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How the Villanelle's Form Got Fixed.

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HOW THE VILLANELLE'S FORM GOT FIXED

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of English

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** ................................................................. ii

**ABSTRACT** ................................................................................. iv

**CHAPTER**

1. **VILLANELLE "TRADITION" AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT** ................................. 1

2. **WORDS FOR TUNES AND TUNES FOR WORDS** ........................................ 14

3. **THE VILLANELLA IN ITALY** ................................................................ 47

4. **THE VILLANELLE IN FRANCE** .............................................................. 88

5. **THE NEAPOLITAN IN ENGLAND** .......................................................... 169

6. **THE FIX IS IN** ................................................................................. 211

7. **THE TWENTIETH CENTURY** .............................................................. 261

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** ...................................................................... 295

**VITA** .............................................................................................. 317
ABSTRACT

This work debunks the myth of the villanelle as a "fixed poetic form" dating back to the sixteenth century or earlier and replaces it with a new-historical account of how a semi-improvisatory musico-poetic genre, the choral-dance lyric, was "translated" across ruptures in lyric technology between oral, manuscript, and print cultures. The "fixity" of the villanelle's written form is shown to be not a matter of long-standing "heritage" or "tradition," but the result of deliberate actions taken by one eighteenth- and one nineteenth-century individual who inserted less-than-truthful passages into otherwise "authoritative" prosodic treatises.

Chapter 1 identifies the literary sources responsible for the construction of a false villanelle "history" and "tradition" and discusses how belief in such a tradition influences and empowers both poets and critics. Beginning with medieval verse forms, Chapter 2 discusses the musical and poetic features that distinguish semi-improvised choral-dance lyrics from text-based vocal lyrics, with particular attention to the role of women in the generation and transmission of choral-dance lyrics. The third chapter describes the musical and poetic styles of the sixteenth-century Italian musical villanella, representing a conscious imitation by courtly composers of semi-improvised refrain songs from the oral tradition; it also contrasts the villanella with the more "literary" madrigal. In Chapter 4, all known "poetic" villanelles and allusions to the villanelle are examined for evidence of a "poetic" or "fixed poetic" form in sixteenth-century France. The fifth chapter examines the influence of the musical villanella upon sixteenth-century English poets, particularly Philip Sidney. Chapter 6 traces the step-by-step process by which the villanelle's poetic form came to be "fixed" between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. In conclusion, Chapter 7 examines the paradox by which a "genuine" hundred-fifty-year-old fixed-form villanelle tradition that is still generating exciting poems has come to be erected
upon the foundations of a false five-hundred-year-old one, and demonstrates how twentieth-century villanelles that are said to "rebel against" traditional villanelle constraints are actually consistent with the villanelle's semi-improvised, multiform origins.
CHAPTER 1: VILLANELLE "TRADITION" AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT

Those of us who care about lyric poetry are at least nominally aware that the genre was once inseparable from music. Etymology preserves ancient history: the very adjective "lyric" derives from the Greek word for "lyre," which was the small stringed instrument that accompanied the singing of poetry. And while much of the lyric verse of the twentieth century has been "free" in form, with no apparent historical link to music, the "fixed forms" of sonnet, sestina, ballade, rondeau, virelai, and villanelle (which never quite died out while free verse was ascendant, and several of which have enjoyed a surprising resurgence since the New Formalist movement of the nineteen-eighties) were all originally sung or recited to musical accompaniment. Their forms are called "fixed" because their rhyme schemes, overall lengths, and metrical organizations are governed by strict conventions. Still other "subgenres" of the genre of lyric poetry—elegy, ode—were also once associated with specific kinds of music, although they have not been passed down to us with any rigidly imposed formal structure.

The sestina's form appears to have been "invented" by the twelfth-century troubadour poet Arnaut Daniel, and the sonnet's thirteenth-century origins are still uncertain (although it seems likely that the latter's octave and sestet may have derived from separate oral-tradition musico-poetic forms), but the other four "fixed forms" existed as oral-tradition musico-poetic genres prior to being codified in print as written poetic forms. However, while the ballade, rondeau, and virelai made their transitions from oral-musical to written poetic status prior to the fourteenth century, from which time period large numbers of monastic and bureaucratic records but few personal letters or memoranda survive, the villanelle began to break from music only during the sixteenth century, when many French, Italian, and English persons interested in music and poetry were writing personal letters, keeping
journals, or authoring books that mentioned those interests. As the condensing dust cloud at the edge of the visible universe is to the astronomer, so is the villanelle to the scholar of fixed poetic form: it should be able to provide a rare glimpse into the mechanisms by which earlier lyric verse forms, as well, "devolved" from music and became fixed on the printed page.

The villanelle's form can be schematized as follows:

```
A1bA2 abA1 abA2 abA1 abA2 abA1A2
```

where similar letters of the alphabet (the A and a lines, the b lines) rhyme with each other; a capital letter indicates a "refrain," or line of verse that is repeated word for word (there are two such refrains, A1 and A2); and a space indicates a stanza break.

Form is made flesh in this untitled 1947 example from poet Weldon Kees:

```
A1  We had the notion it was dawn,
b   But it was only torches on the height.
A2  The truce was signed, but the attack goes on.

a   The major fell down on the blackened lawn
b   And cried like a fool; his face was white.
A1  We had the notion it was dawn.

a   On a bombed wall someone had drawn
b   A picture of a nude hermaphrodite.
A2  The truce was signed, but the attack goes on.

a   Our food was rotten, all our water gone.
b   We had penicillin and dynamite,
A1  And had the notion it was dawn

a   Because a cold gleam, fitful, gray, and wan,
b   Held for a moment in the signal's light.
A2  The truce was signed, but the attack goes on.

a   We helped to choose these fields we crawl upon.
b   Sired in caskets, born to die at night,
A1  We had the notion it was dawn.
A2  The truce was signed, but the attack goes on. 3
```
The challenge of the form lies in making the eight (of nineteen total) repeated lines seem natural rather than forced. When a poet is able to accomplish this, as Kees does in the poem above or Dylan Thomas does in the famous villanelle "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night," the resulting poem virtually burns itself into the reader's memory. More often, however, the would-be villanelle writer runs out of fitting rhyme words or begins to bore with predictable repetition before the end is reached.

Despite its considerable difficulty, and despite the relatively marginalized position of formal verse in general during the free-verse-dominated twentieth century, the villanelle form has attracted many talented poets during the last hundred years—including many poets otherwise known for rebelling against "tradition" in various guises. Ezra Pound, the leader of the free-verse Imagist movement, was nevertheless intrigued enough by the form to write a poem titled "Villanelle: The Psychological Hour," although it is villanelle-like only in its vestigial refrain. James Joyce, who would push the novel and the English language to the limits of experimentation, worked the traditional villanelle he himself had written in his youth, "Villanelle of the Temptress," deeply into the plot of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. William Empson, who strove to integrate modern physics, mathematics, and scientific doubt into his writing, left three villanelles among his scant lifetime output of sixty-five poems. Theodore Roethke, who reached back to the pre- and postlinguistic states of early childhood, dream, madness, and meditation for his poetic inspiration, left us the classic villanelle "The Waking." Denise Levertov, one of the champions of "organic form" during the nineteen-sixties and -seventies, wrote an irregular villanelle titled "Obessions." In the following passage from her famous essay "Some Notes on Organic Form" in Stephen Berg and Robert Mezey's anthology Naked Poetry, she argued that a recurrent refrain form could be "organic":

4
Rhyme, chime, echo, reiteration: they not only serve to knit the elements of an experience but often are the very means, the sole means, by which the density of texture and the returning or circling of perception can be transmuted into language, apperceived. A may lead to E directly through B, C, and D: but if then there is the sharp remembrance or revisioning of A, this return must find its metric counterpart. It could do so by actual repetition of the words that spoke of A the first time (and if this return occurs more than once, one finds oneself with a refrain—not put there because one decided to write something with a refrain at the end of each stanza but directly because of the demand of the content.)

W. D. Snodgrass and Sylvia Plath, who were among the first to base poems upon personal experiences of divorce, mental illness, and other subjects not previously considered suitable for poetry; Elizabeth Bishop, Marilyn Hacker, and Peter Klappert (not to mention Oscar Wilde, in the preceding century), who have rebelled in their poetry or personal lives against "traditional" gender roles; and Rita Dove and Marilyn Nelson, who as African-American poets would not be expected to embrace an "ancestral" European form metaphorically compared to "chains," have all written villanelles—in some cases (Bishop's "One Art" and Dove's "Parsley" come to mind) utterly brilliant, stunning villanelles. And now, crowning its strangely successful rise through the twentieth century, the villanelle has begun to surface in postmodernist poetry anthologies: witness David Lehman's "First Offense" and John Yau's "Chinese Villanelle" in the Norton anthology of Postmodern American Poetry.

Some of the other well-known twentieth-century writers who have worked in the form include Julia Alvarez, W. H. Auden, Henri Coulette, Thomas Disch, Carol Ann Duffy, Stephen Dunn, Richard Eberhart, Roy Fuller, Beth Gysys, Rachel Hadas, Edward Harkness, William Harmon, Barbara Howes, Richard Hugo, Donald Justice, the aforementioned Kees, Carolyn Kizer, Derek Mahon, James Merrill, Robert Morgan, Eugene O'Neill, Stanley Plumly, Edwin Arlington Robinson, William Pitt Root, Judith Johnson Sherwin, Gilbert Sorrentino, Dylan Thomas, John Updike,
David Wagoner, and John Wain. Many of these writers work primarily in free verse; few have published a "traditional" ballade or sonnet.

The issue of how the villanelle's form came to be fixed increases in significance when one realizes that each of the above poets, whether consciously or unconsciously, has positioned him- or herself in relation to a perceived "tradition" when essaying the form. Whatever the particular stance toward that tradition, from reverence to rebellion, it takes courage to reject Allen Ginsberg's jibes at "the old library poets" associated with "antique literary form," or Robert Bly's pronouncement that:

As Whitman saw it, the rhymed metered poem is, in our consciousness, so tied to the feudal stratified society of England that such a metered poem refuses to merge well with the content of American experience. We therefore have no choice but to write free verse.

To write in a "conserved" tradition, many poets and critics presume, is to embrace conservative politics. New Formalist poet Dana Gioia has summarized some of the attacks made upon poetic form: that it is "artificial, elitist, retrogressive, right-wing, and (my favorite) un-American. . . . Obviously, for many writers the discussion of formal and free verse has become an encoded political debate." Not formal verse itself, but the centuries-old tradition behind it, which seems to embody racial, ethnic, gender, and class oppression, and/or to quash the modern values of "freedom" and "individualism," is what comes under attack. Paradoxically, that long-standing "tradition" is something formal verse writers often seize upon in their own defense, viewing it as something precious and shared by all that must be perpetuated or (not unlike an endangered species) be doomed to extinction. Whereas critics of formal verse tend to view the formal verse "tradition" as an abstract but oppressive entity, formal verse writers seem able to concretize their relationship to it— even when that
relationship is one of exclusion. Poet Molly Peacock explains how she had a feeling, early in life, that:

I would like to do what the giants of poetry did, Yeats and Keats and Donne with all their abba's and cddc's . . . Because I didn't know a couplet from a dactyl, those who did composed what seemed to me a secret society; feeling excluded from it, I wanted to join. 10

The same "personalization" of the relationship between self and tradition is visible in Marilyn Hacker's reasoning, considering the troubadour/trouvère traditions, that "who's to say that women didn't have as much to do with defining and refining the European forms which we still read, which some of us still write, as men did?"11 Such culturally circumscribed notions about the "meaning" of poetic form continue to shape the direction of English-language poetry; and, yet, we do not really understand how any one fixed form came to be "anointed" as such. This work will attempt to remedy that situation for the villanelle by investigating the precise steps of its passage from a musical to a written form, and the politics by which its initially irregular form came to be "fixed."

The broad outlines of villanelle "history" as it is presently understood were sketched in eleven books and essays published between 1872 and 1935. French poet Théodore de Banville, a villanelle writer himself, prescribed the first rules for the form in his 1872 prosodic handbook Petit traité de poesie française12 ["Little Treatise on French Poetry"]. A second French prosodist, Ferdinand de Gramont, followed up with a "villanelle" section in his 1876 manual Les vers français et leur prosodie13 ["French Verse and Its Prosody"]. He repeated Banville's rules, added one of his own, and provided historical background for the form.

Next came a pair of essays from a pair of English vers de société writers. The first was Edmund Gosse, whose "A Plea for Certain Exotic Forms of Verse" was published in the July 1877 issue of Cornhill Magazine.14 Gosse quoted his own
villanelle in that essay and added a rule of his own to those put forth by the French writers. The following year, Austin Dobson's essay "A Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse" accompanied the selection of French fixed-form poems in W. Davenport Adams's anthology _Latter Day Lyrics_.<sup>15</sup> Dobson made the villanelle out to be one of the most important Old French forms, further distorting its history.

Also in 1878, Joseph Boulmier published _Villanelles suivies de poésies en langage de XVe siècle_<sup>16</sup> ["Villanelles Followed by Poems in the Language of the Fifteenth Century"]. That volume contained forty of the poet's own villanelles plus, as its title went on to advertise, _une notice historique et critique sur la villanelle avec une villanelle technique_ ["An Historical and Critical Note on the Villanelle with Villanelle Instructions"]. Boulmier performed some original research on the villanelle and attempted to dispel certain myths about its background but, because his own poetry was not very good, his book soon passed out of print and was forgotten.

Not only creative writers, but professional literary historians then began to shape the villanelle's official history. George Saintsbury's 1882 _A Short History of French Literature_<sup>17</sup> pushed the chronology of the villanelle back to the Middle Ages. Three years later, Jacob M. Schipper published a German-language survey of the history of English versification containing several factual errors about the villanelle; it would be translated into English twenty-five years later.<sup>18</sup>

Next came J. Gleeson White's 1887 anthology _Ballades and Rondeaus, Chants Royal, Sestinas, Villanelles, &c. Selected, with a Chapter on the Various Forms._<sup>19</sup> His "villanelle" section recapitulated previous writers' conclusions about the form's early history while placing the recent efforts of French and English writers in historical perspective. Three pages were devoted to the villanelle in L. E. Kastner's 1903 _A History of French Versification_.<sup>20</sup> While Kastner printed a sixteenth-century villanelle quite different from the "fixed-form" model, he also perpetuated the errors made by several writers before him.
American Helen Cohen's 1922 *Lyric Forms from France: Their History and Their Use* also repeated past misinformation, but broke fresh ground in regard to the nineteenth century. She took the novel approach of contacting then-still-living writers such as Gosse, Dobson, and Andrew Lang and asking them to recount their memories of how the French fixed-forms revival in England developed. The last major contributor to the "database" upon which future accounts of villanelle rules and history would be based was Warner Forrest Patterson in *French Poetic Theory* (1935). Patterson didn't even get the villanelle's form right, leaving its final quatrain out in two places.

The nineteen-eighties brought a small flurry of articles and one book on the villanelle. Philip K. Jason, Manfred Pfister, and Ronald McFarland all performed excellent close readings of twentieth-century villanelles, but not even McFarland, author of the book-length *The Villanelle: The Evolution of a Poetic Form*, attempted to challenge the authority of the earlier sources on the villanelle's "rules" and "history."

While differing one from another in their scopes and illustrative details, the foregoing sources tend to be in general agreement on the major developments of villanelle history, which could be outlined as follows: The villanelle was a musical form in sixteenth-century Italy, but a poetic form in sixteenth-century France. Sixteenth-century French poet Jean Passerat wrote numerous villanelles, "cultivating" the form "A1bA2 abA1 abA2 abA1 abA2 abA1A2" at a time when the villanelle's form was irregular. In the seventeenth century, Pierre Richelet and other French prosodists supposedly "fixed" the form by basing their prescriptive rules for it upon Passerat's "Villanelle" (*J'ay perdu ma tourterelle*):

\[
\begin{align*}
J'ay \ perdu \ ma \ Tourterelle: \\
Est-ce point celle que j'oy? \\
Je veus aller après elle.
\end{align*}
\]
Tu regrettes ta femelle,  
Helas! aussi fai-je moy,  
J'ay perdu ma Tourterelle.

Si ton Amour est fidelle,  
Aussi est ferme ma foy,  
Je veus aller apres elle.

Ta plainte se renouvelle;  
Toujours plaindre je me voy:  
J'ay perdu ma Tourterelle.

En ne voyant plus la belle  
Plus rien de beau je ne voy:  
Je veus aller apres elle.

Mort, que tant de fois j'appelle,  
Pren ce qui se donne a toy:  
J'ay perdu ma Tourterelle,  
Je veus aller apres elle. 24

["I have lost my Turtledove.  
Can that not be her I hear?  
I am going after her.

You miss your female.  
Alas, I do mine, as well.  
I have lost my Turtledove.

If your Love is faithful,  
My faith is firm, as well.  
I am going after her.

Your moaning starts again;  
It's my duty to complain:  
I have lost my Turtledove.

In not seeing the beautiful one,  
I see nothing of beauty any more.  
I am going after her.

Death, whom many times I call,  
Take that which is given you:  
I have lost my Turtledove.  
I am going after her."] 25

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If one can believe the major villanelle sources, nothing of importance to villanelle scholarship occurred during the eighteenth century. The sources also maintain that, in the nineteenth century, the villanelle form was "revived" by French poets and taken up by English poets for the first time. Twentieth-century poets are seen to have rebelled against the rules of the traditional form by varying the refrain, adding or dropping stanzas, using slant or assonantal rhyme, incorporating novel or shocking subject matter, or applying other strategies that have made the form more contemporary.

Each of the above points is either false or extremely misleading, as the following chapters will demonstrate. Chapter 2 will situate the villanelle in relation to medieval choral dance-song form. Chapter 3 will discuss the form and poetics of the sixteenth-century Italian musical villanella. Next, the French Renaissance "poetic" villanelles will be compared to each other and to the musical examples for evidence of a common "form;" sixteenth-century allusions to the villanelle will also be examined. Chapter 5 will digress to sixteenth-century England, establishing that English as well as French poets were familiar with the villanelle or "Neapolitan" and revealing that Philip Sidney's experiments with writing villanella lyrics to existing tunes have been credited with changing the very sound of the English lyric line. The chapter that follows will disprove the commonly held belief that "seventeenth-century prosodists" fixed the villanelle's form according to the model of Jean Passerat's "Villanelle" (J'ay perdu ma tourterelle), relocating that event to the mid-eighteenth century. That chapter will also trace the progression of fixed-form villanelles and prose publications on the villanelle from the mid-nineteenth through early twentieth centuries, showing how a falsified "history" and "rules" for the fixed form were established. Chapter 7, on the twentieth century, will discuss the paradox by which a real, hundred-fifty-year-old fixed-form villanelle tradition has been erected upon the foundation of a false five-hundred-year-old one, and will suggest that formal
continuity between contemporary and Renaissance villanelles may reside outside the
"fixed" parameters of rhyme, meter, and stanza length. The thesis that will inform
the overall work is that the "history" of the villanelle as fixed form has obscured its
formal origins in oral-improvisatory choral dance: the lost, lyric, feminine
counterpart to oral-formulaic epic.

End Notes


Evolution of a Poetic Form (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press, 1987). In addition to the preceding references which address the villanelle as a form, there have been several articles on the function of the villanelle in James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.


25. Unless identified otherwise, all translations from French to English in this work are by the author.
CHAPTER 2: WORDS FOR TUNES AND TUNES FOR WORDS

This chapter will define the features that distinguish medieval lyric verse forms associated with or derived from oral-improvisatory choral-dance music from those associated with written text-based vocal music. It will also attempt to establish that female poet-performers of medieval choral-dance lyric enjoyed equal, if not slightly superior, status in relation to their male counterparts, and that the "recollection" of such lyrics entailed a process of oral-formulaic composition similar to that associated with the much lengthier epic poems.

As long as there has been western lyric verse—originally a poetic text sung, chanted, or recited to music, and now considered to be any relatively short, and normally subjective, poem that uses the sound as well as meaning of language to achieve its aesthetic effects—there have been two rival "schools" of lyric that differ in their philosophies of the proper relationship of text to music. According to musicologist James Winn, this function-based distinction can be traced back to the split between Greek "pagan" dance music and the music of the ancient Hebrew synagogue/early Christian church, with all of the resulting freight of connotation:

The song of the Synagogue and early Church was . . . the only cult music of antiquity that did not use dancing, instruments, and regular meter, three elements that have always been closely related both in the music of antiquity and in later Western music. In being free from these elements, psalmody was as unique musically as the rites of the Synagogue and the early Church were unique liturgically from the normal ancient and primitive cultic types such as animal sacrifice and orgiastic dancing. 2

Dance lyrics were generated to conform to a preexisting metrical scheme and to a tune established in the first stanza and repeated in each successive stanza, whereas Hebrew and Christian liturgical composers began with the sacred text and devised a unique musical treatment to express it. In medieval Europe, choral-dance music
versus Christian liturgical music or secular vocal music; in Renaissance Italy, the villanella versus the madrigal; and in twentieth-century America, formal verse versus free verse, can be viewed as manifestations of these opposed lyric archetypes. The poetic villanelle is descended from the musical villanella, which is in turn descended from the medieval choral-dance lyric.

From the tenth century, when the vocally accompanied round dance known as the carol in English; carole, karolle, caral, kyrielle, ronde, rondet, or rondel in French; rondellus in Latin; and ballata in Italian\(^3\) was first mentioned in written records, to the thirteenth century, when its form finally parted company with the dance but continued to retain many dance-derived features, the two poles of the choral-dance music versus vocal music antinomy were occupied by the secular round dance and Christian liturgical music. The medieval European Christian church veered back and forth between nervous tolerance of secular dance and periodic campaigns to eradicate it; in some cases, dance even seems to have been uneasily incorporated into the liturgy. Of course, the festivals and "holy day" eves at which choral dances were performed were directly linked to the liturgical calendar; and, even more ironically, dances were often held just outside or even inside the church itself.\(^4\) The tension between medieval carolers and clergy is perhaps best exemplified in the eleventh-century legend of the cursed carolers of Saxony, which has been recorded in several sources and languages. In the legend, a priest's daughter joins a group of carolers dancing outside a church in which a Christmas Eve service is being held. The priest curses the carolers, who find themselves unable to "break the circle or stop dancing for a whole year," until the following Christmas Eve.\(^5\) Ultimately, in the fifteenth century, the Franciscan clergy would co-opt the musical form of the carol as a vehicle for religious song; the Church's victory over secular choral dance is that today we associate the "carol" with Christian vocal music and not "pagan" dance.\(^6\)
English-carol scholar Richard Leighton Greene, drawing upon research by Joseph Bédier, describes the medieval round dance as consisting of:

a chain, open or closed, of male and female dancers, who moved to the accompaniment of the voice or (less frequently) of instruments. The movement was ordinarily three steps in measure to the left, followed by some kind of marking time in place. It was usual for the dancers to join hands, but gestures seem frequently to have been introduced which would require the clasp to be broken. The whole procedure was under the direction of a leader. It was the duty of this leader, coryphée, or Vorsänger, to sing the stanza of the song to which the carole was being danced. During the time of such singing the ring moved to the left. At the close of each stanza the entire company of dancers would respond with the refrain or burden of the song, dancing in place the while. Then, as the circle revolved again, the leader would sing the following stanza, and so on. Obviously the leader was the only one of the group who needed to know all the words of a song; the burden, being invariable or nearly so, could be quickly learned and easily remembered by the chorus. Some sort of cue in words would serve to notify the chorus of its time for beginning the burden. 7

As the dance leader/solo singer was tasked with remembering the words of the song, and as the leader was frequently a woman, it stands to reason that women bore much of the responsibility for the transmission, if not composition, of choral lyric verse. The chorus itself could be all-female or made up of alternating men and women. 8

The first medieval European secular songs to be committed to writing that were not intended to accompany choral dance or choral work activities 9 were composed by the troubadour poets of Occitania from about 1100 to 1300. Richard H. Hoppin points out that the troubadour poets, like most men of their time, attended church, and thus:

the predominant influence on [troubadour] melodic style must have been the music of the Church. The relationship is most obvious in settings of the rhymed poetry of hymns and versus, but in range, melodic direction, intervallic progressions, and cadential formulas, troubadour melodies scarcely differ from

16

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Gregorian chant in general. Moreover, a surprisingly large number of melodies adhere to the system of eight church modes. For the most part, the style is basically syllabic.

The different categories of vocal lyric composed by the troubadours (such as the *canso*, love song, or *tenso*, debate song) were named for their generic *content* and not their form; their stanzaic "forms," in fact, were continuously various and experimental. Although the troubadours did compose a few dance songs, fewer than forty *baladas* and *dansas* exist among the 2600 surviving troubadour lyrics; the rest are purely vocal lyrics. Interestingly, in light of the fact that women troubadour poets were extremely rare, while women poet-performers of choral dance lyric seem to have been quite common, those surviving *baladas* and *dansas* authored by male troubadours are "often put in the mouth of a woman," as Hoppin describes their phony female personas. Although the troubadours themselves did not compose many dance songs, their creations were sung in public by paid professional musicians known as *jongleurs* who—to please popular tastes—were forced to work dance tunes (not to mention juggling, acrobatics, and epic *chansons de geste*) into their acts as well.

The Old French trouvère poets, who followed the troubadours by about ninety years and were of course influenced by them, incorporated popular dance songs *directly* into their repertoires. They began by appending popular *refrains* (defined by John Stevens as "short snatches of courtly verse with tuneful melodies forming the material of dance song") to their own "new" lyrics, sometimes to jarring effect; but, by the mid-thirteenth century, they had progressed to composing their own refrains, more integrated in form and content with the stanzas preceding them, for dance-song forms including the vocally accompanied *rondet de carole* (also called *rondel* or *rondeau*) *ballette*, and *estampie*. The courtly *chanson* (love song) for which the trouvères are best known was, however—like its troubadour counterpart, the *canso*—a purely vocal music form. Approximately seventy-five
percent of the trouvère repertoire consisted of these standard chansons. But in between the two "poles" of "danced" dance music and purely vocal music, the trouvères also developed several "hybrid" genres that integrated the measured, popular refrain of the choral-dance-music tradition with the syllabic, courtly chanson: these included the chanson avec des refrains, chanson à refrain, pastourelle, aube, and reverdie. Like the troubadours, the trouvères ceased composing around the end of the thirteenth century.

Parallel with the phenomenon of the canso or chanson in troubadour and trouvère poetry was the canzone in Italian poetry, elevated to fame as a genre by Dante both in practice and in his essay De vulgari eloquentia ["Eloquence in the Vernacular"]. Dante elevated the canzone over other "poetic" forms not because it was divorced from music—it was, in fact, still sung—but because it was unsullied by the stain of dance.

I shall first say that it ought to be remembered that writers of poetry in the vernacular have composed their poems using many different forms, some writing canzoni, some ballate, some sonnets, and some using other illegitimate and irregular forms, as will be shown below. Of all these forms, however, I hold that the canzone form is far and away the most excellent; and so, if excellent things are worthy of the excellent, as was proved above, those subjects that are worthy of the most excellent vernacular are also worthy of the most excellent form, and in consequence, are to be treated in the canzone. That the canzone form is everything I have said can be shown using a number of arguments. First, that although everything composed in verse involves song, only canzoni have had that term allotted to them—which could not have happened without ancient authority. Further, everything that brings about unaided the purpose for which it was created is seen as more noble than that which requires outside help; and canzoni do everything that they need to do unaided, unlike ballate—for those need dancers, for whom they were written in the first place. It follows, therefore, that canzoni are to be deemed more noble than ballate; and, as a result, their form is
the most noble of all, since no one doubts that ballate excel sonnets in point of nobility of form. . . . 19

Dante's ballate are essentially the same as the trouvère poets' ballete. While Dante makes it clear that they are written to be danced, he includes them within the general category of "poetry in the vernacular," and even ranks them above sonnets (which require musical instruments in order to be performed) in "nobility of form." Roughly contemporary with Dante's essay (believed to have been written c. 1303 to 1305) is the late-thirteenth-century Catalan treatise De la doctrina de compondre dictatz ["On the Art of Composing Poems"] attributed to Jaiffre de Foixà. Its author lists the dança and estampida (dansa and estampie) among his seventeen types of poems-for-songs, together with such well-known "poetic" forms as the canso and lays. Alone among the seventeen forms, however, the dança and estampida are presented as requiring refrains—still directly linked to the dance or the dance-song tradition; furthermore, the author states that the dança is called that "because it is naturally sung while one is dancing or otherwise disporting oneself," while the estampida "takes more strength to sing or recite. . . than any other kind of song"—probably because it was danced rather vigorously. But the point to be made is that the trouvère poets, Dante, and the Catalan author of De la doctrina de compondre dictatz all considered dance-song forms still meant for dancing to be vernacular "poems" in the same general league with the chanson/canzone/canso and other forms from the vocal-music tradition.

After the thirteenth century, the "dance-song form" was no longer danced, although its form continued to influence a "line" of lyric poetry that opposed the line descended from the vocal-music form. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this dance-derived line would produce the dominant European lyric verse forms of rondeau, ballade, and virelai; but, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, the vocal-music-derived forms of chanson, sonnet, and madrigal would come to
prominence while the *formes fixes* all but died out. It is against this resurgence of vocal-lyric form that the *villanella alla napolitana* will arise, in sixteenth-century Italy, as an avatar of choral-dance-lyric form.

Without the physical presence of *dancers* as the obvious clue to tell dance lyric from vocal lyric after the thirteenth century, one has to look for more subtle points of difference. There are at least three. First, dance music was *measured* or *metrical*, while the rhythms of vocal music were *declamatory* or *free*; second, dance music was characterized by the presence of a *refrain*, while vocal music had no such exact repetition of the same text to the same music; and, third, dance lyrics appear to have been semi-improvised *in performance* to conform to a preexisting tune, while the melody of vocal music was composed especially for, or adapted to, a preexisting literary text. Dance lyrics appear to have been collective, collaborative, and multivocal in their process of composition—a process in which women seem to have participated equally with men; while vocal-music lyrics were normally the unique creation of a single (and male) creator—whether that creator be God (in the case of Hebrew psalmody) or a troubadour.

There is a functional *reason* behind each of the "poetic" features of a choral dance lyric. Meter is one example: dance music must, of necessity, have a regularly recurring rhythm—so that multiple pairs of feet can anticipate what to do next; but the rhythms of vocal music are "free," determined only by its *text*. Literary scholars of western lyric such as Paul Fussell and Robert Bridges tend to make much of the distinction between quantitative and accentual-syllabic meters; but, in terms of functionality, the distinction is irrelevant. Regardless of whether the distinction is based on duration or stress, the *only* type of music in the ancient and early medieval world that was metrical was music intended to accompany regularly recurrent bodily movement: primarily dance music, but also work songs, lullabies, and the religious *conductus* or "song accompanying a change of position by a liturgical celebrant."
Some literary scholars, of course, have recognized this. I. A. Richards asserts that "There can be little doubt that historically [metre] has been closely associated with dancing, and that the connections of the two still hold."27 "Greek verse-craft," Robert Graves has written, "is linked to the ecstatic beat of feet around a rough stone altar."28

*Grove's Dictionary of Music* informs us that the Greek word *prosoidia*, meaning "an accent given to one syllable over another," comes from the root words *pros* (in addition to) plus *oide* (song); the derivation is mirrored in the Latin equivalent *accentus*, from *ad* (to) plus *cantus* (song).29 In Greek, the "weak" beat is the *arsis*, from the root for "lifting," while the strong beat is the *thesis*, from the root for "lowering" or "laying/putting down"—and what is being lifted or lowered is the human *foot*, in the act of dance. Grove's cites Baccheios's *Catechism* on this account, which confirms that *arsis* is "[t]he time during which the foot is raised when we are going to take a step," while *thesis* is "[t]he time when it is on the ground."

The Romans, however ("perhaps because they thought much of recited poetry and little of dancing," suggests Grove's) reversed the meanings of *arsis* and *thesis*, thus helping to obscure the origins of poetic meter in dance song.30 *Trochee*, according to Grove's—a heavy beat followed by a weak beat—comes from the Greek for "tripping," while Webster's translates *trochaios* as "running"31—but, in either case, the metrical term is clearly related to the movement of the feet. Poet Graves adds the information that the iambic beat—the reverse of the trochee—was "named in honour of lasciviously hobbling Lambe," and that the spondee (two heavy beats) derived its name from the beverage drunk at funeral ceremonies where "the gloomy double-stamp of buskined mourners"32 was the ritual dance step.

In particular, medieval dance music was associated with triple meter, in which the time-units of the song are clustered in pulses of three. Triple meter was also called "perfect meter" because of its inevitable association, in the allegorical medieval
mind, with the Holy Trinity. Since one strong beat "equals" two weak beats, both iambic and trochaic poetic feet lend themselves to being sung in triple meter; however, the iambic foot's accent on the second musical beat gives it a somber "rising rhythm" that is much less suitable for dancing than the lively "falling rhythm" of the trochee, which is accented on the first beat. Trochaic meter is apparent in the lyrics to the twelfth-century English "Cuckoo Song," which possesses a refrain as well and which, says E. D. Mackerness, is either a dance song or "show[s] dance rhythms":

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Sumer is y-cumen in,
   Lude sing, cuccu!
Groweth sed and bloweth med
   And springth the wude nu.

   Sing, cuccu!
Awe bleteth after lamb,
   Lowth after calve cu;
Bulluc sterteth, bucke ferteth.
   Merie sing, cuccu!
   Cuccu, cuccu,
Wel singes thu, cuccu:
Ne swik thu never nu!

   Sing, cuccu, nu! Sing, cuccu!
   Sing, cuccu! Sing, cuccu, nu! 35
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At the beginning of the second millennium A.D. in western Europe, both the secular choral dance and the Christian plainsong had words sung to music in common, but their rhythmical bases were entirely different. The poetic rhythms of dance song lyrics conformed (more or less, like songs today) to the musical meter, which conformed to the regularly recurrent physical movements of the dance. But in plainsong, the words—because they were believed to have been inspired by God—were preeminent, and the music had to conform to them as best it could. Each syllable of the text had an equal note- (or "durational") value, and the "melody" of
the chant basically followed the pitch-accents and grammatical sense-units (colon, period, etc.) of the text being sung—with ornamental flourishes arising only at the end of a line of text, once the text had been given its due treatment.

Early music scholars clung to the belief that troubadour songs were sung to regular meters; however, subsequent research by Carl Appel, Hendrik van der Werf, Richard H. Hoppin, and other scholars has established that the rhythms of the music were determined by the text. Van der Werf asserts that "in troubadour and trouvère melodies... the text could flow freely, unhampered by extraneous requirements for accentuation or duration," and Giulio Cattin confirms van der Werf's position that:

most troubadour (and trouvère) songs were performed according to a 'free rhythm' fixed by the flow and meaning of the text. This could better be called 'declamatory rhythm', in the sense that these songs 'were sung, or recited, in the rhythm in which one might have declaimed the poem without music.'

Although "a precise means of indicating note values" had been available for some time, explains Hoppin, unmeasured notation continued to be used for troubadour lyrics, lending further support to this position.

The second "sign" by which we may recognize a dance- or dance-derived lyric form is the presence of a refrain: the same words sung to the same music. The division of round-dance lyrics into stanzas whose words changed alternating with refrains whose words did not change had its origins in functional necessity. First of all, in the absence of an instrumental "rhythm section," the measured refrain set the rhythm for the dancers' feet and for the soloist's singing. Bruce Pattison notes that, in Boccaccio's Decameron, storytelling sessions often end with "a dance, often a carole, in which the entire company sings to keep the rhythm of the dance." The type of refrain that occurs at the beginning of a song as well as at the end of each stanza, as is the case with the carol, is technically known as a burden; it is believed
that the burden may at one time have been voiced as a sort of "continuous undersong" while the soloist was vocalizing, but this early meaning did not persist past the thirteenth century.  

The choral refrain also functioned to give the soloist a rest in which to collect his or her thoughts.  

He or she had no written aid to memory; stumble on a phrase and the dancers, too, would stumble. It will be seen that the art of "improvising" lyrics for medieval dance was far more creative an act than reciting fixed text from memory: that "rest" between stanzas was as necessary to the mind as to the voice. That the relationship between singer and chorus—trading back and forth the task of keeping the lyrics going—was a dynamic, interactive one is further demonstrated by the presence of the "turn" (versus in Latin; volta in Italian; retour in French; and buelta in Spanish) that is common to all oral refrain songs, and not just the carol.  

It is quite likely that this sense of versus as the turn between lyric song segments (rather than the turn at the end of a line, which is a visual metaphor inappropriate to oral culture) has given us the term "verse" for a lyric poem.  

The turn is the last line, or lines, in the stanza proper, serving to link the stanza to the refrain. Poetically, the turn usually rhymes with the refrain, and musically, it provides a transition between two different strains of melody. During an actual dance performance, the turn functions to "cue" the chorus, through rhyme and a change in music, to get ready to sing their part. Sometimes the turn repeats the end-word or words of the refrain, as in the fourteenth-century lyric "Icham of Irlaunde," below. Greene explains that the first three lines are the burden (initial refrain), and that the next four are a stanza with the turn line "In Irlaunde" using an end-word from the burden to cue the refrain. "If the song was not danced to," writes Greene, "at least it could have been":

24
Icham of Irlaunde,
Ant of the holy lande
Of Irlaunde.

Gode sire, pray ich ðe
For of saynte charité,
Come ant daunce wyt me
In Irlaunde. 45

The medieval English lyric "Alison" has a regular refrain and not a burden, but it too shows a "turn" line with a rhyme connection to the stanza proper. The first indented line, below, is actually the last line of the stanza proper, but it rhymes with the refrain that follows:

Bitweene Merch and Averil
When spray biginneth to springe,
The litel fowl hath hire wil
On hire leod to singe.
Ich libbe in love-longinge
For semlokest of alle thinge.
Heo may me blisse bringe:
    Ich am in hire baundoun.
    An hendy hap ich habbe yhent,
    Ichoot from hevene it is me sent:
    From alle wommen my love is lent,
    And light on Alisoun. 46

Since only one person sang the stanza lyrics, there was no need for either words or melody to remain stable from performance to performance, whereas, since the entire company sang the refrain, it was necessary for the same words to be sung to the same music at the same time. The written record is consistent with this common-sense division into "transitory" stanzas and "stable" refrains. Robert Kehler observes that it is rare to find the lyrics to a medieval dance song written down, but refrains written out on their own are quite common. Stevens further believes that at least some refrains "enjoyed an independent existence" apart from any one particular song. N. J. van der Boogard calls the refrain "a 'parasite' in the biological sense" that seeks "to live in symbiosis with another literary genre—whether

25
the latter is sung, as the refrain is, or not." One can even find refrains being "quoted" in long narrative French poems of the thirteenth century: "the quotation of a rhythmical dance tune," writes Lawrence Earp, "was for many purposes more evocative than the extended quotation of a weighty and formal courtly chanson." The trouvere poets, as alluded to earlier, also "quoted" popular refrains "as tags at the end of stanzas. Robert Kehler explains that:

At first they clashed with the heavier, more sophisticated lines which preceded them, but gradually a compromise style was worked out: the trouveres learned how to take the stiffness out of their primary melodies and to invent their own "popular" refrains.

While stanza lyrics purport to be sung from the point of view of an "I," refrain lyrics are the impersonal "voice" of the collective. They may even consist of nonsense words: what is important is that they be simple, memorable, and suitable (in terms of their content) for utterance by a group. "Many carol-burdens," Greene explains, "embody expressions which served the Middle Ages as proverbs or bywords." Still other carol-burdens, writes Greene, allude to the singing group itself, underlining "the communal performance of the carols which remained even after they were dissociated from actual dancing." While refrains are boring to read, they were not boring to sing, or even for a bystander to hear. Paula Johnson explains that musical repetition becomes tiresome only when a segment of time or another musical "idea" has not intervened prior to the iteration. A broken phonograph record or a child practicing a musical instrument, Johnson continues, are rare examples of this kind of "annoying" musical repetition, but when a refrain occurs there has always been a lapse of time and an interpolation of different music. The reader can confirm this effect by listening to a modern refrain song such as the Beatles's "She Loves You" or "I Want to Hold Your Hand;" the refrain paradoxically seems fresh and full of energy each time it recurs.
Calvin Brown explains that music, like literature, is a *dynamic* artform: unfolding in time, and dependent upon the reader's memory; but since its tones, unlike literature's words, are nonreferential, it has to establish its own "vocabulary" of phrases or themes at the outset of a piece and then repeat them to convey a sense of development. Unlike the literary reader, Brown continues, the musical listener cannot readily recognize *inexact* repetition:

Repetition without variation is strictly limited in poetry by the fact that one remembers an idea even though the words in which it was embodied may have escaped the memory; hence the idea alone is usually sufficient for the further purposes of the work, and there is no need to repeat the exact wording until that has become established in the mind. . . . A speech or idea repeated in different words gives an impression of prolixity, but a musical theme "divided," augmented, diminished, transposed, reharmonized, reorchestrated, or varied in any of the almost infinite possible ways seems to be more of a new thing than a repetition. Even unchanged repetition is far more tolerable than in poetry because of the necessity for fixing the exact form (not merely the general idea) of a theme in the listener's mind, in order that he may follow its subsequent development. 54

Our very notion of stanzaic "form"—the repetition, in subsequent stanzas, of a rhyme scheme and metrical pattern established in the first stanza of a poem—is a holdover from the *musical* practice of repeating a melody with different words so that dancers can execute all of the steps of the dance. 55 Naturally, the second and subsequent sets of words have to "fit" the established note patterns. "In strophic form," writes Edward Doughtie, "the repeated music provides considerable formal security. There is a satisfying incremental quality when the returning melody brings new words, when the new comes wrapped in the familiar." 56 (Ironically, many free-verse poems of this century establish a "pattern" in the first stanza, and then dutifully follow it in subsequent stanzas; and the very practice of grouping lines into stanzas—even when
those stanzas are dissimilar—alludes to the "correspondence" of lyric poetic line to musical phrase, and of lyric poetic stanza to musical melody.)

Moving to the third of our distinctions—that dance lyrics seem to have been improvised in performance, rather than recalled from rote memory—we are entering the realm of theory rather than fact. Most poetry scholars have come to accept the Oral-Formulaic Theory of composition/transmission put forth by Milman Parry and Albert Lord in regard to oral epic. As succinctly defined by John Miles Foley, this is the theory that epic poets in oral cultures from Homeric Greece through 1930s Yugoslavia "composed anew each time they sang, utilizing a selection from a host of traditional formulas to fill in each critical slot in the overall sequence of thematic slots."57 While the scholars who have succeeded Parry and Lord have, like the theory's originators, focused almost exclusively on oral epic, several lesser-known studies in the field have turned up evidence that oral lyric was composed in the same "modular" manner as oral epic. At first, this may seem counterintuitive, as lyric "poems" of eight lines or so are certainly short enough to be memorized. But, as Lord has stressed, the very idea of "memorization" is culturally bound, predicated upon the conditions of print literacy and a written text.58 And the "Art of Memory" by which ancient Greek rhetoricians associated visual icons representing words or ideas with architectural locations was, according to Cicero, the invention of the lyric poet Simonides of Ceos.59

Parry himself asserted that "the same forces which created the poetic epic language of Homer created the poetic lyric language of Sappho and Alcaeus," although "the scant remains of these two poets do not allow us to show, as we can do for Homer, that their diction is formulaic and so oral and traditional." Parry did, however, locate research showing that elegiac poets Solon and Theognis repeated numerous phrases from Homer, the Homeric Hymns, and (Theognis only) Hesiod.60 Scholar Gregory Nagy agrees that Theognis and the other elegiac poets had to have
composed using formulas, and cites additional research performed by Pietro Giannini et al. in support of his position. Nagy also confirms the presence of formulas in Sappho's lyrics: "Sappho had at her disposal a tradition of inherited formulas which were parallel to the inherited meter of her verses. The rigid phraseological correspondences between her pentameter and the epic hexameter are due to parallel inheritance of related formulas from related meters." Still another scholar who found formulaic lines and phrases filling identical metrical positions in Sappho and Alcaeus was Jesper Svenbro.61

But, as Parry cautioned, the surviving corpus of Greek "lyric" poetry is too small to lend itself to systematic sampling. That is not, however, true for two genuine oral lyric traditions that survived into the nineteenth century, in the case of Serbo-Croatian (South Slavic) lyric songs, and the twentieth, in the case of Latvian dainas. Both of these bodies of lyric verse were considered "women's songs" within their cultures, as opposed to the male-dominated genre of epic. Within both oral lyric traditions, numerous examples of multiple versions of the "same" song have been captured and compared, enabling Lord to establish that the "song" itself consists of a "stable core" of lines and thematic elements, to which additional lines and "variables" (nouns and noun phrases, adjectives, adverbs, etc.) fitting metrical positions are then added.62 Using modern computer-assisted analysis but looking only for exact string repetition, researchers Vaira Vikis-Freibergs and Imants Freibergs concluded that their data on the dainas:

reinforce the tentative position that a heavily formulaic structure is typical of oral literature. Furthermore, this characteristic seems independent of the genre of literature in question, since our short, lyrical songs seem to be as formulaic as the long narrative epics analyzed earlier. 63

Another researcher, Lalita Lace Muizniece, looked at the subset of dainas on themes of death and burial, and reached the identical conclusion that they were oral-
formulaic compositions. For example, Lord quotes Muizniec as observing that the distich that can be translated as "Oh God, (my) head is aching,/ I shall not live long any more," introduces over thirty different dainas and their variants; and that the distich itself "can be broken down into three simpler formulas, which in turn can fill the appropriate slots in a large number of other songs."64

Also in modern times, at least a half-dozen researchers have noticed the prevalence of oral-formulaic half-lines, lines, and couplets in American blues music.65 The "country blues" songs recorded by ethnologists and "race record" companies in the early decades of this century are perfect examples of genuine musico-poetic lyric: as John Barnie describes them, they are non-narrative in structure, and "consist typically of a series of discrete stanzas which may collectively evoke a particular mood or experience. Such stanzas correspond more or less to the 'themes' of oral epic poetry." Similar to oral-formulaic Anglo-Saxon verse, the blues line is accentual in metrical scheme, with four to six strong stresses and a caesura in the middle; two of the strong stresses in each half-line, says Barnie, "generally correspond with the key words of the formula."66

Anecdotal evidence abounds as to the way in which those "country blues" lyrics were improvised in performance, rather than recalled from rote memory. As documented by Jeff Titon: "Some blues artists could never sing a song the same way twice, complained Lester Melrose, recording director for RCA Victor's Bluebird race series in the 1930s."67 Dennis Jarrett reports that "Harry Oster, for example, speaks of Willie B. Thomas as singing lyrics which 'took shape spontaneously as he was singing,' and adds: 'Later, although he was aware that he had produced an excellent song, he could not repeat it, but had to listen to the tape recording to find out what he had sung.'"68 Once blues songs began being recorded, they became more standardized;69 but even so, writes Barnie: "A close relationship exists between many blues, but it is not that of a copy (even an imperfectly remembered one) to its
Also, many country blues singers included memorized gospel or popular songs in their repertoires, along with orally composed blues—just as medieval jongleurs could work oral-formulaic dance tunes as well as fixed-text troubadour songs into theirs.

"Composing" and "writing" were two distinct activities in medieval Europe. Mary Carruthers explains that what we call "composition" had its equivalent in the medieval "ruminatory" mental processes of cognitatio and collectio: the would-be literary composer drew upon a mental store of information gleaned from previous texts and "reassembled" it, together with his own input, into a new whole. The resulting product need not be written down at all; it could just be committed to memory for later oral delivery. If it was written down, it would be done so with a crude stylus on wax tablets, or dictated to a scribe who would do the same. M. T. Clanchy explains that writing in the sense of inking words onto parchment was much more difficult in the Middle Ages than today, requiring considerable technical skill and training as well as specialized equipment. To prepare the parchment—an animal skin—for writing required:

the knife or razor for soaping it, the pumice for cleaning and smoothing it, and the boar or goat's tooth for polishing the surface to stop the ink running. Then there are the tools for ruling the lines—the stylus, the pencil, the straight ruler, the plumb line, and the awl for pricking holes to mark the beginnings of lines. Finally there is the writing equipment itself—the quill pens and penknife, the inkhorn, and the various coloured inks. . . . Writing was certainly seen as an act of endurance in which "the whole body labours." Paper, which was much easier to write on, did not come into usage until the fourteenth century.

Memory, as Carruthers has described it, was viewed in ancient and medieval times as the equivalent of our "genius" or "imagination" today. Texts, which were of course rare, were committed to memory using the "architectural mnemonic"
described by Cicero, Quintilian, and many medieval writers. With that technique the subject chooses a well-known physical location such as a house with rooms or a grid of city streets, which can be both mentally "walked through" and divided into loci ("places") such as the individual rooms or city blocks. Then he or she associates each item to be memorized with a visual image and mentally "places" that image in the appropriate compartment. Enormous quantities of information can be recalled this way, backwards as well as forwards; the same technique has been "discovered" by twentieth-century memory artists in Russia and Japan who knew nothing about the ancient/medieval system.76

However, as Carruthers goes on to explain, there were two very different medieval methods of committing texts to memory: ad verbum, or word-for-word, which was appropriate for texts such as Scripture or classical authors, and ad res, according to the "gist" or ideas of the text, to be recalled later using one's own words. Text memorized ad verbum was recited verbaliter, or word-for-word, while text memorized ad res was retained and delivered sententialiter, or "according to the sense-units." The ad verbum method of memorization was extremely time consuming, requiring that every single word be assigned a corresponding memory image. Furthermore, memorizing ad verbum was perceived as being more dangerous, because the memorizer could forget a word and stumble during oral delivery. Even the Aeneid, Carruthers points out, was quoted ad res rather than ad verbum in at least two medieval texts.77

Unlike, for example, troubadour and trouvère texts, medieval dance lyrics had no auctores or authorities behind them that would have made ad verbum memorization appropriate. Furthermore, their recollection took place under conditions of dance performance, with no margin for the pauses that could interrupt ad verbum recollection. Recollection of medieval dance lyrics ad res, with the aid of "commonplace" phrases to fill gaps in the line, as performed to the meter or rhythms
of a preexisting tune, may well have been the lyric equivalent of the oral-formulaic compository technique now associated with ancient epic.

The almost complete absence of written dance lyrics noted by Kehler is one of the strongest clues to their improvisational nature. Depictions of the medieval round dance abound in both literature and paintings: in fourteenth-century England alone, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, John Lydgate, and the Sir Gawain and the Green Knight author are among those who allude to it. The many condemnations of dance songs issued by medieval Christian clergy also testify to their popularity. Yet almost no "dance lyrics proper"—the "mutations" whose words change from stanza to stanza, as opposed to the fixed-text refrains—survive on paper, whereas written-out refrains (and fixed-text-based songs like troubadour and trouvère lyrics) are extremely common in the written record. It is thus not possible to systematically compare "texts" of dance songs to prove that they were oral-formulaic.

But circumstantial evidence certainly points to it. It is known, for example, that most of the professional singer-poets (and later, musicians) who provided dance accompaniment were both verbally and musically illiterate. Transmission, if not composition, of dance lyrics thus had to be oral. Furthermore, the singer-poets who performed dance lyrics were often one and the same with the minstrels and jongleurs who performed long narrative epics showing evidence of oral-formulaic composition. It takes no stretch of the imagination to believe that the same mental skills perfected for recollecting epic may have been employed for recollecting lyric.

A peripheral but tantalizing clue to the oral composition of medieval dance lyric is provided by Sylvia Huot in her analysis of the illustrations of Guillaume de Machaut's Le Remede de Fortune. She notes that, while an iconized scroll appears in every scene depicting trouvère composition and performance, the scene in which the protagonist sings a virelay for a circle of dancers is the only illustration that lacks a scroll. Huot considers the possibility that this could be of necessity, since the lover
can't join hands with the dancing ladies with a scroll in his hands. "The lack of a scroll is appropriate, though," she writes, "to the spontaneous oral performance, contrasting with the earlier scene where the lover read his lay aloud."  

Writing of the thirteenth-century dance song, Richard Hoppin is scornful of the "conventional formulas and clichés" that characterize those few dance lyrics that were written down:

Little is known about the texts from which thirteenth-century poets drew the refrains that they quoted so freely. Some may have come from narrative songs, especially the pastourelle, but most were apparently taken from dances or other songs of popular origin. Few of the complete texts from which these refrains came have been preserved. Those few suggest that perhaps we need not regret too much the loss of so many pieces from what must have been a much larger repertory. Neither the poetry nor the music of dance songs is particularly distinguished or distinctive. Conventional formulas and clichés abound in the texts, while the melodies tend to be simple, short, and highly repetitive. . . . Nevertheless, dance songs of the thirteenth century occupy an important historical position. From them came the more literary formes fixes (fixed forms) of later French poetry and song: the rondeau, the ballade, and the virelai.  

