peasant or villein . Villano derives from the Medieval Latin villanus , meaning a " farmhand " . The etymology of the word relates to the fact that the form 's initial distinguishing feature was the pastoral subject .

= = History = =

The villanelle originated as a simple ballad @-@ like song ? in imitation of peasant songs of an oral tradition ? with no fixed poetic form . These poems were often of a rustic or pastoral subject matter and contained refrains . Prior to the nineteenth century , the term would have simply meant country song , with no particular form implied ? a meaning it retains in the vocabulary of early music . According to Julie Kane , the refrain in each stanza indicates that the form descended from a " choral dance song " wherein a vocal soloist ? frequently female ? semi @-@ improvised the " unique " lyrics of each stanza , while a ring of dancers ? all female , or male and female mixed ? chimed in with the repetitive words of the refrain as they danced around her in a circle . "

The fixed @-@ form villanelle , containing the nineteen @-@ line dual @-@ refrain , derives from Jean Passerat 's poem " Villanelle (J 'ay perdu ma Tourterelle) " , published in 1606 . The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (1993) suggests that this became the standard " villanelle " when prosodists such as César @-@ Pierre Richelet based their definitions of the form on that poem . This conclusion is refuted by Kane , however , who argues that it was instead Pierre @-@ Charles Berthelin 's additions to Richelet 's Dictionnaire de rimes that first fixed the form , followed a century later by the poet Théodore de Banville ; his creation of a parody to Passerat 's " J 'ay perdu ... " would lead Wilhelm Ténint and others to think that the villanelle was an antique form .

Despite its classification and origin as a French poetic form , by far the majority of villanelles have been written in English . Subsequent to the publication of Théodore de Banville 's treatise on prosody " Petit traité de poésie française " (1872) , the form became popularised in England through Edmund Gosse and Austin Dobson . Gosse , Dobson , Oscar Wilde , Andrew Lang and John Payne were among the first English practitioners ? theirs and other works were published in Gleeson White 's Ballades and Rondeaux , Chants Royal , Sestinas , Villanelles , & c . Selected (1887) , which contained thirty @-@ two English @-@ language villanelles composed by nineteen poets .

Most modernists disdained the villanelle , which became associated with the overwrought formal aestheticism of the 1890s , i.e. , the decadent movement in England . In his 1914 novel A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man , James Joyce includes a villanelle written by his protagonist Stephen Dedalus . William Empson revived the villanelle more seriously in the 1930s , and his contemporaries and friends W. H. Auden and Dylan Thomas also picked up the form . Dylan

Thomas 's " Do not go gentle into that good night " is perhaps the most renowned villanelle of all . Theodore Roethke and Sylvia Plath wrote villanelles in the 1950s and 1960s , and Elizabeth Bishop wrote a particularly famous and influential villanelle , " One Art , " in 1976 . The villanelle reached an unprecedented level of popularity in the 1980s and 1990s with the rise of the New Formalism . Since then , many contemporary poets have written villanelles , and they have often varied the form in innovative ways ; in their anthology of villanelles (Villanelles) , Annie Finch and Marie @-@ Elizabeth Mali devote a section entitled " Variations on the Villanelle " to such innovations .

= = Form = =

The villanelle consists of five stanzas of three lines (tercets) followed by a single stanza of four lines (a quatrain) for a total of nineteen lines . It is structured by two repeating rhymes and two refrains : the first line of the first stanza serves as the last line of the second and fourth stanzas , and the third line of the first stanza serves as the last line of the third and fifth stanzas . The rhyme @-@ and @-@ refrain pattern of the villanelle can be schematized as A1bA2 abA1 abA2 abA1 abA2 abA1A2 where letters (" a " and " b ") indicate the two rhyme sounds , upper case indicates a refrain (" A ") , and superscript numerals (1 and 2) indicate Refrain 1 and Refrain 2 .

The pattern is below set against " Do not go gentle into that good night " by Dylan Thomas :

The villanelle has no established meter , although most 19th @-@ century villanelles have used trimeter or tetrameter and most 20th @-@ century villanelles have used pentameter . Slight alteration of the refrain line is permissible .

= = Effect = =

With reference to the form 's repetition of lines , Philip K. Jason suggests that the " villanelle is often used , and properly used , to deal with one or another degree of obsession " citing Sylvia Plath 's " Mad Girl 's Love Song " amongst other examples . He notes the possibility for the form to evoke , through the relationship between the repeated lines , a feeling of dislocation and a " paradigm for schizophrenia " . This repetition of lines has been considered to prevent villanelles from possessing a " conventional tone " and that instead they are closer in form to a song or lyric poetry . Stephen Fry opines that the villanelle " is a form that seems to appeal to outsiders , or those who might have cause to consider themselves as such " , having a " playful artifice " which suits " rueful , ironic reiteration of pain or fatalism " . (In spite of this , the villanelle has also often been used for light verse , as for instance Louis Untermeyer 's " Lugubrious Villanelle of Platitudes " .)

On the relationship between form and content , Anne Ridler notes in an introduction to her own poem " Villanelle for the Middle of the Way " a point made by T. S. Eliot , that " to use very strict form is a help , because you concentrate on the technical difficulties of mastering the form , and allow the content of the poem a more unconscious and freer release " . In an introduction to his own take on the form , entitled " Missing Dates " , William Empson suggests that while the villanelle is a " very rigid form " , nonetheless W. H. Auden ? in his long poem The Sea and the Mirror ? had " made it sound absolutely natural like the innocent girl talking " .

= = Examples = =

" Do not go gentle into that good night " by Dylan Thomas . Probably the best @-@ known villanelle in English .

" The Waking " by Theodore Roethke .

" Mad Girl 's Love Song " by Sylvia Plath .

" One Art " by Elizabeth Bishop .

" If I Could Tell You (poem) " by W.H. Auden

Edwin Arlington Robinson 's villanelle " The House on the Hill " was first published in The Globe in September 1894 .

The villanelle written by Stephen Dedalus , the protagonist of James Joyce 's novel A Portrait of the

Artist as a Young Man . It has been the subject of several critical analyses .

" Hate the Villanelle , " a song by They Might Be Giants , first performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music Howard Gilman Opera House in June 2014 .