10H Remote Learning Assignment #6 – 4.3.20

1. The last poetry form I’ll ask you to try is called a **villanelle**. Read each of the villanelles below, and use them to try to put together a definition. I’ll explain it later in this document, so if you want to try to crack the code yourself, don’t skip ahead. The first 3 are quite famous poems, while the last (pasted, not linked) is much lesser known. Rodney Dangerfield gave an iconic recitation of “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night” in the silly 80s movie *Back to School*, if you want to check that out.

<https://poets.org/poem/do-not-go-gentle-good-night>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47536/one-art>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43333/the-waking-56d2220f25315>

**Villanelle for the First Day of Fall**

Because I finally found my chapstick

(Burt’s Bees Hydrating Coconut and Pear,

which isn’t even technically chapstick—

it would have to be the brand called Chapstick®

to have that name—but I don’t really care

because I finally found my chapstick)

I can smile after three days of panic.

But Sir, you say, why didn’t you buy more

(which isn’t even technically chapstick)?

It is really satisfying, I think

to open the same one I had before.

Because I finally found my chapstick

I lost last spring, I can hear that same click

and pop when it opens—it’s familiar

which isn’t even technically chapstick.

To keep from chapping I don’t have to lick

my lips anymore, least not till next year

because I finally found my chapstick

which isn’t even technically chapstick.

A. Bennett

1. So, a **villanelle** is…

-a 19-line poem that consists of 5 tercets and a quatrain.

-it must have the same number of syllables per line (all the examples happen to be in blank verse, but that’s not actually a requirement—lines could all have, say, 7 syllables, or 14).

-the rhyme scheme is *aba aba aba aba aba abaa* (so there are only 2 end-rhymes in the whole poem)

-and the best part is the **refrains**: line 1 gets repeated in lines 6, 12, and 18; and

line 3 gets repeated in lines 9, 15 and 19

1. That’s it for rules, but here are some other notable tidbits:

I recommend figuring out your refrains first, and prepopulating your draft with them. It’s kind of exciting to have 2 of 19 lines written, and with that have like 40% of the poem also written. Up to you.

You’ll notice that in some of the examples (namely Bishop’s and mine) the refrains are not exact—they’re more like revisions than refrains.

The same can be said of the rhymes—slant-rhymes are fine with me if they are with you.

Remember how sonnets are often accidentally about time, and often inadvertently take on that *carpe diem* theme? Well, there’s a similar phenomenon with villanelles, but villanelles tend to be about inevitability or inescapability… I think because those refrains are initially separated, then driven further apart, but brought back together at the end. It is strange so many villanelles end up suggesting something about mortality… but, then again, what could be more inevitable?

By a similar token, it is difficult to advance a *narrative* in a villanelle—just when you think you’re moving the plot forward, those refrains just hit you in the back of the leg like a door closing behind you before you’ve fully left the room. But, you really want to write a narrative villanelle? Go for it!

1. **HERE IS THE ACTUAL ASSIGNMENT: Write 2 more poems of your own. At least one of them should be a villanelle.** The other may also be in this form, but could be another form with which you are familiar. The *topics*, based on your nominations and votes, are: **late** and **summer**.

\***If you accept this mission, share poems with me by Mon 4/4\***