In the fixed forms that first emerge from medieval choral dance songs, as well, the initially "formulaic" quality of the lyrics will be an irritant to scholars with a literary as well as musical bent. Robert Kehler, for example, is bored by "the same time-honored rhymes and stock phrases" of early fifteenth-century rondeau texts:

The vast majority of the rondeau texts set polyphonically by Dufay and Binchois, both born ca. 1400, are of anonymous authorship and indifferent quality (fortunately, perhaps, for the sake of the music). Binchois, though, most likely because he knew something of the art of poetry himself, also chose to set to music at least one rondeau or ballade text from each of the three early fifteenth-century poets who even today are considered the best: Christine de Pisan, Alain Chartier and Charles d'Orléans. The poetic reputations of these three, however, are not based on these particular texts, which are
hardly distinguishable from the general run. What the fifteen-century public seems to have preferred is the comfortable familiarity of the traditional courtly vocabulary. The same time-honored rhymes and stock phrases could be recycled ad infinitum, provided they were put back each time in a slightly different, and of course pleasant, fashion [italics mine]. 82

Helen Cohen observes that, in medieval lyric, "the proverb as a line unit frequently offered a quick solution to what might otherwise have been a difficult rhyme problem."83 The bulk of English courtly lyrics from Chaucer to Wyatt—written in dance-song-derived forms such as the rondeau, balet,84 and virelai—have also been criticized for their use of "clichés":

The writers have what amounts to a genius for the stilted and colourless. Why is this? It is not merely that they are third-rate. They are third-rate in a special way. The courtly balet of this period seems to take a recognized language of love. The 'makers' have and use, it is obvious, a huge stock of phrases hallowed by use. . . . 'Can we doubt', Mr Mason asks, 'that if we had all the songs sung at court between Chaucer and Wyatt, we should be able to shew that every word and phrase used by Wyatt was a commonplace. . . ? 85

Here and in the Petrarchan sonnet, also known for its "courtly" language of stock poetic phrases, it is quite possible that we may be dealing with the traces of oral-formulaic lyric composition, in a time of transition to the written lyric.

Not only the text, but the music of dance-song lyric was highly improvisational: not at all "fixed" (a modern artifact of written musical notation and the tape recorder), but "re-collected" in performance in accordance with a general melodic contour filled out by a stock of conventional musical formulas. It is true that medieval melody in general (not just that of choral dance-song lyric, but that of fixed-text troubadour and trouvère lyric, as well) was far less stable than its modern counterpart. Timothy McGee employs the "filled-in outline" as a metaphor for it:

The point has been made by many scholars that the medieval concept of a melody was closer to that of a filled-in outline
than it was to something given an immutable form by its composer. . . .

An analysis of the variants shows that medieval musicians thought it necessary to retain specific structural elements and characteristic melodic motives of each composition but at the same time felt free to make both rhythmic and melodic alterations. A typical medieval performance was probably a personal version built around a composition's most essential elements, filled in with spontaneous embellishments and variations by the performer(s). 86

Even looking at the "opposite" of the choral dance-lyric composers—the troubadour artists, who set their own original poems to original music—we find, according to Hoppin, the "medieval practice of adapting old tunes to new texts—making contrapuncta, in other words." 87 The stress in the latter sentence should be on the word "adapting," as the new tune was never an exact "copy" of the old. It was as if the artist had a general idea of the old tune in mind, and then "improvised" a new tune over it: what Howard Mayer Brown calls "ad hoc formulation of a melody on the basis of a model." 88 This was especially true of the oldest (early twelfth century) troubadour lyrics to be musically notated—and, indeed, many scholars believe that troubadour and trouvère song originated as an oral-improvisational tradition, evolving to a written tradition by the second half of the thirteenth century, when the chansonniers were compiled. 89

Even in the later troubadour lyrics, when the "same" song by the same composer is musically notated by two different scribes, there are wide variations in the music, though not the words: "What a scribe wrote down," writes van der Werf, "was influenced by the manner in which the song was performed." In the case of one lyric by Gaucelm Faidit, the three different musical versions in manuscript differ so greatly that, as van der Werf states, "it seems impossible to determine whether or not they stem from one ancestor." 90 But, of course, the notion of one definitive version of a song from which others are "variations" belongs to print and not oral (or
transitional oral-print) culture. Looking at two different notated versions of *La
dousa voce* by Bernart de Ventadorn, David Fenwick Wilson finds variations
characteristic of "a mixed oral and written tradition":

The melodic contour is the same in each version, and both
versions clearly convey the same melody, but with many
obvious variants.

Greatest stability is apparent in the phrase beginnings,
precisely the elements that would be easiest to memorize and
recall. Much more variation occurs in matters of
ornamentation and the manner in which the text is fitted to the
music. Greatest difference occurs at phrase endings, where
varied melodic ornamentation often directs the melody toward
different cadence tones.

Troubadour music was disseminated by public
performance. If a song was appealing, others learned it and
performed it, or their version of it, elsewhere. A jongleur in
another town might remember the poem, but vary the melody,
either deliberately or due to a faulty memory; there existed no
absolute relationship between a poem and its musical setting.

It has also been shown that "stock melodic formulas" were associated with
other late-medieval musico-poetic genres. Writing of the twelfth- and thirteenth-
century French narrative *lais*, for example, Hoppin observes that:

The most obvious characteristic of the partially notated lais is
their use of a small number of melodic formulas for texts of
considerable length. A simple, generally syllabic style and the
recurrence of similar if not identical formulas in different lais
further contribute to the family resemblance displayed by all
members of the group. This recurrence of characteristic
formulas suggests that the partially notated lais drew on an
ancient fund of melody that could be adapted to various poetic
forms and modified at the discretion of the composer or
performer. Increasing the probability of this hypothesis is the
fact that the partially notated lais belong among the oldest
examples of the form and are anonymous except for two by
Ernoue de Gastinois.

The musical formulas for singing narrative *lais* had lyric counterparts, as well. The
"modi da cantar versi, manners of singing poetry"—also called *arie* (adjective form
-were, explains William F. Prizer, not tunes but "formulae, often untexted in the sources, for singing any text in a given poetic form." Claude Palisca calls them "the Renaissance counterparts of the Greek nomoi—in short, melodic formulas. The modo, like the nomos, was a melodic scheme that served the singer as a basis for the improvisation of a melody." They could be used to sing any sonnet, ottava rima, terza rima, etc., because each of those poetic forms adhered to the same line-syllable count and number of lines per stanza. The modi/arie were common in Dante's time—indeed, it is reputed that Ariosto revised some of the stanzas of the Orlando Furioso after hearing them sung by street musicians who were employing just such stock musical formulas. But they also survived into the sixteenth century, in the case of the musical formulas or schemas used to sing poetic forms such as the sonnet and canzone.

The improvisational elements that can be glimpsed even in the melodies of fixed-text troubadour lyrics, which are part of the "vocal lyric tradition" where the words precede the music, are the rule in dance lyrics. One compositional technique in particular is associated with the dance- or dance-derived lyric all the way through the Renaissance: that of retaining the bass part of a previously existing melody and improvising a new melodic line and "filler" parts for other voices (or accompanying musical instruments) over it. One might recognize this basic technique as the foundation of twentieth-century jazz improvisation, as well: Claude Palisca reminds us that "to suffer its original tune to disappear while the bass and harmonic scheme persevere has always been the fate of a song that submits itself to constant variation, even in the jazz of our own day." The "ground bass" or bottom part is known as the cantus firmus ("stable song"), while the process of improvising a new melody over the cantus firmus in performance is called discantus or discant, among other terms. Like the modern jazz musician, the choral dance soloist must have relied on a general knowledge of harmonic and compositional "principles" plus a storehouse of
musical formulas, phrases, and ornamental flourishes that could be recombined and inserted into pieces as required. Minstrels performing choral dance lyric and epic narrative were still common in fifteenth-century Europe, and this cantus firmus technique of musical composition is much in evidence in the notated dance songs surviving from that century. Writing of France in particular, Howard Mayer Brown tells us that:

it does at least seem likely that minstrels performed whatever narrative songs still survived in fifteenth-century France, that they played dance music of various kinds, including those dances improvised over cantus firmi, and that they incorporated into their repertory some at least of the monophonic chansons rustiques that I have already identified as a specifically urban repertory. . . . 101

In De vulgari eloquentia, Dante stresses that he is prescribing rules for vernacular poetry that normally "issues at the lips." He scorns "those fools. . . who, immune equally from art or learning, trusting in their native talent alone, burst into song [italics mine], using the highest subjects and the highest style"; once he has set down his instructions for vernacular poetry, then:

Shame on them, then, shame on those men ignorant [of agreement] who in the future dare to burst forth [italics mine] with canzoni! I would hold them in contempt as I would the blind, trying to distinguish colors. 102

Dante uses the term casus, in contrast with "art" or "rules," for the method by which "ignorant" poets compose their canzone. The term, editor Robert S. Haller explains, "means 'chance' or 'accident,' which, for the poet lacking an art to guide him, is the same as 'intuition.'"103 In the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, sortisatio—"a corrupted version of sortitio, from sortior, to cast lots, hence improvised music by chance,"104 as Ernest Ferand explains it—became one of the terms used for the cantus firmus technique of improvised discant. It seems likely that the two terms could be related, and that "lyric verse by chance" could have once been a widespread
method of composition. And if we are indeed peering at evidence of the oral-formulaic composition of early vernacular European lyric, then the "fixed poetic forms" which we now take to be the antitheses of "freedom" and "spontaneity" in poetic expression may, in fact, be our closest links to that lost and jazzlike lyric tradition—a tradition in which, as well, women participated on an equal footing with men.

End Notes


3. From the Greek word *chorus*, or "dance"; the Latin *rotundus*, "round"; and the Latin *ballare*, "to dance."


7. Greene, xlv-xlvi.


9. Wallace Fowlie, writing on "French Poetry" in Preminger and Brogan, eds., 428, reminds us that "Among the earliest secular Fr. lyric poems are the *chansons de toile* (12th c.?), short poems probably accompanying needlework and tapestry weaving."

11. Ibid., 274.

12. Ibid., 270, 273, 275.


17. The list of hybrid genres is from Stevens, *Words and Music*, 461-76. Paul Zumthor points out in *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, tr. by Philip Bennett (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 196, that the *chanson avec des refrains* has a different popular refrain after each stanza, while the *chanson à refrain* has the same refrain throughout.


21. Ibid., 110.

22. Ibid., 130-31.

23. The thirteenth century in Europe was the one in which written records suddenly proliferated and came to replace oral memory as the legal standard of proof in disputes; see M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell), 2-3. It is probable that the shift in lyric technology from oral dance lyric to written verse lyric was part of that same greater social shift from orality to literacy, whose causes are not yet understood.

24. I am using "refrain" here in its modern sense as an inclusive term for any section of text or of text and music that is repeated, although it originally pertained
only to a passage that was repeated within a "stanza proper" (as opposed to the carol "burden" that was a stanza in and of itself).


27. I. A. Richards, "Rhythm and Metre," The Structure of Verse, ed. Gross, 75.


30. Ibid., 476.


32. Graves, 24-25.


34. Mackerness, 42.


38. Hoppin, 302.


42. The "turn" between solo and choral singing parts in medieval verse forms is somewhat different from the "strophe" (literally, "turn") and "antistrophe" ("countertum") of Greek choral ode. The Greek chorus, not a soloist, chanted both strophe and antistrophe; strophe and antistrophe were identical in metrical structure, and the change from strophe to antistrophe marked a reversal in the direction of dance movement. See Ernst Haüblein and T. V. F. Brogan, "Strophe," 1215, and Roger A. Hornsby and T. V. F. Brogan, "Antistrophe," 79, in Preminger and Brogan, eds.

43. Dronke, 191; Pattison, 81.

44. Pattison, 81.

45. Greene, lii.


47. Kehler, 42.


51. Kehler, 42.

52. Greene, cbxviii-clxx.


54. C. Brown, 10, 111.


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58. Foley, 52.


61. Ibid., 64-66.

62. Ibid., 22-62.

63. Ibid., 28.

64. Ibid., 29.

65. They include John Barnie, William Ferris, Jr., John Fahey, Jeff Titon, Michael Taft, Dennis Jarrett, and David Evans.


70. Barnie, 39.

71. Ibid., 48.

72. Clanchy, 126.

74. Clanchy, 116.

75. Ibid., 125.

76. Carruthers, 71-78.

77. Ibid., 87-90.


80. Huot, 256.

81. Hoppin, 296.

82. Kehler, 46-47.


84. Not the narrative English "ballad," but the *ballet* (Dante's *ballata*), a three-stanza dance lyric with a refrain that was composed prior to the mid-thirteenth century. Its form evolved into that of the "fixed-form" *ballade* (Cohen, 9).


87. Hoppin, 282.


90. van der Werf, 69.


95. Palisca, 353.


100. This can also be the tenor part, when the soprano has the melody, but initially the melody was in the tenor voice.


103. Ibid., 38.

CHAPTER 3: THE VILLANELLA IN ITALY

This chapter will describe the musical and poetic features of the sixteenth-century Italian musical villanella and compare them to those of the medieval choral-dance lyric. The villanella's musical and poetic styles will also be compared and contrasted with those of the madrigal, which was the musical genre most popular with composers and consumers at the time of the villanella's first appearance in print. As Alfred Einstein—cousin of Albert, and the leading scholar of the Italian madrigal—has written, the villanella "belongs to the madrigal as the ivy to oak."¹

The first madrigals appeared in manuscript form in Rome and Florence in the mid-1520s. They were not, as we think of music today, for the benefit of "listeners," but rather for the eyes and ears of the four or five part-singers who would perform them at home for their own entertainment.² At the time of their appearance, musical literacy was still relatively rare, particularly outside of aristocratic circles, but technical advances in the printing of musical notation combined with the explosive growth of printing in general would help bring printed madrigal collections to a wide public audience by the 1530s and 1540s. More and more western Europeans, including the new middle classes, began to learn how to "break the code" of musical notation and so become performers themselves. As James Haar has noted: "the madrigal in print offered the public some access to music associated with aristocratic tastes; the element of snobbery. . . surely contributed to the madrigal's success."³

Like medieval Christian liturgical music, troubadour songs, the vast majority of trouvère songs, and the roughly contemporary Parisian chanson, the madrigal was a musical composition in the service of an esteemed ("sacred" or "literary") text that predated it in time. The centrality of text is apparent in virtually every point that music scholar Gustave Reese makes about the key stylistic features of the madrigal:

In short, the 16th-century madrigal may be said to have the following traits: (1) music composed to set a text of literary
quality rather than a text written merely to be set to music (poesia per musica): (2) music intended to express the content of the text; (3) as a result of this, a non-strophic (through-composed) form, on the principle that the same music will not suffice to set the varying content of successive stanzas, the actual form differing from piece to piece and being suggested even more by the content than by the structure of the poem; (4) individual voices that are equal and all engaged in precise and beautiful declamation of the text (as distinguished from the voices in a frottola, with its assignment of the most prominent role to the superius); (5) a texture that may be polyphonic or chordal (and syllabic) and that, when it uses imitation, does so because this enhances the rhythmic independence of the voices or illustrates the text rather than because it is intrinsic to the madrigal. 4

Madrigal texts, explains Ruth DeFord, could be "either the traditional Italian literary forms (especially the sonnet, canzone, ballata, sestina, ottava rima, and terza rima) or free forms known as 'madrigals' in the poetic sense." The average "madrigal poem proper" was about eight to ten lines in length. Even when a strophic poem such as a sestina was used as a text, normally only the first stanza was borrowed. This was at least partly because, since a madrigal was vocalized by four or five voices starting and stopping, repeating verbal phrases to new music, imitating each other for short passages, etc., it took much longer to sing one than to read one. Einstein additionally believes that the madrigal text had to be short for musical reasons: since the music relied so heavily on the text for its form, it could not "generate [the] formal contrasts" necessary to be interesting as music for very long. In contrast to the musico-poetic forms derived from dance song, madrigal poems were not strophic and did not possess refrains.

Nothing about the madrigal poem's form was "fixed." Just as the number of lines in a poem could vary, the rhyme scheme did not have to follow any preset pattern. Poetic lines were normally either seven or eleven syllables in length, but the seven- and eleven-syllable lines were generally mixed within the same poem, again according to no particular principle. The end-rhyme was feminine (i.e., on two
syllables rather than one), but this was because the Italian language places stress on the penultimate syllable of a word, not according to the dictates of poetic "convention," as all-feminine rhyme would be in English or French poetry. In essence, madrigal texts were to the musico-poetic lyric tradition of the sixteenth century what "free verse" has been to the written lyric tradition of the twentieth. In his De lla volgar lingua (1525), Cardinal Pietro Bembo explains that:

Free are such poems as are not bound either to a set number of lines or to a prescribed rhyme scheme; but each forms them as he thinks best; they are generally called madrigals. 8

In tone, madrigal texts were "almost always sentimental, elegiac, and serious," as Einstein has put it. 9 Like Petrarchan lyric, they dealt with themes of courtly love--and, indeed, the popularity of the madrigal helped to revive Petrarch's literary reputation one hundred fifty years after his death. 10 While the texts themselves were serious, it seems that contemporary observers could look upon them with a bemused or sarcastic eye. Einstein quotes a passage from Giraldi Cinthio's Hecatommithi (1565) in which two youths make fun of a madrigal they have just heard:

it is a queer thing that our young people are complaining so much of Cupid, if their songs may be trusted. The one lives dying; the other dies living; a third is burning in ice; a fourth is ice on fire; a fifth yells in silence; and a sixth is silently yelling; things impossible in nature are shown in them as possible. . . 11

The following madrigal text of Baldissera Donato, one of the leading Italian madrigal composers, illustrates all of the poetic features that have been discussed thus far; and, fortunately for our purposes, it was translated into English in a "literary" version faithful to the original's form in 1588. In the translation, as in the original, one can observe the single stanza with a length (nine lines) that is about average, the random mixture of seven- and eleven-syllable lines, the feminine rhyme
endings, the rhyme scheme (abccbddee) that follows no "official" pattern for the
genre, and the Petrarchan motif of the spurned lover. A modernized English version
follows the sixteenth-century English translation:

Dolor se'l mio dolor altri no'l erede
Alza tanto la voce
Ch'alm en quella spietat'alma crudele
Oda le mie querel e
E quando det'haurai quel che piu nuoce
Dile c'hom ai fra tanti dolor miei
Io contento sarei
Se quant'è la mia doglia
Tanto d'amor in lei fosse la voglia. 12

O griefe if yet my griefe, be not beleved,
Cry with thy voice outstretched,
That hir dispightfull heart & eares disdayning,
May heare my iust complainyng.
And when thou hast hir told my state most wretched,
Tell hir, that though my hart be thus tormented,
I could bee well contented,
If shee that now doth grieve mee,
Had but the least desire, once to relieve mee. 13

O grief, if yet my grief be not believed,
Cry with thy voice outstretched,
That her despiteful heart, and ears disdaining,
May hear my just complaining.
And when thou hast her told my state most wretched,
Tell her, that though my heart be thus tormented,
I could be well contented,
If she that now doth grieve me
Had but the least desire once to relieve me. 14

The Donato madrigal, like virtually all madrigal lyrics, concludes with an
epigrammatic statement or "point," as Einstein calls it. 15 This will prove to be
another "point" of difference between madrigal and villanel la texts.

The madrigal's musical rhythms were "declamatory," i.e., designed to mimic
the effects of the same text being read aloud. This style had its origins in the music
of Hebrew liturgy, Gregorian chant, and troubadour/trouvère songs. The Parisian
chanson, which arose around the turn of the sixteenth century, was also a lyric genre "in which musical rhythm was determined by prosody, or the text's rhythm in a union of tone and text in which the poetry dominated," according to Jean-Pierre Barricelli; and historian François Lesure asserts that the chanson "invaded" Italy in the first third of the century, helping to shape the emergent madrigal.

Most madrigals were in 4/2 time, meaning that there were four beats to a musical measure and that each beat had the duration of a half-note. Even or "dupe" rhythms are, as we may recall, not suitable to be danced to like "triple" rhythms, and the half-note is a very slow unit of musical time, suitable for the careful enunciation/recitation of text. Within this broad framework of time signature, DeFord explains, individual madrigal note groupings followed the text rhythms even more closely:

The musical style of the mid-sixteenth century madrigal corresponded to the literary character of its text. . . . the rhythm normally made use of a wide range of note values, alternating or combining passages moving predominantly in minims [half notes] with others moving predominantly in semiminims [quarter notes]. The rhythm followed the natural declamation of the text, often quite independently of the metrical organization suggested by the mensuration. Occasional melismas [multiple notes sung on just one syllable of a word] added further flexibility to the rhythm of the declamation. 19

Along with the historically precedent notion that music could follow the rhythms of speech, a concept entirely new to western music was finding its first applications to the madrigal and some contemporary church compositions: that music could also express the content of the text. Don Nicola Vicentino, among other sixteenth-century writers, describes this new musical philosophy in a 1555 treatise:

for music written to words is written for no other purpose than to express the sense, the passions, and the affections of the words through harmony; thus if the words speak of
modesty, in the composition one will proceed modestly, and not wildly; if they speak of gaiety, one will not write sad music, and if of sadness, one will not write gay music; when they are bitter, one will not make them sweet, and when they are sweet, one will not accompany them otherwise, lest they appear at odds with their sense; when they speak of swiftness, the music will not be sluggish or slow; when they speak of standing still, the music will not run; . . . when the composer wishes to write something sad, slow movement and the minor consonances will serve; when he wishes to write something gay, the major consonances and swift movement will be most suitable. . . .

In addition to observing such "generalities" of musical text-matching, madrigal composers also employed specific "word painting" techniques such as a high or low pitch, as applicable, for the word "high" or "low"; a rapid series of notes for the word "running" or "flight"; a suitable musical correlative for a reference to laughing, crying, or sighing, such as a rising and falling minor second for a sob; onomatopoeic imitation of the sound of a drum or trumpet, when mentioned in the text; or a change from duple to triple time when the word "change" or the phrase "new time" appeared. The words "one" or "alone," "two," "together," etc., were often illustrated by having the corresponding number of vocal parts sing them. Petrarchan oxymoron—situations in which the "speaker" of a poem experiences two conflicting ideas or emotions at the same time—could be dramatically expressed by having two parts sing the antithetical passages at the same time; i.e., "my life/my death." Verbs such as "to disappear," "to die," or "to become extinct" were mimicked by having the voice part(s) break off suddenly. And, of course, whenever an Italian word that was a homonym for the name of a musical tone cropped up, such as sol ("alone") or mi fa ("it makes me"), it would be set to the appropriate note on the scale.

 Stranger even than word painting was the phenomenon of "eye music": features of the musical composition that were apparent to the eyes of the singer.
reading the score, but not necessarily to his or her ears. Words such as "day" or "light," for example, would be set to white notes (half, whole, and double whole notes, called minims, semibreves, and breves), while "darkness," "blindness," "night," "death," and "color" required black notes (quarter notes, called semiminims). Words such as "day" or "light," for example, would be set to white notes (half, whole, and double whole notes, called minims, semibreves, and breves), while "darkness," "blindness," "night," "death," and "color" required black notes (quarter notes, called semiminims).25 Boxes such as "day" or "light," for example, would be set to white notes (half, whole, and double whole notes, called minims, semibreves, and breves), while "darkness," "blindness," "night," "death," and "color" required black notes (quarter notes, called semiminims).25

"Eyes" or "pearls" were often depicted with (round, white) whole notes; and the composer Monteverdi, Einstein tells us, went so far as to outline an acanthus leaf using musical notes.26 John Stevens describes a compositional feat that could be both heard and seen at the same time: setting the word "strained," as describing Christ on the cross, in long notes followed by rests in all of the voices, so that both the "long shape" on the page and the drawn-out sound emphasized the plight of a body dangling from nails.27 The new pastime of private reading made possible by the mass production of affordable texts, and the metaphor of a complex text yielding additional meanings upon close or multiple reading(s), was of course behind this phenomenon that made no "musical" sense whatsoever: "complexity itself," writes Martha Feldman, "became a primary desideratum in the musical projection of vernacular poetry."28 It would be only a short hop from this kind of madrigal to the seventeenth-century English lyric: intellectual, concealing hidden meanings, and sometimes even featuring musicless "eye music"; e.g., the visual puns in George Herbert's "Easter Wings" and other poems from The Temple.

Madrigals were written to be sung by four to six voices, each of which was equal in importance.29 Their music was almost always polyphonic in texture, meaning that each part sang an independent melody (vs. homophony, in which the harmony is chordal)—and this vocal style was considered to be "sophisticated," vs. the homophonic style that seemed to mimic the solo voice and simple instrumental accompaniment of popular "improvisatory" musicians. It often was not even possible for a listener to make out the words of a madrigal being sung—but the music was for the benefit of its performers, who had the printed lyrics in front of them, and not for
the benefit of an outside "audience." Unlike choral dance-derived music, which repeated melodic phrases within the same stanza, and then repeated the whole stanza's melody verbatim for the next stanza, alternating with a refrain that repeated both melody and words—madrigals were "through-composed," meaning that their music unfolded without repetition from beginning to end (occasionally, however, the last line or two might be repeated). Even when a poem with multiple strophes was borrowed for a madrigal text, the composer usually set each stanza to new music.30

Both musically and poetically, the madrigal "is artificial in every sense of the term: in its origin, in its practice, and as a work of art," writes the leading scholar of it.31 Einstein finds it strange that a genre that purports to express the feelings of one individual was sung by a group of polyphonic voices. But artifice, says Einstein, is what patrons and consumers demanded:

In general, the sixteenth century still rejects raw expression, the barbaric cry, not only in the representative music of the church but also in the madrigal. Otherwise it would not have clung so long to a "neutral" instrument like the polyphonic madrigal for the expression of the most personal feelings. In general it avoids real emotional depth. It does not go beyond the sentimental and elegiac and prefers to retain the mask of self-representation and self-reflection. The composer writes for the patron or the consumer, and the consumer wishes to see himself in a fashionable, conventional, "ideal" portrait. The formalistic, illusory side of this art is seldom questioned.32

The madrigal was the logical outgrowth of a century that was elevating words in importance while seeking to banish instrumental music as if it were the medieval devil's own fiddle. "Words," quips Edward Doughtie, "become an early preoccupation of the words that soon come pouring off the presses."33 Not only printing and the parallel growth in literacy rates throughout western Europe, but also the Protestant Reformation that was itself made possible by the development and commercialization of printing, conspired to "sacramentalize" written text while
demonizing the kind of "popular" or "instrumental" music that was associated with
dance—and, thus, with the body. The birth of the Protestant movement in 1517 very
nearly coincided with the birth of the madrigal. Martin Luther, a composer himself,
wrote many of the short, simple hymns that were to be sung, in the vernacular, by the
whole congregation of worshipers—as opposed to the Catholic Church's professional
choir, which was made up of musically trained monks or secular clergy and
professional part singers, vocalizing in Latin.\textsuperscript{34} No doubt because he was a musician
himself, however, Luther could not bring himself to dispense altogether with chant
and polyphony.\textsuperscript{35} The 1520s, decade of the madrigal's rise, saw Ulrich Zwingli
demolishing church organs in Zurich to silence their "profane" sound.\textsuperscript{36} John Calvin
and Calvinism banned the playing of musical instruments with their congregationally
sung Psalms.\textsuperscript{37} The dissolution of the English monasteries in the late 1530s meant,
as well, the destruction of church organs and the dispersal of professional musicians
who had been in the Church's employ. In 1547, King Edward VI ordered the
burning of sheet music and missals.\textsuperscript{38} The Puritans, not surprisingly, recoiled from
music because of its historical associations with dance; even the concept of voices
joining in chorus was offensive to them, because it replaced the individual's \textit{personal}
approach to Scripture with a "set form of praise."\textsuperscript{39}

These antimusical trends reverberated back onto the Roman Catholic Church
itself: the Council of Trent (1545-1563) came out against musical settings of sacred
texts that made the words more difficult to understand.\textsuperscript{40} Even the early Jesuits
sought to banish music from their Masses, ostensibly because they were too busy to
concern themselves with it: the original \textit{Five Chapters} that laid the foundation for
the Society of Jesus in 1539 stated that Jesuit priests:

[were] obliged to recite the canonical Hours according to the
rite of the church, not however in choir, lest they be impeded
in the works of charity to which we have dedicated ourselves.

55
Therefore, they will not use the organ or singing of mass and other sacred ceremonies. 41

Literature scholars seem to take at face value the assertion that sixteenth-century European artists sought to "reunite" the twin arts of poetry and music that had been separated since the fourteenth century, but the truth is more complex. The fourteenth century marked the point at which polyphonic musical settings of "courtly" poetry became so complex as to require the skills of a composer with more musical training than the average poet possessed.42 Eustache Deschamps refers to the change in his 1392 L'art de dictier, calling polyphony musique artificielle.43 The troubadours and trouvères had set their own lyrics to music—but, by the time of poet/composer Guillaume de Machaut's death in 1377, "hustling" a composer to set his or her lyrics to music had become, if anything, more difficult for the average poet than hustling a literary patron.44 Howard Kalwies furnishes some statistics showing why it was so critical for a French Renaissance poet to attract composers:

We all know that the average edition of books during the Renaissance was approximately 400-600 copies per press run. Pierre Attaingnant, the first printer of music in Paris, issued over a period of only six years more than fifty collections of three- and four-part music, with an estimated circulation of about 60,000 copies. Attaingnant alone published some 175 of the 370 composers working in Europe, and he was responsible for printing more than 175,000 copies of music books. Daniel Hearz estimates that several million music books circulated throughout Europe during the Renaissance. It is in no way academic when we state that the acclaim of any poet depended on his inclusion in the musical collections of his time. 45

What was true for France was true for Italy, as well: in 1504 Vincenzo Calmeta, the biographer of the famous late-fifteenth-century poet-musician Serafino Aquilano, claimed that getting a poem sung by a citaredo (vernacular singer/lutenist who performed at courts and academies throughout Italy) was just as important as getting published in print:
Another new way has been found, besides the printer, by which the poems, especially those in the vernacular tongue, can be brought to [public] light; for, such a profession [i.e., the poet's] being much appreciated in our day, many citaredi have arisen, who, taking advantage of the works of a few poets, make such works known in all the courts. 46

Both Kalwies and François Lesure describe the ways in which sixteenth-century French poets would try to "court" composers—sometimes even compromising the aesthetic quality of their work. Kalwies explains how poets gravitated toward shorter lyric forms and also alternated masculine and feminine line endings in hopes of appealing to composers; Lesure adds that "they made advances to composers, celebrating them in poems written expressly for them"—just as they did their literary patrons—and notes that they would sometimes misclassify their poems on purpose:

"we have seen many other poets calling poems chansons which were in fact rondeaux or simple four-line stanzas. They did so in the hope that their poetry, which otherwise would have enjoyed but limited popularity within the circles of literary men at court, would be sung by a thousand lips. 48"

One can assume that similar pressures were being felt by poets in Italy and England, as well.

"Just as the vocal-music forms of the troubadour and trouvère poets had dominated twelfth- and thirteenth-century western European lyric, the choral-dance-derived forms of rondeau, ballade, and virelai (whose formally identical counterparts were the English "roundel" and "ballet," Italian ballata, Spanish villancico, and Arab zajal) had swept in as if by Hegelian "thesis/antithesis" to dominate the secular lyric verse of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Although these forms were (with a few exceptions) no longer danced, they retained as purely structural traits many features that had served functional purposes in the round dance of the previous century. The alternation of changing-text stanzas with fixed-text refrains, for example, hearkened back to the alternation of singing roles by"
soloist and chorus. The "turn" line or lines between stanza and refrain that usually rhymed with the refrain, to let the dancers know to get ready to sing, was retained as a musical and poetic requirement, although there was no longer any practical reason for it. Even the symmetrically shaped stanzas whose new texts were sung to the melody repeated from the first stanza had once served the purpose of prolonging the music so that all dance steps could be executed— but the necessity behind that and other dance-derived features was fast receding into historical memory.

One dance-song feature that was not retained was regular meter: the new "fixed form" lyrics were, like the songs of the vocal-lyric tradition, predominantly isosyllabic and polyphonic. And, once poets and scribes with no musical training began writing and recording rondeaux, ballades, and virelais, they also began emending their textual forms in ways that made no musical sense whatsoever. Now as in the past, the average nonmusician, when faced with a refrain line that has to be copied by hand or typeset three or more times verbatim, will find a way to abbreviate it—and, in the Middle Ages (as discussed in Chapter 2), writing was a much more laborious task than it is today.

The ballade, for example, was initially a three-stanza dance song with a refrain of several lines. During the fourteenth century, the refrain shriveled to one line. Because, at the medieval "poetry slams" known as puyss, it was conventional for a performer to address his patron, the ballade also picked up a four-line "envoi" at the end which not only couldn't have been danced gracefully, were the form still danced, but also upset the musical balance and symmetry of the piece as a whole—and it was still being sung. The rondeau also suffered at the hands of nonmusicians. Christine de Pisan introduced the convention of repeating half of the rondeau refrain, rather than all of it, after the second stanza. In doing so, however, Robert Kehler explains:
[de Pisan] made the cleanest break with the musical tradition of the rondeau. By writing texts in which, logically, only the first line of the refrain should be repeated... she greatly increased the relative importance of the unrepeated lines, at the same time rendering the poem musically unfit. In the rondeau quatrain, for example, the four lines of music—one for each of the four verses of the ABBA refrain—all naturally end with some sort of cadence, but it is only the fourth and final cadence which is meant to be conclusive. Ending the piece on the first refrain line, as many of Christine's rondeaux would necessitate, makes no musical sense whatsoever. 53

After de Pisan, the portion of the rondeau's refrain that was repeated shrank even more, sometimes to just a word or phrase. Scribal abbreviations, which subsequent readers did not understand, are thought to be the reason for the shrinkage. 54

But even as these developments were taking place in the "courtly" lyric, the traditional improvisatory poet-musician was still performing throughout Europe. It was also still possible to sing any fixed-form poem to the tune of any other poem in the same form. Since the number of lines and the syllable count per line were the same, and since music had not yet developed the habit of "expressing" the content of the text, as it would with the madrigal, one ballade, rondeau, or virelai size fit all—although the consciousness of auteurship and originality that seem to go hand-in-hand with literacy caused poets to seek out unique musical treatments of their unique literary creations.

Even epic poet-musicians reciting long poems to the accompaniment of a harp—many of them as blind as Homer—were still common around the turn of the sixteenth century. John Stevens mentions that harpers "blynde Dicke" and "blynde More," who "probably sang old adventures," were part of the court of Henry VIII. 55 "More" is identifiable as William Moore (1492-1565). English poet and musician Thomas Whythorne, who will be discussed in Chapter 5, praises "mr Moor be excellent Harper" in his autobiography, and mentions having transcribed verses by him for his employer 56—probably with musical notation, as Whythorne's employer
was a literary man fully capable of transcribing mere poetic lyrics himself. Gustave Reese quotes from Robert Laneham's eyewitness account of a harper's entertaining Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth Castle in 1575:

we find a lengthy description of an "auncient Menstrell" with "hiz harp... dependaunt before him," who, "after a littl warbling on hiz harp for a prelude, came forth with a sollum song," a ballad of King Arthur, As it befell upon a Penticost day. 57

Philip Sidney's boyhood tutor gives a touching account of his young charge's attraction to, and kindness toward, a blind poet-harper to whom he gave coins. Even at the age of twelve, it seems that Sidney recognized his kinship with that bardic tradition. In adulthood as well, Frank Fabry tells us, Sidney "recalls being greatly moved by a blind crowder playing 'The Ballad of Chevy Chase.'" 58

George Puttenham's The Arte of English Poesie, written about 1569, gives a lengthy account of the presence of oral-tradition poet-musicians in his contemporary England. What is particularly interesting, for our purposes, is that Puttenham links the music of "carols and rounds" (refrain dance song) with that of the oral romance—lending further evidentiary support to an oral-formulaic compositional link between them:

so on the other side doth the over busie and too speedy returne of one manner of tune, too much annoy & as it were glut the eare, unlesse it be in small & popular Musickes song by these Cantabanqui upon benches and barrels heads where they have none other audience than boys or countrey fellowes that passe by them in the streete, or else by blind harpers or such like taverne minstrels that give a fit of mirth for a grout, & their matters being for the most part stories of old time, as the tale of Sir Topas, the reporter of Bevis of Southampton, Guy of Warwicke, Adam Bell, and Clymne of the Clough & such other old Romances or historicall rimes, made purposely for recreation of the comon people at Christmassse diners & brideales, and in tavernes & alehouses and such other places of base resort, also they be used in Carols and rounds and such light or lascivious Poemes, which are commonly more
commodiously uttered by these buffons or vices in playes than
by any other person. 59

At the end of the fifteenth century and beginning of the sixteenth, states John
Stevens, "the minstrel was still an everyday figure in English life."60

Italy, too, had its improvisatore,61 or poet-musicians who improvised
verses to lute accompaniment. Some performed at courts and academies, while
others were itinerant street singers. James Haar notes that they sang both epic and
lyric verse and mentions that a large number of them were blind,62 meaning that they
had to have acquired their songs through oral rather than written transmission. The
most celebrated of the improvisatore was certainly Serafino Aquilano (1466-1500),
who influenced English poet John Wyatt and French poet Mellin de Saint-Gelais,
among others.63 Other names celebrated in contemporary accounts are "Ruzzante,"
the stage name for Angelo Beolco (1502-1542); Giustiniani; Baldassare Olimpo; and
Cariteo.64 The improvisatore sang and played not memorized "tunes," but melodic
formulas that could be easily adapted to fit new lyrics in conventional forms such as
ottave rima. If they were improvising their musical accompaniment on the spot, and
if many of them were blind or otherwise illiterate, is it not likely that their lyrics, too,
could have been at least partially "composed" in performance?

Movable type had just been introduced to Europe by Gutenberg in 1455, but
the technology was spreading rapidly. Together with the rise of commercial printing
and the increase in literacy rates among the middle classes, the sixteenth century
ushered in a new era of contempt for poet-musicians of the "old-fashioned" oral
tradition. In Tudor England, statutes were enacted classifying minstrels as
"vagabonds"—the penalties for which included being whipped, pilloried, branded, and
physically mutilated.65 We find even English poet-musician Thomas Whythorne
lashing out at his uneducated counterparts as "be Raskall and of skumm of hat
profession, who be, or owht to bee kalled minstrels (alpoh now A daiz many do nam bem miuzisions). 66

In France, the same poets who were calling for a "reunification" of poetry and music were promoting the concept of art for an elite group of initiates, and the rejection of popular poetry and music. Their notion of how poetry and music should relate was based upon what they read in ancient Greek and Roman texts, 67 not upon what was still being sung at festivals in French country towns. Evidence of the contempt in which Pléiade poets Pierre Ronsard, Jean-Antoine de Baïf, and Jacques Du Bellay held French oral-tradition poet-musicians will be shown in Chapter 4.

In Germany, as well, the tradition of improvised musico-poetic lyric was under attack in the sixteenth century. Ernest Ferand documents how, writing in Latin in 1548, Heinrich Faber stated that "Musica poetica is divided into two parts, sortisatio and compositio"—i.e., orally improvised music and written, composed music; but that "laborers [miners] and mechanics" are the types who perform sortisatio, and that "erudite persons do not greatly approve of this manner of singing, wherefore it is not our business to linger with this matter any longer." Fifteen years later, another German writing in Latin, Gallus Dresser, would sneer that sortisatio "depends more on practical experience [usus] than on rules"; and, in 1613, Johannes Nucius would add "horsemen, tailors, cobblers, and all the rest of the artisans" to the list of tradesmen who still practiced the old-fashioned art in public taverns. 68

Just as she did not turn in violence upon her medieval religious heritage, Italy seemed to remain more tolerant than the Protestant countries of her medieval musico-poetic heritage. Still, however, the same trend toward privileging written/fixed over oral/improvised artforms can be discerned in Italian sixteenth-century writings. Bembo's division of literary styles into "high," "middle," and "low," to be matched appropriately to subject matter, had a profound influence on the
literature of the century as a whole. For example, Nicola Vicentino, in a 1555 treatise on music:

speaks clearly of chromatic and enharmonic music, reserved for the refined ears of the upper class, and diatonic (public) music, sung for the use of vulgar ears. By extension, the "reborn" music related to the refined occasions of court as contrasted with the plebeian occasions of popular festivals. 69

Yet courtly sixteenth-century audiences delighted in the antics of improvisatory commedia dell'arte troupes, and popular, semi-improvised dialect songs as well as refined madrigals were sung by urban courtesans renowned for their musical and literary gifts. 70

Music historian James A. Winn sees through the verbal posturings of sixteenth-century "musical humanists" to the "subtext" lurking below, and his words resound with significance for our study of the villanella:

under the cover of restoring the ancient union between music and poetry, many of the musical humanists were actually trying to assert the superiority of poetry over music, to curtail music's growing independence, to bring it under the control of texts. 71

Given the foregoing trends in music and literature, one would not expect the canzone villanesca alla napolitana ["peasant song in the Neapolitan manner"]72 to capture the imaginations of European composers and consumers when the first, anonymous, songbook of them was published in 1537. Musically and poetically, the villanesca looked back to the medieval choral dance song tradition, and stood in sharp contrast to the "sophisticated" madrigal. (To avoid confusion, it should be explained that the term villanesca [plural villanesche] was in use from 1537 to the late 1550s, after which the more refined villanella, villanella alla napolitana, or canzone napolitana came into usage. Still later in the century, following years of prolonged contact with the madrigal, the villanella developed into an even more
sophisticated style known as the canzonetta.\textsuperscript{73} This work will use villanella [plural villanelle, in italics to distinguish it from the French villanelle] as a general term for the musical genre, and villanesca when speaking in particular of the earlier, more rustic type of villanella.)

Ronald McFarland, in his book-length study of the villanelle as a poetic form, asserts that sixteenth-century Italian villanelle "are related to the courtly madrigal rather than to popular song."\textsuperscript{74}—but such a statement could only be made by reading printed lyrics as stand-alone "poems," while ignoring their musical settings and their cultural contexts. Musically and poetically, the villanella shared many traits with the medieval refrain dance song, and stood in sharp contrast to the "sophisticated" madrigal.

While the madrigal poem was of "literary quality," the villanella poem was almost always anonymous in authorship\textsuperscript{75} and, particularly in the early years of its popularity, patched together from stock phrases and familiar proverbs:

Proverbial expressions were frequently employed in both villanesche and strambotti. In these genres centone construction is a striking stylistic principle. Many poems consist almost entirely of short, direct phrases. In the early villanesca, simple regional proverbs and slang expressions were often joined loosely together to form mutations, refrains, or both. . . . The same cliches and proverbs turn up as fixtures in both the strambotto and villanesca repertories.\textsuperscript{76}

As in oral-formulaic epic poetry, the "stock phrases" are to be found in the service of "stock themes." While sung from the point of view of a subjective "I," the villanella poem usually revolved around a standard dramatic "scenario" such as a lover flattering his mistress's aged chaperone or complaining about being ignored. (It is not insignificant that villanelle were sung by stock characters in commedia dell'arte improvisations, as will be shown later.) At least three sixteenth-century proverbs can
be identified in the following villanella attributed to Perissone Cambio, a Venetian singer/composer of Flemish origins:

_Buccucia dolce chi` che cana mielle_  
_Labuccia d`una pampana di rosa_  
_Hai scropolosa_  
_S`io cerco un baso_  
_Rispondi: ba ca marzo te l`a raso_  

_Lassa signora homai d`esser crudele_  
_Non ti mostrar ver me tanto sdegnosa_  
_Hai scropolosa_  
_S`io cerco un baso_  
_Rispondi: ba ca marzo te l`a raso_  

_Baciame una sol volta e sta sicura_  
_Bocha basciate mai perde ventura_  
_Hai scropolosa_  
_S`io cerco un baso_  
_Rispondi: ba ca marzo te l`a raso_  

["Oh little mouth sweeter than sugar cane,  
Softer than the petals of a rose.  
You're so scrupulous,  
If I try for a kiss  
You say: "Watch out or March will get you."  

Leave off being cruel to me, lady,  
Stop behaving in that haughty fashion.  
You're so scrupulous,  
If I try for a kiss  
You say: "Watch out or March will get you."  

Kiss me just once for I promise that  
A kissed mouth never loses its luck.  
You're so scrupulous,  
If I try for a kiss  
You say: "Watch out or March will get you."] 77

Donna Cardamone, the foremost expert on the villanella as a musical genre and the translator of the above lyrics, points out that "little mouth sweeter than sugar cane" is derived from an Italian proverb; that "March has ruined you" (literally, "March has
"shaved you") is a well-known sixteenth-century Neapolitan proverb associated with the telling of bad news; and that "A kissed mouth never loses its luck" is the first half of an Italian proverb. Characteristic of villanella, the lyrics also contain several Neapolitan dialect words, such as chiù for più. Erotic puns and allusions are especially frequent in villanesca lyrics, although the Cambio lyrics are relatively "clean." Examples from early, anonymous villanesche are the "broken jug" that connotes lost virginity, the "fig" that stands for the female genitals, and the proper name "Martino" that signifies a cuckold.

Another "point" that should be made about the content of the villanella is the absence of a "point," or concluding epigram. Mark Booth explains that oral tradition song lyrics in general tend to proceed—or, rather, not proceed—additively: each stanza gives a slightly different "take" on the situation presented in the first, but the order of stanzas could be reshuffled, or a stanza or two removed, without significant damage to the song as a whole. "The experience accumulates rather than develops," writes Booth, "and for this reason it frustrates the effort to schematize it into dramatic pattern." Edward Doughtie and Barbara H. Smith are in agreement that the end of such strophic songs has to be indicated by performance practice—a musical or verbal gesture occurring outside the "frame" of the song itself—because the lyrics give no verbal clue to closure. What is true of song lyrics is true of oral "literature" in general. Walter Ong, who was fascinated by Tudor literature precisely because of its liminality between "oral" and "written" practices, defines the differences between the two entities quite succinctly: "Oral composition or grammatical structure is typically nonperiodic, proceeding in the 'adding' style; literary composition tends more to the periodic."

The madrigal is a very "written" sort of lyric. While the villanella "speaker" tends to be caught up in the throes of immediate experience, the madrigal "speaker" tends to be reflecting discursively on past experience. Contrast the following
The reader must work hard to untangle the logical meaning of Croce’s sentence, with all of its “nested” clauses. No line could be removed or reordered without rendering the poem as a whole meaningless.

Four two-line couplets with a rhyme change in the fourth and final couplet is the most frequently found “base” pattern of the villanella’s rhyme scheme, exclusive of the refrain. The anonymous villanesca below has the usual four stanzas and shows the typical ab+R, ab+R, ab+R, cc+R template:

Ch’ha chi cerca de vedere donne belle,  
Vengh’a sta chiazza e non in altra via.  
Tu sei la vita mia.
Cha noe son doi galante guagnastrelle  
Che noce e giorno tengho in fantasia.  
Tu sei la vita mia.

Songho gentile e son chare sorelle,  
Sciëse dal cielo per la morte mia.  
Tu sei la vita mia.

Queste son doi fontane de bellezza,  
Piene de gratia e d'ogni gentilezza.  
Tu sei la vita mia.

["Should you ever want to see beautiful ladies,  
Come to my square, not another place.  
You are the light of my life.

Here you'll find two young women of easy virtue  
Whom I dream about day and night.  
You are the light of my life.

They are gracious and dear, the two sisters,  
Descended from heaven for the sake of my death.  
You are the light of my life.

They are both fountains of beauty,  
Full of grace and every kindness.  
You are the light of my life.

For villanesche published between 1537 and 1559, Cardamone found refrains ranging from one to five lines in length. One- and two-line refrains were the most common, with three-line refrains somewhat common and the longer lengths rare. While "abB abB abB ccB," or variations for lyrics with multi-line refrains, was the most frequently found rhyme scheme, Cardamone catalogued dozens of different rhyme schemes among the one hundred eighty-eight villanesche she looked at, many occurring only once. The rhyme link between the couplet and refrain in all stanzas except the last that can be seen in the anonymous villanesca above (via/mia, fantasia/mia, mia/mia) is also typical of the genre and of choral dance song forms in general; it is the "turn" line that signals the chorus, via a rhyme cue, to get ready to chime in. The end-rhyme above is regular but in the earliest villanesche (closest to
oral tradition) it can be assonantai.\textsuperscript{89} Interestingly, there is a \textit{musical} relationship between words that "rhyme" assonantially: they are similar in musical \textit{timbre}, which is the "mathematical relationship of overtones"\textsuperscript{90} that distinguishes one tone from another produced at the same pitch and volume on a different instrument. A note played on a piano does not sound like the same note played on a flute, but the timbre will sound quite similar (though not identical) when the same note is played on two different pianos. Likewise, the configuration of the human vocal apparatus changes when singing "cat" versus "cut," but is essentially the same shaped "instrument" when singing "cold" and "moan." Rhyme itself, says Calvin Brown, "is a specifically literary use of timbre, and is really only an extended form of assonance."\textsuperscript{91}

The end-rhyme of the anonymous \textit{villanesca} above is, of course, feminine. Its couplet lines are eleven and thirteen syllables in length, with eleven being most characteristic of the genre. The number of syllables in refrain lines can range from five to eleven, and be mixed in a multi-line refrain; the line-length of the refrain often contrasts with that of the couplets. Cardamone explains that the principal accent of both the couplet and refrain line always falls on the next-to-last syllable, while the secondary accent can vary.\textsuperscript{92}

In form as well as content, we can see that the \textit{villanella} "poem" differs markedly from the madrigal "poem," which is typically one strophe long, has no refrain, mixes seven- and eleven-syllable lines at random, takes its individual rhythms from the rhythms of the text rather than from a preset metrical/accentual "template," and avoids assonance for full literary end-rhyme. Even when \textit{villanella} lyrics were published without musical notation, sixteenth-century printers were very careful to distinguish such "popular" from "literary" verse. First of all, it was not usual practice for \textit{villanelle} to be published in the same song-collections as madrigals.\textsuperscript{93} Also, Neapolitan, Venetian, and Roman printers tended to publish \textit{villanelle} collections in an oblong octavo format with plain Roman type and, sometimes, other "rustic"
decorative touches. These printing conventions not only differentiated villanelle collections from "literary" songbooks, but also perpetuated and extended an early-sixteenth-century northern Italian tradition of printing "popular," dialect literature on cheap paper and in a "downsized" format, often with a rustic woodcut on the cover.\(^\text{94}\)

The villanella’s music also differed sharply from that of the madrigal. Its musical rhythms were much livelier: villanella made heavy use of black (short-duration) notes, particularly in the refrain.\(^\text{95}\) Some scholars of sixteenth-century music, led by Erich Hertzmann, even credit the villanella with causing the madrigal to shift to note nere, or black-note, notation by the 1580s.\(^\text{96}\)

While the villanella was by no means metrical, like dance song proper, neither did its musical rhythms follow the details of text declamation, like the madrigal; this would have been impossible, given that the words of its successive stanzas had to "fit" the music of the first. And, while most madrigals were in duple (4/2) time and most villanella in faster, but also duple 4/4 time,\(^\text{97}\) some villanella were in triple time, or alternated passages of duple and triple measures, recalling the rhythms of dance song.\(^\text{98}\) The late-fifteenth-century frottola that most music scholars point to as the direct musical "ancestor" of the villanella was even closer to dance, although it too was not intended for actual dancing. Associated with the repertories of the improvvisatore, frottola were almost always in triple time and displayed definite "dancelike" rhythms.\(^\text{99}\)

While most of the same composers who wrote villanella wrote madrigals, their approaches to the two forms were completely different. In the villanella, there was no relationship whatsoever between the meaning of the text and the music that went with it; word painting and "eye music" are simply not to be found in the genre.\(^\text{100}\) The music of a madrigal was unique from beginning to end, taking its "form" from its content.\(^\text{101}\) But the music of the villanella was repetitive: each
subsequent stanza repeated the music of the first, and even the first stanza contained smaller musical repetitions within it. Each strophe contained three strains of music which can be designated "A," "B," and "C." Like the first strain of an American blues song, the "A" strain (which went with the first or "a" rhyme line of the couplet) was almost always sung twice (words included), while the "B" strain (accompanying the "b" line of the couplet) served as a "bridge" or transition to the contrasting music of the refrain:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Musical Form</th>
<th>Poetic Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>a (repeated in practice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>R (1-5 lines; first line rhyming with &quot;b&quot;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Cardamone points out, the "B" strain was the "musical equivalent of...[the] rhyme connection between the last line of the mutation and the refrain." The refrain was sometimes but not always sung twice in a row, like the "A" section. Cardamone and Booth both believe that such internal repetition was in conscious imitation of the practice of improvisers.

The musical structure described above was then duplicated for each successive stanza, which would contain new "text" for its ab couplet plus the word-for-word text of the refrain. Four stanzas were usual. The medieval carol/carole, ballade, rondeau, and virelai—as well as the Spanish villanco and the Arab zejal—are all essentially the same as the villanella in musical structure, except that they have only two musical strains instead of three, and in some cases the refrain (a true "burden") is sung at the beginning of the song as well as at the end of each strophe.

If the strophes can be viewed as identically duplicated musical "modules"; and each strophe can be broken down into "submodules" of A, B, and C melodic strains, one or two of which will always be repeated, then it should not be surprising to find the A, B, and C strains themselves made up of smaller "modules" the length of a
musical phrase. "From the beginning," writes Cardamone, "one finds a style of melodic and rhythmic clichés."\textsuperscript{105}

Unlike the madrigal but consistent with songs from the "unwritten" tradition, the villanella had an extremely limited range of notes. Galileo Galilei's musician-father, Vicenzo, correctly noted that several villanelle of his day were among those popular "airs" whose soprano parts "do not reach or extend beyond a compass of six notes;\textsuperscript{106} and all three parts together rarely spanned more than two octaves.\textsuperscript{107} Within that narrow range of notes, Cardamone finds not only "one of a few cadential formulas" at the end of each line, but also repeated note-patterns within lines and clichéd rhythmic patterns at the beginning of lines.\textsuperscript{108} Of particular interest because of their link to the oral-formulaic poetic tradition are the formulaic rhythmic motives that can be found at the beginning of a couplet (i.e., strophe). Cardamone describes them as follows:

Most common in this repertory are the shorter patterns of three repeated notes (with or without upbeat) at phrase beginnings. Fifteen of [Giovan Thomaso di] Maio's thirty villanesche open with the patterns... eleven start with the pattern... In the villanesca these rhythmic patterns usually introduce an anecdote of love, and as such they function like the so-called narrative formulae often used by composers of frottola and French chansons to begin an amorous tale.\textsuperscript{109}

Bentley Peabody, writing on the subject of ancient Greek oral-formulaic verse, observed with much truth and some humor that it is "hard to get started singing... The beginnings of songs are often stereotyped",\textsuperscript{110} and we may be seeing the remnants of such an oral-formulaic lyric practice in the early villanella. As in the American blues song ("Well, I woke up this mornin"), one can also find various villanelle, both anonymous and signed by composers, that begin with the same clichéd verbal phrases, although this is true of the madrigal, as well.\textsuperscript{111}
Several writers point out that, in general, *simplicity* and *internal repetition* (or "redundancy") are the two traits that characterize melodies that arise from a genuine oral tradition, although William F. Prizer thinks this is because such music is easier to "memorize," while Booth views internal repetition as being inherently linked to the process of improvisation. Common ground between these two viewpoints may be found in Ruth Finnegan's observation that, worldwide within the oral poetic tradition, *chorally* sung work songs do tend to be *memorized*, while the more common type of work song sung by a leader alternating with a chorus can be "highly creative" within an oral-formulaic framework:

Here the opportunities for individual composition can be extensive—depending on the context and form. . . . [B. Jackson, writing on black prisoners in Texas prisons in the early seventies] shows how the lead-singer uses many phrases and partial lines from traditional prison songs, but by this means can compose his own personal verses. Sometimes this involves little more than "slotting-in" appropriate names into formulaic lines or re-assembling new songs from accepted phrases, but others can use even the prison work song context to produce highly creative work.

The early *villanella* may have incorporated *actual* popular song material. Cardamone suspects as much: while there is no way to "prove" borrowings from popular Neapolitan *tunes* that were never recorded on paper, the "poetic" evidence for the early *villanella* certainly points in that direction:

The statistical summaries reveal an appreciable number of deviant metrical schemes which testify conclusively to an affinity for the flexibility of the oral tradition. They display endless varieties of irregularly-rhymed mutations, incomplete sets of mutations, and assonant rhyme devices common to colloquial idioms. Even the Type B schemes which evolved under the influence of the more cultivated love poem display grammatical errors, assonant rhymes, and a generally unpolished quality. Deviations are found in consistently high numbers between 1537 and 1570, and they reflect a continuing desire to promote the essence of the popular lyrical style.
Indeed, the evidence is so convincing that I am tempted to suggest that many deviant forms before 1560 contain genuine popular material, i.e., strambotto mutations and refrains.

Our knowledge of this area will probably never be expanded for it is impossible to locate, for comparative purposes, substantial quantities of Neapolitan popular tunes which might have qualities that persisted from the past. 115

Two of the other key features of the villanella, whether anonymous or by a named composer, also seem to have arisen from the oral tradition. The madrigal was polyphonic, with different melodies layered one atop the other; but the villanella was homophonic or "chordal"—all three (later, four to five) parts sang the same words at the same time, with the lower parts harmonizing to the upper. Also, villanella composers employed "parallel fifths," which were two notes sung five tones apart on a seven-tone scale. The musical effect imitates that of untrained singers trying to sing in harmony—but it was considered "gauche" by composers and performers with musical training. Cardamone translates a passage from sixteenth-century musical theorist Lodovico Zacconi on the subject:

although those ignorant of music, who sing the above mentioned aeri in the manner of villanelle do not care (since they do not know any better) about making two or more fifths, or even two or more octaves, the musicians, who do know how much two consecutive octaves are inconvenient, have limited themselves to the imitation of consecutive fifths, which are less obtrusive consonances. Furthermore, it is evident that they do not use them in pieces a 2 or a 4, but only in those a 3; and even there [they use them] when the voices move by step, in imitation of the above-said voices [of popular singers] who, having hit upon such consonances, do not know any other way of moving to neighboring sounds, but have the feeling of being well-accompanied.

Therefore, we should not be surprised when musicians too, in imitating those songs and cantilene, introduce two or more fifths in stepwise motion, for otherwise they would not be able to imitate them. And whomsoever would ask me why they are called villanelle, I would like to answer that they thought it best to call them villanelle after having listened to young girls singing their pleasant verses together with such
musical accents as they are in the habit or giving them whenever they sing during their work; or else, maybe, because they listened to how country girls [villanelle] sing during their customary work in the fields.

This, then, is the reason why musicians, in writing some villanelle, do not worry about making several fifths. At this time they are not imitating a song like musicians would, but rather like those who, when singing, sing without any knowledge of music, and stay together by means of consonances found by ear. 117

Parallel fifths are frequent in both anonymous villanesche and villanelle by distinguished madrigal composers, who never inserted them into the more "sophisticated" madrigal. Villanella composers would also break lines of verse in the middle of phrases, repeating them with new music for a "stuttering" effect—another practice that imitated oral tradition.118 An example can be found in this refrain line from a villanella by Giovanni Domenico del Giovane da Nola: "Al-le fa-ve, al-le fa-ve, al-le fa-ve ten-ne-re-la." Cardamone explains that the truncated lyric is an actual street-vendor's cry, and that da Nola set it "to a falling third, characteristic of the songs of southern itinerant food vendors." 119

Villanelle were associated with the musical repertories of touring commedia dell'arte troupes, which improvised theatrical-musical sketches on the basis of stock characters and rough character/action synopses, called scenarios, which might be thought of as the dramatic equivalent of the "theme" in oral-formulaic poetry. The actors, Martha Farahat tells us:

evidently worked from these scenarios, elaborating each situation by improvising speeches and dialogues, and interpolating bits of stage business. Occasionally, especially at key points such as at the end of scenes, the more important actors recited set speeches that had already been memorized. But for the most part, the actors relied on their own experience and ingenuity to flesh out the substance of the drama. 120

75

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Like the villanella itself, the commedia dell'arte performance relied upon dialect words and "rustic" settings for its effect. Farahat draws an even stronger link between the two, asserting that the woodcut of three singing peasants on the cover of the first published book of villanelle "indicates that the new genre was a logical outgrowth of the longstanding tradition of dialect songs in rustic comedies."\(^{121}\)

One of the greatest of all villanella (and madrigal) composers was Orlando di Lasso, who performed with a commedia dell'arte troupe when he was a young man. Later in life, performing for a royal wedding in Bavaria, he sang a villanella while dressed in costume as the Venetian merchant Pantalone, a stock commedia dell'arte character.\(^{122}\) When in 1581 di Lasso published his Libro di villanelle, moreseche ed altri canzone, he wrote in the dedication to his patron that "it would have been better had I published these villanelle in my youth, during which time I wrote them."\(^{123}\) Farahat has determined that two of the songs in the 1581 collection are quite obviously written for "stock" commedia dell'arte characters in "stock" comedic theatrical situations." She notes, as well, that Adrian Willaert, another of the most distinguished villanella composers, composed one specifically for the troupe of the famous comedian Ruzzante.\(^{124}\)

Furthermore, the mascherata—a refrain song closely related to the villanella in form and style—had as its very premise a group of three to five part-singers dressed up in the costumes of tradesmen, introducing themselves and singing about their "occupations" in lyrics with broad sexual puns and allusions. A 1546 collection by Lodovico Novello contains mascherate for singers disguised as "physicians, stone-cutters from the Levant, shoemakers, sellers of sausage and mustard, hermits . . . goldsmiths, dancing masters . . . bakers of gingerbread, surgeons, knights errant . . . postmen, horse-traders, milkmen, locksmiths, wine-dealers, sellers of brooms from the country . . . tinkers, grocers, and flax-pullers."\(^{125}\) Cardamone observes that "some of the comic types which emerged as characters in the commedia dell'arte and
as *dramatis personae* in written comedies were already protagonists in the Neapolitan *mascherate* and *villanesche*, as well as in the rustic *mascherate* of court banquets and festival, confirming the suspected link between these refrain songs and the improvisatory comedic theater.

The other "rustic" musical genres related to the *villanella* should be mentioned as well, since they were included in musical collections of sixteenth-century *villanelle* and will appear in later chapters on the *villanella* in France and England. Like the *mascherata*, the *villotta* resembled the *villanella* in musical form. Poetic points of difference were its northern Italian (versus Neapolitan) dialect words and refrain made up of nonsense syllables. The *villanella*-like *todesca* made fun of the accents and fractured syntax of German soldiers singing in Italian, while the *giustiniana* mocked lustful old men singing with a stutter; like the *villotta*, the latter form employed Venetian dialect. Repulsive to contemporary sensibilities but in the same general class of songforms was the *moresca*, which portrayed Moorish slaves engaged in obscene sexual banter; interestingly, however, its lyrics evidently contained bits of genuine African folklore as well as "interspersed street ballads" and "spoken gibberish."

The sixteenth-century *villanella* was a written and not oral genre, but it still provided the composer and the performer the opportunity to improvise within bounds. The typical *villanella* composer worked by taking a pre-existing *villanella*, whether anonymous or by a named composer, separating the soprano (or melodic) part out from the others; making that soprano part the tenor part of the "new" composition, while usually borrowing the bass part as-is; and then "improvising" a new tune and complementary parts over the borrowed material, much as a contemporary jazz musician creates a "new" song over the "archetypal" melody and the actual bass part stripped from a standard. *Villanella* composers did not "compose" so much as "arrange"; in particular, fashioning four-, five-, and six-part
compositions out of the architectural elements of *villanelle* for three (or four) voices. Yet they were the same composers—di Lasso, Willaert, da Nola, et al.—who were composing unique music, expressive of the text, to set literary madrigal "poems." Four-part *villanelle* composers, says Cardamone, "produced an arrangement of a tune, a new harmonization as it were, of a melody received outside of Naples as common property and available for anyone's use."¹³¹

Not only the *villanesca* composer, but also the part-singer him or herself was tasked with improvising within bounds. Music was not yet barred, and there was no such figure as the "conductor" (a nineteenth-century invention), to keep time¹³²—that was the individual singer's responsibility. Part-singers were forced to practice "rhythmic interpretation," as Fellowes put it;¹³³ and, while the *villanelle* did not change time and rhythm as mercurially as the madrigal, it did so on occasion. In addition, only the first verse of a song was underlaid under the musical notes; the rest of the stanzas were printed at the bottom of the page, meaning that the singer also had to "creatively" fit syllables to musical notes. What Howard M. Brown says of the fifteenth-century singer can be applied a century later, as well. Fitting text to music:

requires not only musical expertise and a considerable memory but also a strong awareness of the way in which text and music are matched... even for the first stanza intelligent singing requires that the performer know both the text and the music so well that the two can be matched according to the musical sense rather than according to what can be seen in the sources. ¹³⁴

For example, sixteenth-century singers were expected to supply accidentals not marked in the score and to judge how long the final chord should last.¹³⁵ They might transpose a composition written for a solo voice and instruments to parts, or vice versa. Writing of *frottola* prints by one composer, Einstein makes a generalization that applies to all of the singers of the era:
Petrucci in his prints offered these compositions as material, leaving the execution—whether entirely vocal, or with an instrumental accompaniment—to practice. . . . it must be assumed that the singers of those days were more expert than we are today in solving this often difficult task—the more so because they had complete freedom in solving it: they might give to a single note one or more syllables; they might divide a word by a rest, or repeat words or parts of sentences. 136

Even singing with a part-book in front of him or her, the villanella singer was still "improvising" to a certain extent.

Springing up in opposition to the "written," "literary," "artificial" madrigal in the fourth decade of the sixteenth century, the deliberately archaic villanella proved to be neither a source of amusement for jaded courtiers nor a quickly passing trend. As will be shown in subsequent chapters, its effects on the poetry and music of subsequent centuries have far outlasted the madrigal's.

End Notes


2. Ibid., 343.


7. Einstein, 152.

8. Ibid., 117.
9. Ibid., 340.

10. Ibid., 107.

11. Ibid., 187.


13. Ibid., 218.


15. Einstein, 172.


18. Einstein, 374.


20. Einstein, 222-23.

21. Ibid., 229, 231, 234, 240; Reese, 422.


23. Einstein, 231.

24. Ibid., 229; Haar, 111.

25. Einstein, 239, 240, 242; Haar, 111.


29. "Though without prejudice to the special rights of the soprano as the highest part and the one most prominently heard, and of the bass, which supports the whole," notes Einstein, 119.

30. DeFord, 111.


32. Einstein, 553.


39. Ibid., 78; Stevens, *Music and Poetry*, 75-76.


41. John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 135. Ironically, however, the Jesuits were forced back into incorporating music into their Masses by their missionary work; without it, they found they had little hope of attracting "heathen" populations into their churches (157-62).

42. Lawrence Earp, "Lyrics for Reading and Lyrics for Singing in Late Medieval France: The Development of the Dance Lyric from Adam de la Halle to Guillaume de Machaut," in Rebecca Baltzer et al., eds., *The Union of Words and Music in Medieval Poetry* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991), 101, 109-


44. Ibid., 40-42.

45. Ibid., 41.


47. Kalwies, 42.

48. Lesure, 120.


51. Ruth Finnegan makes the point that, in all written versions of oral poetry, repetition "may be more extensive than is realised: just because the same degree of repetition would be tedious and inappropriate in written form, the amount of repetition in actual performance may not be fully represented in many written texts which purport to record it"; *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 130.


53. Kehler, 45.

54. Cohen, 57; Gleeson White, in the "Rondel, Rondeau, and Roundel" section of his introduction to *Ballades and Rondeaux, Chants Royal, Sestinas, Villanelles, &c. Selected, with a Chapter on the Various Forms* (London: Walter Scott, 1887), lix-lxvii, provides good examples of how the rondeau's form has changed over time.


57. Reese, 766.


61. Other terms for the *improvvisatore*, according to Haar, were "dicitore in rima, sonatore, cantore, cantatore, canterino, cantastorie, cantimbanca (cantambanca, cantampanca), ciarlatano, and cerretano" (78).

62. Haar, 80.

63. Doughtie, 35.

64. Einstein, 353, 356; Reese, 153.

65. Whythorne, 233-34.

66. Ibid., 243-45.

67. Lesure, among other scholars, has remarked that Renaissance *musicians* were at a disadvantage compared to their writer, artist, and architect counterparts, in that no traces of actual *melodies* have survived from antiquity to be used as models; 90-91.


69. Barricelli, 47.


72. Cardamone, CV, 1:34.

73. Ibid., 1:33; Reese, 446.


75. Einstein, 370.

76. Cardamone, CV, 1:40.


78. Ibid., op. cit.


83. Obertello, 291.

84. Cardamone, CV, 1:68; Einstein, 355.


86. Cardamone, CV, 1:67.

87. Ibid., 1:70-76.

88. Ibid., 68.

89. Ibid., 38, 81; Finnegan, 95-96.

91. Ibid., 37.


93. Cardamone, CV, 1:27.

94. Ibid., 1:8, 1:117.

95. Ibid., 1:139.


97. Einstein, 374.

98. Cardamone, CV, 1:130; Einstein, 364.

99. Einstein, 80; Fenlon and Haar, 11; Nino Pirrotta, Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque: A Collection of Essays (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 75-76.

100. Einstein, 235-36.

101. Faint traces of "schematic" musical form can be detected in the very early madrigal, but they disappear quickly; William F. Prizer, "The Frottola and the Unwritten Tradition," Studi Musicali 15 (1986), 30.

102. Cardamone, CV, 1:94; Einstein, 367.

103. Cardamone, CV, 1:95.

104. Booth, 11; Cardamone, CV, 1:94.

105. Ibid., 1:127.


107. Cardamone, CV, 1:121.

108. Ibid., 1:122, 127.

109. Ibid., 1:122.


113. Prizer, 7; Booth, 11.

114. Finnegans, 154-55.


116. Ibid., 1:127.

117. Ibid., 1:146.

118. Pirrotta, 58.


121. Ibid., 125.

122. Ibid., 122-23; Cardamone, *CV*, 1:175.

123. Farahat, 130.

124. Ibid., 127, 125.

125. Einstein, 345-46.


127. Ibid., 1:249n.

128. Reese, 445.

129. Einstein, 373.
130. Cardamone, CV, 1:179-82.

131. Ibid., 1:180.


133. Ibid., 121.


136. Einstein, 77.
CHAPTER 4: THE VILLANELLE IN FRANCE

This chapter will examine the individual sixteenth-century French "poetic" villanelles plus all known French sixteenth- and seventeenth-century allusions to the villanelle to see whether there is any basis for calling the French Renaissance villanelle a "poetic" or "fixed poetic" form.

Most modern scholars of the villanelle's history proceed from the assumption that it was a fixed poetic form in sixteenth-century France, i.e., one with a fairly standardized rhyme scheme, line mensuration, and number of stanzas. Writing in 1877 in Cornhill Magazine, for example, English poet Edmund Gosse calls the villanelle one of the "six most important of the poetic creations of old France. . . . Each has a fixed form, regulated by traditional laws." Gosse dates it as a fixed form back "at least as far as the fifteenth century." ¹ Writing one year later in an essay appended to the fixed-form section of W. Davenport Adams's Latter Day Lyrics, Gosse's fellow countryman and poet Austin Dobson agrees that the villanelle was one of "the old French forms" with "stereotyped shapes and set refrains"; in fact, one of "the six principal forms." ²

Writers of the next decade also contribute to the myth of the villanelle as long-standing fixed form. In his 1882 survey of French literature, George Saintsbury calls the villanelle one of the "artificial" French poetic forms of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries—one which has inexplicably managed to "surviv[e] the other épiceries condemned by Du Bellay." To Saintsbury, Jean Passerat's "Villanelle" (J'ay perdu ma tourterelle) is "probably the most elegant specimen of a poetical trifle that the age produced." ³ German scholar Jacob Schipper (1885) classifies the villanelle as one of the "other Italian and French poetical forms of a fixed character," and further asserts that it was French rather than Italian in its origins, like the virelai, rondeau, triiolet, ballade, and chant royal. According to Schipper, Passerat

88
"cultivated" the villanelle. Gleeson White (1887) writes that Jacques Grévin's *Villanesques* were "a modified form of the Villanelle" and states that the villanelle "crystallised into its present shape" in Passerat's hands. Again, White's choice of terminology implies that the sixteenth-century French villanelle was a written *poem* with a distinct and definable form.

American scholar Helen Cohen (1922) correctly notes that the villanelle belongs to "a much later literary generation" than the *ballade, chant royal, triolet, and rondeau,* and identifies Passerat as the "inventor of the villanelle." But she goes on to assert, falsely, that:

> Passerat had written other villanelles, so-called, that did not conform to the model [that of *J'ay perdu ma tourterelle*] at all. The great Hellenist was undoubtedly aware of the innovation that he had introduced, but the form caught the attention of his contemporaries and became fixed in his lifetime.

It will be seen later on in this chapter that Passerat wrote only one other villanelle besides *J'ay perdu ma tourterelle*—which was nothing like the latter in form—and, indeed, that the form of *J'ay perdu ma tourterelle* is not like that of any other sixteenth-century villanelle, and was not imitated until the nineteenth century. A second twentieth-century writer, Warner F. Patterson (1935) claims that there were two villanelle poetic forms in the sixteenth century. The first, he says, was the "irregular virelai" or "fixed-form type" exemplified by Passerat's *J'ay perdu ma tourterelle;* the second was the "villanelle or villanesque (simple rustic song)" type written by Joachim Du Bellay, Philippe Desportes, and others. The two types of villanelle forms, he continues, constitute, together with the sestina and the sonnet, the four poetic forms that "take the place of the older fixed forms of the Middle French poets after 1548."
Late-twentieth-century accounts of villanelle history draw on the foregoing sources for their "factual" information, and thus presume, as well, that the sixteenth-century French villanelle was a fixed poetic form. Both the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* and the *Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms* err in backdating it, as a poetic form, to the Middle Ages: the former lists it among "a class of medieval French verse-forms," while the latter includes it in "a set of regularly rhyming and metrically patterned verse forms that originated in Southern France during the 12th and 13th centuries when the troubadours were extant." The edition of the definitive *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* that was in print from 1974 to 1993—when many of the villanelles in New Formalist anthologies were being written—asserts that the villanelle was "A Fr. verse form, derived from an It. folk song" and that it "has since Passerat retained the following pattern [a1ba2 aba1 aba2 abal aba2 abal abal]." To its credit, the 1993 *Princeton Encyclopedia* retreats from this "literate fallacy" somewhat, deleting the line that implies an "evolution" from Italian songform to French verseform as well as the line that implies that other villanelles like Passerat's were produced in Passerat's age or shortly thereafter.

The only book-length treatment of the villanelle to date has been Ronald McFarland's 1987 *The Villanelle: The Evolution of a Poetic Form*. Although he is unable to identify a second sixteenth-century villanelle in the form of *J'ay perdu ma tourterelle*, McFarland too persists in referring to the form as being "fixed" during Passerat's era. If Passerat's poem was to become the paradigm for all future villanelles hundreds of years after it was written, McFarland reasons—in an argument that seems to literalize the central metaphor of T. S. Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent"—then Passerat's contemporaries should certainly have *realized* its significance in his lifetime or, foreseeing its impact on the poetry of the nineteenth
and twentieth centuries, should not have "snubbed" it. The following excerpts from McFarland's second and third chapters illustrate his "retroactive" logic:

French poets of the sixteenth century, some of them well-known members of the Pléiade, moved toward defining or fixing the form. . . . The fixed form devised by Jean Passerat, however, was not to have an immediate impact, even on those poets of the early seventeenth century who remained sympathetic to the forms and themes of the Pléiade.

. . . . Since Passerat wrote a sonnet in response to one in Desportes' Diane (1573), there is no doubt that the men knew each other's work, and Passerat's fixed-form model might well have circulated in manuscripts. If Desportes did know "J'ai perdu ma tourterelle" and Passerat's new villanelle form, his poems show no evidence that he was influenced by it. . . .

. . . . Perhaps the most intriguing thing about this poem [J'ay perdu ma tourterelle] is that despite the interest among Passerat's contemporaries in the villanelle and the general inclination of the Pléiade poets and their followers to embrace fixed forms, this villanelle attracted no imitators for nearly three hundred years.

. . . . It is curious, therefore, that it is the French villanelle which has survived, and that the fixed-form version of Passerat has survived the near oblivion of its singularity. The villanelle as it essentially migrated in its fixed form is also a tribute to the craftsmanship of the minor poet. . . .

Certainly to his contemporaries the part of Jean Passerat (1534-1602) in the Satyre Menipée overshadowed such a trivial piece as his fixed-form villanelle, "J'ai perdu ma tourterelle." . . . Yet it seems odd, despite the repudiation of the Pléiade by Malherbe and Boileau in the seventeenth century, that Passerat's invention had no immediate imitators. . . . Why, then, was Passerat's ultimately rather influential fixed-form villanelle not embraced, and indeed not even revived, for nearly two and a half centuries?

. . . . There are other reasons, though, for the snubbing of Passerat's villanelle. 12

Despite all of the foregoing claims to the contrary, the villanelle in sixteenth-century France was still considered a musical and not poetic genre. In an age obsessed with laying down the "rules" for poetic forms such as the sonnet or dixain,
not one sixteenth- or seventeenth-century French source refers to the villanelle as a poetic form; and, in fact, every reference to it is as a rustic, semi-improvised song that stands in opposition to the courtly, composed, polyphonic chanson—the French "translation" of the villanella/madrigal antinomy. Michel de Montaigne, in his Essais (1580-1595), recognizes the distinction:

popular and purely natural poetry has native originality and charm by which it may enter into competition with the grand beauty of poetry perfected according to the rules of art; as may be seen in the villanelles of Gascony and in the chansons hailing from nations which have no knowledge of science nor even writing. 13

Likewise, Vauquelin de la Fresnaye—the author of a rhymed treatise on poetic forms published in 1605—alludes to the villanelle as a preliterate, genuinely popular, semi-improvised song form:

La chanson amoureuse affable et naturelle
Sans sentir rien de l'Art, comme une villanelle,
Marche parmy le peuple aux danses aux festins
Et raconte aux carfours les gestes des mutins. 14

['The gracious and natural love song unconscious of art, like a villanelle, moves among the people at dances and festivals and recounts, to the crossroads, the gestes of rebels."

It is particularly interesting that Vauquelin equates the singers of villanelles with the reciters of chansons de geste—Old French oral epic poems that valorized "real" historical figures. By les gestes des mutins, Vauquelin is probably referring to the gestes de Doon de Mayence, which were about the vassals who took up arms against Charlemagne. 15 Elsewhere in his poem, he sharply criticizes jongleurs for not knowing how to create the verse that they sang—unlike the trouvères of old, who were both makers and performers. 16 In France as in Italy and England, oral lyric refrain songs seem to have been performed by the same individuals who performed
oral epic, lending further support to the hypothesis of a shared, oral-formulaic basis of composition.

Even Pierre Richelet, who is frequently identified as the leader among those seventeenth-century prosodists who "fixed" the villanelle's form, clearly understood that it was a song arising from the oral tradition and not a fixed poetic form, as will be seen in Chapter 6. Only the gulf in time between the sixteenth century and the present could delude us into believing that there was a gulf in cultural awareness between sixteenth-century Italy and France sufficient for the villanella to exist as a "song" in one and a "fixed poetic form" in the other. In actuality, the contemporary French poets who wrote villanelle lyrics had all traveled to and/or lived in Italy during the period when after-dinner part singing of madrigals and villanelle was fashionable within courtly and middle class circles. Significant exposure of French persons to the villanella also took place in 1554, when Ferrante Sanseverino, Prince of Salerno, made a splash by singing canzone napoletane to the French court at Fontainebleau, and in 1559, when guests in Spain for the wedding of French King Henri II's daughter heard Neapolitan musicians perform villanelle as part of the festivities. Many Neapolitan exiles fled to Paris in the late 1540s and 1550s, when Naples was under Spanish rule; music scholar Jeanice Brooks points out that Henri II and Charles, Cardinal de Lorraine, a member of the distinguished Guise family, plotted for years with the Pope and with exiled Neapolitan nobles against the Spanish who were in control of Naples. Significantly, in light of their intense focus on Neapolitan affairs, the king and the Guise family were the two chief patrons of music and poetry in France. Charles de Lorraine personally employed Jacques Arcadelt and Fabrice Marin Caietain—the latter a Neapolitan—and both went on to compose "real" Italian villanelle and other villanelle-like chansons while in France. Brooks notes as well that Neapolitan musicians Luigi and Fabrizio
Dentice and Giulio Cesare Brancaccio were employed at the French court during the
1550s and 1560s.\textsuperscript{20}

The sole rights to printing music in France were held by Adrian LeRoy and
Robert Ballard from 1551 to 1598, and Italian villanelle were published in a half-
dozen of their musical collections. Altogether, LeRoy and Ballard published two
hundred twenty-nine Italian and Spanish songs (mostly Italian), as compared to just
under two thousand chansons.\textsuperscript{21} Orlando di Lasso's 1565 Dixhuitième livre de
chansons à quatre et à cinq parties contained six "napolitanes" and was so popular
that it was reprinted in 1567, 1570, 1573, 1576, and 1581. Also in 1565, Le Roy
and Ballard published an influential but anonymous collection of twenty-three
villanelle titled Il primo libro di villanelle all napolitana novamente stampate a tre
voci.\textsuperscript{22} Italian emigre Caietain's 1578 Second livre d'airs, chansons, villanelles
napolitaines & espagnolles mis en musique à quatre parties included eight of
them.\textsuperscript{23} The year 1581 brought forth Lasso's Libro de villanelle, moresche, et altre
canzoni, accompanied by a dedication explaining that the composer had written them
in his youth but held off publishing them until the present time.\textsuperscript{24} Next came M. G.
Thessier's 1582 Premier livre d'airs tant françois, italien, qu'espagnol, reduite en
musique, à 4 & 5 parties, including a section of eight "espagnolles, & napolitanes";
the work was subsequently reprinted in 1585.\textsuperscript{25} In 1584, Lasso published six
"villanelle a quatro" in his Continuation de melange d'Orlande de Lassus à 3, 4, 5,
6 & dix parties.\textsuperscript{26} A 1585 collection by Pierre Bonnet titled Premier livre d'airs but
describing its contents as "airs et villanelles" in its dedication, later incorporated the
word "villanelles" into its title upon its second reprinting in 1588.\textsuperscript{27} This was
around the same time that Giaches de Wert, a composer originally from the
Netherlands but relocated to Italy, published his 1589 collection Il primo libro delle
canzonette villanelle à cinque voci, containing three examples of the "villanelle
francesca" (French chanson) and two of the "villanella spagnuola" (Spanish
villancico). The villancico, which is also a strophic refrain lyric, is often confused with the villanella on account of its etymological similarity; and, in fact, it is musically quite similar to the Italian frottola that is viewed by musicologists as the predecessor form to the villanella. We also know of a collection of chansons by different authors, including six genuine Italian villanelle, edited and published by Robert Ballard in 1606.

Political differences were no more of an impediment to the villanella's spread than geographical borders. Catherine de Medici's familial ties to Italy and influence at the French court were widely feared, and Henri III was mocked for his adulation of all things Italian. During the late 1570s, Emile Picot notes, it was even fashionable to speak half French, half Italian at court. Yet the decades in which the French public had reasons to fear or resent Italy as a political force were the same decades in which Italian villanella collections were being published in France and (judging from their reprint histories) appealing to a wide audience.

In Italy, the same forces that had spawned the growth of printing and the spread of literacy had replaced the centuries-old tradition of song lyrics "improvised" in performance to fit preexisting musical templates with a model of the song as a literary "poem" to be set to music that would be unique to it. Thus, the villanella alla napoletana became, in relation to the trendy madrigal, a phenomenon of "cultural atavism"—a deliberate return to a musico-poetic style known to be archaic, even by (especially by) its practitioners.

Knowing how the French Pléiade poets grandstanded, in their manifestos, for a "reunification" of poetry and music, one would assume that France had somehow escaped the elitist "privileging" of text over music that is so apparent in other western European countries of the time. But, if anything, the opposite is true: Pléiade writers such as Du Bellay, Pierre de Ronsard, and Jean-Antoine de Baif expressed contempt for oral-tradition lyrics—and remnants of that oral lyric tradition
were still very much in evidence in their daily lives. Despite trends toward joining
stay-in-one-place minstrels' guilds or chamber music groups attached to courts,
wandering minstrels continued to perform in sixteenth-century France, singing lyric
verse including dance songs improvised to *cantus firmi* tunes—although long
narrative songs seem to have dropped out of their repertoires after about 1500.\(^{32}\)
French minstrels were virtually all illiterate, and could only have passed on their
musical knowledge to apprentices and each other by ear.\(^{33}\) The French literate
public snapped up cheaply printed books of "popular" poetry to be sung to known
tunes.\(^{34}\) And the reputations of Clément Marot and Mellin de Saint-Gelais—two
late-fifteenth-/early-sixteenth-century figures who had worked in fixed forms—still
loomed large in collective cultural memory. It was just such manifestations of
"popular" verse that the Pléiade poets were revolting against. Witness these lines
from Du Bellay in his 1549 *La deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse*:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Seulement veux-je admonnester celuy qui aspire à une gloyre} \\
\text{non vulgaire, s'éloingner de ces ineptes admirateurs, fuery ce} \\
\text{peuple ignorant, peuple enemmy de tout rare & antique} \\
\text{scavoir, se contentir de peu de lecteurs, à l'exemple de celuy} \\
\text{qui pour tous auditeurs ne demandoit que Platon. . . . 35}
\end{align*}\]

Especially do I wish to admonish him who aspires to a more
than vulgar glory, to separate himself from such inept
 admirers, to flee from ignorant people,—the people who are
the enemies of all rare and artful learning,—and to content
himself with few readers, following the example of him who
did not demand for an audience any one beside Plato himself.
36

Du Bellay goes on to condemn "rondeaux, ballades, vyrelaiz, chantz royaulx,
chansons, & autres telles episseries" [" . . . rondeaux, ballades, virelais, chants
royal, chansons, and other such condiments"] as genres that "corruptent le goust de
nostre langue, & ne servent si non à porter temoingnaige de notre ignorance"\(^{37}\)
["corrupt the taste of our language, and serve only to bring testimony of our

96
ignorance"]. Note that the fixed forms derived from refrain dance songs bear the weight of his attack.

Ronsard takes pains to distinguish the poète from the lowly rimeur. He asserts in the épistre au lecteur ["epistle to the reader"] of his 1564 poetry collection that:

\[
\text{Si vous estimez que je soys desireux de la faveur du vulgaire, vous vous trompez beaucoup; car le plus grand desplaisir que je scurois avoir en ce monde, c'est d'estre estimé au recherché du peuple.}
\]

["If you believe that I am desirous of the favor of the vulgar, you make a big mistake; since the greatest displeasure that I could know of having in the world, would be to be esteemed in the demand of the people."]

Similarly, Baif—the chief proponent of the "back to music" movement—writes the following verse lines with all-too-apparent pride:

\[
\text{J'ai toujours désiré, dédaignant le vulgaire} \\
\text{Aux plus rares esprits et servir et complaire.}
\]

["I have always wanted, disdaining the vulgar, To serve and please the rarest of minds."]

Pontus de Tyard's Solitaire premier, ou prose des Muses et de la fureur poétique (1552) "defends the right of poetry to be obscure (i.e., to use rare epithets) and links facility of language to ignorance," explains John McClelland. McClelland draws a parallel between Tyard's original work and his translation of Léon Hébrieu's Dialoghi d'amore in that they both promote "difficult, mythologized, heavily versified poetry" because it "conserves and communicates knowledge by preventing it from being popularized, by fixing the form of its transmission." When the Pléiade poets write about "reuniting" poetry and music, they are referring to text-centered experiments to be based upon their limited understanding
of ancient Greek musical theory, and not upon their own oral lyric tradition, which they view as a cause for shame. As Charles Comte and Paul Laumonier make clear:

"Since monodic music appeared in all likelihood to be a very simple and rudimentary art to our aristocratic poet [Ronsard], dreaming above all of choirs resounding with the official games of ancient Greece, he left to the vulgar the traditional airs of popular songs with the same disdain that he condemned the poetic genres of preceding centuries and the naive manner of their devisers."

Thus it is that, in 1570, when Baif and musician Joachim Thibault de Courville founded their Académie de poésie et de musique under the charter of King Charles IX, for the purpose of "reuniting" poetry and music, they made sure that the doings of the Academy would be secret and that both membership in the Academy and attendance at its weekly concerts would be by invitation only. "This marked gulf between the music of the initiates and that of the masses," writes François Lesure, "appears at the moment when music is about to lose its role as accompaniment to the ordinary events of daily life." Much of the effort of the Academy would center around vers mesurés—French verse produced according to the "rules" of Greek quantitative meter, then set to music—although French is not a quantitative language like ancient Greek, where the vowel sounds had "long" or "short" durations corresponding to the "strong" or "weak" beats of the metrical foot. French is not an accentual language like English, either; in English, accent or lack of it corresponds to the strong and weak beats of meter. French poets of the Middle
Ages and Renaissance based their lineation on the total number of syllables per line, rather than meter.

The counterpart of the Italian madrigal in sixteenth-century France was the courtly, polyphonic chanson—normally referred to only as the "chanson," but distinguishable from the older chanson rustique (or rurale or populaire), which was also referred to only as "chanson," by its "literary" poetic lyrics and polyphonic musical style. (The terms "new chanson" and "chanson rustique" will be used to distinguish them.) Howard Mayer Brown observes that the chanson rustique was strophic in construction; that it usually had a refrain attached; that it was written in direct, colloquial language or outright dialect; that its subjects were those of everyday life; and that musically it was based upon a single melodic line (even when arranged in parts)—features that obviously characterize the Italian villanella, as well. Furthermore, its frequently occurring assonantal rhymes—like those of the villanesca and of the American country blues song—testify to its oral, rather than written, origins. Cardamone adds that both the villanesca and the chanson rustique often begin with stereotyped note-patterns and end their musical phrases with "one of a few cadential formulas"—features that also point to improvisatory origins. The new chanson, on the other hand, normally does not possess a refrain, is only one strophe long, and concerns itself with courtly love. And, like the music of the madrigal, the music of the new chanson is seemingly "generated" by the text: "the declamation of words is syllabic, musical phrases are molded upon each single line," explains Lesure, and "it is typical of the French chanson that the music should comment upon the text." "Eye music" can even be found in some later French chansons, such as the use of black notes to portray a somber mood. Many of the new chansons were never set to music, however, although their authors went to great lengths to attract the attention of composers.
The French poets who titled their lyrics "villanelles" were certainly aware of the prevailing cultural trend toward elitist poetry aimed at the private reader's intellect, and some of them may have been defiantly alluding to the archaic oral-improvisatory musico-poetic tradition represented by the Italian villanella, the French chanson rustique, or (in some cases) the Spanish villancico. The new and "proper" relationship between poetry and music was being advocated chiefly by Ronsard and Baif: two figures who should have their "musical" credentials examined in a closer light before we focus on the poets who challenged them.

Those literature scholars with a superficial knowledge of the "back to music" movement in sixteenth-century French poetry are fond of quoting Ronsard to the effect that:

\[
\text{et feray encores revenir (si je puis) l'usage de la lyre, aujourd'hui ressuscité en Italie, laquelle lyre seule doit et peut animier les vers et leur donner le juste poids de leur gravité. 50}
\]

"[And I will also bring back (if I can) the usage of the lyre, revived today in Italy, which lyre alone should and can animate verses and give them the fitting weight of their seriousness.]"

and:

\[
\text{La Poesie sans les instruments, ou sans la grace d'une seule ou plusieurs voix, n'est millement agreable, non plus que les instrumens sans estre animez de la melodie d'une plaintive voix. 51}
\]

"[Poetry without instruments, or without the grace of a single or many voices, is not at all agreeable, no more than instruments without being animated by the melody of a plaintive voice.]"

and:

\[
\text{Je te veux aussi bien advertir de hautement prononcer tes vers en ta chambre quand tu les feras, ou plutôt les chanter, quelque voix que puisses avoir. . . . 52}
\]
["I wish also to advise you to pronounce your verses loudly in your room when you make them, or, better yet, sing them, whatever voice you may possess. . . ."]

However, all is not what it seems. Ronsard himself was quite deaf. He had lost his hearing in 1543, when he was only nineteen years old; the disability put an end to a promising career in diplomacy.53 Ronsard himself admitted that his singing voice was poor; according to Lesure, "early deafness totally prevented Ronsard from discerning in the polyphonic art anything but a din of confused voices."54 Yet Ronsard's first major biographer, Claude Binet, claimed in 1910 that Ronsard was fond of singing his own verses, and this scant piece of "evidence," together with quotations from Ronsard's poetry (in an age when poetry was by no means autobiographical), has been the source of all subsequent scholarly references to Ronsard's supposed "musicianship," despite Binet's reputation for unreliability in factual matters.55

Of course, deafness is not necessarily an impediment to musicianship, as we know from the example of Beethoven. But there is other evidence to support the very opposite of Binet's claim. In 1552, for example, Ronsard published a collection of over one hundred fifty sonnets with ten musical settings by contemporary composers that were supposed to serve for all of them. In the words of Lesure:

The procedure of a "blanket" musical covering for a whole series of poems, although customary in the case of those chansons populaires of which Ronsard disapproved, must have seemed to the music loving audience of 1552 a challenge flung to the evolution of French music. Under Italian influence music tended toward a more and more literal rendition of the texts.56

Even in the age of the chanson populaire (rustique), however, when new lyrics had commonly been composed to the "same" tunes, those poet-performers had been free to rearrange the melody or harmony of the "archetypal" tune, as well as to embellish
and/or vary it from stanza to stanza or performance to performance. But the music for Ronsard's sonnets was "fixed" on the printed page— it had to be repeated exactly as written. John McClelland has looked closely at the "union" of one of Ronsard's sonnets with the music of the generic composition furnished for it. As might be expected, McClelland finds that Clément Jannequin's musical setting frequently "subverts" the lexical/grammatical/emotional meanings of Ronsard's poem; that it overrides and even negates important poetic features such as alliteration and caesura; and that, through repetition, it distorts the sonnet's basic tripartite structure of fourteen decasyllabic lines rhyming "abbaabbaccdeed" into a strange, twenty-three-line entity with a mixture of four-, six-, and ten-syllable lines and a rhyme scheme of "abbbcaaabbddaeeefggfhf."57 “It was inevitable,” writes Victor E. Graham of Ronsard's "blanket" sonnet-setting project, "that the composer should have one particular poem in mind for the original setting and that all others should fit it less well."58 The same publication that contained the "generic" sonnet settings also contained individual settings for two of Ronsard's odes. In these two cases, the music "fits" the first stanza of each poem, but then fails to match up to the lyrics of subsequent stanzas—and, eventually, the musical repetition becomes mind-numbingly dull:

When we turn to the music for the odes, the anomalies are even more startling. In the case of the ode addressed to Michel de l'Hospital, for instance, there is a single setting for the first strophe and the antistrophe, and another for the epode. Performance of the three types together takes about six minutes, but since the whole poem is twenty-four times that long, a complete performance would take two and a half hours, with the music for the first two parts repeated forty-eight times and that for the second part twenty-four times.

The situation is not quite so extreme in the case of the triumphal hymn on the death of Marguerite de Valois. Here performance time would not likely exceed an hour and a half with only forty repetitions of the single setting provided by
Claude Goudimel. . . one wonders whether these works were ever performed in their entirety. 59

And the references that Ronsard makes to music within his own poetry do not stand up to close scrutiny from a musical perspective, either. Howard H. Kalwies points out that both Ronsard and Du Bellay confuse the contemporary lute with the lyre of ancient Greek literature. 60 Brian Jeffery notices that one of Ronsard's poems portrays a shepherd singing while playing the bagpipe—a wind instrument. Ronsard is also guilty of changing his luth or lire into a guitare in mid-poem to fit metrical constraints. 61 Most puzzlingly, Jeffery tells us that Ronsard makes "no direct references to singing his own poetry. . . none to speaking it; only some few to writing it with a pen; but an almost infinite number to playing his poetry on an instrument." 62 Ronsard appears to have been not a musician at all, but just possessed of an ordinary humanist's musical education, which must have been tempered somewhat by his hearing impairment. Jeffery argues quite convincingly that, when Ronsard imports musical imagery or terminology into a poem, he does so as a "highly extended metaphor for the writing of poetry." 63 We are not meant to look at his musical allusions too closely.

The other main figure associated with the sixteenth-century French movement to "reunite" poetry and music is Baif. Unlike Ronsard, Baif does appear to have had musical training. Having spent his early years in Italy, where his mother was Venetian and his father Ambassador to Venice, and having traveled to Italy again as an adult from 1562-63, 64 he cannot have escaped exposure to contemporary Italian secular music. However, it was the humanistic subjugation of music to text that characterized his attempts to "restore" music to lyric verse. When Baif founded the Academy with de Courville in 1570, he did so under the humanistic assumption (based upon Greek modal theory) that exposure to orderly music would promote orderly moral behavior within a populace still suffering from "the remnants
of [musical] barbarism—i.e., from the effects of the oral tradition. The Letters Patent for Baif's Academy, issued by King Charles IX, spell out clearly that:

[it is] the opinion of many great personages, both ancient legislators and philosophers... that it is of great importance for the morals of the citizens of a town that the music current and used in that country should be retained under certain laws, for the minds of most men are formed and their behaviors influenced by its character, so that where music is disordered, there morals are also depraved, and where it is well ordered, there men are well disciplined morally. 66

To this end, Baif struggled to develop a method of assigning quantities to French vowels—going so far as to propose a revolutionary phonetic spelling system of ten vowels and nineteen consonants that would make the effort easier—so that he could produce French poems conforming to the quantitative meters of ancient Greece. Those poems would then be set to music as described by Graham, below:

When it came to setting such poems to music, the composer was always required to respect the length of the vowels. So-called "long" syllables were set to a half note (or a quarter), short ones to a quarter (or an eighth). In other words, whatever notation is used, long syllables must consistently be exactly twice the length of short ones. All voices sing the same syllable at the same time, and suspensions or passing notes are permitted only within the limits of the syllable.

In vers mesurés there can be no misplaced stresses. There are no bar-lines, and the musical accentuation is kept as light as possible to avoid distortion of the verbal or metrical rhythm. The principal aim is the complete union of the words and the music so that lyrics are no longer just a point de départ but the very raison d'être for the music. The two enhance each other to create an effect impossible with either one alone. 67

One might ask how Baif's vers mesurés experiments were received by the Sunday-afternoon audiences that convened in Baif's own home—there by membership or invitation only, and sworn by oath to keep the secret proceedings from vulgar ears. Certainly the programs never lacked for audiences. But the audiences seem to have
been there more for novelty's sake than for aesthetic enjoyment. Barbara Terry quotes Baif's contemporaries Jean Le Bon, Pontus de Tyard, and Gilbert Génébraud, who criticize him for changing the spelling system, eschewing rhyme, and serving up "odd" music, respectively. A fourth contemporary, Goujet, complains that:

Aside from the fact that vers mesurés are devoid of all harmony and that they are inferior to common prose, it is disgraceful to have to spell out each word if you wish to decipher it. The entire work of Hesiod can be read in less than two hours; yet I've spent more time than that decoding fifty lines of this translation. That is rather a high price to pay for the enjoyment of this author's [Baif's] bizarre taste. 68

The Academy's productions of measured ballets and mascarades (i.e., dances or theatrical numbers) did seem to have been crowd-pleasers, but probably only because of their added dimension of visual spectacle. Interestingly, several of the texts that Baif translated into vers mesurés were from the anonymous 1565 collection Il primo libro di villanelle, but there is no record of those pieces' specific audience reception.

Posterity has not been kind to vers mesurés, either. Frances Yates points out that it is not really possible to read one of Baif's vers mesurés poems aloud with an emphasis on the quantitative metrical scheme, since the latter clashes constantly with normal French accentuation—they cannot really stand on their own apart from their music. Terry observes that modern critics including Sainte-Beuve, Francis Wey, and C. H. C. Wright "generally agree with Baif's contemporaries that vers mesurés contributed little if anything to the advancement of French poetry." Lesure calls Jacques Maudit's measured musical compositions "monotonous," because they are "devoid of all complications which would tend to obscure the alternation of long and short 'feet' and the understanding of each verse syllable." Overall, concludes Lesure, the entire vers mesurés movement "failed to supply musicians with sufficient artistic possibilities." Terry argues that the Academy is important from the standpoint of
music history, but she cites Lesure and Yates as two of the four members of her minority position\textsuperscript{74}—and, as has been shown, they certainly do not share her belief that the music was praiseworthy.

That a perfectly good "union" of poetry and music had always existed in France, but was being repudiated by Pléiade writers as ignorant and vulgar, did not escape the attention of some contemporary observers. Guillaume des Autelz pointed out in 1549 that medieval French lyric forms such as the ballade, chant royal, and lai were quite similar to the foreign forms being advocated by Du Bellay in his \textit{Défence.} "Pourquoi," queried des Autelz, \textit{"est plus à mespriser l'élaborée ballade française que la superstitieuse sextine italienne?"}\textsuperscript{75} ["Why is the elaborated French ballade more scorned than the superstitious Italian sestina?"] Barthlêmy Aneau echoed the same theme in 1550, complaining of the \textit{corruption italique} being visited upon France, and defending medieval French fixed forms and the musical lyric tradition represented by Mellin de Saint Gelais. \textit{"Je te demande,"} he wrote:

\begin{quote}
\textit{n'est ce une mesme chose... ode, canto et chanson en trois langues divers?... Et les noms divers changent la chose? Certes non.} 76
\end{quote}

["I ask you: is it not the same thing... \textit{ode, canto} and \textit{chanson} in three different languages... And the different names change the thing? Certainly not."

The Italian musical \textit{villanella}, and particularly the \textit{villanesche} of the 1530s-1550s, was a genre that mimicked the improvised choral lyrics of the oral verse tradition. In its original, Neapolitan context, it was exactly the sort of "ignorant" musico-poetry that the Pléiade writers were condemning. But, like the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing, the \textit{villanella} had entered French culture under the guise of being an Italian "poetic" form. The timing was significant, because Italy was being held up as the model of a country with a magnificent vernacular literature that French writers wished to emulate.
In the following pages, the sixteenth-century French "poetic" villanelles will be examined for their relationship to the musical genre and for evidence of sharing a common poetic "form." A sixteenth-century French poem was normally headed by a genre designation such as Sonet, Dixaine, or Chanson, rather than by a title, when published. Only eighteen such poems with the heading "Villanelle" or "Villanesque" have been identified to date. Their authors are Mellin de Saint-Gelais (1487-1558), Joachim Du Bellay (1522-1560), Etienne Jodelle (1532-1573), Jean Passerat (1534-1602), Jacques Grévin (1538-1570), Philippe Desportes (1546-1606), Madeleine de Laubespine (Madame de Villeroy; 1546-1596), Jean Palerne (1557-1592), and Honoré d'Urfé (1567-1625).

Mellin de Saint-Gelais, the son of Rhétoriqueur poet-musician Octavien de Saint-Gelais, was— unlike Ronsard— a genuinely accomplished singer and instrumentalist. He went to Italy before his twentieth birthday to study law and stayed ten years, learning how to improvise poetic lyrics to music from the master himself, Serafino Aquilano. According to musicologist Daniel Heartz:

The mainspring of his poetic art was not the academic Petrarchism of Bembo, but the school of courtly improvisers, whose theme was "Carpe diem" and whose chief was Serafino dall'Aquila, the leading poet of strambotti. Under his influence Mellin became, according to his biographer Molinier, "Le premier des strambotistes français," or, to put it another way, the leading inventor of "poesia per musica." Like Serafino, he put his verses to music, sang them himself to the accompaniment of the lute, and was careful never to publish them, so that they might pass continually for improvisations.

As the result of his ten years in Italy, Saint-Gelais wrote in Italian as well as French. He also translated Ariosto and Trissino from Italian to French and is credited with arranging for the French translation of The Courtier.
Saint-Gelais's lyric "Villanesque" is given the publication date 1547 by McFarland, although it is not listed as having been included in the small (seventy-nine-page) collection of his work published that year by Pierre de Tours in Lyon. Rather, it appears that its first publication was in a musical collection by the composer Mornable in 1553. The piece is about a rural lad unable to sleep or eat for love of the green-eyed village lass Catin, although rejected by her at a dance. Particularly given his thorough knowledge of the Italian music of his time, Saint-Gelais seems to be linking, via his title, the rustic villanesca then popular in Italy (and not yet transformed into the more elegant villanella) with the chanson rustique of his own native oral tradition. With its longish (nine six-line stanza) length and narrative (vs. lyric) expository strategy, the lyric's overall form is more like an old-style chanson than a contemporary villanesca. Both songforms, chanson rustique and villanesca, tend to be bawdy in content, and both normally have a refrain but can appear without one. This is the lyric:

Je ne sa y que c'est qu'il me faut
Froid ou chaud;
Je ne dors plus ny je ne veille,
C'est merveille
De me voir sain et langoureux;
Je croy que je suis amoureux.

En quatre jours je ne fais pas
Deux repas,
Je ne voy ne beufs ne charrue;
J'ay la rue
Pour me promener nuit et jour,
Et fuy l'hôtel et le séjour.

Aussi il m'estoit grand besoin
D'avoir soin
Qui aurait des danses le prix:
J'y fus pris,
Et m'amusay tant à la feste,
Qu'encores m'en tourne la teste.
Je ne say oîle mal me tient,
   Mais il vient
D'avoir dansé avec Catin.
   Son tetin
Alloit au bransle, et maudit sois-je,
Il estoit aussi blanc que neige.

Elle avait son beau collet mis
   De Samis,
Son beau surcot rouge et ses manches
   Des dimanches,
Un long cordon à petits noeuds
Pendant sur ses souliers tous neufs.

Je me vy jeter ses yeux verts
   De travers;
Dont je fis des sants plus de dix,
   Et luy dis,
En luy serrant le petit doigt:
"Catin, c'est pour l'amour de toy!"

Sur ce pointct elle me laissa
   Et cessa
De faire de moy plus de conte:
   J'en eus honte
Si grande que pour me boucher
Je fy semblant de me moucher.

Je l'ay veue une fois depuis
   A son huis,
Et une autre allant au marché.
   J'ay marché
Cent pas pour luy dire deux mots.
Mais elle me tourne le dos.

Si ceste contenance fiere
   Dure guere,
A dieu grange, à dieu labourage!
   J'ay courage
De me voir gendarme un matin,
   Ou moyne, en despit de Catin. 82

["I don't know what I want,
   Hot or cold;
I neither sleep nor wake,
It's marvelous
To see me healthy and langorous;
I know that I am in love.

In four days I have not had
Two meals,
I see neither cart nor oxen;
I have the street
To walk in night and day,
And I flee the lodging house and the stay.

It also seemed important to me
To care
Who would have the prize of the dances:
I was taken there,
And amused myself much at the festival
Which still turns my head that way.

I don't know if misfortune has me,
But it comes near me
From having danced with Catin.
Her tit
Went to the branle, and cursed am I,
It was as white as snow.

She had her pretty collar made
Of fine cloth,
Her pretty red overskirt and her sleeves
Of Sunday best,
A long cord with little knots
Hanging above her new shoes.

I turned to throw her green eyes
My way;
Then I made more than ten leaps,
And told her,
Shaking my little finger at her:
"Catin, it is for love of you!"

At that point she left me
And ceased
Making a story out of me:
I was ashamed
So greatly that, as a stopgap,
I pretended to blow my nose.
I have seen her one time since
At her door,
And one time going to the market.
I walked
A hundred steps to tell her two words.
But she turned her back to me.

If that proud countenance
Stays hard,
Goodbye barn, goodbye plowing!
I have the courage
To see myself a cop one morning,
Or a monk, despite Catin."

Warner Patterson treats the lyric as a "poem," going so far as to publish it under a falsified title, "The Rejected Plowman" (in English, although the text of the lyric is in French). He prints it as an example of the French Renaissance poetic genre "villanesques and villanelles" within his multivolume survey of French poetry. McFarland, too, calls "Villanesque" a "poem"; indeed, it is "the first poem of the [villanelle] type in French." Taken out of context, such might indeed appear to be the case. But the piece was first published as a song and, even within the context of Saint-Gelais's posthumously published Oeuvres poétiques (1574), edited by Antoine de Harsy, there is abundant evidence that "Villanesque" was meant to be sung and not read. It appears as the ninth of eleven lyrics in a section titled "Chansons." The first piece in that section had been set to music by Sandrin and published in a collection of chansons nouvelles in 1548—but that information is, of course, not discernible from the text alone. The second bears the rubric: "Pour la guiterre, sur la chanson des nègres: Se lo commo non me don" ["For the guitar, on the Negroes' song: Se lo commo no me don"]. An editor identifies that mixed Spanish/Italian incipit as beginning "une chanson accommodée à une danse nommée alors morisque, dansée par des nègres" ["a song accompanying a dance called moresca, danced by Negroes"]—and one will recall that the moresca was a close cousin to the villanella
in spirit and form. The fourth lyric is about cuckoldry and carries the rubric "Pour La Guiterre", while the seventh appears under the quoted refrain lines "Joy l'hirondelle/ Que son chant renouvelle," which, as an editorial note explains, Saint-Gelais borrowed from a popular song of the time to indicate the tune to which it should be sung.

The ninth song is "Villanesque," which—unlike most poems of the day—was seized upon by two different composers to be set to music. In July 1553, it appeared as set by Mornable in a mixed-composer collection. Arcadelt set it for guitar in December 1554, and then again in 1573. According to Brooks, Arcadelt is one of two composers who introduced villanella-like songs to France in the 1550s, and his setting of "Villanesque" is among those compositions exhibiting villanella-like features such as a limited range, syllabic text-setting, clear melodic periods and cadences, note-against-note counterpoint, shifts between duple and triple meter, three high voices in close position, a prominent melody, and a second voice following the superius in thirds. Recalling that the frottola is considered to have been the musical progenitor of the villanella and that Saint-Gelais would have sung and played thousands of frottola during his years of musical apprenticeship in Italy, we can see a definite link between the French "poetic" villanesque/villanelle and the Italian musical villanesca/villanella in Brooks's report that:

Frottola rhythms and melodies occur especially frequently in Arcadelt's settings of texts by Mellin de Saint-Gelais, who was renowned for singing his own verses; [Daniel] Heartz shows that in some cases the tune associated with Saint-Gelais's texts were preexisting melodies from the frottola repertory, and hypothesizes that these tunes were used by Saint-Gelais himself and subsequently arranged by Arcadelt. "Villanesque" has nine stanzas, versus the four that are typical of the Italian villanesca from 1537-1559, and its refrainless stanza is also not typical of the Italian musico-poetic genre; however, Cardamone has found one Italian villanella that is not
only refrainless, with six lines to a stanza, but which matches Saint-Gelais's rhyme scheme exactly: "aabbcc ddeeff gghhii jjkkl."^94

The last three lyrics in Saint-Gelais's "Chansons" section are "régulières pour le chant"^95 ["regularized for song"], which means only (the vers mesurés movement being years off in the future) that they were divided into symmetrical stanzas. The eleventh lyric has a two-line refrain and the twelfth a truncated one, in the manner of a triolet.^96

Saint-Gelais may have been the first French poet to produce a sonnet, and was definitely the first to publish a madrigal.^97 There can be little doubt that he recognized the musical relationships linking the chanson rustique, frottola, and villanesca; that he was alluding to the latter in his title; and that his Villanesque was meant to be sung.

Jacques Grévin has been remembered as a Pléiade dramatist and as a Calvinist exiled from France to England for his religious beliefs, more so than as a medical doctor or as a poet. Even those modern editors who have seen fit to include him in their verse anthologies—among them Lucien Pinvert, the editor of the only reedition of Grévin's verse since the sixteenth century—have published only selected sonnets. They have ignored the other verse forms which Pinvert describes as "Chansons, Jeux olympiques (sonnets, tous décasyllabes ou octasyllabes, auxquels il manque un vers du dernier tercet), Villanesques, Baisers, Pyramide, Amourettes, Odes"^98 ["Songs, Olympic games (sonnets, all ten-syllable or eight-syllable, in which he omits one line of the last tercet), Villanesques, Kisses, Pyramids, Love Affairs, Odes"]^99. Grévin was a great coiner of new terms—he titled one sonnet sequence "La Gelodacrye," meaning a mixture of tears and smiles^99—and, certainly, the genres of Baiser, Pyramide, and Amourette will be found in no other verse collections of the time. But was "Villanesque" a mere literary coinage meaning "poem with a rustic pretext," or was Grévin alluding to the musical villanesca that was popular in Italy from the
late 1530s through the 1550s, whereupon it took on the more refined guise and name of villanella? A passage from Pinvert's biographical notice on Grévin's youthful socializing with Ronsard, Jodelle, and other lesser-known writers of the time tantalizes: "On 'folâtrait,' on improvisait des strophes, on chantait, on jouait de la lyre, de la guitare ou du bedon (tambour)"[^100] ["One frolicked, one improvised stanzas, one sang, one played the lyre, the guitar, or the drum."] Did Pinvert have access to sources showing that Grévin did, indeed, "improvise" poetic lyrics to a stringed instrument, in the manner of an Italian improvisatori—or are we just in the grip of a nineteenth-century editor with more imagination than scholarship? There is no telling, but one would certainly prefer to believe the former.

Grévin published five lyrics with the title "Villanesque" in two poetic collections published in 1560 and 1561. The first lyric, "Villanesque I," has been misattributed by Warner Patterson to Du Bellay, and McFarland repeats the error[^101] but it is definitely Grévin's:

\[
J'ay trop servi de fable au populaire
En vous amant, trop ingrate Maistresse:
Suffise vous d'avoir eu ma jeunesse.
\]

\[
J'ay trop cherché les moyens de complaire
A vos beaux yeux, causes de ma destresse:
Suffise vous d'avoir eu ma jeunesse.
\]

\[
Il vous falloit me tromper, ou m'attraire
Dedans vos lacs d'une plus fine adresse:
Suffise vous d'avoir eu ma jeunesse.
\]

\[
Car la raison commence à se distraire
De fol Amour, qui trop cruel l'oppressa:
Suffise vous d'avoir eu ma jeunesse. 102
\]

["I have too long been the talk of the town
In loving you, too ungrateful Mistress:
Suffice yourself with having had my youth.

[^100]: Source for the passage.
[^101]: Citation for the misattribution.

I have too long searched for the means of pleasing
Your beautiful eyes, causes of my distress:
Suffice yourself with having had my youth.

It is necessary that you trick me, or attract me
Inside your well-located snares:
Suffice yourself with having had my youth.

Since reason begins to amuse itself
With foolish Love, which too cruelly oppresses it:
Suffice yourself with having had my youth."

The four stanzas and rhyme scheme of "abB abB abB abB" are that of an actual
villanella, 103 and the lyric was set to music by Jean de Castro in 1575, in his
collection Livre de chansons nouvellement compose a troys parties. 104 Three-part
settings had been long out of fashion on account of the popularity of the polyphonic
chanson, and thus it is possible that the style of the musical composition itself may
reflect the influence of the Italian villanella.

Grevin's "Villanesque II. En faveur d'une damoiselle" is long, like Saint-
Gelais's—eight stanzas—but its rhyme scheme of "ababCC dedeCC," etc., matches
that of a four-stanza Italian villanella documented by Cardamone. 105 The
penultimate refrain line changes slightly in the last three stanzas. It was also set to
music by Castro in his 1575 collection of three-part songs. 106 The first stanza is
printed below to illustrate the rhyme scheme:

Puisque mon cueur
J'ay mis en la puissance
D'un seul vainqueur
Qui en ha jouissance,
N'espere plus envieux
Recevoir mieux. 107

["Seeing that my heart
I put in the power
Of a sole conqueror,
Who possesses it,
Don't get your hopes up
To receive more."]
"Villanesque III" is, like I, identical to an Italian villanella in form. Its four stanzas made up of a couplet plus a two-line refrain are typical of the genre, and its particular rhyme scheme of "aaBB ccBB ddBB eeBB" nearly matches two "real" villanelle catalogued by Cardamone ("aaBB ccBB ddBB eeBB ffBB" and "aaBB ccBB ddBB eeBB efef"). The only thing "rustic" about it is its refrain; the language is refined, as one would expect from the dramatist who recoiled from the "crudity" of farce, and as was true of the Italian musical villanella itself circa 1560 and 1561, when Grévin was publishing. The first verse is as follows:

Reçoy, Mignonne, entre tes bras ma vie,
Reçoy mon cœur & mon ame asservie,
Et pour guerdon donne ce don de grace
Que je pourchasse. 110

["Receive, darling, between your arms my life,
Receive my heart and my servant soul,
And for a reward, give that gift of grace
That I pursue."]

The lyric, like the two preceding ones, was set by Castro in 1575. Grévin's "Villanesque III" is unlike the first three in several respects: it begins with the refrain (burden), it has an odd number of syllables in most lines (seven), it does not match any villanella rhyme scheme catalogued by Cardamone, and it was not set to music by Castro. It is possible that it may resemble a Spanish villancico, which begins with its refrain, and then "glosses" upon it in the stanza proper. The first two stanzas of its "ABBA cddcef ABBA ghhgijji" rhyme scheme are printed below:

Brasselets entrelassez
Des beaux cheveux de Madame,
Vous resuscitez la flamme
De mes feux desja passez.

Beaux brasselets, s'il advient
Que d'une autre entrelasseure
Je présente une ceinture
A celle dont mon mal vient:
Puissiez-vous si fortement estreindre
La rondeur de mes deux bras,
Qu'ôres que je fusse las
En volonté ne soit moindre. 112

["Interwoven bracelets
Of Madame’s beautiful hair,
You revive the flame
Of my fires already past.

Beautiful bracelets, if it happens
That from another interlacement
I present a girdle
To the one from whom my misfortune comes:
Will you be able to clasp as strongly
The roundness of my two arms,
So that when I am weak
Her willpower is no less?"

Fifth and last is “Villanesque V,” which is eight stanzas long and has a four-line refrain. The last two lines of the refrain have seven syllables, while all other lines have five, and the odd numbers are certainly Italian in derivation. The stanza form is essentially three couplets plus a refrain—an expanded villanella—but the rhyme scheme of ababcDDEE fgfghhDDEE etc. does not match any of Cardamone’s templates. It does not appear to have been set. The first stanza is as follows:

Puisque de mon cœur
Amour s’est saisi,
Et qu’en mon ardeur
J’ai si bien choisi,
Puissay-je à jamais
Vivre dans ses rais,
Puissay-je toujours
Estre serf d’amours,
Ou mourir pour ta beauté
Preuve de ma fermeté. 113

["Since from my heart
Love was seized,
And in my ardor

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I have chosen so well,
May I forever
Live in his rays,
May I always
Be a slave of love,
Or die for your beauty,
Proof of my steadfastness."

At the risk of turning out to be as wrong as Vauquelin de la Fresnaye's 1865 editor Georges Pellissier, who asserted, in a footnote, that Grévin was the one who put the villanelle "à la mode chez nous"114 ["in the style with us now"]. I will venture to say that it does seem extremely likely that Grévin was writing his lyrics with the musical villanesca/villanella in mind.

It seems a bit surprising to find the author of La deffence among the small group of poets who wrote villanelle lyrics—particularly when one realizes that Joachim Du Bellay, like Ronsard, went deaf fairly early in life. Du Bellay lost much of his hearing during a long illness when he was in his late twenties; thus, the madrigals and villanelle of Rome would not have exerted much of a siren pull on him when he visited there in the service of his Cardinal cousin, Jean Du Bellay, between 1553 and 1557, when he was in his thirties.115 In La deffence, Du Bellay attacks the old-fashioned musico-poetic style of Saint-Gelais and a female counterpart, Pernette du Guillet:

Sur toutes choses, prens garde que ce genre de poème soit eloigné du vulgaire, enrichy & illustré de motz propres & epithetes non oysifz, orné de graves sentences, & varié de toutes manieres de couleurs & ornementz poétiques, non comme un Laissez la verde couleur, Amour avecques Psyches, O combien est heureux, & autres telz ouvrages, mieux dignes d'estre nommez chansons vulgaires qu'odes ou vers lyriques.

116

["Above all, see that this kind of poem be far removed from the vulgar, enriched and made illustrious with proper words and epithets by no means idle, adorned with grave sentences, and varied with all manner of poetical colours and ornaments: not like a Laissez la verde couleur, Amour avecques Psyches,

118

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According to the editor of the 1948 Henri Chamard edition of *La deffence*, the first and third of Du Bellay's allusions are to songs by Saint-Gelais published in the rare 1547 pamphlet of his work, and the second to a song by Pernette du Guillet published in 1545. Additionally, in the preface to his 1549 *Vers lyriques*, Du Bellay had reacted disgustedly to the idea of alternating masculine and feminine rhyme endings "comme on use en ces vaudevilles et chansons qui se chantent d'un mesme chant par tous les couplets" ["as one uses in street-songs and chansons where the same tune is sung for all the couplets"]; i.e., he had no secret, repressed love for the *chanson rustique*, and probably would not have liked the repetitive music of the Italian *villanella*, were he able to hear it. But precisely because he could not hear it very well, the *villanella* would have been encountered by Du Bellay primarily as a "poetic" form; and the fact that it came from Italy—the country whose body of literature French writers were then striving to emulate and equal—would have rendered any connection to the scorned *chanson rustique* unimaginable.

In "Villanelle" (*En ce moys délicieux*), first published in *Divers jeux rustiques* (1558), the object of the poet's unrequited love, Marguerite, is compared to a grass snake hiding under a flower:

*En ce moys délicieux,*
*Qu'amer toute chose incite,*
*Un chacun à qui mieux mieux*  
*La douceur du temps imite,*  
*Mais une rigueur despite*  
*Me fait pleurer mon malheur.*  
*Belle et franche Marguerite,*  
*Pour vous j'ay ceste douleur.*

*Dedans vostre oeil gracieux*  
*Toute douceur est escritte,*  
*Mais la douceur de voz yeux*  
*En amertume est confite.*
Souvent la couleuvre habite
Dessous une belle fleur.
Belle et franche Marguerite,
Pour vous j'ay ceste douleur.

Or puis je deviens vieux,
Et que rien ne me profite,
Desesperé d'avoir mieulx,
Je m'en iray rendre hermite,
Je m'en iray rendre hermite.
Pour mieulx pleurer mon malheur,
Belle et franche Marguerite,
Pour vous j'ay ceste douleur.

Mais si la faveur des Dieux
Au bois vous avoit conduittte,
Où, despéré d'avoir mieulx,
Je m'en iray rendre hermite,
Peult estre que ma poursuite
Vous feroit changer couleur.
Belle et franche Marguerite,
Pour vous j'ay ceste douleur. 120

["In this charming month
When love prompts all things,
Each one to whom better and better
The sweetness of the time imitates,
But, despite it, a harshness
Makes me weep my unhappiness.
Beautiful and fresh Marguerite,
For you I have this sadness.

Within your gracious eye
All sweetness is written,
But the sweetness of your eyes
Is steeped in bitterness.
Often the grass snake lives
Underneath a pretty flower.
Beautiful and fresh Marguerite,
For you I have this sadness.

Now since I grow old
And nothing profits me,
Despairing of having better,
I'm going to go be a hermit,
I'm going to go be a hermit,  
The better to weep my unhappiness,  
Beautiful and fresh Marguerite,  
For you I have this sadness.

But if the favor of the Gods  
Had conducted you to the woods,  
Where, despairing of having better,  
I'm going to go be a hermit,  
It could be that my pursuit  
Would make you change color.  
Beautiful and fresh Marguerite,  
For you I have this sadness."

Brooks points out that Du Bellay "is employing the style bas here—not the elevated style he uses in sonnets, for example. There's a clear difference in register." She suggests that the use of the "low" style may be why Du Bellay "thinks of it as a villanelle." The lyric has four stanzas, which is also typical of Italian villanelle, and one can also observe a "turn" or rhyme link between the stanza and the refrain (bcBC) and an Italianate count of seven syllables per line. The rhyme scheme of ababbcBC is more complicated than those of the Italian villanelle catalogued by Cardamone but, interestingly, two of the so-called villanelles napolitane that would be published in 1578 in Caietain's Second livre d'airs, chansons, villanelles napolitanes & espagnolles would have comparably complex stanza forms: one with an eleven-line stanza, including four refrain lines, of "aabbccd+R," and one with a refrainless eight-line stanza of "abababcc."^122

Du Bellay's villanelle was quickly appropriated by three composers for a musical setting. Only one year after its "poetic" publication, it came out in a 1559 collection of chansons by various composers and authors, in a setting by Nicolas. The collection was so popular that it was reprinted in 1561, 1565, 1569, 1572, 1575, and 1583. Jacob Arcadelt set it next: his version appeared in 1565 in a collection dominated by di Lassus chansons. That collection, too, saw reprintings in 1567, 1570, 1573, 1575, 1578, 1584, and 1591. Five years later, Pierre Certon
set it in his 1570 *Les meslanges*. It can thus be assumed that the French bookbuying public associated Du Bellay's lyric with one or another of its musical settings.

Du Bellay's third stanza contains, as its "bb" lines, the twice-repeated phrase *Je m'en iray rendre hermite*, and it appears once in the fourth stanza. Especially since the lyric was popularized as a song, the line may well be what sparked a "takeoff" sonnet by Desportes (*Je me veux rendre hermite*) and a response by Passerat (*Vous voulez estre hermite*), both of which were set to music by Caietain and published in a collection that also featured eight of the composer's *villanelles napolitane*—thus ensuring that those two poets, who also titled lyrics of their own "Villanelle," had to have been exposed to the Italian musical *villanella*.

Warner Patterson asserts that the poems "Villanelle" (*J'ai trop servi de fable au populaire*) and "D'un Vanneur de Blé aux vents" are a "villanelle" and "villanesque" by Du Bellay, respectively, and McFarland accepts his authority. However, *J'ai trop servi* does not appear in Du Bellay's six-volume *Oeuvres poétiques*, while it most definitely does appear in the collected works of Grévin. And nothing contextual to the poem "D'un Vanneur de Blé aux vents"—an adaptation of a Latin poem by Naugerius—indicates that Du Bellay himself considered it a villanesque. One suspects that Patterson was stretching for examples to prove his claim that the villanelle and villanesque were fixed poetic forms of a stature with (though less popular than) the sonnet.

Etienne Jodelle's "Villanelle" (*Cent foys j'ay tasché me distraire*) consists of nine four-line stanzas rhyming abbA1, accA2, addA1, etc. Jodelle's poem is more than twice as long as an Italian *villanella*, and the true *villanella* stanza never exhibits an odd number of couplet lines in the stanza proper, exclusive of the refrain. There is, however, at least one Italian *villanella* (or, more accurately, *villanesca*) with an alternating refrain; it appeared in the first, and anonymous, 1537 musical
collection, indicating that alternation might have been a practice more common to the oral tradition than the written. McFarland has pointed out that Jodelle's alternating refrain predates that of Passerat's famous "Villanelle" (*J'ai perdu ma tourterelle*), but, aside from its refrain, the poem has nothing in common with either the Italian *villanella* or the French *chanson rustique*. And the spirit of those two musico-poetic genres ran counter to that of Jodelle's writing: he took the dictates of *La défense* to heart, writing Italianate comedies to drive out the ghosts of French morality plays and farces, and penning odes, sonnets, elegies, and the like to bury his own native lyric tradition. But he does seem to have had some musical knowledge: three *chansons* are titled "Branle"—a courtly and fashionable dance of the time—and another is titled "Chanson divisée en trois airs, et chacun air en six stances," implying that its three parts are to be sung to three different tunes—although each part is identical in poetic form, and could be sung to the same music. Jodelle also uses the descriptive word *chapitre* in the title of several poems: *chapitre* is the French translation of the Italian *capitolo*, which was one of the lyric genres sung to formulaic melodies by *improvvisatore*.

Jodelle also knew enough about music to know that his poetic fortunes would rise if he were to get a poem set by Orlando di Lasso. As early as 1560, we find Jodelle praising a patron's musically talented daughter in verse, claiming that she would be the best possible interpreter of poems of his set to music by Lasso—which, however, hadn't happened. When, in 1570, Le Roy and Ballard published a *Mellange* of Lasso's *chansons* in Paris, they did so with a Latin verse tribute to Lasso by Jodelle displayed prominently up front. But still, Jodelle's modern editor Enea Balmas explains, the composer neglected Jodelle, until in 1571 Jodelle was driven to publish "le 'Chapitre en faveur d'Orlande excellent Musicien'... dans le but transparent d'obtenir du célèbre musicien qu'il mette en musique quelques-uns de ses poèmes. Roland de Lassus est à Paris dès les premiers mois de l'année" [*the
'Capitolo in Honor of Orlando the Excellent Musician'. . . with the transparent aim of obtaining from the celebrated musician that he set several of his poems to music. Orlando di Lassus was in Paris since the first months of the year"]. Lasso was, of course, the greatest of the composers arranging villanella melodies, and it is entirely possible that the groveling Jodelle might have titled his un-villanellelike poem "Villanelle" in the hopes of snagging Lasso's attention. So far as we know, the poem was not set to music.

Jean Passerat, the deviser of the "form" of the villanelle as we know it today, cannot have escaped getting a sound musical education in his youth. According to his first biographer, Papire Masson, Passerat's early studies were supervised by his uncle, Jean Thiénot, who was a canon at the local cathedral of Saint-Pierre in Troyes. Another Thiénot, Nicolas (Passerat's mother's maiden name was Nicole Thiénot and the town was small, so the relation is likely), was named Master of Latin Grammar at Saint-Pierre's cathedral school in 1549, in charge of educating the eight choirboys attached to the cathedral. While Passerat himself was not enrolled in the cathedral school, but rather entrusted to a private tutor under the close monitoring of his Uncle Jean, it seems likely that Jean Thiénot, with or without the additional support of Nicolas, would have wanted his nephew to acquire something of the musical education that he had himself received to be a canon, and that was being taught to the boys at Saint-Pierre. Standard Renaissance educational practice grouped musical theory with arithmetic and geometry under the trivium category of "mathematics", however, choir schools also imparted practical training in music, as described by music scholar Isabelle Cazeaux:

Perhaps the most important center of music education was the choir school, or maîtrise, whose aim was to train boys in sight-reading and improvised discant and fauxbourdon, written notation, plainchant, polyphony, and grammar (which
included reading, writing, and literature) so that they would serve their chapel well.

Although the program of studies varied from cathedral to cathedral and from time to time—some maîtrises stressed academic studies more than musical ones, and vice versa—music and grammar were always taught. 140

A sixteenth-century manuscript source from Troyes claims that Passerat was the youthful pupil of Jacques de Launay, who was a canon at Troyes's collegiate church of Saint-Etienne. Passerat's modern biographer Roger Patterson accepts that both accounts of Passerat's education were true and, from our perspective, such would only increase the likelihood that the poet received practical as well as theoretical musical training. 141

Of extreme interest is the fact that, in 1564, Passerat organized the twenty-four-day entrée of the new King Charles IX and his mother, Catherine de Medicis, into Troyes. Passerat was responsible not only for writing the official poetry for the event, but also for organizing the decoration of the royal route with arches, sculptures, and tableaux by a team of fourteen artists, and for arranging the many musical performances that would greet the young king and his mother. 142 In the 1980s, Victor E. Graham discovered a long-lost account of the entrée into Troyes that had been published in Lyon in 1564. It describes how the royal pair were greeted in front of the church of St. Urbain by its deans and canons, dressed up in capes, singing a motet; then how trumpets, oboes, and clarinets sounded as they passed the cathedral of Saint-Pierre. Further along the route, drumming accompanied the pageantry of costumed "savages" riding on horses and donkeys with bows and arrows. More fanfare of trumpets, drums, and fifes resounded as the honorees entered the cathedral. After the cathedral choir sang an oratory, bells tolled, and a musical Te Deum was sung to the kneeling king to organ accompaniment, "trèsmelodieusement." 143 Although not all of the artistic
decorations were finished on time, Passerat does seem to have done an excellent job of organizing the music.

Like most of his fellow poets, Passerat visited Italy (circa 1567, when the villanella was popular) and had other important contacts with contemporary Italian culture. Dennis Lambin, who was secretary to the Cardinal de Tournon in Italy from 1549-1559, and Marc-Antoine Muret, who fled sodomy charges in France in 1554 to become secretary to the Cardinal d'Este, were two of Passerat's closest friends. Another close friend and fellow student of Passerat's while studying civil law at the University of Bourges from 1564 to 1567 was Alphonse Delbène, the son of a Florentine expatriate; the older Delbène was then employed at the court of Turin. Numerous biographers have speculated that Catherine Delbène, who was related to Alphonse (although the precise relationship is unclear), was the object of Passerat's unrequited love poems, including one cryptically titled "Sur le trespas de feu Mademoiselle [sic] Cat. Del." Also like other poets of his time, Passerat makes many general references to music in his poems; but, as has been seen from the example of Ronsard, such evidence does not necessarily imply real-life knowledge or skill. He has a lovely sonnet about a barge full of musicians, a series of quatrains addressed to a girl learning to write and to play the lute, and another sequence of quatrains to be recited to the lyre. He even wrote two odes and one elegy in vers mesurés, although he had earlier cautioned King Henri III, in verse, not to waste time and money on Baïf's Academy when civil war was threatening France. Late in life, when he had not been paid a stipend for some time on account of those same civil wars, he wrote a very funny poem petitioning the king for the court jester's job, for which he thought a poet would be well suited: "L'un chante des sonets, l'autre danse aux sonnettes" ["the one sings sonnets, the other dances to little bells"].
We know for a fact that Passerat was exposed to the Italian musical villanella in 1578. That was the year that both Desportes's sonnet *Je me veux rendre hermite* and Passerat's reply sonnet *Vous voulez estre hermite* were set to music by Caietain and published in his songbook containing *villanelles napolitanes*, as well. Thus, we can prove without a doubt that Passerat was exposed to the "real" Italian villanella four years after he wrote "Villanelle" (*J'ay perdu ma tourterelle*), and if he had somehow managed to escape exposure to it while in Italy, or through correspondence with his Italian-resident friends, or from the Parisian publication of the wildly popular Lasso songbook containing six villanelle in 1565 (reprinted in 1567, 1570, 1573, and two times subsequently), then at least he did not change the titles of the two poems he had in manuscript titled "Villanelle" as a result of the belated exposure.

One enigmatic reference to Passerat in relation to music should also be mentioned here: Passerat was the author of a very witty Latin "paradoxical encomium" on "nothing" (titled *Nihil*, 1581) that enjoyed immediate popularity, and which was subsequently translated/adapted into French (by Philippe Girard, as *Rien*) and English (by Edward Daunce, as *The Praye of Nothing*). Girard's translation was published with two other similar pieces in the collection *Rien. Quelque chose*. *Tout* is still unknown. Of the entire collection, however, Jean Demons wrote in 1594: "le sieur Passerat... & encore avec lui deux autres qui n'ont voulu estre nommez, ont composé & chanté un Triot musical" ["Mr. Passerat... and with him two others who did not wish to be named, have composed and sung a musical trio"]. Roger Patterson observes that Demons lived in Amiens and not Paris, which is why he did not know the identity of the *Quelque chose* author; so Demons's allusion to the collection in a musical context could be a similar product of ignorance.

127
arising from geographical isolation, if not an extended metaphor—but it certainly is intriguing.

Passerat, who is often portrayed as a great "experimenter" and "innovator" of poetic form, was in fact a very old-fashioned, if not archaic, poet when writing in his native French. Numerous critics have remarked on his fidelity to the Marotic tradition at a time when Clément Marot was held in low repute by the "reigning" Pléiade poets; and, of course, Marot wrote lyrics of the old-fashioned sort condemned by Du Bellay in his *Deffence*. Yet Passerat was friendly with, and respected by, Pléiade writers: he and Ronsard exchanged warm letters, Ronsard dedicated a poem to him, Passerat wrote a sonnet in response to the one by Desportes, and Passerat even tried his hand at *vers mesurés*. Still, Merken finds in his French poems a "simple" or "low" style; direct and colloquial language; a dearth of learned allusions or terms; the conspicuous absence of many pronouns and articles; and the definite influence of the French comic narrative tradition—^156—all despite Ronsard's and Du Bellay's prohibitions against them. Passerat himself writes, metaphorically, in a passage of poetry addressed to Ronsard: "*Combien que trop soit bas de mes chordes le son,/ Pour monter à l'accord de ta docte chanson*"^[1]^ "Too low are the sounds of my own strings/ To rise to the harmony of your learned song"]. Passerat's contemporary Antoine Le Roy claimed that, as Passerat was dying, his confessor destroyed Passerat's manuscript commentary on Rabelais's *Pantagruel*.^[158] Rabelais was the ultimate French "low" stylist who, one might remember, had been condemned and banished from France with Marot in the year 1535. Merken observes that Passerat favors the decasyllabic line and "uncomplicated stanza forms such as the quatrain, sizain, and huitain"^[159]—hardly what one would expect from an "innovator." Passerat even has a poem in which a spurned lover stands outside his mistress's door offering up gifts of "aubades, lais, virelais,
chansons, & ballades—lovely gifts from Passerat's perspective, perhaps, but repugnant to his peers (and, alas, to the mistress).

This, then, is the poet who "invented" the form of the villanelle as we know it today. And, while many writers have implied or stated outright that Passerat wrote a great many villanelles, the truth is that he wrote only two. The first—whose year of composition, like that of most of Passerat's lyrics, is not known, but whose rustic style is to the second specimen as the villanesca to the villanella—is "Villanelle" (Qui en sa fantasie), as follows:

Qui en sa fantasie
Loge la jalousie,
Bien tost cocu sera
Et ne s'en sauvera.

Qu'on mette en une cage
C'est oiseau sans plumage.
Bien tost cocu sera,
Et ne s'en sauvera.

A contempler sa mine,
Qu'une coesse embeguine,
Bien tost cocu sera,
Et ne s'en sauvera.

Son regard se rapporte
Au Tor qui cornes porte,
Bien tost cornu sera
Et ne s'en sauvera.

Son front, qui bien retire
A un cornu satyre,
Bien tost cornu sera
Et ne s'en sauvera. 161

["Who in his imagination Lodges jealousy Soon will become a cuckold And cannot escape.
What one puts in a cage
Is a bird without plumage.
Soon will become a cuckold
And cannot escape.

In contemplating his appearance,
But an infatuated husk,
Soon will become a cuckold
And cannot escape.

His look will resemble
The Tor who wears horns,
Soon will become homed
And cannot escape.

His forehead, which brings back
That of a horned satyr,
Soon will become homed
And cannot escape.

McFarland has pointed out that the form of this poem is very close to that of the
Italian villanella, which is true, but in printing it McFarland omits the fifth of its five
stanzas, then compounds the error by pointing out "the jocular variation in the refrain
in the last stanza," which should actually be the next-to-last stanza, were the
poem whole (the variation occurs in both the fourth and fifth stanzas). The net effect
of McFarland's error is to render Passerat's lyric much closer to the form of a typical
Italian villanella than it is; nearly all villanelle have four stanzas, but Passerat's, like
it or not, has five.

But Passerat's four-line stanza consisting of a couplet combined with a two-
line refrain is, according to Cardamone, one of the two most common Italian
villanella forms between 1537 and 1559. His odd-numbered (seven-) syllable lines,
although sometimes irregular, are also Italianate. The lyric's rhyme scheme of "aaBB
ccBB ddBB eeBB ffBB" is identical to that of one Italian villanella identified by
Cardamone and— incredibly! — Cardamone's specimen also has five, rather than the
normal four, stanzas. The tendency to vary the refrain in the last stanza (which
Passerat does in his last two stanzas) also appears in over a third of the villanelle catalogued by Cardamone. And it goes without saying that the rustic, farcical subject matter of Passerat’s lyric, studded with sexual double-entendres and slang, is in keeping with the spirit of the villanesca. One would not be surprised to discover that Passerat’s words were shaped to fit an actual villanella tune.

Passerat’s second villanelle, "Villanelle" (J’ay perdu ma tourterelle) (hereafter referred to by its incipit) is the template for the villanelle "form" that has enriched English literature with such poems as Dylan Thomas’s "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" and Elizabeth Bishop’s "One Art," to name just two. Its five tercets and final quatrain in the rhyme scheme "A1bA2 abA1 abA2 abA2 abA1A2" are a familiar pattern to the twentieth-century reader’s eye, but at the time of the poem’s writing, they constituted only a nonce form. Its lines, like those of Passerat’s other villanelle, are of seven syllables, imitating Italian rather than French prosody. The use of the familiar tu and of the term femelle, which connotes a female animal rather than a female human, indicate that the poet is addressing a literal turtledove who, like the poet, is grieving for his lost mate:

J’ay perdu ma Tourterelle:
Est-ce point celle que j’ay?
Je veus aller après elle.

Tu regretes ta femelle,
Helas! aussi fai-je moy,
J’ay perdu ma Tourterelle.

Si ton Amour est fidelle,
Aussi est ferme ma foy,
Je veus aller après elle.

Ta plainte se renouvelle;
Toujours plaindre je me doy:
J’ay perdu ma Tourterelle.
En ne voyant plus la belle
Plus rien de beau je ne voy:
Je veus aller après elle.

Mort, que tant de fois j'appelle,
Pren ce qui se donne à toy:
J'ay perdu ma Tourterelle,
Je veus aller après elle. 165

["I have lost my Turtledove.
Can that not be her I hear?
I am going after her.

You miss your female.
Alas, I do mine, as well.
I have lost my Turtledove.

If your Love is faithful,
My faith is firm, as well.
I am going after her.

Your moaning starts again;
It's my duty to complain:
I have lost my Turtledove.

In not seeing the beautiful one,
I see nothing of beauty any more.
I am going after her.

Death, whom many times I call,
Take that which is given you:
I have lost my Turtledove.
I am going after her."

Yet, with all that has been written about J'ay perdu ma tourterelle by scholars of fixed poetic form, no one has yet examined it in its original context. The villanelle was written not as a stand-alone poem, but as one of a cycle of thirty-three poems produced by Passerat to commemorate the death of the king's beloved mistress. The title of the entire sequence is "Le tombeau de Fleurie pour Niré"166 ["The Monument for Fleurie by Niré"]—"Fleurie" being the pet name for the mistress, and "Niré" being the pseudonym for the king. It was long believed, based on an editorial
note by Prosper Blanchemain in the 1880 edition of Passerat's *Poésies françaises*, that the sequence was written for King Henri IV upon the death of Gabrielle d'Estrées in 1599. The error was perpetuated by Edgar von Mojsisovics, who wrote a 1907 German-language thesis on Passerat, and it was picked up by McFarland—although McFarland referred to "Prosper" Blanchemain as "Pierre," and gave the date of the poem as "c. 1590" rather than "1599." Quite aside from the fact that Passerat was both blind and gravely ill in 1599, and could not possibly have produced the *Tombeau* in his physical condition, Roger Sorg published an article in 1925 which pointed out that Passerat's sequence bears many striking parallels to the *Tombeaux* written by Ronsard, Desportes, and Amadis Jamyn upon the death of Henri III's mistress Marie de Clèves in 1574. Both of Passerat's recent biographers, Merken and Roger Patterson, have accepted Sorg's redating without dispute. Marie de Clèves died in childbirth, while Gabrielle d'Estrées died either of heatstroke or poisoning: the redating also explains Passerat's once-puzzling reference to Fleurie as being pregnant at the time of her death. "Niré," thought to be an anagram for "[H]enri," would of course fit either king, but the rhyme between "Marie" and "Fleurie" is another clue to the mistress's true identity.

From our perspective, the year 1574 is vastly more interesting than 1599, because the former falls during the period of the villanella's peak popularity in France, based upon the dates of villanella songbook publications and reprintings. Passerat had also been in Italy only six or seven years before, circa 1567, and one of the other poems in the *Tombeau* sequence is his "Sonet" (*Retournant d'Italie au bel air de la France*) ["Sonnet" (Returning from Italy to the good air of France)], the only poem of his that mentions the trip. Also, one of the sonnets in the sequence begins with Passerat's reworking of a quatrain-long simile from Serafino Aquilano—although, unlike Saint-Gelais, Passerat could not have encountered the famous improvvisatori while still alive.
From the seventeenth century on in France, asserts Belgian music scholar Charles van den Borren in his article "Esquisse d'une histoire des 'Tombeaux' musicaux" ["Draft of a History of Musical Tombeaux"], the term Tombeau signified a musical tribute to deceased members of royalty, famous artists, or, occasionally, lesser-known persons held in high esteem by musicians. Although van den Borren traces a consistent history of French musical tributes to deceased "celebrities" from medieval times through the sixteenth century, he claims that the first usage of the term Tombeau for such a tribute occurred between 1636 and 1639. He makes no mention of the many "poetic" Tombeaux written in the second half of the sixteenth century by Ronsard, Desportes, Jamyn, Passerat, and other writers. Can it be that these sequences were intended, at least in part, to be combined with music in actual performance? Such was certainly the case with other types of court-occasional "poems" such as mascarades, epithalames, and those for royal entrées, although they too are published in poetic collections with no indications of their link to music.

Another point that has not yet been mentioned in connection with J'ay perdu ma tourterelle is that the conceit of the solitary turtledove mourning for his lost mate was a common theme of the chansons published in popular French musical collections of the time. Of course, as Sylvia Huot points out, it was a common conceit even in the Middle Ages, when the widowed turtledove was meant to symbolize the Church, and its lost "mate," Christ. But, in sixteenth-century French song, the metaphor's tenor becomes human emotion for another human, not spiritual longing. Two different chansons on that theme appear in Lasso's 1570 Recueil du mélange d'Orlande de Lassus, the first beginning "Comme la Tourterelle languit jusqu'à la mort,/ Aiant perdu sa belle, compagnie & confort" ["As the Turtledove languishes up until death,/ Having lost his beautiful one, company, and comfort"], and the second "On t'attend ta maîtresse, ami ne dis doux port,/ Mais un lieu de tristesse, et sans aucun confort" ["Where your mistress awaits you, friend,
don't say *sweet port,* But a place of sadness, with scarcely any comfort*.175

*Comme la tourterelle* was also set by Castro in 1575 (in the collection with the Grévin *villanesques*) and by Philippe de Monte the same year; *Ou t'attend sa maitresse* appears in Castro's collection, but not de Monte's.176 Ronsard, too, wrote a *tourterelle* lyric: his sonnet, set to music by Castro in 1576, begins "*Que dis tu, que fais tu, pensive tourterelle?*" ["What are you saying, what are you doing, thoughtful turtledove?"]177

The widowed turtledove shows up in at least one other Passerat poem, too, interesting for its metaphorical associations, in the poet's mind, with professional musicians:

> Rossignol Roy de bois, vous Tourtre solitaire,
> Linotes, & Tarins, & vous Chardonnerets:
> Gentils musiciens des champs & des forests. . . 178

["Nightingale king of the woods, you solitary turtledove, Linnets, and tarins, and you goldfinches, Gentle musicians of the woods and forests. . ."]

It is almost certain that, at the time of writing *J'ay perdu ma tourterelle,* Passerat knew what a *villanella alla napolitana* was; and there had to have been a good reason why he titled his lyric "Villanelle" and not "Chanson." In the case of his (presumably) earlier villanelle, the reason is obvious: its form and subject matter are that of a real Italian *villanesca.* But *J'ay perdu ma tourterelle* is quite unlike most *villanelle* in form—aside from the 1537 Italian example with an alternating refrain, and the possible poetic example of Jodelle's "Villanelle" (*Cent foys j'ay tasché me distraire*). Its series of tercets ending with a final quatrain is more like an Italian *capitolo* (French *chapitre*)—one of the lyric poetic forms sung to the *frottole* tunes from which the *villanella* is believed to have emerged—than like a symmetrical *villanella* lyric. But the *capitolo* is in *terza rima* (aba bcb cdc . . . xaax) and lacks a refrain, so the similarity ends there.
What seems likely is that Passerat meant for his tribute to the king's dead mistress to be accompanied by music—and, specifically, not by the polyphonic music of the *chanson* and of *vers mesurés* then dominant in sophisticated French circles, but by the simple kind of music associated with the *villanella*—a single voice carrying the melody, followed closely by a stringed instrument or by two voices subordinate to it in harmony. Eventually, the term "air" would come into usage to signify just this type of monodic musical setting for strophic poetry but, as of the date of Marie de Cléves's death, its coinage was brand new.\(^{179}\)

Philippe Desportes, the favorite poet of King Henri III, made his own trip to Italy in the company of the then-future monarch. Desportes's familiarity with, and admiration for, Italian culture is apparent from the fact that approximately a third of his sonnets are translations or adaptations from fifteenth-century Italian poets.\(^{180}\) Not surprisingly, Desportes wrote two villanelles. "Villanelle" (*Rozette, pour un peu d'absence*) was, as discovered by Sorg and confirmed by Raymond and by Desportes's modern editor Victor E. Graham, written for Madeleine de Laubespine, Madame de Villeroy (who was married to Nicolas de Neufville, seigneur de Villeroy), soon after Desportes's return from traveling abroad in 1575. Madeleine herself was a poet and translator of Ovid; Raymond informs us that Ronsard referred to her as his "daughter." In time she, too, would become a "favorite" of King Henri III.\(^{181}\) Following is Desportes's poem:

*Rozette pour un peu d'absence*

*Vostre coeur vous avez changé.*

*Et moy sachant ceste inconstance*

*Le mien autre part j'ay rangé:*

*Jamais plus beauté si legere*

*Sur moy tant de pouvoir n'aura:
Nous verrons volage Bergere*

*Qui premier s'en repentira.*
Tandis qu'en pleurs je me consume
Maudissant cet esloignement,
Vous qui n'aymez que par coutume,
Caressiez un nouvel amant.
Jamais legere girouette
Au vent si tost ne se vira:
Nous verrons, Bergere Rozette,
Qui premier s'en repentira.

Où sont tant de promesses saintes,
Tant de pleurs versez en partant?
Est-il vray que ces tristes plaintes
Sortissent d'un coeur inconstant?
Dieux que vous estes mensongere!
Maudit soit qui plus vous croira:
Nous verrons, volage Bergere,
Qui premier s'en repentira.

Celuy qui a gaigné ma place
Ne vous peut aymer tant que moy:
Et celle que j'ayme vous passe
De beauté, d'Amour et de foy.
Gardez bien vostre amitié neuve,
La mienne plus ne varira,
Et puis nous verrons à l'espreuve
Qui premier s'en repentira. 182

["Rozette, during a brief absence
You have had a change of heart,
And I, knowing that inconstancy,
For my own part have ranged:
No more will beauty so fickle
Have so much power over me:
We will see, flighty Shepherdess,
Who will be the first to repent.

While I consume myself in tears
Cursing that absence,
You who love but by habit
Caress a new lover.
Always a light weathercock
Will quickly turn with the wind:
We will see, Shepherdess Rozette,
Who will be the first to repent.
Where are all the sacred promises,
Full of tears shed in parting?
Is it true that those sad moans
Came out of a fickle heart?
God but you are lying!
Cursed be he who believes you any more:
We will see, flighty Shepherdess,
Who will be the first to repent.

The one who has gained my place
Can't love you more than I:
And the one that I love surpasses you
In beauty, Love, and faith,
Guard your new friendship well,
Mine will change no more,
And then we'll see put to the test
Who will be the first to repent."

Its rhyme scheme is "ababcdD eefghgD," etc., for four stanzas, except that the second-to-last line is actually a variable refrain. The four-stanza length is of course typical of the Italian villanella. While the complex eight-line stanza of "ababcdD" is unlike that of Italian villanelle, it is almost identical to the stanza (ababbcBC) used by Du Bellay in his "Villanelle" (En ce mois délicieux), which was in turn like that of two musical villanelles napolitanes published by the composer Caietain in Paris in 1575. Desportes's lyric is octosyllabic, while Du Bellay's had seven syllables per line, but still the former could be sung to any tune devised for the latter. We may be looking at a contrafactum written to one of the musical settings of Du Bellay's earlier villanelle.

Even more interesting than this poem's prehistory is what happened to it after it was written. Sorg states that the poem was:

mise en musique un grand nombre de fois, notamment, dès 1575, par Eustache du Caurroy, "chantre de la chapelle de musique du Roy" qui obtint un "cornet d'argent" au "puy" musical fondé à Évreux par Guillaume Costeley, pour un air à quatre parties qu'elle lui avait inspiré. 183
"put to music a great number of times, notably, in 1575, by Eustache de Caurroy, singer of the King's musical chapel, who obtained a gold coin at the musical-poetry competition founded at Evreux by William Costeley, for an air in four parts that the poem inspired him to."

It was not that unusual in sixteenth-century France for a lyric to be set to music prior to being published as a poem; in fact, back in the 1530s it had been quite common. Following the setting by Caurroy, Rozette was set three more times: once by Caietain (Paris, 1576); once by an anonymous composer as collected by J. Chardavoine (Paris, 1576); and once by J. B. Besard (Cologne, 1603). It has been mentioned that Caietain was Neapolitan and a composer of villanelle. The collection of Airs in which Rozette appeared was dedicated to Henri, duc de Guise, the leader of the Catholic League and patron to many poets and musicians of the age. Twelve years after its publication, on December 22, 1588—moments before the duke was assassinated by henchmen of the French king—he was singing Desportes's Rozette, according to his companion's diary. To the duke and his companion, Rozette was not a "poem," but a song.

Yet one more surprise remains concerning this poem: its object, Madeleine de Laubespine, Madame de Villeroy, wrote a response to it. Her parody is in the same basic form as the original; the only change she makes is that she invokes the refrain at the end of the second and fourth stanzas only. It is quite possible that she penned her witty, flippant lyrics to the tune of one of the musical settings of Desportes's poem. That she possessed an expert's knowledge of music is apparent from an earlier poem, believed by scholars to be hers, that was copied into a Villeroy family manuscript. In it, she compares the proportions of musical chords to those of the human body:

\begin{verbatim}
Venus et l'espinette ont pas droit soutenable
Quelques affinites de musique semblable:
Une tierce se fait des yeulx et de la bouche,
De la bouche aux tetins une quinte se touche;
\end{verbatim}
Puis après, doucement, le diapason entre
Par la quinte et la tierce en l'octave du ventre... 188

["Venus and the spinet have no tenable right
To have some affinities with music alike:
A third is made of the eyes and the mouth,
From the mouth to the breasts a fifth is played;
Then after, sweetly, the entire range
By the fifth and the third in the octave of the belly..."]

The sharp wit and sexual innuendoes apparent in the above passage are evident in

Madeleine's villanelle, as well:

Berger, tant ramply de finesse,
Contentez-vous d'être inconstant,
Sans accuser vostre maistresse
D'un péché que vous aymez tant.
La nouveauté qui vous commande
Vous fait à toute heure changer:
Mais ce n'est pas perte fort grande
De perdre un amy si léger.

Si vous eussiez eu souvenance
De l'œil par le vostre adoré,
En despit de vostre inconstance
Constant vous fussiez demeuré
Mais vous n'estiez à six pas d'elle
Que vostre coeur s'en retira.
Nous verrons, monsieur le fidèle,
Qui premier s'en repentira.

Ces pleurs et ces plaintes cuisantes
Dont tout le ciel elle enflammoit,
C' estoit des preuves suffisantes
Pour montrer qu'elle vous aimoit.
Mais vous, plein d'inconstance extrême,
Oubliastes pleurs et amour.
Donc, si Rosette en fait de mesme,
Ce n'est qu'à beau jeu beau retour.

Ceste si constante et si belle
Que vos propos vont décevant,
S'elle arreste vostre cervelle
Peut aussi arrester le vent.
Mais je ne porte point d'envie
Au bien que par vous elle aura:
C'est celle, je gage ma vie,
Qui premier s'en repentira. 189

["Shepherd too full of finesse,
Be content to be unfaithful
Without accusing your mistress
Of a sin you love too much.
The novelty that commands you
Makes you change all the time.
But it is not a very big loss
to lose such a fickle friend.

If you could have remembered
The eye adored by yours,
Despite your inconstancy
Constant you would have remained.
But you weren't six steps from her
When your heart drew back.
We will see, Mister Faithful,
Who will be the first to repent.

Those tears and those bitter moans,
Which enflamed the very sky,
They were sufficient proofs
To show that she loved you.
But you, full of utter fickleness,
Forgot tears and love.
So, if Rosette did the same,
One good turn deserves another.

That one so faithful and beautiful
Who's now your intention to deceive,
If she arrests your brain,
The wind can also arrest it.
But I bear hardly any envy
Of the wealth she'll have through you:
It is she, I bet my life,
Who will be the first to repent."]

Madeleine's poem exists only in manuscript, and Sorg's 1923 French-language article
establishing her authorship and the link to Desportes's Rozette--mentioned by both
Graham, in his 1963 edition of Desportes's Diverses amours, and Raymond, in his

141

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1927 book *L’Influence de Ronsard sur la poésie française*\(^{190}\)--has not yet been consulted by researchers into the villanelle’s history. One hopes that future such accounts will right the wrong done to the most entertaining practitioner of the sixteenth-century French villanelle.

Desportes also wrote a second villanelle, which was not published as a poem until 1581—three years after it had been set to music and published in Caietain’s *Second livre d’airs, chansons, villanelles napolitaines & espagnoles* (Paris, 1578).\(^{191}\) Caietain’s melody was rearranged by Didier LeBlanc in 1579 in his *Airs de plusieurs musiciens sur les poésies de P. Desportes & autres des plus excelants Poètes de nostre tems* ["Airs by various musicians on the poems of P. Desportes and other of the most excellent poets of our time"], although the LeBlanc print mistakenly attributes the poem to Jamyn.\(^{192}\) Following is the first strophe:

\[
\begin{align*}
M’ostant le fruit de ma fidèle attente, \\
On veut hêlas que je sois un rocher, \\
Que je me taise, et que rien je ne sente: \\
Mais si grand deuil que je ne puis cacher \\
Fend ma poitrine, et fait que je m’escrie, \\
Il est aisé de tromper qui se fie. \\
\end{align*}
\]

["Removing myself from the fruit of my faithful waiting, One wishes, alas, that I were a rock, That I would shut up, and that I’d feel nothing; But sorrow so great that I can’t hide it CLEAVES my chest, and makes me cry out, It is easy to fool one who trusts."]

The rhyme scheme is "ababcC"—more complicated than the native Italian villanella, but not unlike two of the eight geographically displaced *villanelle* in Caietain’s 1578 collection: "abababcC" and the refrainless "abababc."\(^{194}\) Like Du Bellay’s villanelle and Desportes’s other example, it also exhibits a "turn" between the stanza and the refrain. Two out of every five Italian *villanelle* also vary the refrain in the last stanza, as Desportes does in his. (Oddly, both musical settings of the poem

142

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reverse stanzas four and five, so that the variance occurs in the penultimate stanza—our third and fourth examples of editorial violence toward the last stanza of a villanelle.) The decasyllabic line and six-stanza length of the poem are more "literary than villanella-like, however.

Little is known about our next figure, Jean Paleme, whose single villanelle was discovered by McFarland. According to Auguste Benoit, the editor of an 1884 edition of Paleme's Poésies, Paleme traveled widely while in the service of a son of King Henri II, as well as afterward. While his lyrics appear to have been written in the 1570s and 1580s, they were not published until 1606, some fourteen years after his death. Yet this little-known figure has left convincing proof of the French "poetic" villanelle's link to the Italian musical villanella.

Paleme's manuscript is divided into three sections of letters (Lettres), poems (Poésies), and songs (Chansons), respectively. The letters are, indeed, prose letters. Poésies has forty-one French-language poems in forms identified as sonnets, sixains, huitains, dixaines, quatrains, épigrammes, odes, stances, satyres, and other miscellaneous poetic forms. But it is the third part of the manuscript that fascinates. Of the fifty-seven lyrics in the Chansons section, twenty can be found in French musical collections from the late 1570s and 1580s (vs. only five of the forty-one poems in the Poésies section). This indicates that the designation chanson was more literal, and less metaphorical, than a modern reader would presume. Several of the lyrics published with music are identified within the musical collections themselves, although usually not by Paleme or Benoit, as being by Jamyn, Desportes, or Ronsard. The greatest number of lyrics, eleven, appear as well in M. G. Thessier's 1582 Premier livre d'airs tant français, italien, qu'espagnol, which contains a section of eight "espagnolles, & napolitanes." The next-greatest number, seven, can be found in Didier LeBlanc's 1579 Airs de plusieurs musiciens sur les pöesies de P. Desportes & autres des plus excelants pöetes de nostre tems. Three are from
Pierre Bonnet's 1585 *Premier livre d'airs*; two from LeBlanc's 1579 *Second livre d'airs des plus excelans musiciens de nostre tems*; one from Caietain's 1576 *Airs mis en musique* (one will remember that Caietain was a displaced Neapolitan, and that he composed eight *villanelle napolitane*); one from Jehan de Maletty's 1578 *Chansons à quatre parties*; and one from Jean Planson's 1587 *Airs mis en musique*. Six of the songs were set twice, so there are twenty-six settings in all.

In two instances, Palerme also indicates that a *chanson* is "sur ce mesme air" ["on the same tune"] as the one preceding it, making twenty-two of the *chansons* identifiable to their music. Of the five poems from the *Poésies* section that were published in musical collections, two of them twice, two (attributed to Desportes) were set by Caietain in his 1578 *Second livre d'airs, chansons, villanelles napolitanes, & espagnolles*, two by Claude Le Jeune in his 1586 *Meslanges de la musique*, which is a mixture of French and Italian songs, the latter madrigals; one by G. Boni in his 1576 *Sonetz de P. Ronsard*; one in Maletty's 1578 *Les amours de P. de Ronsard*; and one by the aforementioned Planson. Palerme's incipit spellings and the spellings in the musical collections often differ, suggesting that he *heard* the songs, rather than copied them.

"Villanelle" (*Le feu sécret de mon désir*) is not one of the lyrics for which a musical setting can be identified. It is the second lyric in the *Chansons* section. Preceding it is a Desportes lyric set by LeBlanc, and immediately following it are two of what Benoit refers to as foreign-language "poems," which are sprinkled throughout the third section of Palerme's collection. Because Benoit doubted that the non-French "poems" were actually written by Palerme, he published only the first line of each. It seemed prudent to check the first lines of the two Italian "poems" following Palerme's villanelle against the incipit index in Harry B. Lincoln's *The Italian Madrigal and Related Repertories: Indexes to Printed Collections, 1500-1600*. As anticipated, the incipits matched those of secular songs published in Italy.
during the same time span that the *chansons* transcribed by Palerme were published in France. The first is *Zephiro spirit bel tempo rimena*, set by six composers between 1507 and 1592, the first time as a *frottola* and the next five times (with the word *spirit* or *spiro* altered to *torna* or slight variations thereof) as a madrigal. The second, *La piaga che nel core piaga non e che mabia bata amore*, is a madrigal set anonymously in 1584 and 1589 in Italy and again in France in 1598. Of course, madrigal lyrics existed as literary "poems" prior to being set as music, but other evidence in the *Chansons* section makes it virtually certain that Palerme encountered them as *songs*.

Two other Italian incipits in the *Chansons* section can be positively identified as published songs. *Vorrei morire* was set as a villotta in 1566 by an anonymous composer, then reset as a madrigal by Waelrant in 1594. As described in Chapter 3, the *villotta* had the same basic musical structure as the *villanella*; but its lyrics contained northern Italian dialect words (as compared to the southern, Neapolitan dialect of the *villanella*) and its refrain was often made up of nonsense syllables. *Dormiendo io mi sonniava* was set as a *canzona* by Arpa in 1565. And the incipit *Bene mio*, while too brief for positive identification, could well match one of four different madrigals beginning with that phrase.

Elsewhere in the manuscript, Palerme records a French dance song with the villotta-like nonsense refrain *Liron, Liron, Liron, Lirette, Liron, Lonfa*, and a "*Chanson de Rodetz*" which seems to be a French version of the Italian popular songs that make fun of foreigners, particularly Germans, speaking Italian (*tedesca*, etc.). He records a *moresque* (i.e., *moresca*) with the incipit *Hia calle balle*; a *Turquesque* with the incipit *Brey aramber*; a *napolitane* of five quatrains beginning *Dicete mi, dicete mi, mio bene*; and two examples of the *Bergamasca*, one with the incipit *Io ti vedo per il buso* and one that has been identified as the *canzona* set by Arpa. All of the foregoing types of songs are in the *villanella* family. There are
also several other unidentified Italian and Spanish lyrics, as well as some bawdy French *chansons rustiques* with only their first lines printed.

We may never know whether Palerne himself wrote the lyrics that are not attributed to other authors, or whether he was just keeping a Renaissance copybook with one section for poems and one for songs that struck his fancy. It does seem likely that the love poems addressed to "Magdeleine le Gentilhomme" are Palerne's own. But regardless of who wrote "Villanelle" (*Le feu secret de mon désir*), it is structured as if set to *villanella* music:

_Le feu secret de mon désir_
_M'a fait une dame choisir._
_Belle par excellence._
_Un amoureux_
_Est malheureux_
_Qui n'a la joyssance._

_Son maintien est venu des cieux;_
_Son oeil bening et gratieux_
_Me nourrit d'espérance._
_Un amoureux_
_Est malheureux_
_Qui n'a la joyssance._

_Depuis l'heure que je la vey,_
_Le dieu d'amour m'a poursuivy_
_D'avoir son allience._
_Un amoureux_
_Est malheureux_
_Qui n'a la joyssance._

_Tant qu'elle m'a donné pouvoir_
_De l'aller trouver et la voir,_
_Luy disant ma souffrance._
_Un amoureux_
_Est malheureux_
_Qui n'a la joyssance._

_Je sçay que son intention_
_Est d'augmenter la passion_
_De ma persévérance._

146
Un amoureux
Est malheureux
Qui n'a la joyssance.

Rien ne sert un parler humain
Quant on dit: Revenez demain;
C'est dure pénitence.
Un amoureux
Est malheureux
Qui n'a la joyssance.

Amour ne se peut maintenir
Du passé ny de l'advenir;
Il ayme la présence.
Un amoureux
Est malheureux
Qui n'a la joyssance.

Dame, que je sers humblement,
Donnez-moy donc présentement
Le doux bien que je pense.
Un amoureux
Est malheureux
Qui n'a la joyssance.

["The secret fire of my desire
Made me choose a woman
Beautiful above all.
A lover
Is unfortunate
Who has no pleasure.

Her bearing came from the heavens;
Her kind and gracious eye
Nourished me with hope.
A lover
Is unfortunate
Who has no pleasure.

Since the hour that I saw her,
The god of love has hounded me
To have her in marriage.
A lover
Is unfortunate
Who has no pleasure.

147
So much power she gave me
To find her and see her,
Telling her my suffering.
    A lover
    Is unfortunate
    Who has no pleasure.

I know that her intention
Is to increase the passion
    Of my perseverance.
    A lover
    Is unfortunate
    Who has no pleasure.

It never seems like human speech
When she says: "Return tomorrow;"
    That hard penance.
    A lover
    Is unfortunate
    Who has no pleasure.

Love cannot hold
What is past or to come:
    He likes presence.
    A lover
    Is unfortunate
    Who has no pleasure.

Lady, whom I humbly serve,
Give me thus presently
    The sweetness I think of.
    A lover
    Is unfortunate
    Who has no pleasure."

The rhyme scheme is "aabCCB," which can be broken down into a couplet (aa) plus a "turn" (bC) linked to the last two refrain lines (CB). While not matching any of Cardamone's catalogued rhyme schemes exactly, it is certainly close to structures such as "abBCC" or "aaBCB."\(^{218}\) We may never recover the tune for it, but it is a safe guess that it had one at the time Palerne wrote it down.
Honoré D'Urfé's villanelles have been analyzed as poems by McFarland,^ and it is true that they were published separately in seventeenth-century verse collections; but they had an additional context that needs to be considered. The four of them can also be found as verse interludes within d'Urfé's pastoral novel L'Astrée, which was not only one of the first pastoral novels, but one of the first novels, period, published in France. Inspired by Montemayor's Diana, which had been translated into French in 1578, L'Astrée consisted of five volumes published between 1607 and 1627; the fifth was written by d'Urfé's secretary (although the poetry is d'Urfé's) and published two years after d'Urfé's death.  

The plot of L'Astrée involves a shepherd in love with a shepherdess; and obviously, given its five-volume length, their romance is thwarted by various setbacks and subplots. Interspersed with the prose passages are sonnets, madrigals, chansons, stances, plaintes, epitaphes, dialogues, and our four villanelles. Why include the poetry? Louise Horowitz theorizes that the pastoral "genre" was still associated with verse in people's minds, and that L'Astrée "had to utilize verse if it was to remain faithful to the pastoral conventions"; she also stresses that poetry was still the leading literary genre within Renaissance culture. Certainly also the mix of long narrative tales broken up by short lyric songs would have approximated the repertoire of a minstrel or improvvisatori, newly "displaced" from oral to written form. This is in fact the format of the medieval French "romances with lyric insertions," as Sylvia Huot terms them; they arose during the thirteenth century, which was the locus of the major shift from oral to written modes of discourse in Europe.

One of d'Urfé's villanelles has four stanzas, one five, and two six. All are in the essential rhyme scheme "abbaCC," although in three of them he varies the first refrain line only, and in all of them he prints the refrain at the beginning of the lyric, like the refrain of a Spanish villancico, so that the actual scheme is "AA bccbAA."
His rhyme scheme is not far off from some of the variants catalogued by Cardamone among musical villanelle of the 1560s (ababCC, for example). The poetry in L’Astrée is essentially Petrarchan, and we are well past the point in time when the Italian villanella was a living part of western European culture. But what is most interesting about d’Urfé’s villanelles is that—unlike the other types of "poem" woven into his novel—they are always shown as being sung by the novel’s characters.

Scanning the first two volumes of L’Astrée, for example, one sees that sonnets can be sung (chanter), but they can also be engraved upon a tree (gravier), whispered (souspirer), made (faire), sent (envoyer), spoken (parler), added (ajouter), said (dire), uttered (proférer), remembered (se souvenir), said in response (respondir), or had on paper (avoir). Chansons too can be sung—once, to the harp; but they are also frequently made (faire). Stances are sometimes sung and sometimes sent (envoyer), had (avoir)—at the bottom of a letter), whispered (souspirer), or added (ajouter). Even the madrigal is not always musical: it can be written with a pen or upon a makeshift table (escrire), engraved upon a tree or a rock (gravier), added (ajouter), or uttered (proférer). Dialogues are whispered (souspirer) or read (lire), and even an untitled poem with a fixed refrain is not sung but merely found (trouver) on rolls of paper. But d’Urfé’s villanelles are unambiguously musical.

The first, "Vilanelle [sic] d’Amidor reprochant une legereté," is sung by a minor character named Amidor who is walking away from a group that has been bickering. Amidor intends to reproach the character of the narrator for foolishness in love:

A la fin celuy l’aura,
Qui dernier la servira.

De ce coeur cent fois volage,
Plus que le vent animé,
Qui peut croire d’estre aimé

150

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Ne doit pas estre creu sage.
   Car enfin celuy l'aura,
   Qui dernier la servira.

A tous vents la girouette
Sur le feste d'une tour,
Elle aussi, vers toute Amour
Tourne le coeur et la teste.
   A la fin celuy l'aura,
   Qui dernier la servira.

La Chasseur jamais ne prise
Ce qu'à la fin il a pris;
L'inconstante fait bien pis,
Méprisant qui la tient pris.
   Mais enfin celuy l'aura,
   Qui dernier la servira.

Ainsi qu'un clou l'autre chasse,
Dedans son coeur, le dernier
De celuy qui fut premier
Soudain usurpe la place.
   C'est pourquoi celuy l'aura,
   Qui dernier la servira. 224

["In the end that one will have her
Who last will serve her.

Of that heart a hundred times stolen,
More animated than the wind,
Who can believe in being loved
Should not be thought wise.
   Since in the end that one will have her
Who last will serve her.

To all winds the weathercock
On the crest of a tower,
She also, toward all Love
Turns the heart and the head.
   In the end that one will have her
Who last will serve her.

The Hunter never values
That which at the end he took:
The fickle one does even worse,
Scorning who holds her engaged.
   But in the end that one will have her
   Who last will serve her.

As the other chases nothing,
   Inside her heart, the last,
   From that one who was first,
   Suddenly usurps the place.
   It is why that one will have her
   Who last will serve her."

The first refrain line is varied slightly throughout, and the echoes of Desportes's
*Rozette* refrain line ("Qui premier s'en repentira") and *girouette* (weathercock)
image may well be intentional, given *Rozette* 's fame as a song and the similarity of
theme between the two poems.

"Villanelle de Hylas sur son inconstance" is sung by an amiable shepherd
named Hylas who admits cheerily to his pattern of infidelity. Within the context of
the novel, he is singing this lyric while being approached by a group of characters
(the opening refrain is not printed below):

   *J'aime à changer, c'est ma franchise,*
   *Et mon humeur m'y va portant:*
   *Mais quoy? si je suis inconstant,*
   *Faut-il pourtant qu'on me mesprise?*
   *Tant s'en faut, qui m'arresterà,*
   *Beaucoup plus d'honneur en aura.* 225

["I love to change, that's my charter,
And my spirit brings me there:
But why? If I am fickle,
Is it yet necessary that one scorns me?
   Far from it, he who stops me
   Will have a lot of honor."]

Again, the refrain is varied throughout, and one can hear the echoes
of Desportes's famous refrain line.

"Villanelle" (*Change d'humeur qui s'y plaira*) ["Villanelle" (Change of mood
for whom it pleases)] occurs two volumes later, but obviously refers back to the

152
preceding villanelle. It, too, is sung by Hylas. First Astrée's suitor, Calidon, walks a few steps in front of Astrée and whispers a sonnet to her (souspirer ces vers); then Hylas "chanta à haute voix ces vers" ["sang these verses in a high voice"], beginning as follows (minus the initial refrain):

\[
\begin{align*}
Ceux qui veulent vivre en servage, \\
Peuvent comme esclaves mourir, \\
Hylas jamais n'a peu souffrir \\
Que l'on lui fit un tel outrage. \\
\text{Change d'humeur qui s'y plaîra} \\
\text{Jamais Hylas ne changera. 226}
\end{align*}
\]

["Those who wish to live in servitude, 
Can die like slaves, 
Hylas will hardly suffer at all 
That one commits such an outrage. 
Change of mood please whom it will, 
Never will Hylas change."]

This time d'Urfé's refrain is as unchanging as Hylas's character, but the "sonic" allusion to the refrains of the earlier villanelles, and to that of Desportes's "Rozette," has to have been intentional.

Volume five brings us to "Villanelle" [sic] (Amour, que j'ayme les lys). Astrée has been crying, and her cousin Phillis seeks to amuse her by singing "une Villanelle [sic] que Lycidas luy avoit donnée le jour auparavant" ["a villanelle that Lycidas had given her the day before"]. This is the only time in the novel that a villanelle is not sung as immediate utterance; and it is quite possible that Lycidas could have sung the lyric to Phillis, rather than transmitted it in writing, since (strangely, for a five-volume novel) the earlier scene of villanelle transmission has not been depicted. Like the other villanelles, this lyric begins with its refrain, but it differs from the others in not alluding to Desportes's Rozette, and in its sexually suggestive content—reminiscent of the villanesca and chanson rustique. The first strophe, minus the opening refrain, is:

153
Quelques beautés que la Nature
donne à la naissance des fleurs,
et quelques aymables couleurs
Dont elle imite la peinture,
Rien n'est beau comme les lys
Qui sont au sein de Phillis! 227

["Such beauties as Nature
Gives at the birth of flowers
And such likeable colors
With which she imitates painting,
Nothing is beautiful like the lilies
Which are at the breast of Phillis!"]

Once Phillis's song has ended, the voice of the villanelle in France will be
stilled for a century and a half; and, when it resumes again, it will be in the harsh
gutturals of speech, rather than the liquids of song. So it seems fitting that this "end"
for the villanelle in France should be so like its beginning—from the pen of a writer
whose borrowings from Desportes and Tasso "almost suggest plagiarism,"228 per
Horowtiz, and in the literary style of a French ménétrier or Italian improvvisatori of
old, holding his audience spellbound with long narrative tales about distant figures,
then breaking the spell with short, dancelike refrain songs that invite the listener in.

As can be summarized below, the eighteen French "poems" designated
"villanesque" or "villanelle" varied widely in their poetic forms: 229

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Rhyme Scheme</th>
<th>No. Syllables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS&amp;tG</td>
<td>aabbc ddee'f etc. (9 stanzas)</td>
<td>8,3,8,3,8,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JG-1</td>
<td>abB abB abB abB</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JG-2</td>
<td>ababCC dedeCC etc. (8 stanzas)</td>
<td>4,6,4,6,6,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JG-3</td>
<td>aaBB ccBB ddBB eeBB</td>
<td>10,10,10,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JG-4</td>
<td>ABBA cddceffe ABBA ghhgiji</td>
<td>7,7,7,7, 8,8,8,8,8,7,7,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JG-5</td>
<td>ababccDDEE fgfghhDDEE etc. (8 stanzas)</td>
<td>5,5,5,5,5,5,5,5,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JD</td>
<td>ababcBC ababcBC etc. (4 stanzas)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EJ</td>
<td>abA1 accA2 addA1 etc. (9 stanzas)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPass-1</td>
<td>aaBB ccBB ddBB eeBB'B f'B'B</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPass-2</td>
<td>A1bA2 abA1 abA2 abA1 abA2 abA1A2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD-1</td>
<td>ababcDC efefghD etc. (4 stanzas)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD-2</td>
<td>ababcC dedeCC etc. (6 stanzas)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ML</td>
<td>ababcCde efefghH etc. (4 stanzas)</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPal</td>
<td>aabCCB</td>
<td>ddbCCB etc. (8 stanzas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HD'U-1</td>
<td>AA bccb'A'A deedA'A etc. (4 stanzas)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HD'U-2</td>
<td>AA bccbA'A deedA'A etc. (6 stanzas)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HD'U-3</td>
<td>AA bccbAA deedAA etc. (6 stanzas)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HD'U-4</td>
<td>AA bccbA'A deedA'A etc. (4 stanzas)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even considering Madeleine de Laubespine's parodic imitation of Desportes's *Rozette* and the four very similar villanelles written by the same author, d'Urfé, no two of the eighteen are identical in rhyme scheme, length, and syllable count. They do not resemble each other but, in most cases, each resembles an actual musical *villanella* or *villancico*. It cannot possibly be said that there was anything resembling a poetic "form," let alone a *fixed* poetic form, for the villanelle in the sixteenth century.

End Notes


8. Chris Baldick, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 84; the chronological error occurs in the "fixed forms" entry, while the "villanelle" entry, 238, states that "the form was established in France in the 16th century." Jack Myers and Michael Simms, eds., *The
Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms (New York: Longman, 1989), 125; their chronological error occurs in the "French forms" entry, while the "villanelle" entry, 335, says in regard to dating only that the v. is "a form derived from an Italian Renaissance folk-song form."


22. Ibid., 121-22, 206.

23. Ibid., 189-90.


27. Ibid., 223, 238; Brooks, personal correspondence to author, 3 January 1999.


29. Ibid., xiv-xv; et al.


38. Springarn, 120.

39. Quoted in W. Patterson, 556.


50. From the *Epistle au lecteur* of his 1550 *Odes*, quoted in Comte and Laumonier, 343.
51. From his 1565 *Abrégé de l'art poétique français*, quoted in W. Patterson, 535.

52. Ibid., 566.

53. W. Patterson, 488.


59. Ibid., 310-11.


62. Ibid., 218.

63. Ibid., op. cit.


66. Ibid., op. cit.


68. Terry, 4-5, 8.

70. Brooks, personal correspondence to author, 3 January 1999.

71. Yates, 53.

72. Terry, 8.


74. Terry, 10.

75. Quoted in W. Patterson, 360.

76. Ibid., 381.

77. Acknowledged even by the scholar who debunked the idea of Ronsard's musicianship: Jeffery, 210.


82. Sainct-Gelays, II:231.

83. W. Patterson, 379.

84. McFarland, 27.


88. Ibid., 222.
89. Ibid., 228-29.


93. Ibid., 158.


95. Sainct-Gelays, II:237n.

96. Ibid., I:238-43.

97. Ibid., I:238-39.


99. Ibid., xii-xiii.

100. Ibid., xi-xii.

101. W. Patterson, 380 (who also gives it the English-language title "The Ungrateful Mistress"); McFarland, 29.


107. Tomaszewski, 182.


109. W. Patterson, 664.
110. Tomaszewski, 183.


112. Tomaszewski, 191. One cannot help but be struck by the similarity in subject matter between this poem and John Donne's "The Relic," which is also about a bracelet of his mistress's hair remaining with his body after death.

113. Ibid., 199.

114. Vauquelin, 40n.

115. W. Patterson, 292-93.


122. Fabrice M. Cajetain, *Second livre d'airs, chansons, villanelles napolitaines et espagnolles mis en musique à quatre parties* (Paris, 1578); photocopy provided by the Houghton Library.


124. Ibid., 120.


127. W. Patterson, 380-81.


133. Ibid., 320, 328, 334, 339, 372, 375, 382; Cardamone, *CV*, I:37, 55.

134. Ibid., 44.


136. Jodelle, 49.


138. R. Patterson, 50-51.


140. Cazeaux, 92-93.

141. Merken, 2; R. Patterson, 66.

142. R. Patterson, 114-15.


144. Ibid., 107.

145. R. Patterson, 100, 104.

146. Ibid., 116-21.


149. Merken, 162.

150. Yates, 34.

151. Merken, 138.


153. Ibid., 121.

154. R. Patterson, 228.

155. Ibid., 231, 431.

156. Merken, 62, 90, 107, 109, 111, 149-50, 152.


158. R. Patterson, 310.

159. Merken, 154.

160. Passerat, II:43.

161. Ibid., 165-66.

162. McFarland, 36.


164. Ibid., I:68.

165. Passerat, II:83.

166. Passerat, II:64.

167. Merken, 88.


171. Ibid., II:72.

172. Merken, 92.


179. Cazeaux, 206.


183. Sorg, "Une fille de Ronsard," 137.


185. Desportes, 219n.


190. Desportes, 96; Raymond, 157-58. A minority opinion holds that Heliette de Vivonne was the object of Desportes's poem and wrote the response poem; Brooks, personal correspondence to author, 3 January 1999.


192. Ibid., 200.

193. Desportes, 81.


195. Desportes, 81n.


198. Ibid., 5, 9-10.

199. Lesure and Thibault, *Bib. Le Roy et Ballard*, 212; "Les Mouches a Miel" (*Estant couché près des ruchettes*); *Toutes les herbes croissent*; "Les Marins" (*Les marinsiers adorent un beau jour*); *Quelle divinité s'imprime dans mon âme; Amans qui vous pleignez*; *Désespoir* (*Plorez, o démons pitoyables*); *Lieux de moi tant aymez*; "Par Monsieur de Lyon" (*Je n'aymeray doresnavant*); and "Amour Piqué par une Avette" (*Le petit enfant Amour*).

200. Ibid., 199-200; "Contre une Nuict Trop Claire" (*O nuit, jalousie nuit*), attributed to Desportes; "Les Mouches a Miel" (*Estant couché près des ruchettes*), attributed to Jamyn; *Toutes les herbes croissent*, attributed to Jamyn; "Les Marins" (*Les marinsiers adorent un beau jour*); *O déserts esquartez; Que ferez*
vous dites, madame, attributed to Desportes; and "Chanson sur Avril" (Or que le plaisant avril), attributed to Jamyn.

201. Ibid. 223; Quelle chose icy bas; Je ne veulx plus aymer; and "Congé Respectif entre Amants" (Vostre humeur ne m'a poinct fasché).

202. Ibid., 200-1; Dormant, j'ay quelque foys songé and "Extraict d'Amadis Jamin" (Du profond des enfers, tout noircy).

203. Ibid., 177; "Amour Piqué par une Avette" (Le petit enfant Amour).

204. Ibid., 191; "Extraict d'Amadis Jamin" (Du profond des enfers, tout noircy).

205. Ibid., 234-35; Qui ayme n'a poinct de plaisir.

206. Ibid., 189-90; "Sonnet d'Amour" (Celle qui de mon mal ne prend), attributed to Desportes; and "Aultre Epigramme" (Je voullu baiser ma rebelle), attributed to Desportes.

207. Ibid., 227-29; "Epigramme" (Si, dessus vos lèvres de roses) and "Aultre Epigramme" (Je voullu baiser ma rebelle).

208. Ibid., 175-76; "Sonnet a la Même" (Mignonne, levez-vous).

209. Ibid., 190-91; "Sonnet a la Même" (Mignonne, levez-vous).

210. Ibid., 234-35; "Quatrains sur la Persévérance" (Vous l'avez dit, mauvaise).

211. Harry B. Lincoln, The Italian Madrigal and Related Repertories: Indexes to Printed Collections, 1500-1600 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 890; cf. Zephyro spira e il bel tempo rimena, Trombocino 1507 (frottola); Zefiro torna e'l bel tempo remena, Chamatero 1569 (madrigal); Zefiro torna e'l bel tempo rimena, Balbi 1570 (madrigal); Zeffiro torn'el bel tempo rimena, Baccusi 1572 (madrigal); Zeffiro torn'il bel tempo rimena, Iacovelli 1588 (madrigal); and Zefiro torn'e'l bel tempo rimena, Iacomini 1592 (madrigal).

212. Ibid., 871; La piaga ch'ho nel core, Anonymous, 1584 (madrigal); La piagha ch'ho nel cor, Anonymous 1589 (madrigal); Lesure and Thibault, Bib. Le Roy et Ballard, 247; La piaga ch'ho nel core, Anonymous, 1598.

213. Lincoln, 889.

214. Ibid., 848.
215. Ibid., 837.


218. Cardamone, CV, I:70, 85.


221. Ibid., 138.

222. Huot, 83.


225. Ibid., I:246.

226. Ibid., III:345.

227. Ibid., V:253.

228. Horowitz, 139.

229. Author abbreviations: MStG = Mellin de Saint-Gelais, JG = Jacques Grévin, JD = Joachim Du Bellay, EJ = Etienne Jodelle, JPass = Jean Passerat, PD = Philippe Desportes, ML = Madeleine de Laubespine, JPal = Jean Palerne, HDU = Honoré d’Urfé. In the "Rhyme Scheme" column, similar letters of the alphabet rhyme with each other (e.g., "a" and "A"), a capital letter indicates a refrain line, and an apostrophe to the right of a refrain symbol (A’) indicates that the line is varied once or more upon repetition.
This chapter will examine the influence of the Italian villanella on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English poets. One would never suspect, from reading accounts of the villanelle's history, that it had reached England any earlier than the late nineteenth century, when the poets Edmund Gosse and Austin Dobson "discovered" it. But, in fact, the Italian musical villanella and its musical successor, the canzonetta, were well known and warmly received in Tudor England. Poets including Philip Sidney, Thomas Whythorne, George Gascoigne, Thomas Morley, William Holborne, and Michael East wrote English poems to villanella tunes or translated/adapted villanella and canzonetta lyrics. While no individually famous poem was produced by these efforts to compare with Philippe Desportes's "Villanelle" (Rozette pour un peu d'absence) or Jean Passerat's "Villanelle" (J'ai perdu ma tourterelle) in France, the six contrapuncta written to villanella and villanella-like melodies by Philip Sidney have been credited by several scholars with introducing a new rhythmical flexibility to the English metric line that altered the very sound of English poetry. What's more, the simple, chordal musical style of the villanella prevailed over the complex, polyphonic style of the madrigal in England, ushering in the style of the "lute air" that would inspire a great body of lyric poems by Thomas Campion and others.

One could hardly expect more of a literary historical influence; and yet, our records of the villanella in Renaissance England are strangely blank. This may be attributable to a simple confusion of terminology. While the plural Italian noun villanelle (vil-la-nél-lay) slipped easily into the French language as the singular noun villanelle (vil-la-néll), sixteenth-century English writers tended to refer to the genre by its variant terms "Napolitane/Napolitaine/Neapolitan" or (toward the end of the century) "canzonet/canzonetta." Thus, it is easy for the casual reader (and inevitable
for the modern computer word-search program) to overlook the surprisingly numerous references to the *villanella* in sixteenth-century England.

Although, with one exception, secular music publishing in England did not get underway until the decade of the 1570s, two manuscript collections of Italian *villanelle* bearing signs of possession by royal and/or courtly English owners provide evidence of a musically literate group of English courtiers attuned to continental musical trends, and showing a particular taste for the sprightly *villanella*. The first such manuscript, dated by Alfredo Obertello to the final years of Henry VIII's 1509-1547 reign, contains thirty Italian *villanelle* and madrigals plus an equal number of Latin motets, and quite possibly may have belonged to the English king himself. Henry VIII was a gifted amateur musician and composer; among his surviving compositions are two "forester's songs," examples of the *mascherata* or "masker's songs" which were very closely related to the *villanella*.

Much attention has been lavished on the mid-1560s "Winchester College Manuscript" of eighty-one Italian madrigals, *villanelle*, and related light musical pieces since its 1970 identification by Frank J. Fabry as the probable source of the music for three of the lyrics in Philip Sidney's "Certayne Sonnets." Although each pink-sheepskin-bound partbook is stamped with the Tudor coat-of-arms, leading to speculation that it may have been a foreign diplomatic gift to Queen Elizabeth herself, John Stevens cautions that "[a]ll that can safely be deduced is that the volumes were prepared and bound in the Netherlands for presentation to a person of some standing and culture in this country." Orlando di Lasso and Adrian Willaert are among the six well-known composers represented in the manuscript, although the *napolitane*, *villotte*, and *veneziane* that comprise the bulk of the collection are mostly anonymous.

In addition to those two manuscripts, at least one Italian songbook including "Neapolitane songes" survives from a private library of the time period. Joseph

170
Kerman informs us that Henry Fitzalen, Earl of Arundel, "ordered a set of anonymous villanelle and also a set of madrigals from Innocentio Alberti, a minor composer in the Rore circle" while visiting Italy in 1566. Not very musical, nor even much of a reader, himself, the non-university-educated Arundel seems to have been stocking an extensive musical and classical library for the benefit of his children's education. He was to bequeath that collection to his son-in-law, Lord Lumley; and a 1609 catalog of its musical contents includes Ms. No. 25747, "Galliardes and Neapolitane songes of 3 and 4 partes, written and bownde in blewe leather gilte, in 4 volumes," which may well be the villanelle collection ordered by Arundel in Italy.

Ironically, the English Church reformers, for all of their ambivalence toward music and musicians, had tilled the very soil in which the villanella could take root in England. In turning hundreds of musicians out of their former berths in churches and church colleges between 1536 and 1540, the monarchy had inadvertently launched a "countertrend": newly wealthy from their acquisition of confiscated church property, English aristocratic families began hiring those same displaced musicians as servants to perform for their private entertainment or to tutor their children in the social niceties of part-singing and instrument-playing. Baldassone Castiglione's II Cortegiano, translated into English as The Courtier in 1561, not only introduced the concept that well-bred persons should be skilled in the performance of music, but also launched the first craze for the European "Grand Tour," during which young English ears couldn't help but be exposed to continental musical trends.

In the meantime, continental musicians were also traveling to England: sometimes just for a visit, as appears to have been the case with the Italian composer Alessandro Striggio in 1567; sometimes to escape religious persecution, as with the French Huguenot music publisher Thomas Vautrollier in 1569; often on official state business, as with Orlando di Lasso, said to have helped woo Mary Tudor for Spain.
while in the musical entourage of Philip II in 1554; or even to find work, as with the Italian Alfonso Ferrabosco the Elder, who became the leading English court musician through 1578. In 1567, Ferrabosco was accused of murdering an Italian musician in the service of Sir Philip Sidney. The incident provides us with a brief "snapshot" of all of our critical trends coming together: increased musical interest and musical literacy among the English upper classes; the employment of musicians as private servants; the dominant influence of Italy on English musical tastes of the late sixteenth century; and the inevitable involvement of English lyric poets in the musical developments of their time period.

Although the English translation of The Courtier was a spur toward the popularization of musical training and continental travel among the English upper classes, it should be stressed that many contemporary English poets could read and understand Italian well enough to translate works of literature. Thomas Wyatt returned from Italy in 1527 impressed by having heard poetry sung to improvised lute accompaniment in the style of the late Serafino Aquilano (1466-1500). He later translated some of Serafino's strambotti into English. One literary generation later, many of the names we will see associated with the villanella in England were also involved in studying, imitating, and/or translating the two fashionable "languages" of music and Italian. Thomas Watson, who as an editor would publish the second collection of "englished" Italian madrigals, was also the first poet to try an Italian sonnet sequence (Hecatompathia) in English. Philip Sidney's Amoretti were directly shaped by Italian literary models; and Sidney himself makes reference to having studied music while sojourning in Venice, which seems to presume a fair degree of technical proficiency in the Italian language. Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, who finished her brother Philip Sidney's verse translations of the Biblical Psalms after his death—a project influenced by the French poet Clement Marot's contrafacta verse translations of the Psalms to popular French tunes—was the
English translator of Petrarch's *Trionfo della Morte*. George Gascoigne, who composed verses *alla napolitana*, also produced the first English-language translation of an Italian comedy, Ariosto's *The Supposes*, in 1566. Thomas Whythorne, a practicing musician and pioneering English autobiographer (and no stranger to the villanella, as will be shown) declares that he made learning the Italian language his top priority during his half-year of touring that country.

Thus, the original lyrics to an Italian villanella would not have been—as they would be to the ears of most English-language poets today—an impenetrable curtain of sound. Indeed, a homophonic villanella sung in Italian would probably have sounded far more intelligible to a sixteenth-century English writer than a polyphonic madrigal sung in English, with four to six or even eight different verbal phrases being articulated at the same time. "Tunes," as Bruce Pattison has observed, "... travel much more easily than manuscripts;" and (as early modern musicologist Nino Pirrotta cautions) we should bear in mind that fleeting musical performances and/or orally transmitted popular songs may have influenced our target literary figures as much or more than the written record that is now all we have to go by.

One example of such a fleeting influence has entered the written record only because the musical performance in question took place at a royal wedding attended by delegations from all of Europe, and the tune in question was a villanella. In 1568, as part of the festivities for the royal Bavarian wedding of William V and Renée of Lorraine, famous composer Orlando di Lasso played Pantalone in a commedia dell'arte performance. Donna Cardamone reports that he sang *Chi passa per questa strada*, "the strophic serenade of a rejected lover at his lady's window," while dressed in laugh-getting costume. Afterward, continues Cardamone, the song became "so well established in northern Europe that it even found its way to England," appearing in two versions for lute intabulation in a manuscript now in the possession of Trinity College of Dublin.
The first written reference to the *villanella* in English was made by Thomas Whythorne, one of that "new breed" of musicians who made his living as a musical servant to the rich. His employers included the noted English proverb-collector John Heywood and the family of Lord Ambrose Dudley, the son of the Duke of Northumberland. He is believed to have taught music to Lady Mary Dudley, Philip Sidney's mother, when she was a child, and it is possible that his enthusiasm for the *villanella* was picked up by Lady Mary and passed on to her son.\(^{20}\) Whythorne was a composer as well as a skilled singer and instrumentalist. In 1571, in what Winifred Maynard has termed "a self-confessed bid to advance himself as a teacher of music,\(^{21}\) he decided to publish a collection of his own musical compositions. It was a bold idea, as only one English secular songbook had been published previously, and that one back in 1530. Whythorne titled his collection:

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Triplex of Songes for three, fouer, and five voyces, composed and made by Thomas Whythorne, gent, the which Songes be of sundry sortes, that is to say, some long, some short, some hard, some easie to be songe, and some betwene both: also some solemn, and some pleasant or mery: so that according to the skill of the singers (not being musitians) and disposition or delite of the hearers, they may here finde songes for their contentation and liking. 22
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Music and literary critics have not been kind to Whythorne. While his songs have been termed "truly barbarous," the verse preface to those songs has been called "perhaps the worst poetry that ever appeared in print."\(^{23}\) That verse preface is of interest to us, however, because of Whythorne's mention of our subject:

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Eev'n such with the others (I say) I let them understand,
That I, a traveller have been, in sundry forrein land
Wher I among the people did, a certaine time abide,
Whose divers trades of Musick, part (although not all) I spide,
But cheefly the Italian, emong the which is one,
That called is Napolitane (a prety mery one) 24
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174

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The "Napolitane" is the only song genre singled out for special mention in Whythorne’s rather lengthy verse preface. Not surprisingly, Gustave Reese has identified one of the songs in the collection (“The doubtfull state that I posses”) as being "an English adaptation of the villanella alla napolitana.” Musicologist Edward Doughtie concurs with Reeve’s identification, although "unlike most villanelle it has a sober, almost despairing text, and a suitable minor tonality." It is difficult to avoid the twin anachronisms of "reading" the lyric as both first-person confession and poem:

The doubtfull state that I posses,
doth trouble all my wits throughout,
one while good hap seems t’will not ceasse,
then by and by it makes me dout:
And thus standing in hope and dread,
I wish oft times that I were dead,
I wish oft times that I were dead.

The juxtaposition of deliberately artificial, emotionally distancing circumlocution ("The doubtfull state that I posses") with a blunt, bleak cry at the nonverbal edge of language ("I wish oft times that I were dead") brands its first and last lines into the reader’s memory—not unlike the effect achieved by Henry Vaughan with the adjacent lines "They are all gone into the world of light,/ And I alone sit lingering here!" But, although the lyric’s seven lines are perfectly octosyllabic, they are metrically awkward if spoken rather than sung, and the "rawness" one admires in its repeated last line is just an artifact of the loss of the music that made the two lines different in performance. Its subject, too, may well be not cry-from-the-heart, but late-Renaissance cliché: one half of the familiar "L’Allegro/Il Penseroso" theme of despair and elation in opposition.

Doughtie also points out that a second song, "Buy new broom," bears some of the traits of the villotta. Musically quite similar to the villanella, the villotta is
distinguished from it in place of origin—northern Italy, and, specifically, Venice—and in incorporating "genuinely popular material," as Alfred Einstein tells us. One can hear the urban street-vendor's cry and the folk-proverb resonating simply and appealingly in Whythorne's opening lines: "By new broom, by new broom/ Ye may be sure, store is good, for they will not long endure:/ The new broom sweepeth cleane;" but, as "poem," it soon breaks down from the weight of trying too hard to be both folksy and witty.

From promoting himself as a musician, Whythorne went on to write one of the first autobiographies in modern literature. Displaying—like Philip Sidney and Jean-Antoine de Baif—an ear almost painfully oversensitive to the "music," or lack thereof, in spoken and written language, and to the sometimes jarring contrast between the two, Whythorne did so in a quirky phonetic English alphabet of his own design. One passage is notable for its amplification of his feelings toward the "Napolitane" (Note: read "p" as "th"):  

In þe hier part of þe realm of Italy, iz A kuntrey named þe kingdom of Napolis (of þe which I hav said sumwhat in þe diskoors of my travell beyond þe seaz as affor iz said) þe vplandish or kuntry peopull of þe which kuntrei hav A sertain kynd of Miuzik þe which diffreth from all oþerz in Italy, and alþow in þe kompozision þerof (þei being but of iij parts) þer be fawts and errowrz, yet for þe pleazant strainzes of þe trad of þem dyverz miuzisians hav not only amended þem and mad þem into iij parts, but also dyverz oþer miuzisians imitating of þat miuzik hav mad of þeir lyk vnto þeirz. And az þei hav doon, so do I in my miuzik published set foorth þe lyk of þeirz, both for iij, iiij, and fyv voises. 33

Whythorne's earlier mention of the "Napolitane" had focused on its sensual appeal ("prety") and light, lively tempo ("mery"). By "fawts and errowrz" ("faults and errors") here, he means primitive harmonic techniques such as parallel fifths; "octaves," where voices sing one seven-tone musical scale range apart; and "unisons," where voices sing the same tone. Although these devices and the
villanella's basic three-part structure are musically anachronistic, he suggests, the songs are still so attractive to modern composers that they knowingly emulate them. He also makes it clear that "composition" in this genre involves rearrangement or imitation-with-a-difference of an existing song, not the unique creative effort we equate with "composition" today.

Much like the French poets of the same time period, however, Whythorne combines an attraction to Italian lyric forms derived from the oral tradition with an aversion to the oral lyric tradition of his own country. His Autobiography is full of contempt for minstrels, equating them with beggars and urging magistrates and judges to treat them harshly under the law. Whythorne's modern editor explains that minstrels had been included in the anti-vagabond statute of 1572; offenders could be whipped, stockaded, branded with a "V," or separated—via a sharp knife—from their ears. However, Whythorne rails at "minstrels [who] vnder þe nom of meuzisians... go about þe kuntrey with þeir miuzik in such sort az iz before rehearsed" [italics mine], raising the possibility that it is the very fixity of their performances—aping the genuine, semi-improvisatory oral tradition for commercial profit—that earns his disgust. He does express admiration for "mr Moor þe exellent Harper"—William Moore (c. 1492-1565), one of the last of the (blind) epic poet-musicians of England, who was in the service of King Edward VI—and says that he transcribed verses by him (since lost), demonstrating once again that oral epic and oral lyric poets were often one and the same. Furthermore, Whythorne confesses to having written a topical ballad "vpon an old grownd," or ground-bass skeletal tune, in the "old style" of contrafacta musical composition.

George Gascoigne can be seen to share with Whythorne not only a fondness for Neapolitan music, but a knack for self-promotion. In 1575 soldier-poet Gascoigne claimed authorship of the book A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres, which had been published in 1573 while he was abroad. Squawks of outrage have attended
him ever since, as the poems, plays, and prose pieces within the volume are clearly
not all his. On the other hand, the prose piece known as "The Adventures of Master
F. J.," introduced by Gascoigne as having been "translated out of the Italian riding
tales of Bartello," is quite transparently based on Gascoigne's own erotic
adventures.40

Master "F. J.," or "Ferdinando Jeronimi," uses all of his musical wits and
training to woo the young lady Elinor, although her father keeps trying to thrust his
elder daughter, Lady Fraunces, upon him instead. Deserted by Elinor one evening,
and cornered into asking Fraunces to dance, F. J. proclaims:

If it please you to followe (quod he) you shall see that I can
jest without joye, and laugh without lust, and calling the
musitions, caused them softly to sounde the Tynternall when
he clearing his voyce did Alla Napolitana applie these verses
following, unto the measure. 41

As the forty-two lines of verse that follow bear not the slightest resemblance to
villanella lyrics—they unfold a linear narrative "storyline" capped by a didactic
message, the lines are too long, and there are too many stanzas—it appears that
Gascoigne is using the term alla napolitana in a stylistic sense. In all likelihood, he
means a semi-improvisatory performance in the style of untrained Neapolitan singers.
The Naples of that time was reputed to be a place where everyone, even the
tradespeople, could burst spontaneously into part-song.42 In the year 1588, a native
of Naples named Giambattista Del Tufo was to portray this aspect of his hometown
within a poem; and Donna Cardamone has translated part of his poem into prose as
follows:

Likewise in the shops everywhere, and with no need of
instruction (arte), all those workers and those Neapolitan
shopkeepers of ours sing arie or canzoni with needles and
scissors in their hands. . . . Late at night, accompanied or
alone, there seem to be so many finches or nightingales who,
here and there, are heard singing new tunes and villanelle. 43

178

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Gascoigne's character appears to be improvising verses to a Neapolitan tune; the poet Philip Sidney actually wrote six poems to such tunes, all in the villanella family. Twentieth-century tastes find the practice of contrafacta lyric-writing to be laughable: think of a comedy skit or political satire that sets new lyrics to a familiar tune, or of a classroom collapsing into giggles over the discovery that the average Emily Dickinson poem can be sung to the tune of "Amazing Grace." But, in Sidney's time—in fact, well on into the seventeenth century—the practice was prevalent. And, as Edward Doughtie points out, writing to music can be far more demanding of a poet's skills than writing in meter:

If in ordinary poetry the meter is the pattern against which the poet arranges his rhythms, in contrafacta the tune in effect becomes the meter. Some tunes can be more demanding than meter, since they control more details of the rhythm, as well as the syntax. 44

As early as 1500, according to Mark Booth, printed ballads to be sung "To the Tune of [song title or incipit]" were being marketed on the streets of London; so popular were they with the new "urban consumer class" that even current events began being rendered into "broadside ballad" versions, producing the prototype of the modern newspaper.45 Edward Doughtie reports that "Henry VIII's most famous song, 'Pastime with good company,' was known earlier on the Continent as 'De mon triste desplaisir.'"46 He also provides startling evidence that both Wyatt and Surrey wrote lyrics to the rhythms of preexisting tunes:

Several of Wyatt's lyrics—which are more metrically regular than his poems in ten-syllable lines—suggest that he sang them to the lute. One of these lyrics, 'Blame not my lute,' seems to have been sung to music found in a manuscript dating from around 1551, some lute tablature based on the folia. Another Wyatt poem, "Heaven and earth," is connected with lute tablature from another mid-sixteenth-century manuscript; this music is said to be related to the romanescana and was published in France as a "Pavane d'Angleterre" in 1555. In the same
manuscript is music for two poems by the earl of Surrey, 'If
care do cause men cry' and "In winters just returne" . . .
[which] were very probably printed as broadside ballads. A
later poem by Thomas Howell indicated that it was to be sung
"To the tune of winters just returne." It must be confessed
that these early tablatures are crude and unclear . . . But they
at least indicate that these poems of Wyatt and Surrey were
sung, probably in a popular or improvised manner, like the
broadside ballad. 47

Thomas Whythorne notes that his ballad "Ther waz A frier men Kald
Robard" has been composed "on an old grownd," which Doughtie takes to mean
"either a ground bass or a popular tune." And, intriguingly, Whythorne makes
mention, in his Autobiography, of having transcribed songs and sonnets by both
Wyatt and Surrey for the benefit of his then-employer, John Heywood, at least ten
years prior to the first publication of their verses in Tottel's Miscellany:

Also whyl I waz with him [Heywood] I did wryt owt for him
diverz songs and sonets þat wer mad by þe erll of Surrey, sir
Thomas Wiatt þe elder, and mr Moor þe excelltent Harper
besydt sertain salms þat wer mad by þe said mr. wyatt, and also
mr Stenold. 50

From the "musical" context (William More was the blind harper to Edward VI), it
appears that musician Whythorne was encountering Wyatt and Sidney's verses as
musical lyrics and not as manuscript poems. Whythorne's employer, a published
author himself, could certainly have copied down mere manuscript poetry without
benefit of amanuensis; but he would have had to rely on his musician-servant to
transcribe musical notes.

Just as Doughtie confirms the practice of writing contrafacta during the reign
of Henry VIII, Bruce Pattison finds ample evidence of the practice during the
Elizabethan era and the early seventeenth century. Edmund Spenser seems to have
composed one of the songs in The Shepheardes Calendar to the tune of "Heigh ho,
holiday," a popular song that Thomas Deloney, Thomas Creede, Thomas Lodge, and
an anonymous poet in Englands Helicon also harnessed for their own lyric-writing
Pattison identifies many of the poems in miscellanies such as Tottel's (1557), A Handful of pleasant delites (1566), The Paradise of dayntie devises (1576), The gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions (1578), Britons Bowre of Delights (1591), and Englands Helicon (1600) as having been written to popular tunes; occasionally, the new poem became so popular that the old song came to be reidentified by its title, rather than vice versa. Thomas Nashe, says Pattison, satirized Gabriel Harvey in print for modeling his verses after popular songs, rather than distinguished "Authors."^^

Christopher Marlowe's famous poem "Come, live with me and be my love" was written to an already well-used tune, asserts Pattison, although "the broadside edition of Marlowe's song advertises it as sung to a new tune. But strict veracity is not always a trait of ballad printers." The twentieth-century reader, noting the formally imitative "reply poems" written by Sir Walter Ralegh and John Donne, tends to overlook the very obvious fact that they were also intended to be sung to the same song—adding immeasurably to the fun of the imitation.

Not only living persons, but also characters in literary works of the time can be observed writing verses to tunes in their heads. Pattison points out instances in William Shakespeare, John Lyly, and Ben Jonson:

Bottom intended to get Peter Quince to write about his adventures in the wood, and Falstaff threatened to pay back those who had played a trick on him by having ballads about them sung to "scurvy tunes". In Lyly's Endimion Sir Thopas is said by his page, Epiton, to do nothing but write sonnets, and the page quotes one with the comment: "It is set to the tune of the black Saunce, ratio est, because Dipsas is a black saint". In Jonson's Staple of News Madrigal composes a madrigal to the tune the fiddlers played. Neither Lyly nor Jonson were satirizing hack-writers of broadsides. Amateurs of [high social station] wrote verses to tunes, often to popular tunes of the kind the ballad-writers used. 55
So there was certainly nothing unusual about Philip Sidney's writing new lyrics for popular songs—only that he did so for songs in the villanella family (including the villotta and villancico) then fashionable on the continent.

Philip Sidney himself had written, or was to write, other poems based on more conventional songs. Certaine Sonnet (CS) 23 bears the heading "To the tune of Wilhelmus van Nassaw, & c"—since adopted as the Dutch National Anthem. CS 24 is introduced as being "To the tune of The Smokes of Melancholy," which Frank Fabry types an "English consort song" or native solo-song.\(^5\) Pattison explains that Sidney's lyric "The Tyme hath beene that a Taundry Lace" was written to the tune of "Greensleeves," as were various other ballads of the time by Richard Jones, Edward White, and at least one anonymous writer. And a handwritten note in one copy of England's Helicon provides a clue that yet another Sidney poem, "Only joy now here you are," was quite likely written to an existing tune.\(^5\) In the realm of speculation, Stevens thinks it possible that Sidney's lyric "Have I caught my heav'nly jewell" may have been written to Italian music,\(^5\) while Fabry suggests that Sidney may have intended all of his feminine-rhymed sonnets to be singable to frottola music. The frottola was the favorite song form of the improvvisatore, adaptable to singing all kinds of lyric poems, and it is recognized as the musical forebear of the villanella:

Later, sonnets in Italy were to receive sophisticated madrigal settings, but they also continued to be sung to highly schematized frottola music throughout the sixteenth century. Although without external evidence we cannot prove that Sidney intended his feminine-rhymed sonnets to be sung to frottola music or to some early madrigal, we should note that by writing a sonnet like OA 69 in which every line is feminine he made possible its performance to a large quantity of existing Italian music. Singers could adapt his words to frottola or early madrigal music on sight; to the more complex later madrigals they might need to have the words transcribed.\(^5\)
We know that Sidney was particularly sympathetic to the sounds of the blind poet-harpers who were still practicing their oral epic craft in England during his lifetime. Sidney's boyhood servant, Thomas Marshall, recorded that his then-twelve-year-old charge commanded that twelve pence be given "to a blind harper who is Sir William Holles man in Nottinghamshire." And, in his *Defence of Poetry*, Sidney himself went on to write:

Certainly (I must confess my own barbarousness) I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet, and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder with no rougher voice than rude style. Which being so evil appareled in the dust and cobwebs of that uncivil age, what would it work trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar? In Hungary I have seen it the manner at all feasts and other such like meetings to have songs of their ancestors' valor, which that right soldier-like nation think one of the chiefest kindlers of brave courage. The incomparable Lacedaemonians did not only carry that kind of music ever with them to the field but even at home, as such songs were made, so were they all content to be singers of them, when the lusty men were to tell what they did, the old men what they had done, and the young what they would do.

Some pages later, Sidney adds:

I dare undertake Orlando Furioso or honest King Arthur will never displease a soldier, but the "whatness" of being and "first matter" will hardly ever agree with a corselet. And therefore, as I said in the beginning, even Turks and Tartars are delighted with poets.

The *Orlando Furioso* was then still being sung in the streets of Italy by itinerant *improvvisatore*, and "King Arthur" was an allusion to the narratives sung by their English bardic counterparts. Hungary, where Sidney reported hearing epic poet-musicians, borders the former Yugoslavia, where Milman Parry and Albert Lord heard (and interviewed) *guslari* still singing epic poems in the early 1930s, and thus were able to confirm the foundations of their Oral-Formulaic Theory; both countries were part of the Ottoman Empire in Sidney's day, ruled by his "Turks and Tartars."
That Sidney equates the Hungarian, Italian, and English bards, and that he understands their art to be a type of "poetry" that he admires greatly, but that is out of fashion in his age, might also shed light on his attraction to the practice of "improvising" new lyrics for villanella and closely related (frottola, villotta, villancico) tunes, which, as we have seen, bear various traces of having arisen from an oral-improvisatory lyric tradition.

Of the thirty-two poems in "Certaine Sonnets," written circa 1581, eight are identified by Sidney as having been written to preexisting musical tunes, and six of those eight were written to tunes in the villanella family. Fabry states this point quite clearly: "the others (five Italian, one Spanish) are probably variant forms of the villanella, a type of sixteenth-century art-song written for three or four voices and distinguished by its rhythmic lightness, its homophonic (chordal) structure, and its mildly satirical or openly vulgar text."^3

Sidney himself noted that CS 3, "The fire to see my wrongs for anger burneth," was written "To the tune of Non credo che piu infelice amante," and that the piece immediately following it, "The Nightingale, as soone as Aprill bringeth" (CS 4), was written "To the same tune."^4 Fabry has identified the source of the original Italian song as being the mid-1560s Winchester College Manuscript mentioned earlier in this chapter. Non credo is, indeed, an Italian villanella, whose lyrics and music were both anonymously composed. In the original Italian, the lyrics rhyme abbcddEFEF, with eleven syllables in the "abba" and "EFEF" lines, and seven in the "cddc" lines.^5 In the first lyric, Sidney changes the rhyme scheme slightly, to "ababcdcdefef," and substitutes new text where there was a refrain:

The fire to see my wrongs for anger burneth:
The aire in raine for my affliction weepeth:
The sea to ebbe for griefe his flowing turneth:
The earth with pitie dull the center keepeth:
Fame is with wonder blazed:

184
Time runnes away for sorow:
Place standeth still amazed
To see my night of evils, which hath no morrow.
   Alas, all onely she no pitie taketh,
   To know my miseries, but chaste and cruell:
   My fall her glorie maketh,
   Yet still her eyes give to my flames their fuell. 66

There is a second stanza, as well, in the same form.

In the second lyric written to "Non credo," Sidney adheres more closely to
the original's rhyme scheme, retaining the refrain; the only variance is that he changes
the order of the first four lines from "abba" to "abab." It is remarkable how very
different the second poem is from the first, although written to the same "template."

Following is its first stanza:

   The Nightingale, as soone as Aprill bringeth
   Unto her rested sense a perfect waking,
   While late bare earth, proud of new clothing springeth,
   Sings out her woes, a thorne her song-booke making:
       And mournfully bewailing,
       Her throate in tunes expresseth
       What griefe her breast oppresseth.
   For Thereus's force on her chaste will prevailing.
   O Philomela faire, ô take some gladnesse,
       That here is juster cause of plaintfull sadnesse:
       Thine earth now springs, mine fadeth,
       Thy thorne without, my thorne my heart invadeth. 67

According to Fabry, although the two poems differ in places as to rhythm and
stress accent, both from each other and from the Italian original, Sidney was careful
to depart from the original "only where the music allows these variations to be
inconsequential;" for example, where a pattern of repeated quarter-notes renders all
syllable values equal. 68 Sidney was thus following the "prosody" of the music and
not of the Italian lyrics. In both poems, however, Sidney retained the Italianate
seven- and eleven-syllable counts and feminine rhyme endings of his model.

The next such lyric, CS 6, was written "To the tune of Basciami vita mia." 69
which was set at least ten times by Italian composers between 1543 and 1594,
usually as a madrigal but, in 1560, by an anonymous composer, as a villotta. It was even published in France in 1586, in a collection of madrigals composed by Regolo Vecoli. It is not known where Sidney encountered the song, but his version is definitely in villanella, rather than madrigal, form: it is strophic, with a one-line refrain and "standard" (less one stanza) villanella rhyme scheme of "abB abB abB." Sidney even varies the last refrain line slightly:

Sleepe Babie mine, Desire, nurse Beautie singeth:
The Babe cries 'way, thy love doth keepe me waking'.

Lully, lully, my babe, hope cradle bringeth
Unto my children alway good rest taking:
The babe cries 'way, thy love doth keepe me waking'.

Since babie mine, from me thy watching springeth,
Sleepe then a little, pap content is making:
The babe cries 'nay, for that abide I waking'.

Sidney employs feminine rhyme in the above lyric, but calls on it only sparingly in the poem that follows it, "To the tune of the Spanish song, Se tu señora no dueles de mi" (CS 7). Sidney's source for the latter tune has not been identified, but it is probably a Spanish villancico; and it is interesting that the English, as well as the French, appear to have conflated the villanella and villancico. The poem--and, one assumes, its model--commences with its refrain. There are four stanzas, rhyming "AAAbcbcaA." Sidney's editor Ringler points to this poem and to CS 26 and 27 as being "the first regularly sustained accentual trochaics in English." The first stanza is:

O Faire, ô sweet, when I do looke on thee,
In whom all joyes so well agree,
Heart and soule do sing in me.
   This you heare is not my tongue,
   Which once said what I conceived,
   For it was of use bereaved,
   With a cruell answer stong.
No, though tongue to roofe be cleaved,
Fearing least he chastisde be,
Heart and soule do sing in me. 75

The fifth such lyric, CS 26, is "To the tune of a Neapolitan song, which
beginneth: No, no, no, no."76 Fabry has identified this song, too, as being in the
Winchester College Manuscript. The original song begins "No, no, no, no, giammai non cangerò," and Fabry explains that it "seems to be that type belonging to the
frottola family, from which eventually the villanella was to be derived."77 Doughtie
confirms that it is a frottola, adding the interesting information that Sidney was able
to change the trochaic meter of the refrain, but not that of the strophe, to iambic
meter in his own poem for reasons that were based in music:

The soprano of the ripresa [refrain] moves more freely than
the other voices and has several melismatic passages; the
strophe is more uniformly homophonic, with a pronounced
rhythmic pattern setting the trochaic verses. The freedom of
the soprano in the ripresa allows Sidney to use iambic lines
when the Italian is trochaic; but Sidney has to follow the
trochaic strophe quite strictly. 78

This poem is the second English-language lyric to use trochaics; as can be seen in the
first stanza, below, the iambic meter of the first four (refrain) lines contrasts
markedly with the trochaic meter of the last seven lines. The rhyme scheme is

"ABBCddeeffa," for three stanzas:

No, no, no, no, I cannot hate my foe,
Although with cruell fire,
First throwne on my desire,
She sackes my rendred sprite.
   For so faire a flame embraces
   All the places,
   Where that heat of all heates springeth,
   That it bringeth
To my dying heart some pleasure,
   Since his treasure
Burneth bright in fairest light. No, no, no, no. 79
The last of Sidney's villanella contrafacta is "To the tune of a Neapolitan Villanell" (CS 27). Stevens reports that, although its original tune has not yet been identified, the refrain is so unusual that it is probably just a matter of time.

Al my sense thy sweetnesse gained,  
Thy faire haire my heart enchained,  
My poore reason thy words moved,  
So that thee like heaven I loved.  
Fa la la leridan, dan dan dan deridan:  
Dan dan dan deridan deridan dei:  
While to my minde the out side stood,  
For messenger of inward good.

The poem has five such stanzas, rhyming "aabbCDDee." It is likely that the original tune was a villotta, the member of the villanelle family that featured a refrain of nonsense syllables. A 1566 villotta in Giovanni Leonardo Primavera's II secondo libro de canzone napolitane has a refrain much like Sidney's: "fa la li lo di ru di ru di ru di ri," etc. "Al my sense thy sweetnesse gained" was set to music for the lute by Robert Jones about thirty years after it was written, and Stevens strongly suspects that Jones may have picked up the original tune that was known by Sidney in his composition:

It could be, of course, that the verbal rhythms of the villanella pattern suggested the tune to Jones. But it is not out of the question that he picked up with the words a tune associated with them. It has the precise rhythmic repetitions, the contrasting triple sections, the syllabic word-setting and the total absence of any "commentary" by the music on the text that characterized the villanella.

Aside from having produced six very accomplished English-language poems, Sidney's villanella experiments have been credited by several scholars with changing the verse rhythms of the English lyric line. The Italian song translations/adaptations, in general, were introducing changes to English-language poetry. Feminine rhyme was one, unusual in a language like English with "a notorious predominance of
monosyllables," as Michael Smith puts it. Increased linguistic density was another; when translating from polysyllabic Italian to monosyllabic English, says Smith, translators had to resort to inverting syntax, inserting adjectives, and substituting circumlocutions for single words in order to "fill up gaps in the metre." Gerunds and present participles were heavily relied upon for feminine rhyme endings. Smith calls the resulting style "eccentric," but it also places strong demands upon the reader's intelligence for its decoding; we may well be looking at one of the influences upon the complex verbal styles of Shakespeare, John Donne, and other later writers.

Sidney's particular influences on the lyric line were twofold. First, in his villanella experiments he became the first writer to introduce "sustained accentual trochaics" in English, as Frank Fabry explains. Prior to "Certaine Sonnets," the singsong "poulter's measure" folk meter of a John Skelton or the irregular iambics of a Thomas Wyatt, weighted by the Anglo-Saxon strong-stress poetic inheritance, had constituted the "range" of English lyric metrics. But trochaic meter—like the triple "dance meter" it is associated with in songs—is lilting in its rhythms, as shown in this excerpt from the third stanza of CS 26:

No man doubts, whom beautie killeth,
Faire death feeleth,
And in whom faire death proceedeth,
Glorie breedeth:
So that I in her beames dying,
Glorie trying,
Though in paine, cannot complains. No, no, no, no. 89

Three of Sidney's villanella contrafacta contain those sustained trochaics (numbers 7, 26, and 27), and Fabry explains that:

Sidney continued to use trochaic meter in his later poetry—it appears in six of the eleven "songs" in Astrophil and Stella, in one of his occasional poems, and in five of the Psalms—and perhaps largely through his influence trochaics occur more and more in the lyrical poetry of the 1590's. 90
The other lasting effect of Sidney's villanella experiments was a "loosening" of the rhythms of the English lyric line. As pointed out by Doughtie earlier in this chapter, writing to music can be more challenging than writing to meter. Meter has only two time-values, the stressed syllable and the unstressed syllable, which can be combined into six basic feet, but sixteenth-century music had four basic note values that could be subdivided further and combined into an infinite number of rhythmic combinations. The villanella, in particular, employed the smallest note values in rhythmically lively patterns. It was not the villanella melodies per se, but the animated rhythms of those melodies that attracted Sidney, says Stevens:

The extreme melodic dullness of [Sidney's villanella model]... suggests again the sort of interest Sidney may have been taking in this "courtly-popular" Italian tradition. The villanella (like, perhaps, the later balletto) provided not melodies but rather (a newish thing in western music) harmonized rhythms. It provided thus a stock of interesting new patterns, to which interesting poetic stanzas could be devised. It was another way of searching for the new voice of Elizabethan poetry. 91

T. V. F. Brogan asserts that "The invention of a wholly new m[eter] is relatively rare; what is not rare, and is vastly more important, is the discovery of what a m[eter] borrowed from one lang[uage] can be made to do in another."92 The "language" that Sidney borrowed from was music, not Italian, as Bruce Pattison emphasizes in this passage:

Sidney's original contribution to English poetry lies in the metrical and rhythmical variety he brought to it in a period of stiffness and poverty of invention; and most of his innovations derive ultimately from Italy. It was no accident, however, that most of them were measures very common in the Italian musical volumes... The fact is that the rhythmical uncertainty of English verse was so acute that it was incapable of absorbing any fresh stream in terms of speech rhythm, and it was only with the support of music that new measures could be attempted or borrowed from foreign sources. Hence we must imagine Sidney learning Italian measures not as metrical schemes but as tunes to which he fitted English texts in
imitation of the Italian originals. Indeed, in the case of many of the rhythms and metrical schemes that were most novel in English he clearly states the tunes that he had in mind in composing them... These are all well-known Italian tunes.

Surprisingly, a similar claim has been made for the influence of the villanella upon German lyric poetry. Sara Dumont explains that the translation of Il cortegiano into German in 1565 whetted Germans' appetites for fashionable Italian music; and, in the 1570s, three volumes of villanelle by Jacob Regnart were published in Germany, thereafter undergoing numerous reprintings and new editions. Poet/composer Valentin Haussman, continues Dumont, was particularly influenced by the Regnart villanelle and by the subsequent villanella and canzonetta collections by other composers that followed. He translated many of the Italian songs into German and went on to publish his own collection of Italianate songs with German lyrics:

Fifteen of the 27 [lyrics] are fully Italianate in style and expression, and they are quite successfully done, using the German language in a new, more fluid way; five of these have been identified as direct translations from Italian poems, and the rest may also be translations or adaptations from the Italian... The major differences at this time between Italian and German poetry were these: German poetry used strongly accented metres in lines of usually four or eight syllables, and its concerns were those of hunting, drinking, springtime, courtly love and the narration of stories; Italian poetry used quantitative metres in lines of six, seven, ten or eleven syllables and engaged in extravagant Petrarchean modes of expression and references to classical and/or mythological figures. Haussman, concludes Dumont, "proved most successfully here that such practices could be transferred to Germany, for with his translations and adaptations of Italian poems he helped to make the German language more fluid and flexible." The similarities between Haussman's villanella-based effects on the German lyric and the
changes wrought to the "crude" English metrical line by Sidney's villanella deserve to be studied in parallel, and one hopes that they will be.

In 1588, about seven years after Sidney's villanella experiments, Nicholas Yonge published Musica Transalpina, an anthology of "madrigal" lyrics translated into English. As Yonge explained in his introduction, the purpose of the collection was to enable English "Gentlemen and Merchants of good account" who loved the music of Italian songs, but didn't understand the words, to be able to sing them in their own language. It was to be a functional anthology, and not a collection of "poetry." Yonge's madrigal translator wished to remain anonymous, and has not yet been positively identified. More interesting from our perspective, however, is the allusion Yonge makes, in his introduction, to another anonymous Englishman who was translating "Napolitans"—villanella or canzonetta lyrics—somewhat earlier in time than Yonge's madrigal translator, who appears to have been working circa 1583:

I had the hap to find in the hands of some of my good friends, certaine Italian Madrigals translated most of them five yeeres agoe by a Gentleman for his private delight, (as not long before certaine Napolitans had been englished by a verie honourable personage, and now a Councillor of estate, wherof I have seene some, but never possessed any.)

It is quite possible that the gentleman in question who had been translating "Napolitan" lyrics around 1582 was Philip Sidney's younger brother Robert. Robert was also a poet, and his surviving poetry manuscript contains two contrafacta lyrics written to continental tunes, as well as poems with feminine rhymes and trochaic meters—telltale evidence of translation/adaptation from Italian. Furthermore, Robert was a gifted musician and leading music patron whom Philip envied for his greater musical talents. Yonge's casual remark that the Napolitan translator had "now become a Councillor of Estate"—i.e., that he had recently become a diplomatic officer or royal advisor—fits Robert Sidney quite closely. Robert had been knighted
in 1586 and in the summer of 1588 had been sent to Scotland by Queen Elizabeth on a special diplomatic mission. His instructions were "to bring James VI over to England's side and keep him there," and he succeeded in winning the Scottish king's trust and friendship. Robert returned to London on September 16, 1588, which was just two weeks prior to the October 1 date of Yonge's introduction to Musica Transalpina: the success of the mission would thus have been quite fresh in a Londoner's mind.

Five of the "madrigals" in Musica Transalpina were actually examples of the canzonet or canzonetta, a further refinement of the villanella that became popular in Italy in the 1580s. Gustave Reese explains that the canzonetta "avoided the crudities sometimes found in the villanella and was in effect a refinement of the latter or, perhaps better, a compromise between villanella and madrigal." Poetic "crudities" such as Neapolitan dialect words and sexual puns had disappeared, as well as musical "crudities" such as the parallel fifths, unisons, octaves, and "stuttering" effects mentioned previously which had been learned composers' imitations of actual oral tradition practices. And while the Italian canzonetta was strophic, English composers usually borrowed and translated only the first strophe, meaning that even the refrain lines were no longer apparent as such.

But, while the literary sentiment and musical sophistication of the canzonetta betrayed the influence of the madrigal, the structure of the villanella was still discernible under the refinements. According to Kerman:

formally the canzonet is still close to the villanella. . . . old villanella forms are common in the earlier books and by no means absent from later ones. The canzonet too is strophic, generally composed of four short stanzas, which often retain a rhyme scheme linking them together, as in the villanella.

Of the five canzonettas represented in Musica Transalpina, Kerman identifies two as retaining this obvious villanella structure in the Italian, although only the first stanza

193
of each is translated into English. The musical source of the first such canzonetta is Giovanni Ferretti's *Sei tanto gratioso e tanto bella*, which, in the original, has four stanzas rhyming abB abB abB aaa:  

So gracious is thy self, so fair, so framed,  
That whoso sees thee without a heart inflamed,  
Either he lives not, or love's delight he knows not.

The second villanella-like canzonetta translation to be found in *Musica Transalpina* was from Ferretti's *Donna crudele*:  

Cruel, unkind, my heart thou hast bereft me,  
And wilt not leave while my life is left me,  
And yet still will I love thee.

According to Kerman, the original musical composition had the very common villanella rhyme scheme of "abB abB abB ccc." Not much can be said about either of the two English "poems" as poems, except that their loose rhythms, two feminine rhymes, and use of eleven- and seven-syllable lines show the stamp of the Italian musical tradition.

The year after *Musica Transalpina* was published, George Puttenham published his major English-language prosodic treatise, *Arte of English Poesie*. Like contemporary French prosody manuals, it does not mention the villanella, but it does contain two passages that lend support to our hypothesis of a western European oral-improvisatory lyric tradition. In the first such passage, Puttenham describes how to challenge an improvisatory poet by dictating the number of lines in the poem, number of syllables per line, rhyme scheme, one entire line (just to ensure the poem wasn't made up beforehand), and theme to him:

if ye shall perceiue the maker do keepe the measures and rime as ye have appointed him, and besides do make his dittie sensible and ensuant to the first verse in good reason, then may ye say he is his crafts maister. For if he were not of a plentiful discourse, he could not upon the sudden shape the entire dittie upon your imperfect theame or proposition in one
verse. And if he were not copious in his language, he could not have such store of wordes at commaundement, as should supply your concords. And if he were not of a marvelous good memory he could not observe the rime and measures after the distances of your limitation, keeping with all gravitie and good sense in the whole dittie. 111

Certainly such a poet would have to have a "storehouse" of formulaic phrases and themes at hand. The "marvelous good memory" that Puttenham praises is not literal, but conceptual: the ad res (versus ad verbum) mnemonic technique that was suggested in Chapter 2 as underlying medieval oral lyric performance.

The second passage was quoted in full in the chapter on the Italian villanella: in it, Puttenham states that "the over busie and too speedy return of one tune" is to be avoided except in the "small & popular Musickes song by the Cantabanqui [i.e., improvvisatore]; in the "stories of old time" sung by "blind harpers or such like taverne minstrels"; and in "carols and rounds and such light or lascivious Poemes. . . uttered by these buffons or vices in playes."112 That he identifies a common musical structural device, the frequently repeating tune, underlying all three of these seemingly dissimilar types of verse (semi-improvised lyric, oral epic/romance, and the historical round dance or carol) and that he "grandfathers" the three categories out of his more exacting requirements for contemporary verse, seems to indicate both that he equates them at some level, and that he is paying them a sort of homage due to their stature in the past and not the present.

Although Puttenham's treatment of English poetics does not mention the villanella, Thomas Morley's A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke (1597) discusses it in some detail. The first reference to it appears in a passage on the use of the musical repeat sign:

But if you find any song of this kind without the stroke so parting all the lines, you must begin at the first sign of repetition and so sing to the end, for in this manner (for saving

195
of labour in pricking them at length) do they [the Italians] 
prick all their Ayres and Villanelles. 113

Morley himself was a professional musician—a former student of the composer 
William Byrd, and the organist at St. Paul's Cathedral in his later years. In his section 
on "Composing" he groups the canzonet and villanelle together as types of "light 
music," but is careful to distinguish between them:

The second degree of gravity in this light music is given to 
Canzonets, that is little short songs (wherein little art can be 
showed, being made in strains, the beginning of which is some 
point lightly touched and every strain repeated except the 
middle). . . . Of the nature of these are the Neapolitans or 
"Canzone a la Napolitans," different from them in nothing 
saving in name. . . .

The last degree of gravity (if they have any at all) is 
given to the Villanelle or country songs, which are made only 
for the ditty's sake for, so they be aptly set to express the 
nature of the ditty, the composer (though he were never so 
excellent) will not stick to take many perfect chords of one 
kind together, for in this kind they think it no fault (as being a 
kind of keeping decorum) to make a clownish music to a 
clownish matter, and though many times the ditty be fine 
enough yet because it carrieth the name Villanella they take 
those disallowances, as being good enough for plough and 
cart. 114

By "ditty," from the French dictier, to dictate, Morley means the lyrics of the 
"Villanelle," which he finds to be agreeable enough; however, he complains that the 
music is "clownish." Even "excellent" composers, he says—i.e., those who excel at 
other musical genres—use too many "perfect chords of one kind together" when 
composing villanella music. By "perfect chords" he means parallel fifths, octaves, 
and unisons. Morley is also saying that the canzonet is "made in strains," i.e., made 
of (three) melodic phrases, and that every strain is repeated except the middle one: 
the basic musical architecture of the villanella stanza. He calls them "little short 
songs," demonstrating that, in England, composers usually set only the first stanza of 
a canzonetta, although in Italy they were still strophic. Kerman suggests that
strophiic poems had begun to seem as old-fashioned to the English as they had seemed to the Italians when the madrigal came to prominence; besides which, one stanza was easier to translate than four.\footnote{In the same passage on light musical forms, Morley also mentions balletts and the subset of balletts called "fa las," both of which are "devised to be danced to voices [i.e., to vocal music]," and the villanella-like dialect songs called Giustinianas, which he says are "all written in the Bergamasca language; a wanton and rude kind of music it is."\footnote{Elsewhere in his treatise, Morley stresses that composition or "counterpoint" is just a written version of the oral practice of descant, or improvising a new part over or under a cantus firmus. Morley states that an infinite number of new parts can be made on any one "plainsong," and cites the example of a contemporary who had made over a thousand; Morley's editor notes that Morley himself uses the same cantus firmus for fifty-six different examples of counterpoint.\footnote{These passages are cited here only to demonstrate that the concept of improvising a new variation on an existing tune each time a song was performed was considered quite normal in late-sixteenth-century England, as was the practice of improvising new lyrics for the same tune. Pattison makes this point quite eloquently: the period had not outgrown a primitive and universal way of creating poetry, that of letting a tune serve as a metrical framework. In folk-song there is often a very subtle interchange between traditional tunes and stock poetic phrases, and verse and air modify each other. The sixteenth century had not lost touch with folk-lore.\footnote{Morley himself had published a collection of "englished" Balletts in 1595. According to Kerman, several of them are actually villanelle in the Italian originals; for example, number 14:}\footnote{Fyer, fyer, my hart. Fa la la. O help, alas. Ay me, I sit & cry me, & cal for help alas, but none coms ny mee. Fa la la.}}}
Kerman explains that Marenzio, the composer of the *villanella A la strada o dio* upon which Morley's adaptation is based, even employs "parodistic parallel fifths" in his composition, thereby exaggerating its musical genre—but Morley does not follow suit. In another instance, Morley adapts only the first stanza of a Ferretti composition that, in the original, has the rhyme scheme "abCDE abCDE abCDE ccCDE," recognizable as the "archetypal villanesca" scheme of ab+R, ab+R, ab+R, cc+R. Morley also went on to publish a collection of canzonets and one of madrigals including canzonets in 1597 and 1598, and Yonge published a second volume of *Musica Transalpina* in 1598. All were influenced by the *villanella*, but at this point the influence becomes too well integrated with the madrigal style to trace from lyrics alone.

The same year that Morley's *Practicall Musicke* was issued (1597), another Englishman published a set of *canzonetta* lyrics translated by his brother in the back of his own, unrelated book. The book was *The Cithern School* by Anthony Holborne, and appended to it were "sixe short Aers Neapolitan like to three voyces, without the Instrument: done by his brother William Holborne." Edmund H. Fellowes explains that William Holborne was then in his very early twenties; that Anthony decided to publish the Neapolitans because "incorrect and unauthorized coppies are got about"; and that "Nothing further is known about" William—not even the year of his death. The six one-stanza lyrics—all of which exhibit feminine rhyme and seven- or eleven-syllable lines (exclusive of the "fa la's")—have a charming animation that belies their brevity. They manage, like Donne's opening stanzas of the same approximate chronology, to hook the reader's attention with a simulation of action stumbled upon *in media res*:
Since Bonny-boots was dead, that so divinely
Could toot and foot it, (O he did it finely!)
We n'er went more a-Maying
Nor had that sweet fa-laing. Fa la. 124

The last significant publication of villanella/canzonetta lyrics as "poetry"
occurred in 1610: Michael East's Third Set of Bookes: Wherein are Pastorals,
Anthemes, Neapolitanes, Fancies, and Madrigals, to 5. and 6. parts: Apt both for
Viols and Voyces. East appears to have been the son of music publisher Thomas
East, 125 who printed Yonge's and Watson's anthologies, among other collections.
His songbook does, indeed, contain three canzonet-like, single-stanza "Neapolitans"
with feminine rhyme and odd numbers of syllables, although Kerman believes that
neither the words nor the music are original to East. 126 And although Fellowes
claims that their musical style is indistinguishable from that of the "madrigals" and
"pastorals" in the same collection, he, too, seems haunted by the beauty and
strangeness of the following one: 127

Dainty white pearl, and you fresh-smiling roses,
The nectar sweet distilling,
Oh, why are you unwilling
Of my sighs inly firing?
And yet my soul herself in them discloses,
Some relief thence desiring. 128

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, the term canzonet or canzonetta
begins to be used interchangeably with "ayre" (air) in England. 129 The English air
was, in the words of the Norton Anthology of English Literature:

a much less complicated form [than the madrigal], [and] used
words arranged in stanzas; it was a single, recurring melody
for the voice with a three-part accompaniment on the lute.
Words written for the lute-song or air were much more
frequently excellent lyric poems than the words written for
madrigals, which tended to be not much more than epigrams.
130
The villanella's simple, chordal musical style with lyrics that could be understood by bystanders prevailed over that of the complex, polyphonic, art-song madrigal, whose lyrics sounded like gibberish when sung. The villanella spawned the canzonetta, and the canzonetta spawned the air. "The air's focus on one voice," writes Doughtie, "allowed a clear presentation of the text, which in turn allowed for musical treatment of longer (usually strophic) and more complex poems than feasible in the madrigal or other polyphonic forms." Ultimately, the air inspired a great body of lyric poems that would never have existed had the villanella never reached England, including this one by Thomas Campion, with its villanella-like refrain:

When to her lute Corinna sings,
Her voice revives the leaden strings,
And doth in highest notes appear
As any challenged echo clear;
But when she doth of mourning speak,
Ev'n with her sighs the strings do break.

And as her lute doth live or die,
Led by her passion, so must I:
For when of pleasure she doth sing,
My thoughts enjoy a sudden spring,
But if she doth of sorrow speak,
Ev'n from my heart the strings do break. 132

One other musico-poetic phenomenon related to the villanella deserves mention. Thomas Ravenscroft's Deutromelia (1609) announces on its title page that it contains "K. H. Mirth, or Freemens Songs," which the editor of English Madrigal Verse explains as follows:

On the title-page "K. H. Mirth" stands for "King Henry's Mirth," and "Freemens Songs" is probably a corrupt form of "Three-Men's Songs," i.e., songs for three voices. 134

King Henry VIII was credited as the author of two "forester balets" or "forester-songs," which were related to the Italian mascherata or masking-song in which three men in costume announced themselves to be members of a profession, then
sang a three-part song full of erotic double meanings. The *mascherata*, as mentioned earlier, was very closely related to the *villanella*, and the English equivalent appears to have been quite popular. Stevens mentions that a list of the Marquis of Exeter's servants, dated 1538, singles out for attention the one of his six musicians "who can sing properly in three-man songs." Shakespeare inserts a forester-song into *As You Like It*. Jaques and two lords dressed as "Foresters" sing about putting horns on their head after killing a deer, in an obvious allusion to cuckoldry:

Take thou no scorn to wear the horn,
It was a crest ere thou wast born,
Thy father's father wore it,
And thy father bore it. 138

One of King Henry VIII's two credited forester songs is equally self-mocking:

Every bowe for me ys to bygge;
Myne arrow ny worne ys;
The glew ys slypt from the nyk;
When I shuld shoote I myse;
Yet have [I bene a foster.] 139

Ravenscroft's *Deutromelia* contains two such songs, "We be soldiers three" and "We be three poor mariners;" the former has a distinctive part-French, part-nonsense-syllable refrain and is the livelier poem, as well:

We be soldiers three,
Pardonnez-moi je vous en prie,
Lately come forth of the Low Country
With never a penny of money.
Fa la la la lantido dilly.

Here, good fellow, I drink to thee,
Pardonnez-moi je vous en prie,
To all good fellows wherever they be,
With never a penny of money.
Fa la la la lantido dilly.

And he that will not pledge me this,
Pardonnez-moi je vous en prie,
Pays for the shot, whatever it is,
With never a penny of money.
Fa la la la lantido dilly.

Charge it again, boy, charge it again,
Pardonnez-moi je vous en prie,
As long as there is any ink in thy pen,
With never a penny of money.
Fa la la la lantido dilly. 140

These types of "freemen's songs" have been mentioned as an obvious influence upon the comic opera lyrics of William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, drawing another interesting link between the villanella and the twentieth century.

The Italian villanella was nearly as well known in sixteenth-century England as it was in sixteenth-century France. In both countries it was strongly associated with music and with an "old-fashioned" oral poetic tradition of semi-improvising lyrics to a preexisting tune. In neither country was it remotely associated with a "fixed poetic form;" rather, its multiplicity of poetic forms disguised a common musical style and structure. Altogether Doughtie has counted more than seven hundred sixteenth-century English songs styled after Italian ones.141 Most of those English songs were based upon madrigals, and yet it is the villanella and not the madrigal that is credited with loosening the stiff rhythms of the English metric line and parenting the English lute air: two developments that have altered the course of subsequent lyric poetry.

End Notes

1. According to Winifred Maynard, Elizabethan Lyric Poetry and Its Music (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 21, the first secular songbook published in England was "XX Songs (1530), by various composers"; the printer is unknown. The second was Thomas Whythorne's Songes, for Three, Power, and Five Voyces (London: John Daye, 1571), discussed later in this chapter.


10. Kerman, 75.


203


25. Reese, 816.


34. Ibid., 233-34, 243-45.


37. Ibid., 14.

38. Ibid., 128.


40. Gascoigne's deceptive introduction to "The Adventures of Master F.J." is on page 383 of The Posies. Margaret Drabble, ed., The Oxford Companion to English Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), notes that the 1573, unexpurgated version of "The Adventures of Master F.J." "has every appearance of being a roman à clef," 353. It should also be noted that several of the pieces in The Posies are truthfully identified as translations.

41. Gascoigne, 398.

42. See Cardamone, CV, 1:6, 147; Ernest Ferand, "'Sodaine and Unexpected' Music in the Renaissance," The Musical Quarterly 37 (1951), 19; and Reese, 334.

43. Cardamone, CV, 1:115-16.

44. Doughtie, English Renaissance Song, 48.

45. Booth, 103.

46. Doughtie, 80.

47. Ibid., 35-36.


49. Doughtie, 48.


52. Ibid., 165-73.
53. Ibid., 65.

54. Ibid., 177.

55. Ibid., 163-64.


57. Pattison, Music and Poetry, 174-75.


62. Ibid., 38.


64. Philip Sidney, Poems, 136-37.


67. Ibid., 137.

68. Fabry, "Sidney's Verse Adaptations," 244.

69. Philip Sidney, Poems, 139.


73. Ibid., op. cit.

74. Ibid., xliii.

75. Ibid., 139.

76. Ibid., 155.


78. Doughtie, 82.


80. Ibid., 156.


86. Ibid., op. cit.

87. Ibid., 172.


95. Ibid., 63.

96. Ibid., 68.


98. Yonge, np.


100. Ibid., 49-52, 336.


102. Ibid., 67-68.

103. Reese, 446.

104. Kerman, 153.

105. Ibid., op. cit. (including notes 1 and 2).

106. Ibid., 153.


108. Maynard, 42.


112. Ibid., 83-84.

114. Ibid., 295.

115. Kerman, 158.


118. Pattison, 160.

119. Kerman, 145.


121. Kerman, 145, 153.


126. Kerman, 253.


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136. Ibid., 276.

137. Maynard, 217.


140. Quoted in Fellowes, *EM Verse*, 221-22.
CHAPTER 6: THE FIX IS IN

This chapter will demonstrate how the form of the poetic villanelle came to be "fixed" as the result of two untruthful passages inserted into two "authoritative" prosody texts a century apart. A number of respected sources have claimed that the villanelle was a fixed poetic form in France prior to the sixteenth century. Edmund Gosse wrote in 1877 that the villanelle was one of "the six most important of the poetic creations of old France," dating back "at least as far as the fifteenth century."1 Saintsbury "confirmed" in 1882 that the villanelle was one of the "artificial" forms of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries—one which had mysteriously "survived the other épiceries condemned by Du Bellay."2 The Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms has it listed as one of "a set of regularly rhyming and metrically patterned verse forms that originated in Southern France during the 12th and 13th centuries when the troubadours were extant."3 The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms lists the villanelle, in its "fixed forms" entry, among "a class of medieval French verse forms."4 But, as was shown in Chapter 4, the sixteenth-century French villanelle was considered a type of song, not a poetic genre, and the eighteen surviving "poetic" specimens resemble individual (musical) Italian villanelle and Spanish villancicos, but not each other, in their "poetic" forms.

Still other critics imply that Jean Passerat himself was responsible for fixing the villanelle's poetic form during the sixteenth century, by writing so many of them in that form that it became the "template" for other villanelles. In that group can be found Jacob Schipper, who stated in 1885 that the villanelle "was cultivated by Jean Passerat;"5 Helen Cohen (1922), who claimed that Passerat "was undoubtedly unaware of the innovation that he had introduced, but the form caught the attention of his contemporaries and became fixed in his lifetime;"6 and Warner Patterson, who in 1935 referred to "Villanelle" (J'ay perdu ma tourterelle) as "a villanelle of the type
made popular by Passerat. But, as we have seen, Passerat wrote only two villanelles, one in the form "aaBB ccBB ddBB eeBB" and one in the form "A1bA2 abA1 abA2 abA1 abA2 abA1A2." One can hardly credit him with regularizing its poetic form during his own lifetime.

The "mainstream" account of how the villanelle's form came to be fixed is that a group of seventeenth-century French prosodists, led (in most versions) by Pierre Richelet (1631-1698), selected Passerat's *J'ai perdu ma tourterelle* as the model poem upon which the form should be standardized. Ferdinand de Gramont wrote circa 1876 that:

> Ce furent les Richelet et autre prosodistes, fort enclins pour la plupart à poser des restrictions, qui attribuèrent particulièrement ce nom générique de villanelle à une certaine forme de chanson dont le type a été donné par Jean Passerat. 8

["They were the Richelets and other prosodists, strongly inclined for the most part to impose restrictions, who attributed particularly the generic name of "villanelle" to a certain form of chanson of which the type had been given by Jean Passerat."]

Writing in English in 1903, L. E. Kastner stated that "it was only in the seventeenth century that Richelet and other prosodists reserved the term *villanelle* for one of these rustic songs by Jean Passerat. . . the form of which is more complicated and regular than in those of the other poets of the sixteenth century." And Cohen, after stating that the villanelle's form had become fixed during Passerat's lifetime, contradicted herself in her next sentence by claiming that "Pierre Richelet and other writers on the theory of poetry designated as villanelles only those poems that conformed to Passerat's classic example." The unsigned "villanelle" entry in the 1974 *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetic* also stated clearly that:

According to L. E. Kastner (*History of Fr. Versification, 1903*) Fr. 17th c. prosodists such as Richelet reserved the term

212
'villanelle' for one of the rustic songs by Jean Passerat. Although the earlier forms show considerable variation, the v. has since Passerat retained the following pattern. . . . 11

Curiously, the only book-length treatment of the villanelle's development as a poetic form does not mention Richelet at all, either to confirm that he fixed the villanelle's form, or to dispute that claim. But Ronald McFarland does give a nod in the direction of the "seventeenth-century prosodists" theory when he writes that:

In La Sieur De la Croix's L'Art de poésie française et latine (1694), Passerat heads the list of the 67 most renowned modern poets, and his fixed-form villanelle is quoted as an example of his achievement. . . . De la Croix's observations do not necessarily indicate, however, that he thought of "J'ai perdu" as a fixed-form paradigm. 12

The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics also credits Richelet with fixing the form. That entry, signed by Clive Scott, retreats from the 1974 edition's position that the villanelle's form had been fixed since Passerat, but repeats the by-now-familiar claim that "The form only became standardized in the 17th c., when prosodists such as Richelet based their definition on 'J'ai perdu ma tourterelle' by Jean Passerat." 13

Seeking to locate the exact passage of text in which Richelet had blessed the form of J'ai perdu ma tourterelle, I began by checking his publications in the Bibliothèque Nationale and British Museum catalogues. They consisted of La versification française (1672), a prosody manual; the Dictionnaire français (1680), a comprehensive French dictionary initiated by the Académie Française, which was then seeking to "regularize" the French language; Les plus belles lettres française (1689), a collection of excerpts from noteworthy French authors; and the Dictionnaire des rimes (1692), a rhyming dictionary.

While putting in requests for reprints, microfiche, and/or xerox copies of Richelet's prosody manual and rhyming dictionary at various libraries around the country, I noticed that my own university's rare book library possessed a copy of
Richelet's *Dictionnaire français*, and so decided to spend an afternoon with it. To my surprise, it contained this definition of the word "villanelle":

*Vilanelle, s.f. Mot qui vient de l'Espagnol villano. C'est une chanson de Berger. C'est une sorte de chanson pieuse ou galante, amoureuse et pastorale. Es un genera de copla que solamente se compone para ser cantado. Rengifo Poetique. c. 40. [Monsieur d'Urfé nous a laissé dans l'Astrée d'assez belles vilanelles.]

["Villanelle, singular feminine. Word that comes from the Spanish villano. It is a shepherd's song. It is a kind of devoted or gallant song, amorous and pastoral. [Switching from French to Spanish:] It is a type of verse that can only be composed by being sung. Rengifo Poetic. [Mister d'Urfé has left us in the Astrée some very beautiful villanelles.]

There seemed to be little doubt that Richelet was saying that the villanelle was a musical and not poetic genre. What's more, the sentence quoted in Spanish from Juan Diaz Rengifo's *Arte poetica española* (1592) seemed to confirm that the villanella was composed *in the act of performance*—making it a "lost lyric counterpart" to oral-formulaic epic. Even if Richelet—under the spell of the French seventeenth century's love affair with Spanish literature—had conflated the Spanish villancico with the Italian villanella, the two song forms were closely enough related, musically and poetically, for the omission to make no real difference to the essential truth of the definition. The connection between the French "poetic" villanelle and the so-called Italian or Spanish "musical" villanella or villancico is thus unmistakable: D'Urfé's published, "literary" villanelles are being cited as examples of the type of song called "villanelle" whose lyrics could only be composed by being sung. But why was Richelet citing d'Urfé and not Passerat as the author of exemplary villanelles?
Examining the *Dictionnaire français* further, I found that Richelet provided dictionary entries for the names of several Pléiade authors, although not for Passerat. Elsewhere, Richelet defined "tourterelle" with reference to the cliché of its lost mate:

*Tourterelle. Les tourterelles vont deux à deux & lors que l'une des deux perit celle qui demeure vit seule le reste de ses jours. La tourterelle est chaste & d'une tres-douce nature. On dit en proverbe, Elle est chaste comme une tourterelle. Belon, Histoire des animaux, 1.6. 15

["Turtledove. Turtledoves go two by two and when one of the two perishes the one that survives lives alone the rest of its days. The turtledove is chaste and of a very sweet nature. As the proverb says, She is chaste like a turtledove. Belon, History of Animals, 1.6."]

Even though the "I" of Passerat's poem was meant to stand for his country's king, Richelet's entry makes it clear that Passerat was drawing upon folklore and proverbial material for his second villanelle, as well as for his first.

But the question at hand was not Passerat's inspiration for the poem, but how the poem had come to be anointed as the definitive villanelle; and so I turned next to Richelet's *La versification française*. In that work, Richelet expressed a very low opinion of *vers mesurés*; and, strangely, his only mention of Passerat was as a writer of *vers mesurés* that rhymed:

*Lors que les Pōetes commurent que les vers mesurez ne plaisoient point, ils les rimerent. Ils firent mesme des vers Leonins mesurez, c'est à dire des vers qui rimoient & au milieu, & à la fin. Mais ni les uns, ni les autres, ne reussirent. Quelque soin qu'on prenne à rimer juste, les vers composez de piez ont tres-peu de grace en nostre Langue. Toutefois ils sont beaucoup plus agreable avec la rime que sans la rime. Butet, Desportes, Passerat, Rapin, Callier, ont laissé des vers mesurez & rimez. 16

["When the poets realized that *vers mesurés* didn't please at all, they rhymed it. They made even leonine *vers mesurés*, that is to say the verses that rhyme in the middle and at the end. But neither the one nor the other succeeded. Whatever
care one took to rhyme just right, verses composed of feet have very little grace in our language. Always it's more agreeable with rhyme than without rhyme. Butet, Desportes, Passerat, Rapin, Callier, have left us rhymed vers mesurés.

Hardly a ringing endorsement of Passerat and/or his Tourterelle! And, once again, Richelet heaped praise upon Passerat's "villanelle rival" d'Urfé, despite d'Urfé's lapse of judgment in writing vers mesurés:

Les autres Pöetes qui ont composé des vers mesurez, sont Louis Aleman, Pasquier, Vignenere, & l'illustre* [in the margin: "*M. d'Urfé"] Auteur de l'Astrée. . . . L'Auteur de l'Astrée nous a laissé en cette espèce de Pöesie un Ouvrage Dramatique, qui n'est pas tout-à-fait digne de lui. 17

["The other poets who have composed vers mesurés are Louis Aleman, Pasquier, Vignenere, and the illustrious* [in the margin: "*Mr. d'Urfé"] author of the Astrée... the author of the Astrée has left us in that aspect of poetry a dramatic work that is not at all worthy of him."]

Richelet did not mention Passerat's name in the list of the best and most famous old French poets, unless he intended to include him under the blanket reference to "la plupart de ceux qui composent la Pléiade" ["the majority of those who composed the Pléiade"]—but Passerat had never been considered a Pléiade member, only a peripheral figure, and Richelet then proceeded to call out Du Bellay, Tyard, Jodelle, Belleau, Baif, and Dorat by name. 18

When at last I received a modern edition of Richelet's Dictionnaire de rimes and came across the passage below, titled "De la Villanelle," in the prefatory material to the rhyming dictionary itself, it seemed that I had found what I was looking for:

La Villanelle est une chanson de bergers. En voici une de Jean Passerat. [followed by text of J'ay perdu ma tourterelle]

Ce petit Poëme est partagé par tercets, tous sous deux rimes en elle et en ai: et les deux mêmes se trouvant ensemble à la fin de la pièce, font un quatrain au lieu d'un tercet. On trouve encore des villanelles dont les couplets de six vers. 19

216
"The Villanelle is a shepherd's song. Here is one from Jean Passerat. [followed by text of J'ay perdu ma tourterelle] That little poem is divided into tercets, all under two rhymes on elle and on oi: and the two sames [i.e., refrains] find themselves together at the end of the piece, making a quatrain in place of a tercet. One finds also villanelles with stanzas of six lines."

But in the rhyming dictionary section in the back of the same volume, under the syllable "-elle," was the vaguely worded definition "Villanelle, vieux poète français—sorte de danse et de poésie"20 ["Villanelle, Old French poetry—sort of dance and of poetry"], which just didn't seem to match the crisp, modern, technical tone of the "villanelle" passage up front. Neither did the tone and content of the latter passage seem to match those of Richelet on the subjects of Passerat and the villanelle in Richelet's earlier works. And, here again, Marot, Ronsard, and Jodelle—but not Passerat—had been deemed important enough to have their surnames catalogued as rhyme words.

The edition of the Dictionnaire des rimes that I was using was dated 1810. It seemed prudent to check the bibliographic history of the book. In 1648, Frémont d'Ablancourt had authored a Nouveau dictionnaire de rimes, corrigé, published in Paris by Augustin Courbé. The words Nouveau ["new"] and corrigé ["corrected"] implied that there had been another work preceding it, but apparently no copy of the original edition had survived. Next, in 1667, Richelet had edited a new edition of the work: "Ablancourt, Frémont d'. Dictionnaire de rimes (retouché par Pierre Richelet). Avec histoire de la rime" ["... (retouched by Pierre Richelet). With a history of rhyme"]. In 1692, the fourth edition of the work was issued, with Richelet listed as the author: "Richelet. Dict. de rimes dans un nouvel ordre, avec abrégé de la versif. et Remarques sur la nombre des sylb. de quelques mots difficiles. 2e ed. de 1667" ["... in a new order, with an abridged versification and remarks on the number of syllables of some difficult words. 2nd ed. of 1667"].

217

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Richelet died in 1698, but his rhyming dictionary remained popular. There was a reprinting or new edition in 1700, of which few details are extant. The year 1702 brought a new, 648-page edition published in Paris by F. [Florentin] and P. Delaune, of which the British Museum Catalogue notes: "New ed. augmented with a big # of french words + all Latin words by M.D.F. (i.e., DuFresne), for foreigners and those who wish to learn by reason and proportion the Latin language." The edition was republished in 1721, 1731, and 1739.

The revised edition of 1751 swelled to 749 pages. Published in Paris by G. Desprez, it was catalogued as "Nouvelle éd., revûe, corrigée, augmentée & mise dans un nouvel ordre par m. l'abbé Berthelin" ["New edition, reviewed, corrected, augmented, and put in a new order by the abbey Berthelin"]. The "abbey Berthelin" was Pierre Charles Berthelin (1720-1780), who has left no trail whatsoever in French literary biographical reference works. His edition was reprinted in 1757 and 1760. In 1762 and 1778, the publishing company "Nyon," of Paris, reprinted the work, which was still 749 pages long; the year 1781 brought a version published Chez Les Librairies Associés in Paris, which was ten pages shorter.

The next revised edition came out in 1799 and reached 816 pages:

"Dictionnaire de rimes, par P. Richelet, retouché en 1751 par Berthelin. . . . Nouv. éd., corr. et considérablement augm. par les cc. Dewailly. . . et Dewailly fils aine. A Paris, Chez Plassan, etc., l'an VII de la Republique 1799" ["Dictionary of Rhymes, by P. Richelet, retouched in 1751 by Berthelin. . . New edition, corrected and considerably augmented by the cc. Dewailly. . . and Dewailly his son. In Paris, at Plassan, etc., year 7 of the Republic 1799"]. The two Waillys who altered the work this time were Noel François de (1724-1801) and his son Etienne Augustin de (1770-1821).

The edition that I had consulted, 1810, had been amended yet again:

"Dictionnaire de rimes, par P. Richelet, retouché en 1751, par Berthelin. . . . Nouv.
"Dictionary of Rhymes," by P. Richelet, retouched in 1751, by Berthelin. . . . New edition, reviewed, corrected, and considerably augmented by Mr. Barthelemi. Lyon: A Leroy, 1810"]. "Barthelemi" was identified as Louis Barthélemy (1759-1815?).

Checking further, I saw that, while various U.S. libraries possessed one or two of the editions, The University of Michigan's library owned copies of the 1702, 1739, 1751, and 1799 editions. I wrote to their staff and, in August 1996, I received the following response from Kathryn L. Beam, Curator of Humanities Collections at the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library, University of Michigan:

we are pleased to send photocopies of the sections you requested from various sections of Pierre Richelet's Dictionnaire de Rimes. . . . Specifically, the sections are those subtitled "De la Villanelle." Please note that there is nothing photocopied from either the 1702 or 1739 editions. The first time a section concerning types of poems (i.e., the sonnet, rondeau, triolet, ballad, etc.) occurs in the prefatory matter is in the 1751 edition. There the section is entitled "De plusieurs pôèmes, ou pieces de poésie remarquables," and constitutes the last text (on pages /xvii-/xxx) prior to the beginning of the Dictionnaire itself. The same is the case for the 1799 edition. Here the section "De plusieurs pôèmes. . ." is on pages /xii-/xxv, with the passage concerning the villanelle on pages /xxiv and /xxv (see photocopy), followed directly by page 1 of the Dictionnaire de Rimes. . . .

The passage on the villanelle had not been added until 1751, fifty-three years after Richelet's death: and the fixer of the villanelle's form was not seventeenth-century prosodist Pierre Richelet, but the mysterious eighteenth-century editor Pierre Charles Berthelin.

And what of "La Sieur De la Croix," the seventeenth-century French prosodist cited by McFarland for placing Passerat at the top of his list of the best modern poets, as well as for quoting J'ay perdu ma tourterelle as one of Passerat's
most accomplished poems? To begin with, "le sieur Pherotée de La Croix" (c. 1640-
1715), the author of the 1694 L'art de poésie française et latine to which McFarland
refers, should not be confused with "La Sieur de la Croix," the pen name of "La
Croix du Maine, François Grude, sieur de," the coauthor of the distinguished 1584
French literary history Bibliothèque de La Croix du Maine et Du Verdier. Sixteenth-
century La Croix du Maine did include Passerat in his Bibliothèque, praising him as
"homme très-docte en Grec & en Latin, & des plus excellens Pōetes Latins &
François de notre temps"[^22] ["a man very learned in Greek and Latin, and one of the
most excellent Latin and French poets of our time"]—but there is no mention at all of
Passerat's villanelle.

McFarland's seventeenth-century "La [sic] Sieur De la Croix," on the other
hand, can hardly be called "distinguished." While one aim of this work has been to
rehabilitate the image of those late medieval/early Renaissance poets accused of
"plagiarism" for practicing the dying art of oral-formulaic lyric composition, Pherotée
de la Croix's brand of plagiarism lies quite beyond redemption. According to Jean
Lagny, L'art de poésie françoise et latine is a cut-and-paste job from the 1692
Recueil des plus belles pièces des poètes français ["Anthology of the Most Beautiful
Pieces by French Poets"], commonly known as the Recueil Barbin for its publisher,
Claude Barbin—except that Pherotée de la Croix couldn't even cut and paste without
leaving out chunks of text that rendered sentences factually wrong or meaningless.
Lagny gives the following example to illustrate his point:

(Recueil Barbin 1692): ... il estoit originaire de Normandie,
et à ce qu'on pretend allié de Mons, le Cardinal de Richelieu,
qui luy donna pension et le fit élever avec beaucoup de soin.
Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans avoit tant d'estime pour luy qu'il
le logeoit au Palais-Royal.

(De la Croix 1694). ... étoit originaire de Normandie, et
allié du Cardinal de Richelieu qui luy donna pension, et avoit
tant d'estime pour luy qu'il le logeoit au Palais-Royal. 23

220

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"Barbin Anthology 1692): . . . he was originally from Normandy, and it was there that he claimed alliance with Mons, the Cardinal Richelieu, who gave him an allowance and raised him with much care. The Duke of Orleans had so much esteem for him that he lodged him at the Royal Palace.

(de La Croix): . . . was originally from Normandy, and allied with the Cardinal Richelieu who gave him an allowance, and had so much esteem for him that he lodged him at the Royal Palace.

Passerat's "Villanelle" [sic] (J'ay perdu ma tourterelle) had, indeed, been one of the twenty-seven Passerat poems anthologized in the Recueil Barbin, explaining why it would have found its way into Pherotée de La Croix's work.

As to the list of renowned modern poets referred to by McFarland, Pherotée de La Croix actually published two lists in L'art de poésie française et latine: one of the principal poets, followed by one of playwrights ranked according to their merit. Of the list of poets, scholar Frederic LaChèvre mentions only that "Boileau" and "Despréaux" (who are, in fact, the same person) are listed twice, as numbers 36 and 45. LaChèvre describes the list of playwrights in more detail, but suffice it to say that Corneille and Racine are relegated to the third, and lowest, rank. Finally, not even the lists, laughable as they are, appear to have been Pherotée de La Croix's original work. Noticing that no play written since 1674 had been included among the listed playwrights' cited works, Lagny was able to trace the list of dramatists back to its initial publication in Samuel Chappuzeau's Theatre français (1674). According to Lagny, Chappuzeau's three lists of playwrights had been sorted chronologically, not by merit, into those still working in the theater, those alive but no longer working in the theater, and those deceased—and de La Croix, as usual, had managed to bungle a simple cut-and-paste job.

Two writers have claimed that they systematically examined prosodic treatises of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and/or seventeenth centuries looking for allusions
to the villanelle. Joseph Boulmier, the author of a quirky 1878 collection of original villanelles prefaced by a note on the form, declares that:

\[\text{Eh bien! je le déclare sans crainte: on peut, comme je l'ai fait moi-même, feuilleter l'un après l'autre tous les traités de versification du quinzième et du seizième siècle; on n'y trouvera pas la moindre trace de la tourterelle de Passerat, c'est-à-dire rien qui ressemble à ce joli rythme.} 26\]

["Now then! I declare it without fear: one can, as I have done myself, leaf through one after the other of the versification treatises of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; one will not find the least trace of Passerat's turtledove, that is to say nothing that bears resemblance to that pretty rhyme."]

While Boulmier claims to have thoroughly examined all fifteenth- and sixteenth-century prosody treatises, McFarland attests to having made a comparable survey of seventeenth-century works:

most manuals of versification during the seventeenth century do not list the villanelle at all. Neither Boileau, in L'Art poétique (1674), nor François Colletet, in Le Parnasse français (1664), mentions the villanelle among the many forms surveyed.

... [Aside from Pherotée de La Croix's L'Art de poésie française et latine] Subsequent prosodic texts do not recognize Passerat's villanelle as the formal model until fairly late in the nineteenth century. 27

However, neither lists the works he examined, and both overlooked villanelle allusions. The major fifteenth through seventeenth century prosody treatises and literary histories that I have been able to examine for any mentions of the villanelle in general or of Passerat's J'ay perdu ma tourterelle in particular include the following:

1493-98 Henry de Croy, L'art et science de rhétorique
1521 Pierre Fabri, Le grand et vrai art de pleine rhétorique
1539 Gracien DuPont, Art et science de rhétorique métérisée
1548 Thomas Sebillet, Art poétique francoys
1549 Joachim Du Bellay, La defence et illustration de la langue française
1555 Jacques Peletier, L'art poétique
1584 La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier, Les bibliothèques françaises
As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Richelet calls the villanelle "a sort of dance or poetry," "a shepherd's song," and "a kind of devoted or gallant song," and quotes Diaz Rengifo to the effect that it is "a type of verse that can only be composed by being sung." Vauquelin de la Fresnaye's lines on the villanelle, quoted in Chapter 4, also indicate that the villanelle is a type of song from the oral tradition with a link to oral epic verse. As the passage was translated earlier:

The gracious and natural love song
Unconscious of Art, like a villanelle,
Moves among the people at dances and festivals
And recounts, to the crossroads, the gestes of rebels.

And, while he was not a prosodist, Michel de Montaigne used the term "villanelle" for the oral lyric verse of rural French Gascony, as contrasted with poetry "perfected according to the rules of art." Just one other early modern prosodist of those listed above mentions the villanelle, and that is Claude Lancelot (c. 1615-1695). Two significant points about Lancelot are, first, that he is credited as being the author of an anonymous treatise on learning to sing plainchant and, second, that Richelet considered Lancelot's prosodic treatise to be the equal of his own. According to Spire Pitou:

Richelet...acknowledged only one other treatise as a rival to his own: Lancelot's Quatre traités de poésies: latine, française, italienne et espagnole (1663). This work handles the subject skilfully, Richelet avers, but does not preclude his own because it is "un Corps de Pöetique entier" ["an entire body of poetics"].
Lancelot locates his passage on the villanelle within the section devoted to Spanish poetry. At the beginning of that section, he explains that there are two kinds of Spanish poetry: one that is ancient and their own tradition, and one that is new and an Italian imitation. He goes on to say that villanelles (which, he says, the Spanish call villancicos) fall under the ancient/traditional category, and that they correspond to French ballades. On the latter point he is musically quite correct, according to villancico scholar Isabel Pope, who equates the villancico with fifteenth-century French refrain songforms such as the rondeau, virelai, and bergerette; furthermore, the villancico also corresponds to the Italian frottola ("parent" songform to the villanella) and to the "carnival songs" such as the mascherata, moresca, and villotta—which are, in turn, related to the villanella. James Haar agrees that the frottola and villancico are closely related. Earlier it was shown that several of the French musical collections that contained Italian villanelles napolitaines also contained espagnolles, i.e., villancicos. In other words, while the Italian villanella and Spanish villancico are not identical, they are close enough musically and metrically for a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century French person's confusion to be understandable. It was stated earlier that Saint-Gelais's "Villanesque," one of the earliest French "poetic" villanelles, is believed to have been set by a later composer to Saint-Gelais's own frottola tune for it; the frottola and villanella shade into each other in the early villanesca.

One will recall that Richelet quoted from Diaz Rengifo's 1592 Arte poetica española in his dictionary definition of "villanelle." Lancelot, as well, alludes to Diaz Rengifo in the preface to his section on the "ancient/traditional" Spanish poetic forms: "Je passe les autres sortes qu'on peut voir dans Rengifo, & dans le sieur Bense du Puis qui les rapporte"—"I proceed to the other sorts that one sees in Rengifo, and in Mr. Bense du Puis who retrieves them". Here, then, is the text of Lancelot's passage on the villanelle, titled "Des Villanelles":

224
Ce que nous avons dit des Rondelets suffit pour connoistre
toute l'ancienne poésie Espagnolle. Car tout le reste plutost
l'invention de Poète, que la façon des vers, en quoy consiste la
partie de la poésie que nous expliquons icy, qui est la
versification.

Par exemple, les Villanelles, que les Espagnols
appellent Villanzicos, & qui sont fort propres à faire des
chansons, ne sont que des Rondelets disposez en cette sorte.
On met d'abord une Teste ou entrée de 2. de 3. de 4. ou de 5.
vers, qui est suivie de deux ou de plusieurs couplets qui
expliquent ce qui est contenu dans cette entrée, & dont la fin
en doit estre une reprise, ou en repetant les mesmes mots, ou
en reprenant au moins la terminaison, suivant le mesme ordre
que dans l'entrée.

Or ces Villanelles se peuvent faire en toutes sortes de
vers, & dans toutes les dispositions de rime qu'on donne au
Rondelets, dont ils emprunterent mesme leur dénomination.
Ainsi ceux de huit syllabes, sont appelez Villanellenes de Grand
Rondelet. En voicy un exemple fai sur le saint Sacrement.
[Quotes a Spanish lyric with the rhyme scheme abBA
cddcbaBA effeabaBA]

Ces deux vers de six syllabes, s'appellent Villanelles
de petit Rondelet; comme celuy-cy de Castillejo, au petit
Iesus nouveau nê. [Quotes a Spanish lyric with the rhyme
scheme abBA deeddaBA]

Et ainsi des autres.

Mais il faut remarque que les couplets des Villanelles
qui suivent l'entrée, sont composez de deux parties. La
premiere est, de leurs quatre ou cinq premiers vers, qu'on
divise en deux muances ou changemens, parce qu'en les
chantant on y change l'air & la cadence de l'entrée. La
seconde est, une reprise d'autant de vers qu'il y en a dans
l'entrée; dont les premiers s'appellent retour; parce qu'on y
reprend le premier ton de l'entrée: & les autres repetition;
parce qu'on y repete un ou deux vers de l'entrée. Les vers du
retour finissent quelquefois par les mesmes mots que ceux de
l'entrée; & quelquefois seulement par des rimes semblables.
On en peut voir des exemples cy-dessus. En voicy neanmoins
encore un sur une espine de la sainte Couronne, où la reprise
est seulement de mesmes rimes. [Example, in Spanish, with a
four-line entrée rhyming abAB; a two-line muance, cd; a
second two-line muance, cd; a two-line retour, ab; and then
the repetition, AB] 35

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"That which we have called Rondelets suffices for knowing all of ancient Spanish poetry. Because all the rest regard the invention of the poet, rather than the fashioning of verse, in which consists the part of poetry that we explain here, which is versification.

For example, Villanelles, which the Spanish call Villancicos, and which are very suited to making songs, are only Rondelets arranged in that way. One first puts a "head" or "entry" [i.e., initial refrain or burden] of 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 lines, which is followed by two or more couplets, which explain that which is contained in that "entry," and of which the end must be a "return," either in repeating the same words, or in recapitulating at the least the ending, following the same order as in the "entry."

Now those Villanelles can be made in all kinds of verse, and in all the dispositions of rhyme that one gives to Rondelets, from which they borrowed even their name. Thus those of eight syllables are called Villanelles of Big Rondelet. And here is an example made about Saint Sacrament. [Quotes a Spanish lyric with the rhyme scheme abBA cdc dabBA effeabBA]

Those two lines of six syllables are called Villanelles of Little Rondelet; like this one here by Castillejo, where little Jesus is newly born. [Quotes a Spanish lyric with the rhyme scheme abBA deeddaBA]

And thus some others.

But it must be remarked that the couplets of Villanelles that follow the "entry," are composed of two parts. The first is, of their four or five first lines, that one divides into two "mutations" or "alterations," because in singing them one changes the tune and the cadence of the "entry" there. The second is a "return" of as many lines as there are in the "entry," of which the first are called the "turn" [i.e., volta], because one repeats the first [musical] tone of the "entry"; and the others "repetition" [i.e., refrain], because one repeats there one or two lines of the "entry." The lines of the "turn" end sometimes with the same words as those of the "entry"; and sometimes only with like rhymes. One can see some examples here below. Here nevertheless is yet another one on the thornbush of Saint Couronne, where the "turn" is only of two lines. [Example, in Spanish, with a four-line "entry" rhyming abAB; a two-line mutation, cd; a second two-line mutation, cd; a two-line "turn" or volta, ab; and then the "repetition" or refrain, AB]

226
Looking at the French "poetic" villanelles, one sees that d'Urfé's four specimens are classic examples of Lancelot's model, and were almost certainly based upon the *villancico* rather than the *villanella*. They have a two-line "entry," AA; then two pairs of couplets rhyming bc and cb; then the "turn" line, A' (the apostrophe standing for inexact repetition of the first line of the entry), repeating in three of four cases the end words but not the exact wording of the corresponding line in the "entry," and in one case, the exact wording; and then the refrain line, A, repeating the last "entry" line word for word. Lancelot shows how the "poetic" structure of the form is linked to its *musical* structure; and, if one compares the information he is imparting about the musical structure and its relationship to the poetic structure to the corresponding section of Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, one will see that they are discussing identical phenomena.

Despite the fact that editor Pierre Charles Berthelin had decided to fix the form of the villanelle in 1751, no practicing poet seemed to notice for almost a century afterward. Then Théophile Gautier, who had written of art in 1835 that "la forme... est tout" ["the form... is all"], and who would become the leader of the "art for art's sake" movement, published a "Villanelle Rhythmique" in 1837—two hundred ten years after the posthumous publication of d'Urfé's last villanelle. Gautier thought that poetry should emulate the plastic arts, painting and sculpture. Poetic "form," to him, was thus the sculpted or molded external "shape" of the poem, and not a matter of internal necessity. The origins of the refrain song's characteristic form in choral dance, and particularly in the exchange between solo singer and collective chorus, had long been forgotten; but, as recently as the French sixteenth century, the villanelle's form had still been a matter of *musical* necessity—the transitions between the "poetic" stanza components of mutations, turn, refrain, and rhyme corresponded to cadences, changes of melodic strain, and musical repetitions. From Gautier's time on, however, the villanelle's form would be viewed as mere
surface—an aesthetically pleasing mold into which new words could be poured. And, as identical cups, saucers, plates, statues, and vases rolled down the conveyor belts of Industrial Age factories, the mold was also being cast for the mass production of villanelles.

However, Gautier's three-stanza, refrainless "Villanelle Rhythmique" bore no resemblance to Passerat's \textit{J'ai perdu ma tourterelle}. Gautier's rhyme scheme of "ababcdcd" resembled nothing so much as the two refrainless stanzas of Madeleine de Laubespine's parody villanelle, except that Gautier's last "d" line was truncated from eight to two syllables. Ironically, Gautier's lyric attracted the attention of a composer, Xavier Boisselot, who set it to music.\textsuperscript{37}

The next villanelle after Gautier's to be published in France following that gap of over two centuries \textit{did} follow Passerat's model, not because the model was the "rule" but because the author was \textit{parodying} Passerat's instantly recognizable poem for the sake of humor. Théodore de Banville's "Villanelle de Buloz," 1845, is a topical poem satirizing the plight of a literary journal editor who had lost one of his best writers, Poulin Limayrac,\textsuperscript{38} and \textit{J'ai perdu mon Limayrac} is, of course, one of the two alternating refrain lines. The poem is eight stanzas long—two stanzas longer than Passerat's original—with a masculine rhyme on the refrain lines and a feminine rhyme on the "b" lines. This is the opposite of Passerat's rhyme-order but, like Passerat, Banville did observe the \textit{alteration} of masculine and feminine rhymes. Passerat's seven-syllable line was also imitated.

\textit{Odes funambulesques}, Banville's first verse collection, came out in 1857; a second edition followed in 1859. "Villanelle de Buloz" is in both editions but "Villanelle des Pauvres Housseurs," dated December 1858, makes its first appearance in the second edition. The second villanelle is also topical, satiric, and witty; it attacks \textit{un tout petit pamphlétaire}\textsuperscript{39} ["a little pamphleteer"] whose views, published in the journal \textit{Figaro}, Banville most definitely did not endorse. Like

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Passerat's villanelle, it begins with a feminine ending, observing the alteration of rhymes and the seven-syllable count per line, but Banville stretches the poem to twelve stanzas.

In imitating Passerat's nonce form and other (more authentic) French fixed forms in Odes funambulesques—though almost always for the purpose of satire—Banville was several years ahead of a trend. The year 1866 would mark the publication of La Parnasse contemporain, the "art for art's sake" manifesto/anthology that would help spur the French fixed forms revival, as well as the publication of Algernon Swinburne's Poems and Ballads, which would contain several English-language "rondels" (rondeaux). The following year, Philoxène Boyer's villanelle "La Marquise d'Aurore," which followed Passerat's model closely (including seven-syllable lines and F/M/F rhyme endings), except for running two stanzas longer, would appear in Boyer's collection Les deux saisons. According to McFarland, Boyer and Banville were friends who had collaborated on two verse plays in the 1850s, which would explain how Boyer came to be the second human being to think of imitating the form of Passerat's villanelle.

McFarland does an excellent job of tracing the villanelle's development throughout the nineteenth century, providing excerpts from many villanelles and analyzing their poetic styles and content. Rather than duplicate his efforts, this chapter will merely summarize the major milestones in villanelle publication, criticism, and "scholarship" in order to provide a context for the growing body of rules that were being laid down for the villanelle at the same time that a false, three-to six-hundred-year fixed-form poetic "tradition" was being constructed for it.

Construction of that false tradition began in 1872, the year that Banville's book-length Petit traité de poésie française was published in France. It provided "rules" for all of the major French fixed forms, including the villanelle. On the basis of the four fixed-form villanelle specimens in existence—Passerat's sixteenth-century
original, Banville's two nineteenth-century parodies, and Boyer's attempt to emulate the feat of his close friend Banville—Banville described the villanelle as follows:

La Villanelle est divisée en tercets. Elle commence par un vers féminin.
Il ne paraît pas qu'elle comporte un nombre fixe de tercets.
Elle est écrite sur deux rimes: l'une, masculine, qui régît le second vers de tous les tercets; l'autre, féminine, qui régît les autres vers.

Le premier et le troisième vers du premier tercet reparaissent tour à tour—comme Refrains—pendant tout le cours du poème, et deviennent alternativement le dernier vers de chaque tercet, de sorte que:

Le premier vers du premier tercet devient le troisième vers du deuxième tercet;
Le troisième vers du premier tercet devient le troisième vers du troisième tercet;
Le premier vers du premier tercet devient le troisième vers du quatrième tercet;
Le troisième vers du premier tercet devient le troisième vers du cinquième tercet;
Le premier vers du premier tercet devient le troisième vers du sixième tercet;
Et ainsi de suite.

Enfin la Villanelle se termine par un quatrain ainsi composé: 1° un vers féminin; 2° un vers masculin; puis le premier et le troisième vers du premier tercet, devenant le troisième et le quatrième vers de ce quatrain final. 41

["The villanelle is divided into tercets. It begins with a feminine line [i.e., rhyme].
It does not appear that it must comprise a fixed number of tercets.

It is written on two rhymes: one, masculine, that rules the second line of all the tercets; the other, feminine, that rules the other lines.

The first and the third line of the first tercet reappear turn by turn—as refrains—throughout all the body of the poem, and become alternately the last line of each tercet, in this manner:

The first line of the first tercet becomes the third line of the second tercet:
The third line of the first tercet becomes the third line of the third tercet;  
The first line of the first tercet becomes the third line of the fourth tercet;  
The third line of the first tercet becomes the third line of the fifth tercet;  
The first line of the first tercet becomes the third line of the sixth tercet;  
And so forth.

Finally the villanelle is terminated by a quatrain thus composed: first a feminine line; then a masculine line; then the first and the third lines of the first tercet, becoming the third and fourth lines of that final quatrain.

On a less technical note, Banville described the effect of the interweaving refrain lines and "b" lines as being like "une tresse formé de fils d'argent et d'or, que traverse un troisième fil, couleur de rose"[^42] ["a braid formed of silver and gold threads, which crosses a third thread, the color of rose"]. The mock-seriousness of his approach to the villanelle as a theoretical "form" certainly stands in contrast to the comic spirit of the two he wrote himself. One cannot help but wonder if he inserted the villanelle writeup amidst the more legitimate poetic forms as a hoax. If not, then he was certainly being less than truthful.

English interest in the "French fixed forms" was continuing to grow. Andrew Lang had edited and translated a collection of "Old" French verseforms in 1872, and in 1873 Robert Bridges's *Poems* appeared with two *triolets* and three *rondeaux*. Robert Louis Stevenson had written scholarly articles on Villon and Charles d'Orléans, and was about to publish two "rondels" of his own[^43]. In April of 1874, as related by Gosse's biographer Evan Charteris, two young English poets met at a party and struck up a friendship on the basis of their common interest in Banville's *Petite traité*:

On the April evening when [Edmund] Gosse, newly admitted to the circle, was present, some dreary readings had led up to the recital by Austin Dobson of a piece which Gosse at once recognised as a rondeau in the French form elaborately defined
by Théodore de Banville in the 1874 reprint of his *Petit Traité de la Poésie Française*. When the party broke up, Gosse approached the author of the piece, and shyly observed that he noticed that in the verses recited Banville’s rules had been followed. They wandered into the night together, and it was only after several hours, passed "in a kind of dream" and absorbed by metrical discussions, that they parted.

It was the beginning of a friendship which lasted forty-eight years. . . .

According to Helen Cohen, Gosse wrote an admiring letter to Banville around this time, and received a long letter back. Not long after his fateful meeting with Dobson, Gosse claims to have published the first English-language villanelle, although the dating cannot be verified. The sentimentality of "Villanelle" (Little mistress mine, goodbye!) is rather hard for the modern reader to take; the first tercet should suffice to give an idea of the rest of the poem:

Little mistress mine, good-bye!
    I have been your sparrow true;
    Dig my grave, for I must die.

Gosse goes one step further than the French poets in limiting his poem to six stanzas --although he would relax that restriction in his next (and last) villanelle. Like Passerat, he writes a seven-syllable line, but he makes both of his rhyme endings masculine; feminine endings are too noticeable in English, and tend to make a poem singsong or unwittingly humorous.

Meanwhile, in France, Ferdinand de Gramont published *Les vers français et leur prosodie* in 1876: the first work to address the villanelle's "history." It was Gramont who first asserted that "all" sixteenth-century *chansons* on rustic themes were called villanelles; that Du Bellay's adaptation of "Vanneur de Blé aux vents" from classical Latin was a villanelle; and that Richelet and other prosodists were the parties who had fixed the villanelle’s form according to the model of Passerat's *J'ay perdu ma tourterelle*—all three of which statements were false. Gramont also
repeated Saint-Beuve's charming anecdote about the duc de Guise singing *Rozette* moments before he was assassinated. 48

Printing Passerat's poem as his example, Gramont repeated all of the villanelle rules that had been laid down by Banville, and then added one of his own: the total number of stanzas had to be even, so that the last tercet before the final quatrain ended with the second refrain line—otherwise, the first refrain line would occur twice in a row, spoiling the "alternating" effect. Correctly noting that the villanelle was younger than the *virelai*, Gramont then singled out Boyer as a modern poet who had enjoyed success with the form, qualifying his praise with the confession that he thought it rather a slight form to be much more than the "object of a fantasy" for other writers. 49 Ironically, Gramont himself was helping to construct a villanelle mythohistory that would cause the villanelle to shimmer romantically in other writers' fantasies for more than a hundred years.

The next two years saw an explosion of interest in the villanelle in both England and France. Dobson published a book-length collection of fixed-form poems, *Proverbs in Porcelain*, which included one villanelle, in London in 1877. 50 His "When I Saw You Last, Rose," like the French villanelles of Banville and Boyer, was eight stanzas long, two stanzas longer than Passerat's original, but otherwise followed Passerat's basic architecture. Later, Dobson would shorten it by two stanzas to make it conform to Passerat's model exactly. 51 He did not, however, heed the French "rule" about making the "a" rhymes feminine and the "b" rhymes masculine—all of his rhymes were on one syllable. He also shortened the syllable count: one refrain line has six syllables and the other only five.

Dobson's second villanelle, "Tu Ne Quaesieris," was published in *Gentleman's Magazine* in November 1877, and went into the second edition of *Proverbs in Porcelain* the following year. 52 It moved closer to Passerat's model, concluding in six stanzas and alternating masculine and feminine rhymes; its syllable
counts were six on the "a" lines and seven on the "b" lines. But its affected language and inverted syntax are already embarrassingly dated, whereas Passerat’s simple diction is still fresh:

Seek not, 0 Maid, to know
(Alas! unblest the trying!)
When thou and I must go. 53

Also in 1877, Gosse published the essay "A Plea for Certain Exotic Forms of Verse" in the July issue of *Cornhill Magazine*, which was then edited by Virginia Woolf’s father Leslie Stephen. Helen Cohen has called the essay the “manifesto” of the fixed-forms movement, and it is well to remember that these poets were rebelling against “the monotony produced by the lesser imitators of Tennysonian blank verse and other characteristic measures of the great Victorians,” as Cohen puts it. Gosse’s essay echoed the elitist sentiments of Du Bellay’s *La deffence*. Improvisation in poetry was to be looked down upon, and skilled workmanship extolled. The fixed forms were to be valued precisely because they were *difficult*—they weeded out the poet *manqué* from the true professional:

In the present age the warblings of poetic improvisation cannot expect more attention than the equally artless impromptus of an untaught musical talent. . . . As a rule. . . where little pains is taken little pleasure results. . . . We acknowledge that the severity of the [sonnet’s] plan and the rich and copious recurrence of the rhyme serve the double end of repelling the incompetent workman and stimulating the competent. . . . Half the pleasure given to the reader, half the sense of richness, completeness, and grace which he vaguely perceives and unconsciously enjoys, is due to the labour the poet has expended. 56

While Banville had claimed only that the villanelle and other poetic forms had been fixed “for a long time” and Gramont had dated the villanelle to the sixteenth century, Gosse now classed it as one of “the six most important of the poetic creations of old
France, the rondeau, the ballade, and the chant royal." The villanelle "dates back at least as far as the fifteenth century," Gosse asserted with supreme confidence—and no evidence whatsoever.

Gosse was less strict than his French predecessors about the technical "rules" for the form. He said nothing about alternating masculine and feminine rhymes, nor that the number of stanzas had to be even—only that the form was in tercets and on two rhymes, with the first and third lines of the first tercet alternating turns as the last line of each successive tercet "until they finally form the close in a couplet." He quoted Passerat's J'ay perdu ma tourterelle in French, mentioned that Banville and Boyer had "written famous villanelles" in France, and then quoted his own villanelle Wouldst thou not be content to die as his English-language model, coyly apologizing that the only other villanelle published in England up to that time had also been his. Wouldst thou not was eight stanzas long, and it reversed the feminine and masculine rhyme order prescribed by Banville. While flaunting one French "rule," however, Gosse was laying down one of his own, pertaining to the villanelle's content. While it was permissible for some fixed forms to be lighthearted in spirit, he said, the villanelle was one of three forms that "are usually wedded to serious or stately expression, and almost demand a vein of pathos."Ironically, the parody villanelle by Banville that had launched the "fixed-form" villanelle writing movement would never have measured up to Gosse's "serious or stately" rule—nor would the cuckoldry villanelle written by Passerat himself. Gosse's own serious and stately theme was the Romantic wish to die during autumn, a time of abundance and sensuality, and not winter, representing scarcity and old age.

The following year, Dobson responded with an essay of his own. "A Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse" prefaced a section of fixed-form poems in an anthology edited by W. Davenport Adams. Dobson attempted to put the English fixed-forms movement in historical perspective, stressing that the forms were not
"intended to rival the more approved national rhythms in the treatment of grave or elevated themes." Rather, he said, they were "admirable vehicles for the expression of trifles or jeux d'esprit," and they could also help train young writers to handle more serious genres. Dobson then inscribed his own rules for the forms, citing the "French authorities" as his sources, and referring the reader to Gosse and Banville for historical background. However, in citing Villon and Charles d'Orléans as practitioners of the "six principal forms" he was about to describe, Dobson was making the villanelle seem much older than it was and long fixed in its present shape.

Dobson called the villanelle a "regularised Virelai," basing his claim upon the so-called virelai nouveau tradition dreamed up by Banville on the basis of one historical specimen. In contrast to Gosse, who had found the villanelle suitable for "serious or stately" expression only, Dobson asserted that "The primitive Villanelle was, in truth, a 'shepherd's song'; and, according to rule, 'the thoughts should be full of sweetness and simplicity.'" Having quoted Passerat's model poem in French as his example, Dobson added only that:

The arrangement of rhymes requires no further explanation. The first and third line must form the final couplet, but there is no restriction as to the number of stanzas. A good modern example is that entitled "La Marquise Aurore" in the Deux Saisons of the late Philoxène Boyer; but we have not met with many French poems in this form. 66

Dobson apparently intended no irony by his last statement; and yet, he was immortalizing one of the "six principal forms" of old France on the basis of one historical specimen, Passerat's--while making the number of modern villanelles in that form (then totaling three in France and six in England) sound somehow meager by comparison.

The number of English villanelles had jumped from four to six with the publication of the anthology containing Dobson's essay. In addition to reprints of
Gosse's "Wouldst thou not be content to die" and Dobson's "When I Saw You Last, Rose," *Latter Day Lyrics* contained villanelles by English poets John Payne and Emily Pfeiffer. Payne's—which, like the other three villanelles in the collection, was titled only "[Villanelle]"—was nine stanzas long, an odd number, meaning that his first refrain line occurred twice in succession in the last two stanzas of the poem. Yet, while violating Gramont's rule about the number of villanelle stanzas having to be even, Payne adhered to the French rule for alternation of feminine and masculine rhymes that Gosse and Dobson had ignored or reversed to make less obtrusive:

The air is white with snow-flakes clinging;  
Between the gusts that come and go,  
Methinks I hear the woodlark singing. 67

Note that his nine- and eight-syllable lines are longer than Passerat's. In terms of content, Payne situated himself in Gosse's "stately or serious" camp with phrases like "woodlands sad with snow" and "winter's woe."

There has been no rush to claim Pfeiffer as the first modern, and first English, female villanelle writer, with good reason:

O summer-time, so passing sweet,  
But heavy with the breath of flowers,  
But languid with the fervent heat,

They chide amiss who call thee fleet,—  
Thee, with thy weight of daylight hours,  
O summer-time, so passing sweet! 68

Her specimen, like Payne's, looks to "Bleak Winter," aka "Old Winter," for the undertones of inevitability and doom proper to the stately, serious Gosseian villanelle. She employs iambic lines of eight and nine syllables, alternating masculine and feminine rhymes but reversing their order, and stopping her poem after Passerat's six-stanza length has been reached.
Fixed-form villanelle production was accelerating in France as well as England. An obscure and obsessed poet named Joseph Boulmier had just published *Villanelles suivies de poésies en langue du XVe siècle, et précédés d'une notice historique et critique sur la villanelle avec une villanelle technique* ["Villanelles Followed by Poems in the Language of the 15th Century, and Preceded by an Historical and Critical Note on the Villanelle with a Villanelle Technique"]. The unknown Boulmier, like the small boy in the fairy tale "The Emperor's New Clothes," saw through to the truth of the villanelle's history, despite the claims of everyone else who had written on the subject:

*Avant d'aller plus loin, je dois faire observer que la villanelle n'a jamais été,—comme par exemple le triolet, le rondeau, le sonnet, la ballade, le chant royal,—une forme poétique d'un rythme spécial et rigoureusement défini. Elle appartient à la famille plus indépendante de l'ode, du madrigal, de l'épigramme; et, sauf un refrain quelconque, toujours obligatoire,—puisque sa nature est de pouvoir être chantée et même "dansée",—chacun, sans hérésie aucune, peut la revêtir du costume qu'il préfère. Affaire de goût.* 69

["Before proceeding further, I must make the observation that the villanelle was never—like for example the triolet, the rondeau, the sonnet, the ballade, the chant royal—a poetic form with a special and rigorously defined rhyme scheme. It belongs to the more independent family of the ode, the madrigal, and the epigram; and, except for a commonplace refrain, always obligatory—since its nature is to be able to be sung or even danced—each one, without any heresy, can reclothe it in the costume that he prefers. Matter of taste."

Unlike Banville, Gramont, Gosse, and Dobson, who had quoted or cited only Passerat's model poem from the historical "past" of the villanelle, Boulmier quoted Desportes's *Rozette* and d'Urfé's "Villanelle d'Amidor reprochant une lègereté" in full before quoting Passerat's *J'ay perdu ma tourterelle*, making it quite obvious that the sixteenth-century villanelle had been multiform. Of Boulmier's four predecessors, Banville, Gosse, and Dobson had implied that the villanelle's poetic form had been
fixed in the sixteenth century or even earlier, while Gramont had named seventeenth-century prosodist Richelet as the fixer of the form. Not pretending to possess any "insider's knowledge" about how the villanelle had bridged the gap between the wildly variant early forms he had just quoted and its present, rigidified form, Boulmier half-jokingly attempted to guess what had happened:

Un beau jour, après avoir parlé successivement du rondeau, du triolet, de la ballade, du lai, du virelai, du chant royal, l'auteur de je ne sais plus quel traité de versification, bâclé à la diable comme ils le sont à peu près tous, abordant à la fin la villanelle, eut l'idée, ou plutôt la chance, de citer comme modèle de ce dernier genre,—en quoi du reste il n'avait pas tort,—certain naif chef-d'oeuvre échappé, Dieu sait comme, à la plume du savant Passerat.

. . . La tourterelle de Passerat une fois lancée dans la circulation, qu'arriva-t-il? Tous les traités de versification qui se succédèrent et se copièrent "à la queue leu leu", escortant telle ou telle grammaire, tel ou tel dictionnaire de rimes, ne manquèrent pas de la ramener en scène, et surtout de la présenter comme un type dont il était absolument interdit de s'écarter.

["One fine day, after having spoken successively of the rondeau, the triolet, the ballade, the lai, the virelai, the chant royal, the author of I don't know what versification treatise, bungled to hell as they almost always are, reaching at the end the villanelle, had the idea, or better the luck, to cite as a model of that last genre—in which besides he had not been wrong—a certain naive masterpiece escaped, God knows how, from the pen of the scholar Passerat.

. . . The turtledove of Passerat launched one time into circulation, what happened to it? All the versification treatises that would succeed it and that would be copied in a single-file line, following such or such grammar book, such or such rhyming dictionary, could not help but bring it back on stage, and above all to present it as the type from which it was absolutely forbidden to deviate."]

Ironically, Boulmier's unpretentious guess at villanelle history is probably more accurate than all of the "authoritative" accounts that have preceded and followed it.

First the mysterious Berthelin, and then, a century later, Banville, must have followed
a thought process very much like the one described by Boulmier in the passage above.

Boulmier goes on to say that he has "leafed through" all of the versification treatises of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries without finding any mention of Passerat's turtledove, and also that he has searched the complete poems of Passerat and found only two villanelles. He quotes Passerat's little-known cuckoldry villanelle in full. Since he can find nobody but Passerat from the distant past who has written a villanelle in the form that is now definitive, Boulmier declares Passerat "the first and only inventor of the villanelle's form."

Boulmier proceeds to formulate his own rules for the villanelle. Its lines should be of seven syllables, "pimpant et dégagé d'allure" ["trim and dispatched with speed"]. Made of two rhymes, one masculine and one feminine, it could begin on either, but the first rhyme set the tone for the rest of the poem and was called "the dominant." The poem was constructed of five tercets followed by a quatrain; adding more tercets would be like "putting lead on the wings" of the light poem. The dominant rhyme would begin and end each tercet, with the nondominant rhyme in the middle. Beginning with the second tercet, the first and third lines of the first tercet would alternate as the refrain by turns. And here, in addition to his "speedy seven syllable" dictum, Boulmier laid down a new rule: one refrain line should not be able to take the place of the other (a defect, he admitted, that he himself couldn't always avoid). The two refrain lines would be placed side by side at the end of the final quatrain.

Romantic love, continued Boulmier, should be the villanelle's theme but, on account of the villanelle's peasant origins, it should never contain bombast, phony affectation, or wordplay--rules that would have eliminated most of Boulmier's contemporary villanelle writers from contention.
Just as he had guessed the villanelle's past, Boulmier was foreseeing its future: in the twentieth century, it would more or less "regularize" to six stanzas, with the refrain lines well integrated into their stanzas, and Victorian rhetoric and social pretentiousness (though not wordplay) would fall out of fashion. But Boulmier's book itself would soon go out of print, and his observations on the villanelle sink into oblivion. His own villanelles—forty altogether—are described well by McFarland as documenting a life that revolves around drinking, smoking, villanelle-writing, missed opportunities, and a beloved pet cat—who dies.75

The same year that Boulmier's book was published (1878), Brander Matthews wrote a long and admiring review of Proverbs in Porcelain in the American monthly Appleton's Journal, whetting American poets' and readers' interests in the French fixed forms.76 Two years later, an American edition of Dobson's Vignettes in Rhyme would be published by Henry Holt in New York, containing three villanelles,77 and by 1883 James Whitcomb Riley would become the first American to publish a villanelle.78

French poet Maurice Rollinat, who like his friend Charles Baudelaire was fascinated by Parisian decadence—prostitution, putrefaction, drug addiction, devil worship, and the like—published a single villanelle in 1877, then five more in his 1883 collection, Les névroses.79 In addition to their novel content, they were exceptionally long—twenty stanzas, in the case of "Villanelle du Soir," and thus the refrains of the more successful poems take on, as McFarland points out, an "incantory" quality that opened up a new possibility for the form.80 McFarland also reports that Rollinat set some of his poems to music and sang them in Parisian cabarets, and that one villanelle was given a symphonic musical setting by M. T. Loeffler.81

Just as Rollinat was stretching Passerat's model to new lengths, French poet Leconte de Lisle was compacting it to four stanzas. His first villanelle, "Le Temps,"
was published in 1884. In the 1974 *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, de Lisle is cited for using the nineteenth-century villanelle "as a vehicle for philosophical content." Villanelle rules, it seemed, were being broken almost faster than they were being made.

George Saintsbury's highly respected *A Short History of French Literature*, first published in 1882, named the villanelle as one of the "artificial" French forms of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, and reinforced that error by calling Grévin's *Villanesques* "a modified form of the favourite Villanelle, which had survived the other épiceries condemned by Du Bellay." Having pushed the villanelle's chronology back one to three hundred years, Saintsbury then blundered further by implying that there were *many* sixteenth-century villanelles like Passerat's, which he praised as "the most elegant specimen of a poetical trifle that the age produced." The foremost English authority on French poetry could not have been more wrong about the villanelle's chronology--but he would of course be cited as an authority on it throughout the twentieth century.

Oscar Wilde's first villanelle, "Theocritus," was published in 1881. Like his later double villanelle, "Pan," and like contemporary villanelles written by Dowson ("Villanelle of Acheron," 1890; "Villanelle of Sunset," 1892; "Villanelle of Marguerites," 1894; "Villanelle of the Poet's Road," 1895) and Andrew Lang ("Villanelle: To Lucia," 1881), as well as non-villanelle poems being written by Dowson's friend William Butler Yeats, "Theocritus" romanticized a lost pastoral world in contrast with the bleak modern present:

O Singer of Persephone!
In the dim meadows desolate
Dost thou remember Sicily? 85

The villanelle length was now "fixed" in English, at six stanzas, and there were no attempts to stretch or condense it, as in France; but English-language poets
continued to ignore the "alternating masculine and feminine" rhyme rule of the French. Certainly the mythological, pastoral-elegiac subject matter of the English fin-de-siècle villanelles would have pleased both Dobson, who had called for pastoral "sweetness and simplicity" in the villanelle, and Gosse, who had wanted them "stately and serious." Although Emily Dickinson (who died in 1886) had been experimenting with slant rhyme as many of these villanelles were being written, and Walt Whitman (d. 1892) had been drawing attention to free verse, there were as yet no attempts to loosen the rigid end-rhyme of the villanelle, nor to vary its fixed refrains.

Indeed, the villanelle was now so legitimate a fixed form in English that Jacob Schipper addressed it in his 1885 *Englischen Metrik*, which was translated into English as *A History of English Versification* in 1910:

The villanelle (a peasant song, rustic ditty, from *villanus*) was cultivated by Jean Passerat (1534-1602); in modern poetry by Th. de Banville, L. [sic] Baulmier [sic], &c. It mostly consists of octosyllabic verses divided into five stanzas (sometimes a larger or smaller number) of three lines plus a final stanza of four lines, the whole corresponding to the scheme a1ba2 + abal + ab2 + abal + ab2 + ab1a2. Hence the first and the third verses of the first stanza are used alternately as a refrain to form the last verse of the following stanzas, while in the last stanza both verses are used in this way. A villanelle by Gosse on this model consisting of eight stanzas, perhaps the only specimen in English literature, has been quoted, *Metrik*, ii, § 587. 86

Although published in 1885, Schipper's villanelle research must have ceased as of 1877, which is when Gosse's bellwether villanelle87 suddenly began acquiring more company. But, even though Schipper overlooked the villanelles of Dobson, Payne, Pfeiffer, Wilde, Lang, and Dowson, he still made several important contributions to villanelle literary "history." He lent his authority to the idea that Passerat had "cultivated" the villanelle. Despite the fact that Schipper's sole English-language model, Gosse's poem, was eight stanzas long and had nine syllables rather than eight

243

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to its "b" lines, Schipper also put forth as description rather than prescription his belief that the usual villanelle had octosyllabic lines and six stanzas. Most importantly, his abstract schematization of the villanelle's form would save future prosodists hundreds of descriptive words—and, on the eve of Planck's and Einstein's Quantum Age, it certainly looked mathematical and scientific. With Banville, Gramont, Gosse, Dobson, Saintsbury, and now Schipper all treating the villanelle as a fixed poetic form of four- to five hundred years' standing, who would believe otherwise?

Behind Schipper's volume came Gleeson White's Ballades and Rondeaus, Chants Royal, Sestinas, Villanelles, & c. Selected, with Chapter on the Various Forms (London, 1887), the first full-length anthology of fixed-form poems. Just the fact that the villanelle was named in the book's title, unlike forms such as the triollet, virelai, and pantoum that were also covered in White's sixty-five-page introductory essay and exemplified in the anthology section, showed how legitimate its reputation had become. Unlike his predecessors, White cited the sources he had consulted in "researching" the fixed forms:

These include the French treatises of De Banville, De Gramont, and Jullienne, Mr. Saintsbury's Short History of French Literature, Mr. Hueffer's Troubadours, an article by Mr. Gosse in the Cornhill Magazine, July 1877, Les Villanelles by M. Joseph Boulmier, The Rhymester of Mr. Brander Matthews, and many occasional papers on the various forms that have appeared in English and American periodicals. To arrange in one chapter the materials gathered from these and other sources is all that I have attempted. 88

There was now such a canon of secondary scholarship on the fixed forms that it was no longer necessary to go back, as Gramont and Boulmier had done, to the sixteenth-century villanelles themselves. That many of the primary villanelle texts were virtually inaccessible to scholars outside of France made it even less likely that the secondary sources' errors would be uncovered.
One can deduce from White's choice of language—"the rules of the various forms;" "the rules which Mr. Dobson was the first to formulate in English;" "the laws of the various forms;" "their ascertained laws;" "general laws governing these fixed metrical forms that must be insisted on at the outset;" "one binding law in French verse"89—that he will not be one to acknowledge the villanelle's past multiplicity of forms, nor its potential for variance in the future. Grévin's *Villanesques* were, according to White, "a modified form of the villanelle"90—although there is no more poetic resemblance between any of Grévin's five rhyme and metrical schemes and that of Passerat's model villanelle than there is between the same Grévin poem and a given *rondeau*, *ballade*, or *virelai*.

And what were the immutable "laws" of the villanelle, according to White? First, that villanelles "fulfill a condition now held strictly binding, since promulgated by Joseph Boulmier in his own Villanelles—that is, that their length should imitate the example of Jean Passerat's famous model, and be complete in nineteen lines."91 White also recapitulates the usual information about the villanelle's having five tercets and a quatrain, two rhymes, two alternating refrains, etc., except that there is a more menacing tone to his prose than we have heard before. His "laws" have implied teeth behind them: "Two rhymes only *are allowed*. The refrains *must repeat in the order quoted in the example*. . . ."92 [italics mine]. However, White treats Dobson's suggestion as to proper villanelle content not as a law but as "a hint . . . that has been taken to heart by later writers, who almost invariably select pastoral or idyllic subjects for this most artificial but dainty lyric."93 Like Gramont, White seems to view the villanelle as being somewhat slight and dainty as compared to hardier forms.

Elsewhere in his essay, White releases English poets from one of the fixed-form statutes applicable only to French poets. Alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes is, he claims, "impossible in English"94—not holding with those who view the rhyme on two English syllables as equivalent to the rhyme on a French syllable
followed by mute "e." Having given, White takes away: he then forbids English poets to rhyme words of the same sound and spelling but different meaning, as is permissible in French. Purists, he adds, do not even allow rhymes on the same sound, spelled differently, in English (e.g., "sale" and "sail"), but he permits this if the rhymes are spaced far enough apart. The refrain, he continues, cannot be altered in sound—but, writing a scant thirteen years after the first commercial introduction of the typewriter in 1874, he leaves the door open to typographic alterations:

Still, any change of meaning that can be obtained by alteration of punctuation, accent, or even of spelling, provided the sound is unchanged, is not merely allowable but desirable, in lighter verse especially. Without recommending the use of the pun pure and simple... yet any pretty play upon words, or a sentence with new meaning read into it by the context, is more than permissible... 96

Interestingly, however, of the thirty-two English villanelles by nineteen poets in the anthology section of the volume, only one, Henley's "Villanelle" (Where's the use of sighing?), takes advantage of this new "license" to vary the meaning of the refrain lines. Twenty-six of those villanelles have six stanzas, like Passerat's model; two, eight stanzas; two, nine stanzas; and two, ten. One of the six-stanza villanelles lacks a fourth line (the second refrain line) in its final stanza. There are a few violations of the rule against rhyming adjacent, like sounds (e.g., Gosse's "you" and "yew"; Henley's "lime and sublime"; Henley's "amain" and "remain").

These villanelles dutifully follow the "rules," just as White dutifully follows alphabetical order in sequencing them; and yet, they are almost all trite and forgettable as poems. The following list of the two refrain lines of each villanelle in the collection should be sufficient to evoke the rest of the poem:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Refrain Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| L. S. Bevington               | There are roses white, there are roses red  
Which shall I choose to wreathe my head?                                                                                                       |
| Cotsford Dick                | O Halcyon hours of happy holiday  
(Sweet is the sunshine, soft the summer's sway)                                                                                               |
| Austin Dobson                | Seek not, O maid, to know  
When thou and I must go                                                                                                                        |
| Dobson                        | When I saw you last, Rose  
How fast the time goes!                                                                                                                         |
| Dobson                        | O singer of the field and fold  
Thine was the happier Age of Gold                                                                                                                |
| Dobson                        | "Ah me, but it might have been!"  
Quoth the little blue mandarin                                                                                                                     |
| Edmund Gosse                 | Wouldst thou not be content to die  
And golden autumn passes by?                                                                                                                     |
| Gosse                         | Little mistress mine, good-bye!                                                                                                                   |
| W. E. Henley                 | Where's the use of sighing?  
Time is always flying                                                                                                                             |
| Henley                        | A dainty thing's the Villanelle  
It serves its purpose passing well                                                                                                                  |
| Henley                        | In the clatter of the train  
I shall see my love again!                                                                                                                         |
| Andrew Lang                  | Villanelle, why art thou mute?  
Hath the Master lost his lute?                                                                                                                      |
| Anonymous 97                 | Child of the muses and the moon  
Thy song is over all too soon                                                                                                                      |
| Cosmo Monkhouse              | Beautiful, distracting Hetty  
As we strolled upon the jetty                                                                                                                       |
| James Ashcroft               | Life, thou art vaguely strangely sweet  
But Death comes on with footsteps fleet                                                                                                             |
| John Payne                   | The air is white with snow-flakes clinging  
Methinks I hear the woodlark singing                                                                                                                |
| Samuel Minturn Peck           | Just to please my Bonnie Belle  
Lo, I sing a villanelle                                                                                                                           |
| Peck                         | All worldly dreams I would resign  
If some true maiden's love were mine                                                                                                                  |
| Emily Pfeiffer               | When the brow of June is crowned by the rose  
Then the Earth hath rest from her long birth-throes                                                                                             |
| Pfeiffer                     | O Summer-time so passing sweet  
But languid with the fervent heat                                                                                                                     |
| May Probyn                   | In every sound, I think I hear her feet  
And still I say, "To-morrow we shall meet"                                                                                                           |
| Probyn                       | The daffodils are on the lea  
The birds are glad and so are we                                                                                                                      |
Clinton Scollard  Man's very voice is stilled on Troas' shore
Thus have the gods ordained forevermore

O daffodil, flower saffron-gowned
Thou bring'st the joyous season round!

Spring knocks at winter's frosty door
The bonnie bluebirds sing once more

O, had I but a fairy yacht
I soon would sail away with Dot!

Across the world I speak to thee
Send thou a messenger to me!

Come near, O sun--O south wind, blow
Where are the springs of long ago?

O jewel of the deep blue night!
I pray thee, lend thy lovely light!

I did not dream that Love would stay
Yet here he lingers many a day

Come! to the woods, love, let us go!
And rest where rosy blossoms blow!

O Singer of Persephone!
Dost thou remember Sicily?

The reader scanning the abridged versions above cannot help but sympathize with
Robert Louis Stevenson, who wrote in a letter to Henley just after White's anthology
was published: "I got your Gleeson White... Damn your Villanelles—and
everybody's."98

It was almost time for poets to begin rebelling against the villanelle "rules"
supposedly in effect for four or five hundred years; but even still, the villanelle's
falsified "history" would be burnished with added luster, and the loopholes in its rules
cinched tighter.

In 1903 came L. E. Kastner's A History of French Versification, with almost
three pages devoted to the villanelle:

The word villanelle or villanesque was applied in the second
half of the sixteenth century to literary imitations of rustic
songs. The only particularity of these villanelles was the
refrain recalling their popular origin, their form being in other
respects undefined. Such, for example, is the well-known
poem of Du Bellay, Le Vanneur de Blé [sic], or this one by
Jacques Grévin (1538-70). [Quotes "Villanesque" (Reçoy, mignonne)]

It was only in the seventeenth century that Richelet and other prosodists reserved the term villanelle for one of these rustic songs by Jean Passerat (1534-1602), also a contemporary of Ronsard, the form of which is more complicated and regular than in those of the other poets of the sixteenth century. [Quotes "Villanelle" (J'ay perdu ma tourterelle)]

Accordingly the villanelle may be defined as a poem divided into tercets of lines of seven syllables on two different rhymes. The first and third line of the first tercet are repeated alternately as the third line of the other tercets, and together at the end of the last strophe, which thus becomes a quatrain. The number of strophes is not fixed, but should not exceed six, the number used by Passerat, who was the first and remains the best writer of such a trifle. If a larger number of strophes is used, the repetition is apt to become monotonous. No very serious attempt has been made to revive this species of poetic composition, if we except the collection of villanelles of J. Boulmier, one of the minor poets of the nineteenth century. [Quotes Boulmier's C'en est fait, je deviens sage]

Philoxène Boyer (1827-67) has left one well-known example of this form, La Marquise Aurore (which differs slightly from Passerat's model in that the third line of the first tercet is repeated before the first line), and the buffoon-satirical collection of Théodore de Banville, entitled Odes Funambulesques, contains two specimens—Villanelle de Buloz and Villanelle des pauvres housoeurs; but Leconte de Lisle is the only French poet who has applied the villanelle to various subjects, although we have but two such poems from his pen, the following being in tercets of eight syllables. [Quotes "Le Temps, L'Etendue et le Nombre"]

Among more modern poets may be mentioned Maurice Rollinat, who has written some half-dozen poems of this type, all of which have at least ten tercets, and some as many as twenty. 99

It is to Kastner's credit that he links the sixteenth-century French villanelle to music and admits that its form was "undefined;" but he also repeats Gramont's error of calling "Vanneur de Blé aux vents" a villanelle. Furthermore, Kastner perpetuates the falsehood that "Richelet and other prosodists" fixed the villanelle's form in the
seventeenth century. Like other writers, too, Kastner implies that Passerat wrote a number of villanelles in the form that is now well known. Following Passerat's model and Boulmier's dictum, Kastner also defines the French villanelle as having seven syllables to a line and no more than six stanzas.

Although he was addressing only the modern French villanelle and not its English counterpart, Kastner's influence on subsequent villanelle scholarship would be significant. One can hear his echoes in the prefatory essay to Helen Cohen's Lyric Forms from France: Their History and Use (1922), which was the first American scholarly work on the fixed forms. The passages that echo Kastner, below, have been placed in italics:

The word villanelle, or villenesque [sic], was used toward the end of the sixteenth century to describe literary imitations of rustic songs. Such villanelles were alike in exhibiting a refrain which testified to their ultimate popular origin. The villanelle was, in a sense, invented by Jean Passerat (1534-1602). It is a poem of six stanzas on not more than two rhymes, the first five of which are composed of three lines, the last of four, the first line and the third line of the first stanzas alternating as refrains. The tercets rhyme aba, the quatrain usually abaa. Passerat's villanelle about the turtle-dove and Wyndham's translation show all of these characteristics. [Quotes both poems.]

Passerat had written other villanelles [sic], so-called, that did not conform to this model at all. The great Hellenist was undoubtedly unaware of the innovation that he had introduced, but the form caught the attention of his contemporaries and became fixed in his lifetime. Pierre Richelet and other writers on the theory of poetry designated as villanelles only those poems that conformed to Passerat's classic example. L. E. Kastner, the eminent authority on French versification, mentions the fact that "Philoxène Boyer (1827-67) has left one well-known example of this form, La Marquise Aurore (which differs slightly from Passerat's model in that the third line of the first tercet is repeated before the first line. . . ."

250
Cohen also provides a chart titled "A Rule of Thumb for the Construction of the 'Forms' in Modern English Verse." In it, she repeats the above restrictions but adds, under "Special Features" for the villanelle, two notes. The first note is "Difference in signification of refrain at its various repetitions desirable"—thereby making White's *dispensation* from the rule of the unvarying refrain a rule of its own; and the second is "Line of four accents commonly employed"—thereby translating Schipper's requirement that the English villanelle be octosyllabic into accentual-syllabic feet.\(^{101}\)

Cohen errs in attributing other "villanelles" (plural) to Passerat, but invents outright the story that the form became fixed while Passerat was still alive. She also perpetuates the myth about Richelet and the unnamed "other writers" of his time fixing the villanelle's form. Her original contribution to fixed-form history, however, was to contact still-living poets such as Gosse, Dobson, and Lang, and ask them for their anecdotal recollections on how the fixed-forms movement began in England. Their responses to her indicate that they developed their interests in the fixed forms independently of each other, but joined forces to push their common "agenda" once they became aware of each others' efforts.

Warner Forrest Patterson's four-volume *French Poetic Theory* (1935) has no such feature to redeem its sloppy villanelle scholarship. As has been mentioned previously, there is no basis in fact for his assertion that the fixed-form villanelle, rustic villanelle/villanesque, sonnet, and sestina were the four poetic forms that replaced "the older French forms of the Middle French poets" after 1548.\(^{102}\) There was only one so-called fixed-form villanelle written in the sixteenth century, and only seventeen that we know of written in other forms--most of which were courtly and not "rustic." Sixteenth-century sonnets must have numbered in the thousands, if not tens of thousands; it is absurd to parallel the sonnet with a genre of so few specimens, let alone split the villanelle into two genres.
Patterson also assigns English-language titles to the poems that he prints in their original French, even when the original had only "Villanelle" for its title. For example, Saint-Gelais's "Villanesque" becomes "The Rejected Plowman;" Du Bellay's "Villanelle" (En ce moys délicieux) becomes "To Marguerite;" Desportes's "Villanelle" (Rozette, pour un peu d'absence) becomes "The Inconstant Shepherdess;" and Passerat's "Villanelle" (J'ai perdu ma tourterelle) becomes "The Lost Dove." Patterson not only changes the title of Grévin's "Villanesque" (J'ai trop servi) to "The Ungrateful Mistress," but he also reassigns its authorship to Du Bellay (!), an error that is picked up and repeated by McFarland in his book on the villanelle. Patterson can perhaps be excused for misidentifying Du Bellay's "Vanneur de Blé aux vents," which he translates as "A Winnower of Wheat to the Winds," as a villanelle on the grounds that he is repeating the false claim made first by Kastner, but once again McFarland trusts Patterson's authority and repeats the error.

Oddest of all is the fact that Patterson not only prints "Villanelle" (J'ai perdu ma tourterelle) (renamed "The Lost Dove") with its final quatrain missing, but that he also drops the quatrain from the schema for the form that he gives in a footnote to the poem: "The rime scheme is as follows: A(1)bA(2) abA(1) abA(2) abA(1) abA(2)." Unless this error was corrected in editions later than the one I was using, it makes no sense that Patterson has been accepted as an authority on the villanelle form.

A good detective knows that, when two suspects' stories match each other too closely, without much in the way of supporting detail to render them more different from each other, then said suspects are probably conspiring to cover up the truth. But literary scholars are somewhat more gullible than detectives: the sources cited for the "villanelle" entry in the latest New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics are Banville, Gosse, Dobson, Adams, White, Schipper, Kastner, Cohen—
and then, after a gap of forty-five years, a small flurry of sources published in the 1980s, including McFarland. From the quasi-hoax villanelle "rules" put forth by de Banville to the outright falsehoods put forth by Cohen and Patterson, late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century accounts of villanelle rules and history feed upon each other, and not upon the evidence of the actual poems. But, paradoxically, in attempting to convince the world that a fixed-form villanelle tradition had been in existence for five hundred years, they have succeeded in establishing—yes, a fixed-form villanelle tradition, which was born in the year 1845 with Banville's parody of Passerat, and which is still inspiring excellent poems at the dawning of the twenty-first century.

End Notes


15. Ibid., 469.


17. Ibid., 88.

18. Ibid., 8-9.


20. Ibid., 178.


25. Lagny, 36.

27. McFarland, 44.

28. The editions examined (for those works not previously cited) were:


34. Lancelot, 99.

35. Ibid., 104-6.

37. McFarland, 46.

38. Ibid., 47.


40. McFarland, 146n.


42. Ibid., 215.


45. H. Cohen, 82.

46. In "A Plea for Certain Exotic Forms of Verse," 65, Gosse states in regard to the English villanelles: "In English I do no think any have yet been printed, except one by the present writer, published in 1874 in the *Athenaeum*. In the dearth of examples, I may perhaps be pardoned if I quote here another which has not hitherto been printed."

47. Gosse then prints the text of what he is calling his second villanelle to be published, *Wouldst thou not be content to die*. Both Helen Cohen and McFarland evidently skimmed Gosse's passage too quickly, however, and assumed that *Wouldst thou not be content to die* was the villanelle published in the *Athenaeum* in 1874 (H. Cohen, 82; McFarland, 62-63). Further complicating matters, an interlibrary borrowing request for a copy of the 1874 *Athenaeum* poem was returned with the information that *no poem at all* had been published by Gosse in the *Athenaeum* in 1874. As the contents of the 1870s *Athenaeum* are not indexed, volumes for the years before and after 1874 will have to be manually searched when physical access to a set of them becomes possible. But, since only one other villanelle by Gosse has ever been collected in Gleeson White's fixed-forms anthology and in Gosse's own *Collected Poems*, one assumes through process of elimination that the earlier villanelle must have been "Villanelle" (*Little mistress mine, good-bye!*).


49. Ibid., 308-9.


52. Murray, 158.


54. Robinson, 748.

55. H. Cohen, 81, 78.


57. Ibid., 57, 64.

58. Ibid., 64.

59. Ibid., 64-65.

60. See Note 46.


63. Ibid., 335-36.

64. Ibid., 343; de Banville, *Petit traité*, 216-17.


66. Ibid., op. cit.

68. Emily Pfeiffer, Ibid., 310.


70. Ibid., 6-7, 9-10.

71. Ibid., 10-11.

72. Ibid., 12.

73. Ibid., 13-15.

74. Ibid., 17.

75. McFarland, 51-52.


77. Murray, 6.


80. McFarland, 56.

81. Ibid., 58.

82. Preminger and Warnke, 893.

83. Saintsbury, 82, 182.

84. "Villanelle of Acheron" and "Villanelle: To Lucia" are quoted in McFarland, 74, 69.


86. Schipper, 388-89.
87. Schipper, too, seems to be alluding to the eight-stanza version of
*Wouldst thou not be content to die* published in Gosse's 1877 essay, and not to the
"ghost" villanelle allegedly published in the *Athenaeum*.

88. J. Gleeson White, ed., *Ballades and Rondeaux, Chants Royal, Sestinas,
Villanelles, & Selected, with a Chapter on the Various Forms* (London: Walter
Scott, 1887), xvii.

89. Ibid., xviii, xxxix, xliii.

90. Ibid., xxxi.

91. Ibid., lxxiii.

92. Ibid., lxxiv.

93. Ibid., op. cit.

94. Ibid., xliii.

95. Ibid., xliii-xliv.

96. Ibid., xlv.

97. No author is indicated, but "Love in Idleness" is printed in quotes as the
source.

98. Quoted in H. Cohen, 89.

Press, 1903).

100. H. Cohen, 72-74.

101. Ibid., 93.

102. W. Patterson, 264.

103. Ibid., 379, 381-83.

104. Ibid., 380; McFarland, 29.

105. W. Patterson, 381; McFarland, 29.
106. Ibid., 383.

CHAPTER 7: THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

This chapter will examine representative twentieth-century English-language villanelles, showing that critical claims for their "experimentation" and "rebellion" in regard to the "traditional" fixed-form villanelle become meaningless once the multiform history of the villanelle has been exposed. It will be suggested that certain formal continuities do, however, exist between the danced, sung, and written "villanelle," which have been "translated" across each rupture in lyric technology.

To read accounts of villanelle history is to become convinced that there has been a five- or even six-hundred-year continuous tradition of poets sitting down to writing tables with a "fixed" and visual form in mind: some preset pattern of rhyme scheme, line mensuration, and number of stanzas approximating that of Passerat's J'ay perdu ma tourterelle, despite occasional and expected "deviations" or "irregularities." But these accounts gloss over the huge rupture in technology between sung and written lyric: "VILLANELLE. A Fr. verse form, derived from an It. folk song of the late 15th-early 17th c.," as the 1974 Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics elides it.

As we have seen, the eighteen sixteenth-century French "poetic" villanelles, the six contrapfacta written to villanella-family tunes by Philip Sidney, and the hundreds of villanelle in Italian musical collections all share an underlying musical form, but have nothing in the way of a common "poetic" form to distinguish them from other types of refrain poems. It has been shown as well that the first move toward "fixing" the villanelle's poetic form according to Passerat's model occurred not in the seventeenth century, when many western Europeans would still have remembered its music, but midway through the eighteenth, when that music had long since fled. Pierre Richelet was an admirer of Honoré d'Urfé's villancico-like villanelles, and had no part in designating J'ay perdu ma tourterelle as the eponymic
The eighteenth century—long thought to be a period of dormancy for the villanelle—was actually the locus of significant activity, from the perspective of the "fixing" of its form.

Ronald McFarland states that "Théodore de Banville, in reviving the form in 1845, expanded the number of stanzas by two;" elsewhere he says that de Banville "resurrected" the form or was responsible for "bringing Passerat's fixed-form villanelle back to life." By his choice of language, McFarland implies that *J'ay perdu ma tourterelle* possessed the attribute of formal "fixity" some three hundred years before its poetic form was ever duplicated; but the truth is that Passerat's poem was a *nonce* form. Furthermore, many of the "rules" for the villanelle were inscribed by nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers prior to the appearance of more than one or two, or sometimes *any*, villanelles containing those features.

Yet—as the childhood psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner once remarked to a roomful of college undergraduates, one of whom wrote it down—"Situations perceived as real are real in their consequences." The five-hundred-year-old "continuous fixed-form villanelle tradition" is a fiction constructed by a small group of self-serving writers and critics between 1872 and 1935. In at least one case, the consequences of perceiving that fiction to be real have been very nearly disastrous.

In February of 1975, feeling "the way Heinrich Schliemann must have when he discovered Troy," ethnologist Anna L. Chairetakis entered a church basement in Brooklyn, New York, tape recorder in hand, to listen to a group of Calabrian-Italian immigrants sing the still-living villanella:

a genuine antique of a type of European polyphony employing two to three parts with a double drone. In spite of its interest as both a musical and poetic form, however, it has received little scholarly attention. Because it is difficult to master, is stylistically unorthodox by the canons of Western polyphony, and lacks the cheerful naïveté beloved of revivalists and
composers in the folk vein, it has never left the oral tradition. There, however, it holds an honored place. 4

The villanella as displaced to late-twentieth-century Brooklyn and New Jersey, Chairetakis found, was being sung at festive Calabrian-American community gatherings, or at reunions of family members who had been separated. Native foods and wine were served, and there was dancing to an accordion and percussion instruments, although the villanella itself was not danced. But the villanella performance as described by Chairetakis was a sort of liminal artform between choral dance and mere choral singing:

Singers stand in a closed circle, leaning against one another or with their arms around one another's shoulders if they are related. . . . The singers' faces are serious, and their eyes are cast upward or gaze abstractedly into the center of the singing circle. As he delivers his lines, a male lead singer will rock his torso and throw his body into a conventionalized posture suggesting a cringe, twisting his head up and sideways away from the group with his eyes closed and his face in a grimace, like one in pain. Women are more sedate, but also rock and cringe while singing. Positioned thus, they sing into one another's faces, producing a vibrating effect on the sound waves called beating, a device used in vocal polyphony throughout southeast Europe.

.... Each line or couplet is begun by a leader. The leader is joined by, or drowned in, a chorus at the peak of the melody and the poetic utterance, which the whole group then reiterates with variations in both melody and text. The high-pitched, strident voice of the iettu ["throw," or important high drone part sung by a female] of Calabrian polyphony climactically overrides and ornaments the final line of each couplet. In effect, a monophonic situation gives way to heterophony, in which other voices weave together subtle variants of the melody in loose unison. These distinct voices then merge to create the prolonged, bagpipelike drone chords that are a signature of every phrase ending. 5

The Calabrian villanella "poem" itself was hendacasyllabic and eight lines (four couplets) long, 6 like the strambotto poem that was the usual lyric for the frottola, and like the typical sixteenth-century villanella minus its refrain. 7
refrain of the Calabrian villanella was created by the chorus themselves out of the fabric of the lead singer's couplet; singly or as a group, sometimes joining the lead singer midline and sometimes following, they repeated and echoed fragments of the line being sung. The way the Calabrian villanella's refrain was generated raises an interesting question about the sixteenth-century villanella's written refrain, with its own text separate from that of the stanza: could it have been an attempt on the part of literate composers to "literalize" an oral-improvisatory practice? Chairetakis observes that the twentieth-century singers omitted the refrain when they rendered the "poem proper" for her.8

Most intriguing of all, from a poetic standpoint, is that the singers told Chairetakis "that villanelle were frequently composed on the spot" in the past and also that:

the villanella texts were written "over a hundred years ago, before our time, by a poet named Virginio" (whom I understood to mean Virgil). Virginio, they said, wrote many songs which were lost in their written form, but passed down orally to their generation. 9

However, because Chairetakis had looked up the term "villanelle" in the 1974 Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics and read therein that it had become "a rather complicated verse form" in sixteenth-century France, she dismissed as tall tales the evidence being reported to her of a still-living oral-improvisatory lyric tradition, and assumed that the Calabrian villanella texts had originated as literary "poems."10

Twenty-three years after Chairetakis made her stunning discovery, this author alerted Renaissance villanella expert Donna Cardamone Jackson to it, and one hopes that it is not too late for the two to compare the poetics of their respective villanella texts.

Another theme that has been touched upon in earlier chapters found additional support in Chairetakis's contemporary research. According to Chairetakis, while the lead singer of the Calabrian villanella could be either male or female,
women were chiefly responsible for collecting and remembering villanella texts, and "to judge from its many female, work-related contexts and from the importance of the high drone part, the genre is basically feminine."\(^{11}\) This is consistent with what is known of the representation of women in medieval choral dance, where they often took the role of lead singer and participated on an equal basis with men in the chorus;\(^{12}\) with what is known of choral dance in ancient Greece, where both young men and women were required to participate;\(^{13}\) with the evidence of Latvian and South Slavic oral-formulaic lyrics, called "women's songs" as opposed to the "masculine" genre of epic;\(^{14}\) and even with Du Bellay's condemnation of Mellin de Saint-Gelais and Pernette de Guillet, the latter a woman, as representative of the type of old-fashioned, improvisatory musico-poetry that he wanted to eliminate with the publication of *La deffence et illustration de la langue françoise*.\(^{15}\) The choral-dance or "improvised" lyric tradition in western Europe did not discriminate against women, but it has taken hundreds of years for women poets to achieve significant representation in the written lyric tradition that has supplanted it.

Chairetakis's consulting of the *Princeton Encyclopedia*, with its misinformation about the sixteenth-century French "poetic" villanelle, may have blocked an unprecedented opportunity for us to have learned more about the composition and transmission of such "women's songs," since Chairetakis's research subjects, middle-aged and elderly in 1975, are probably now deceased. More often, however, the consequences of believing in the "fixed-form villanelle tradition" are not as serious, but simply absurd. We have seen, in Chapter 1, that many critics equate adherence to the so-called "traditional" forms with adherence to "traditions" of racial, ethnic, gender, and class oppression practiced during the same time periods. Now that the multiformity of the early villanelle has been demonstrated, we can see, as well, that critical praise heaped upon modern and contemporary villanelle-writers for
break "traditional" villanelle rules or "experimenting" with the form is equally shortsighted.

For example, Joyce Kilmer in 1912 praised Edwin Arlington Robinson's villanelle, "The House on the Hill," for being "so different in spirit from the traditional villanelle that its form is at first scarcely recognized." The poem circles around a house that has been boarded up and abandoned, explaining nothing. It is, indeed, quite different from the rhetorical nineteenth-century villanelles that had preceded it; but the sixteenth-century musico-poetic genre embraced a wide variety of subject matter in its early years, before the rustic villanesca shaded into the refined villanella with its narrow theme of courtly love. Between 1537 and 1541, Cardamone tells us, "harsh, derogatory, and unflattering attacks on the beloved are as frequent as pathetic laments of frustrated lovers." As was shown in previous chapters, sexual puns and allusions were frequent. Genres closely related to the villanella, such as the villotta, mascherata, and tedesca, respectively, incorporated street-vendors' cries, boasts by maskers costumed as tradesmen, and social/political commentary in the form of satires of foreign soldiers. Juan Diaz Rengifo's examples of sixteenth-century Spanish villancicos were all on Christian religious themes. And Chairetakis writes of the orally transmitted Calabrian villanella that survived into the twentieth century:

The Italian contexts of villanella singing were... numerous and varied, being functionally connected to work and to specific social events such as serenading, as well as to informal occasions such as those used by immigrants. Villanelle accompanied female group labor of many kinds. . . . Insulting verses were sung by women to warn, ridicule, or punish an obstreperous or promiscuous neighbor, or by men to destroy the heart and reputation of a rejected lover. Men and women sang villanelle together in night serenades. . . .

When *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* remarks upon how twentieth-century poets "have explored the v.'s capacity to deal with serious, even
metaphysical subjects,"19 or McFarland writes that "By the end of the 1950's... the villanelle had been proven, at least in the hands of able poets, capable of the profoundest themes,"20 they are ignoring the wide range of themes and subjects that can be found in the musico-poetic genre at its juncture with oral tradition. Transition from oral-musical to written poetic form brought about a narrowing of villanelle content against which the recent twentieth-century "expansion" has been measured.

The same is true of critics' assertions that "slant" or assonantal rhyme is a bold, twentieth-century assault on the "traditional" and rigid rhyme scheme of the villanelle. McFarland writes of a 1957 villanelle by Barbara Howes that "the use of eye-rhyme, along with the freely enjambed lines, identifies this villanelle as a product of what might be considered the furthest limits of experimentation within the confines of formal invention."21 However, Cardamone has shown that assonantal rhyme is common in the villanesca lyrics of 1537 to 1541.22 Indeed, as anthropologist Ruth Finnegan explains in her book Oral Poetry, assonantal rhyme is a device commonly found in the oral poetries of many nations and ethnic groups, but "it is probably among oral literatures in close contact with writing that full vowel and consonant rhyme is most significant;"23 i.e., assonantal rhyme gives way to full end-rhyme only when the written lyric begins to encroach upon the oral-musical lyric. Interestingly, while it takes no great intelligence to discern whether "moon" and "June" or "big" and "pig" rhyme according to the rules of literate consciousness, Michael Taft in his article "Willie McTell's Rules of Rhyme: A Brief Excursion into Blues Phonetics" has identified fourteen very complex linguistic "rules" by which oral-tradition blues musicians determine whether two sounds "rhyme" assonantly.24

In their introduction to Strong Measures, an anthology of "contemporary American poetry in traditional forms," editors Philip Dacey and David Jauss assert that:
Still another way that contemporary poets have redefined traditional forms is by truncating them. This technique is especially prevalent in two French forms that require considerable repetition: the sestina and the villanelle. 

Contemporary poets not only shorten forms, they also on occasion lengthen them. 25

Dacey and Jauss are defining "truncation" and "lengthening" with reference to the nineteen-line "fixed-form" villanelle (five tercets plus a quatrain). But again, a glance at the musico-poetic origins of the villanelle and at the French "poetic" villanelles of the sixteenth century reveals a wide range of total line lengths and total numbers of stanzas. The musical villanella normally had four symmetrical stanzas, but those stanzas could vary in length from three to eight lines each,26 producing total lyric lengths of from twelve to thirty-two lines. In addition, Cardamone catalogued musical villanelle of two, three, and five stanzas.27 Of the eighteen French "poetic" villanelles of the sixteenth century, eight had four stanzas; one, five; four, six (counting J'ay perdu ma tourterelle); none, seven; three, eight; and two, nine stanzas. They ranged in length from twelve to eighty lines. And, of course, even the first few nineteenth-century French and English imitations of J'ay perdu ma tourterelle paid no attention to its length, but only to its rhyme scheme, as the guiding principle of the "form."

Writing in 1980 of Tom Disch's "The Rapist's Villanelle," Philip K. Jason declares that it:

shows us an interesting, and popular, contemporary way of bringing additional flexibility to the villanelle. Without changing a word of his refrain lines, he manages some varied effects by changes in punctuation (and, thereby, syntax). 28

However, this "contemporary way of bringing additional flexibility to the villanelle" was first advocated by Gleeson White in the year 1887: "Still, any change of meaning that can be obtained by alteration of punctuation, accent, or even of spelling, provided the sound is unchanged, is not merely allowable, but desirable, in
lighter verse especially. Scarcely two decades had gone by since Banville had written the second fixed-form villanelle in existence.

Not even variation of the villanelle's fixed refrain lines is unique to the twentieth century. When twentieth-century poet Barbara Lefcowitz writes of taking "liberties with the villanelle refrain, sometimes repeating only a key word or a sound," she is describing a practice that was common in the sixteenth century in both the "musical" and "poetic" examples. According to Cardamone, the refrain was altered in the last stanza of seventy-two of one hundred eighty-eight of the villanesche lyrics dating from 1537 to 1559 that she examined. Jean Passerat (in his nonfamous villanelle), Philippe Desportes, Madeleine de Laubespine, and Honoré d'Urfé also varied the refrain lines of their villanelles. It has been shown that d'Urfé was probably imitating the form of the Spanish villancico, which the French also called "villanelle;" and prosodist Claude Lancelot, in his 1663 passage on the Spanish "villanelle," explained that recurrences of the initial "entry" or refrain had to have the same number of lines as the original, but could repeat only the end-words or only the rhymes of the original, if desired, and not necessarily the exact wording.

But attraction to, or repulsion from, the idea of a "fixed-form villanelle tradition" with rules to be mastered or defied, as the case may be, is not sufficient to explain the fascination that the villanelle form has exerted on the minds of so many twentieth-century writers. The fact is that a hundred-fifty-year-old fixed-form villanelle tradition does now exist, although erected upon a false foundation: situations perceived as real are real in their consequences. The triolet, virelai, and chant royal, too, have "traditions" and "rules," but one does not see poets the likes of Weldon Kees, William Empson, Elizabeth Bishop, Richard Hugo, and Rita Dove essaying them. As Jason has observed:

Of all the fixed forms that have rivalled the sonnet, only the villanelle continues to accumulate within its familiar shape a
body of significant literature. Something brings poets to the villanelle often enough and intently enough to justify an inquiry into the form. Certainly the villanelle offers the demands and joys of all strict literary puzzles, but mere problem-solving doesn't seem a powerful enough attraction to account for the lively interest in this form. Nor does strength in the villanelle usually reside—as it often does in the sonnet—in what each new offering borrows from the accumulated associations of past poems in that form. Literary history doesn't seem to be an important issue here. Instead, there is something about the very form—and its varieties of possible functions—that has caught the attention of many poets.

Jason goes on to identify qualities of the villanelle form that are compatible with what he terms, in one example, "basic cognitive and expository processes." He cites the "interplay of constant (repeating) and variable elements;" the tripartite structure; the "psychology of repetition" that suits the form to themes of obsession, or that comforts us with "the law of return;" and "the potential of the villanelle for handling duality, dichotomy, and debate." 33

Other writers besides Jason have suggested that the "form" of the villanelle may be an internal organizing principle or archetype that has nothing to do with fixed rhyme schemes and total numbers of tercets. Ezra Pound wrote that:

The villanelle, even, can at its best achieve the closest intensity, I mean when, as with Dowson, the refrains are an emotional fact, which the intellect, in the various gyrations of the poem, tries in vain and in vain to escape. 35

Pound's description of the "inner dynamics" of the villanelle form is certainly congruent with Jason's ideas about its compatibility with "basic cognitive or expository processes," particularly those in play when dealing with themes of conflict or obsession. German critic Manfred Pfister shifts this inner-dynamics approach to the villanelle's "form" from the level of human psychology to that of linguistic structure. It is no accident, he believes, that William Empson, author of the well-known literary essay "Seven Types of Ambiguity" about how meaning shifts within a
literary work as the result of linguistic play, wrote three villanelles himself. Pfister points out that:

in the sestina the repeated words, in the villanelle rhymes and refrains—can be embedded in continually changing contexts and thereby their potential for meaning can be exhausted one after the other... 36

But even the notion of the modern lyric as a genre "in which the poet seems to struggle to express for his own satisfaction psychic experiences whose nature he at times only half understands," as Margaret Drabble has phrased it, which can be seen to underlie Jason's, Pound's, and Empson's theories of the "internal form" of the villanelle, is in itself culture-bound.

It is also possible to "read" twentieth-century villanelles as translations—across ruptures in lyric "technology" between dance and vocal, and vocal and written, lyric—of the conventions of choral dance. It should be obvious that the form of the contemporary "fixed-form" villanelle, while being atypical of the form of the *lyrics* of the musical villanella of the sixteenth century, can be viewed as a verbal analogue of the Renaissance villanella's musical form. The three strains of melody that made up each musical strophe have been "translated" into the three lines of text that make up each poetic tercet. In the musical villanella, the first melodic strain, fused to the "a" or opening line of the poetic couplet, was normally repeated; the second musical strain (fused to the "b" poetic line) was brief and functioned as a contrast to the first and also as a "bridge" to the refrain; and the third strain was the familiar melody of the refrain. In the poetic version, these three divisions carry the same weight: the "a" lines of the tercets dominate the "b" lines in emphasis because the former rhyme with the powerful refrain lines, and also because they come first. The weaker "b" lines connect the "new" thought of the "a" line to the "old" thought of the refrain. The third verbal "section" of each tercet, like the third melodic section of the musical villanella, is the refrain. Even the extra line in the terminating
quatrain is consistent with what is known of strophic poetry performance practice: the performer often had to give some sort of musical flourish, extraneous to the song itself, to signal that it had ended. Musical cadences are preserved by the villanelle's line breaks and by the end-rhymes. The villanelle's symmetrically patterned tercets represent the singing of new words to the same melody established in the first strophe. The alternation of individual soloist with chorus is "translated" into the alternation of new text with fixed refrain lines.

It is even possible to view the thematic content of the contemporary villanelle as being continuous with its origins in choral dance. This is by no means a radical idea in lyric scholarship. Paul Fussell, in Poetic Meter & Poetic Form, is struck by how many free-verse poems take as their subject matter themes of freedom and flux and, particularly, the sea. Perhaps because the idea smacks of the metaphysical, Fussell distances himself from it by phrasing it as a double negative: "But this is not to imply that...free verse does not itself seem to generate certain specific themes, which such devices as unpredictable line-length and unadvertised rhythms seem to trigger." Peter Sacks, in The English Elegy, makes a similar argument for the conventions of the modern elegy, which he views as having "roots in a dense matrix of rites and ceremonies, in the light of which many elegiac conventions should be recognized as being not only aesthetically interesting forms but also the literary versions of specific social and psychological practices." Sacks catalogues both general sorts of elegiac conventions—such as pastoral context, reiterated questions, and the overall movement from grief to expectations of resurrection—and specific, symbolic conventions, such as the playing of a wind instrument or the breaking of flower stems. Ultimately, according to Sacks, the elegy itself can be viewed as an artifact created to substitute for the loss of the dead one.

In a similar fashion, one might view the archetypal choral dance "form" as a dramatization of the emergence of individual from group consciousness, and of the
group's reassimilation of the "threat" posed to it by the individual thinker. At the heart of choral-dance or choral-work lyric, as at the heart of an army marching in lockstep or of an audience bursting into rhythmic applause, is the underlying assumption that to move together is to be of one mind. As Wilson Coker, author of *Music and Meaning*, explains it:

> When the participants in a social act are severally carrying out and controlling their actions with regard for that act, their common response, which is the stimulus to each, becomes the symbolic meaning of, the thought about, that act (or of the object the act concerns). 41

It is not, Coker explains, necessary for the participants in that act to be conscious of the "meaning" of what they are doing, any more than it is necessary for wild geese to understand "why" they are flying in formation:

> Consciousness (in the sense of awareness of one's self or discursive mental activity) is not necessary on the part of organisms in a social situation in order for meaning to arise. The mechanism of meaning is present in the social act prior to the emergence of consciousness itself, and hence prior to one's consciousness of meaning. The adjustive response of the second organism to the gesture of the first within a social act constitutes the meaning of that gesture. 42

"Gestures are performatives," continues Coker, and each gesture embodies an affective "attitude" which includes "an organism's affective, conative, and cognitive disposition, [and] the character of its readiness to respond."43 Tracing backwards from identically performed *gestures*, therefore, one should be able to find identical *attitudes*.

This underlying equation of shared gesture with shared state of mind appears to have been the reason why choral dance performance was a mandatory educational requirement for the young men and women of ancient Greece. Classicist Eva Stehle explains that Plato thought choral dance both "impose[d] discipline and harmony on
children who are still too young to reason," i.e., upon the dancers themselves, and modeled community values for the audience watching the dancers:

As the chorus performs the rhythms and melodies \textit{(harmonia)} of good men, the dancers give pleasure, so that justice and pleasure are \textit{seen and heard} to be united. We could say that in Plato's ideal state community values are refracted through the chorus in such a way as to become visible and sensuous. Plato calls choral performance \textit{mimemata tropon} ( . . . "imitations of character"); the qualities that the chorus imitates are made attractive by the rhythm and melodic form of song and dance.

. . . . . . The performers present themselves as exemplary members of the community, for they concretize collective attitudes as personal convictions and exhibit the shared beliefs in idealized form. 44

The choral dance of the Middle Ages was, in the words of Lawrence Berman, "a highly ordered mechanism by which a group could manifest its identity and solidarity." 45 Those who moved together as a group on ritual occasions of harvesting and "holy day" eves believed, as well, that to control one's behavior via the "code of chivalry" was to embody the group's most cherished values. 46 The universal order itself was symbolized by the "dance of the heavens," 47 and to participate in a round dance was to enact the literal level of an allegory, as shown in a wonderful twelfth-century quotation found by John Stevens:

By the circling of the dance moreover they wished the revolution of the heavens to be understood; by the joining of hands the linking of elements; by the sound of singers the harmony of the resounding planets; by bodily gestures, the movements of the constellations; by hand-clapping or the stamping of feet, the crashing of thunder. 48

The notion of the lyric poem as embodying a single emotion or state of mind persists in modern times, despite the tendency of many free-verse and formal poems to shift moods as they unfold. But it is virtually impossible for the fixed-form villanelle to do so, because of the constraints imposed by the repetition of its refrain
lines—and, perhaps, even by the repetition of its dominant rhyme sound. John Frederick Nims believes that there is a correlation between vowel sound and evoked "mood," with "high-frequency" sounds like long "e," "a," and "i" associated with an increase of energy and excitement, and "low-frequency" sounds like "oo" or long "o" associated with sadness, sluggishness, and a general slowing down of energy. Nims even singles out a villanelle, Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night," as an example of rhyming in the high-frequency range, aptly expressive of the poem's theme, which is the life force refusing to give in to death. As distinct from other types of lyric, the contemporary villanelle almost always strikes a single pure emotional tone that dominates the poem, and which the reader must "move with" for as long as that poem is the content of consciousness.

The medieval choral dance lyric was, of course, an antiphonal form, alternating stanzas sung by a soloist with refrains sung by the chorus. Yet the refrain always had the "last word," and the voice of the individual was always folded back into that of the collective.

In the modern and postmodern lyric, a multiplicity of selves has become one possibility of the "I" that is its usual speaker. Drabble's observation about the twentieth-century lyric concerning itself with bringing unconscious materials to consciousness is highly relevant in this regard. Also in the twentieth century, the rhetorical stance of the average lyric has shifted from that of "a man speaking to men," as Wordsworth put it in his Preface to Lyrical Ballads, to that of an internal thought process being somehow eavesdropped upon. The subjective "I" can thus play out the medieval choral dance roles of soloist and chorus within its own compass.

A villanelle such as Theodore Roethke's "The Waking," then, can be seen to take as its theme the emergence of individual consciousness from the pool of "sleep" or unconsciousness or instinct that is the "collective" mind:

275
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.
I learn by going where I have to go.

We think by feeling. What is there to know?
I hear my being dance from ear to ear.
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Of those so close beside me, which are you?
God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there,
And learn by going where I have to go.

Light takes the Tree; but who can tell us how?
The lowly worm climbs up a winding stair;
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Great Nature has another thing to do
To you and me; so take the lively air,
And, lovely, learn by going where to go.

This shaking keeps me steady. I should know.
What falls away is always. And is near.
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I learn by going where I have to go. 52

Nims would identify Roethke's long "o" sounds as being of extremely low frequency, appropriate to the poem's theme of something sluggish and clumsy, of a level with the ground and the worm, "waking" from some state lower than sleep to sleep. Like Thomas's villanelle, Roethke's dramatizes the conflict between life and death instincts, between the wish to assert the self against the world and the wish to abandon self and sink back into unconsciousness, and in both villanelles that struggle is fully played out within the scope of a single voice.

Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" also takes as its theme the vacillation between yielding to "small deaths" in the form of loss and asserting the individual self to cry out against it. Literal losses such as door keys, watches, and houses give way to the middle-aged losses of time and dreams and, ultimately, to the loss of a loved one—which is the reality of death, our own as well as that of others.
—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster. 53

Bishop plays out not only Sacks's "elegiac" process whereby the artifact of the poem comes to substitute for the loss of the loved one, but also a parallel process that is the outcome of choral dance: individual and collective together weave a text from the drama of their conflict which, once performed and complete, enters the memory of the collective. The individual voice is enshrined and at the same time neutralized, encased in the collective's refrain the way an irritant grain of sand becomes covered by layers of nacre.

The foregoing two villanelle examples have cast the collective voice as not-knowingness, but it can take other guises. In a poem like Peter Klappert's "Ellie Mae Leaves in a Hurry," there is an almost literal Greek chorus of "married men" shaming the absent Ellie Mae—who has aborted her child and may have killed herself, as well—for getting pregnant:

There's some who say she put death up her dress
and some who say they saw her pour it down.
It's not the sort of thing you want to press

so we just assumed she planned on leaving town
and gave her money for the first express.
She had some family up in Puget Sound.

Well we are married men. We've got interests.
You can't take children out like cats to drown.
It's not the sort of thing you want to press.

We didn't know she'd go and pour death down,
though most of us had heard of her distress.
We just assumed she planned on leaving town.

There's some of us who put death up her dress
but she had family up in Puget Sound.
We gave her money for the first express.

277
Well we are married men. We've got interests.
Though most of us had heard of her distress.
You can't take children out like cats to drown,
it's just the sort of news that gets around. 54

The collective has no insight into the situation or self-awareness of its shared responsibility for it, only rigid "rules" for the behavior of its members. The refrain lines function like proverbs that are parroted without any real understanding ("You can't take children out like cats to drown"). In Sylvia Plath's villanelle "Admonitions," as well, the "collective" voice of the poem, like the chorus of Greek tragedy, chides the person being addressed for seeking to know too much. It is better to stay mired in superstition, with the group, than to embark upon the gnostic quest for knowledge that is ultimately self-knowledge:

For deadly secrets strike when understood
and lucky stars all exit on the run:
ever try to knock on rotten wood,
ever try to know more than you should. 55

When Plath writes "The magic golden apples all look good/although the wicked witch has poisoned one," she is alluding not only to the myth of Sleeping Beauty but to the bitten apple of Eden that imparts the knowledge of good and evil, irrevocably separating individual consciousness from instinctual or collective consciousness.

The interplay between "individual" and "collective" voices in the villanelle can also take the form of the conscious mind drifting in and out of "unconscious" or instinctual sexual fantasy. In Marilyn Hacker's "Wagers," one aspect of the lyric "I" knows enough to wait until the time is right to make a pass ("but I can bide my time until it's biddable"), but the other keeps yielding to sexual instinct. The two (nonrhyming, in this case) refrain lines are "I bet you blush all over when you come" and "I bet you don't wear shoulderpads in bed."56 In Beth Gyllys's "Villanelle of Desire," not physical pleasure but loss of ego-consciousness is the ultimate attraction of the sex act:
Your penis fits quite fine between my thighs.
Come lie with me a while, this life is hell.
We're nothing but our bodies. Close your eyes

and let me touch you. I could see it rise
when I walked in. I'm not ashamed at all,
your penis fits so well between my thighs.

Why must we talk? I hate how words disguise.
I love the way we touch, and taste and smell,
reacting with our bodies. Close your eyes

and feel the truth of sex. It signifies
our wish to find the other side, a spell
the penis weaves between another's thighs,

the taste we have to beat the thing that dies
and bind the other to the self. We'll still
be bodies: naked limbs and hungry eyes.

We might desire the things that money buys,
but even more we want to fill the shell,
to slide the penis warm between our thighs,
feel nothing but our bodies, close our eyes. 57

One of my own, early villanelles used the cycling of refrain lines and tension between
"new" and "stale" knowledge in the villanelle to capture the psychology of a drug
addict, choosing to obliterate ego-consciousness for the oblivion promised by the
drug: "She's not going to take him running in the park,/ the track like a rosary, the
oak trees prayers./ He'd rather stick a needle in his arm." 58 Richard Hugo's "The
Freaks at Spurgin Road Field" draws a parallel between the limited awareness of a
mentally retarded child attending a baseball game ("The dim boy claps because the
others clap") and the tendency of the mind to limit ego-consciousness and present-
centeredness by obsessively circling a past incident that evokes guilt and shame:

The afflicted never cheer in unison.
Isn't it wrong, the way the mind moves back
to stammering pastures where the picnic should have worked.
The dim boy claps because the others clap. 59
Hugo’s speaker appears to have witnessed a neighbor beating a child, and done nothing to stop it. His feelings of shame are the internalized "voice" of the collective—if we can believe Freud’s theory of superego formation in this post-Freudian age.

Freudian theory turns up, overtly this time, in Rita Dove’s "Parsley," in which the villanelle "The Cane Fields" sets the surreal, hallucinatory scene for the free-verse poem that follows. Dove’s Haitian general, obsessed with his dead mother, is about to murder hordes of poor canefield workers for not being able to enunciate their "R's" like his refined mother. The villanelle itself cycles between detached ego-observation of events ("There is a parrot imitating spring/ in the palace, its feathers parsley green./ Out of the swamp the cane appears") and a sort of swooning into mass terror; the peasants’ minds, overtaken by instinctual fear, and El General’s mind, overtaken by Oedipal instincts and instinctual violence, almost merge into each other:

El General has found his word: _perejil_.
Who says it, lives. He laughs, teeth shining out of the swamp. The cane appears
in our dreams, lashed by wind and streaming.
And we lie down. For every drop of blood there is a parrot imitating spring.
Out of the swamp the cane appears. 60

The process of _writing_ a fixed-form villanelle may even in some ways be eerily reminiscent of the lost art of orally composing or "recollecting" lyric. As with _contrafacta_ composition, the "skeleton tune" consisting of five tercets plus a quatrain of an identifiable meter, usually iambic pentameter or tetrameter, precedes the words. Those who have written rhymed and metered verse know how the unconscious mind begins to "think" in rhyme and meter, casting a net into its store of language and pulling up rhyme words with connections to the subject they never could have
thought of rationally, as well as lines and phrases that float into consciousness "preformed" to the meter of the poem. This is what Nims, a poet himself, means when he says that "rhyme interferes with the rational processes of thought by obliging us to say other things than we originally had in mind."^^

Commonplace sayings and clichés of English, having meter already "built into" them, come to mind easily when one is thinking "metrically;" moreover, those semi-clichés can be linked to almost any other thought with no appearance of "forced" juncture, which is important when the poet is constrained by a limited number of rhyme words. As the oral lyric poet of old must have joined memorized lines, couplets, and phrases proper to the "core song" itself with all-purpose clichés from a "storehouse" of them and still other phrases made up in performance to flesh out a line, so does the villanelle-writer delight us by blending received chunks of language, common cultural property, with original phrasing. David Lehman is a master at this art of blending, as can be seen in the opening tercet of his villanelle "First Offense": "I'm sorry, officer. I didn't see the sign/ Because, in fact, there wasn't any. I tell you/ The light was green. How much is the fine?"^^ In another of Lehman's villanelles, "Wedding Song," one of the two refrain lines is "I now pronounce you man and wife."^^ William Harmon blends not only bits of received cultural language, but also the pop cultural icons of a Camels cigarette pack and an old Chevrolet, into his villanelle "A Masque of Resignation": "The sun will rise, will shine, and--come what may--/ Will set. I don't know what it's all about./ I bought a pack of Camels yesterday."^^ David Wagoner constructs a villanelle tercet from a pastiche of phrases borrowed from Christmas carols, psalms, and sermons: "O holy night as it was in the beginning/ Under silent stars for the butchering of sheep/ And shepherds, is now and ever shall be, night;"^^ Martha Collins does the same with the trite phrases of social introductions and "small talk": "The way to begin is always the
Ironically, it may be this very ancient technique of patching received bits of "common cultural property" language with unique bits of poetic expression, regardless of the "literary" appropriateness of the former's sources, that makes the villanelle seem "postmodern." Not postmodernism but modernism was still in vogue when William Empson wrote "Reflections from Anita Loos":

> No man is sure he does not need to climb.
> It is not human to feel safely placed.
> "A girl can't go on laughing all the time."

> Wrecked by their games and jeering at their prime
> There are who can, but who can praise their taste?
> No man is sure he does not need to climb.

> Love rules the world, but is it rude, or slime?
> All nasty things are sure to be disgraced.
> A girl can't go on laughing all the time.

> Christ stinks of torture who was caught in lime.
> No star he aimed at is entirely waste.
> No man is sure he does not need to climb.

> It is too weak to speak of right and crime.
> Gentlemen prefer bound feet and the wasp waist.
> A girl can't go on laughing all the time.

> It gives a million gambits for a mime
> On which a social system can be based:
> No man is sure he does not need to climb,
> A girl can't go on laughing all the time. 67

In his brilliant explication of the poem, Pfister explains that it was based upon a scene from the 1925 bestselling novel *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* by Anita Loos, which was subsequently turned into a Broadway play and then a hit movie:

> The second refrain line quotes an observation that Dorothy, the friend of the first person narrator, makes, in which she
asks a beau to finally take off his ridiculous spats: "Fun's fun, but a girl can't laugh all the time." Then, however, when a pair of unspeakably tasteless socks appear, she asks him with resignation to please put on his spats again. This episode supplies the villanelle with its central, semantic oppositions.

Pfister goes on to explain that the removal of the spats produces a new "wrong" while righting the old one, just as Christ's death cancels the Old Dispensation but ushers in a new religion with its attendant horrors. In his blending of pop culture with serious culture, received language with original poetic expression, Empson was decades ahead of his culture, but close in spirit to the sensibility of a John Yau—also heavily influenced by "pop culture" in the form of movies—whose "Chinese Villanelle" yokes echoes of Chinese poetry ("serious culture") with the evasive and discontinuous linguistic techniques popularized by his obvious influence, John Ashbery: "Like a river worthy of its gown/ And like a mountain worthy of its insolence. / Why am I like a lute left with only description." The latter poem, along with Lehman's "First Offense," are the two villanelles appearing in Norton's *Postmodern American Poetry* anthology. Paul Hoover's introduction to that volume, in which he champions the technique of pastiche; the elimination of the individual, emotional poetic ego in favor of a neutral tone and pluralistic voice; the idea of the poem as process over the idea of the poem as product; and even John Giorno's use of "multiple voices and repetitions" that give "a ritualized, almost choral character to the work," could as easily have prefaced a medieval choral dance performance as an anthology of postmodern poetry.

Sylvia Huot has remarked that "courtly lyric, as is often pointed out, is about the event of its own making," but the modern villanelle, even more so than the average courtly lyric, tends to sacramentalize its own process of composition. In many villanelles, this impulse can take over the poem. Examples are "Pour faire une villanelle,/ Rime en 'elle' et rime en 'in',/ La méthode est simple et belle" ["To make
a villanelle,/ Rhyme on 'elle' and rhyme on 'in,'/ The method is simple and beautiful"],
from Joseph Boumier's "Pour Faire Une Villanelle;"73 "A double-clappered silver bell/ That must be made to clink in chime,/ A dainty thing's the villanelle," from
William Ernest Henley's "Villanelle;"74 "Villanelle, why art thou mute?/ Hath the
singer ceased to sing?/ Hath the master lost his lute?," from Andrew Lang's
"Villanelle (To M. Joseph Boumier);"75 and "Just to please my Bonnie Belle/ With
her winsome eyes of blue./ Lo, I sing a villanelle," from Samuel Minturn Peck's
"Bonnie Belle."76 The contemporary sensibility prefers a lighter touch—as when
Bishop interjects "(Write it!)" toward the end of "One Art," or Hugo's "way the mind
moves back" comes to stand for the writing of the poem, as well as for the thinking
of its speaker. The terminating quatrain of Henri Coulette's villanelle "Postscript,"
about the breakup of a relationship, turns suddenly reflexive, as well: "We had too
little craft and too much art."77 This writer has instinctively done the same thing in a
villanelle that ends with an allusion to the blues pianist James Booker: "to play with
words like Booker played."78 Stanley Plumly spies a group of birds migrating "too
late in the season to be real./ Like a thought turned in a machination."79 His birds
are like that "thought turned in a machination" because they have been turned into
the content of the machinelike villanelle.

The villanelle writer is, of course, as "free" as the free verse writer to strike
out and revise in private: he or she is not constrained by having to fill the slots in a
metrical line under conditions of performance, with no margin for hesitation. Yet, as
we have seen, the process of writing a fixed-form villanelle may now approximate, as
closely as possible, the lost art of orally improvising one; and something of that
godliness that descends upon the oral poet inspired by the Muse or possessed of
"divine furor" seems to have carried over into the associations brought to the written
form. In two modernists, we see mastery of the villanelle form held up as the level of
skill that distinguishes the master literary craftsman from the youthful apprentice.
Eugene O'Neill lets us know, in his narrative title, that he has tried and failed at his first attempt to write "Villanelle of Ye Young Poet's First Villanelle to His Ladye and Ye Difficulties Thereof":

To sing the charms of Rosabelle,
To pour my soul out at her feet,
I try to write this villanelle.

Now I am caught within her spell,
It seems to me most wondrous sweet
To sing the charms of Rosabelle.

I seek in vain for words to tell
My love—Alas, my muse is weak!
I try to write this villanelle.

Would I had power to compel
The English language incomplete
To sing the charms of Rosabelle.

The ardent thoughts that in me dwell
On paper I would fain repeat
I try to write this villanelle.

My effort fruitless is. O H—l!
I'll tell her all when next we meet.
To sing the charms of Rosabelle,
I tried to write this villanelle. 80

Amateurish as it is, O'Neill's villanelle is "framed" by its title as being not the first, but the second, villanelle written by its speaker. The editorial note to the poem mentions that it was written to Maibelle Scott, thus, the would-be artist Eugene O'Neill has attempted to write a villanelle about his desire for the real Maibelle, and has failed, but "Ye Young Poet" has displaced desire into a poem for the fictional "Rosabelle," and has succeeded. The "plot" of O'Neill's poem echoes that of another modernist work of literature that revolves around a villanelle.

The villanelle contained in James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man was both Joyce's first and his character, Stephen Dedalus's, first villanelle.
Pfister explains that Joyce wrote the villanelle in 1900, when he was eighteen years old, and that he was influenced by the poetry of Ernest Dowson, who wrote a number of villanelles in the last decade of the nineteenth century. "Villanelle of the Temptress" did not appear in the first draft of the novel, titled *Stephen Hero*. In the final version, however, as Zack Bowen observes:

the villanelle is a portrait of the artist, and like the book, the poem is a work of art about its own making. . . . the portrait within a portrait of the villanelle [is] the microcosm and artistic epiphany of the entire novel. Like the final portrait, the villanelle is an amalgam of previous images, a rationalization for Stephen's inferiority, and a vision of its own composition. 83

In Joyce's villanelle, the voice of the "collective" is figured by the priest saying Catholic mass, while the individual who would pose a threat to that collective is figured by the temptress:

Are you not weary of ardent ways,  
Lure of the fallen seraphim?  
Tell no more of enchanted days.

Your eyes have set man's heart ablaze  
And you have had your will of him.  
Are you not weary of ardent ways?

Above the flame the smoke of praise  
Goes up from ocean rim to rim.  
Tell no more of enchanted days.

Our broken cries and mournful lays  
Rise in one eucharistic hymn.  
Are you not weary of ardent ways?

While sacrificing hands upraise  
The chalice flowing to the brim,  
Tell no more of enchanted days.

And still you hold our longing gaze  
With languorous look and lavish limb!
Are you not weary of ardent ways?
Tell no more of enchanted days. 84

Stephen and, one assumes, Joyce himself sympathize not with the temptress who would lure the priest-figure onto a path of individuation, apart from the collective, but with the artist-priest who stands on the side of literary and religious traditions: "transubstantiating his own experience into the eucharist, producing not only the body and blood of Stephen-Christ but the poem about the process,"85 as Bowen describes it.

In several of the French "romances with lyric insertions" or "lyrico-narrative texts" of the late Middle Ages, as Huot terms them, such as Guillaume de Machaut's La remede de fortune, the protagonist-hero, like Stephen Dedalus, is a young lover who composes a lyric verse about his beloved and thereby becomes a writer. The lyric verse forms employed (carol, rondeau, etc.) are choral-dance forms, and the romance plots encapsulate not only the process of substituting the poem for the object of desire, but the process of substituting the written lyric for the orally improvised one. Huot points out that the lyric poem is still considered "an oral performative medium" in those romances, iconographically represented in illustrations by a scroll rather than a book. But the romance novel itself, which purports to have been written by the lover-poet, and into which the lyric poems are inscribed, is most decidedly a book. Guillaume de Machaut, a poet-musician himself and author of several romances, "explores the dynamics by which singing is replaced with writing as the lyric activity: the carol is projected into the book, the trouvère becomes an author,"86 Huot tells us. And, one might also add, the "feminine" genre of improvising choral-dance lyric is co-opted into the "masculine" activity of writing poems.

One wonders if Joyce, through his choice of a villanelle as Stephen's poem, was consciously alluding to the French lyrico-narratives. There is no telling: were
the pastiche compositional techniques of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and *The Four Quartets*, and the haunting round-dance scene from the latter which patches the poetry of Eliot's literal ancestor, Sir Thomas Eliot, with Eliot's own, evidence that Eliot recognized the reality of a lost oral-formulaic lyric tradition—or just intuitions on his part?

In that open field
If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,
On a summer midnight, you can hear the music
Of the weak pipe and the little drum
And see them dancing around the bonfire
The association of man and woman
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie—
A dignified and commodious sacrament.
Two and two, necessarye coniunction,
Holding eche other by the hand or the arm
Which betokeneth concorde. Round and round the fire
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,
Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
Mirth of those long since under earth
Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing. . . 87

In the end, it does not matter: wherever and in whatever guise choral-dance form intersects with the "latest" lyric technology, it nourishes and invigorates it. Even the art of opera that inspired Walt Whitman, the ultimate free-verse stylist, owes its late-sixteenth-century Florentian origins to the return to accompanied solo singing brought about by the villanelle and its closely related musical genres.88 The fixed-form villanelle is one of the latest historical manifestations of choral-dance lyric form, but it is by no means the last—just as choral dance itself may not have been the first. Using this work as a starting point, one hopes that the villanelle's model can inform further study of how the earlier fixed forms—rondeau, ballade, virelai—crossed from musical to written realms, as from the sea to land, before it.
End Notes


5. Ibid., 20.

6. Ibid., 25.


10. Ibid., op cit.

11. Ibid., 20.


18. Ibid., 1:19.


22. Cardamone, CV, 81.


27. Ibid., 70-76, 84-87.


30. Quoted in McFarland, 112.


34. Ibid., 137, 139, 141-42, 144.

35. Quoted in McFarland, 83.


40. Ibid., 2-3, 7-8.


42. Ibid., op cit.

43. Ibid., 19-20.

44. Stehle, 28.


47. Stevens, Words and Music, 159.

48. Ibid., 160.


61. Nims, 211.


63. Ibid., 11.


69. Ibid., op. cit., tr. Fontenot.


75. Andrew Lang, "Villanelle (To M. Joseph Boulmier)," Ballades and Rondeaux, ed. White, 258.


81. Ibid., op. cit.


84. Quoted in Pfister, 299-300.

85. Bowen, 64.

86. Huot, 53, 74, 249-58.


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295

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314


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