



# REPEATING FORMS

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## Introduction

There are many types of interlocking forms of poetry. Some forms use a refrain or a repeating line such as the Rondeau or Rondel. Others set the rhyme by using a line from the previous post and using that line in the last stanza to set the rhyme of the first stanza. One example of this form is the Terza Rima.

An alternative is to use a line from the previous stanza and make it the first or last line of the new stanza, the Villanelle comes readily to mind.

It seems that every nation has enjoyed using their own version of repeating or interlocking forms and poets as well as enjoying the poetic form in its purest manner have also adapted and put their own mark on that form. Lewis Turco and the Terzanelle, is a wonderful example.

All of them are pleasant sounding forms and appear easy to write, but without exception are far more challenging to write than "conventional" rhyming poetry and perhaps this is why they have fallen out of fashion in this modern age of fast food, fast cars and fast poetry.

The purpose here is to reintroduce these oft forgotten forms and challenge you to try them and also to see if in that challenge there can be a little revival.

I hope to add to this collection from time to time, so please if you hear of any form or feel like contributing in some way, please do.

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## Ballade

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The Ballade as its name suggests is a French form and along with the Rondeau was one of the first forms to be standardised in the 14th century. Written in syllabic prosody of **any one line length**, the original French forms were octosyllabic, but now decasyllable, iambic tetrameter etc; are just as acceptable.

The construction is 28 lines which are divided into three octave stanzas and an envoi. The rhyme and pattern do not change. It turns around on only three rhymes, and as is common with some French forms the last line of each stanza is a refrain. The Ballade has a rhyme pattern of:.. **a, b, a, b, b, c, b, C.** and the envoy **b, c, b, C.**

Leny Roovers' "Carving" below is an excellent example of this form.

### Carving

*Your words carve nightmares in my skin, they bleed-  
obscure the lines that burn and scourge within,  
as deep into my flesh the etching feeds  
in layers only I knew to be thin.  
Is witnessing a branding also sin?  
I feel the tissues sizzle and contract,  
the bluntness of the knife is sinking in-  
as violated nerve-ends now retract.*

*You cut with great precision at the weeds  
your eyes detected underneath my skin;  
I bowed my head in silence and agreed,  
endured your efforts, keeping up my chin.  
But now I'm tired, hurting, in a spin;  
beside deep-rooted weeds I lost- I cracked  
on seeing on your face an old chagrin,  
as violated nerve-ends now retract.*

*The hand that wields the knife will not recede,*

*though hesitation finally begins  
to waver and confuse in loss of speed;  
the silence that enfolds- a roaring din.  
Our faces slowly lose the deadly grin,  
essential parts that kept me whole, intact,  
regenerated by adrenalin-  
as violated nerve-ends now retract.*

*We'll throw the offal left into the bin  
and start to build anew; we'll re-enact,  
retrace our steps, determined we will win,  
as violated nerve-ends now retract.*

## Envelope Ballade

The Envelope Ballade is no more difficult form than the basic Ballade, however the Refrain starts and finishes each stanza. The construction is the same but the rhyme pattern changes to:.. **A, b, a, b, c, a, c A**, and the envoy **c, a, c A**,

Here is an example of this form.

### Essence

*To taste your essence on my lips  
I sense your spirit in the wind  
I feel you still at my fingertips  
And see you smiling in my mind.  
Your trembles to my touch says so  
Sensing strongly how your heart skips  
Passioned clutch forbids me go  
To taste your essence on my lips*

*To taste your essence on my lips  
Each night with dusk I feel a kind  
Of bond with you of honeyed sips  
To all else I am truly blind  
Unseeing yet all of you I know  
I am the bee and honey drips  
So sweet a special nest doth grow  
To taste your essence on my lips*

*To taste your essence on my lips  
My soul and body to unwind*

*And free all feeling of loving nips  
My will to lock and mind to bind  
Yet such passionate feelings grow  
A love drug giving me such trips  
But after leaving me aglow  
To taste your essence on my lips*

*Where are you from I do not know  
The heavenly dust of passion grips  
The white hot heat of Heavens snow  
To taste your essence on my lips*

*Ryter Roethicle*

## Ballade Poetry Collection

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## Kyrielle

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The *Kyrielle* was once a very popular French form dating from the Middle Ages. It is a simple eight syllable form with quatrain stanzas (four lines of poetry). The last line is a refrain (repeat line, phrase, or word).

The rhyming pattern is:.. **z. b. z. B.** As a variation if we have three stanzas and add the first two lines to the refrain as a cauda we have a *Kyrielle Sonnet Form*.

## These Hands

*These hands have not had a manicure  
They were they never soft like you  
Your safety my love I will ensure.  
With these hands you can feel secure*

*How much do I love to touch you  
And please you so love will endure  
A simple touch, is this the key?  
With these hands you can feel secure*

*How much with you do I love to **play**  
And pleasure my life's **amour**  
Love will light up the **dullest day**  
With these hands you can feel **secure***

*Your hands are so soft and **tender**  
Absence from you they will **cure**  
A simple touch and I **surrender**  
With your hands I can feel **secure***

*So small and pale a work of **art**  
With your love I m never **poor**  
Willingly giving you my **heart**  
With your hands I can feel **secure***

*Ryter Roethicle*

## Kyrielle Poetry Collection

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## Lai and Virilal

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**This is a very old French form and tradition states that the short line must not be indented, and must be left dressed to the poem. This is known as Arbres Fourchus (Forked Tree) meaning that there is a tree to be set up as a pattern.**

**The Lai looks to be a very simple form comprising of five syllabled couplets separated by a two syllable line. This gives us a rhyme pattern of.. **a. a. b.** In English poetry, this two syllabled line is probably the most difficult part of the poem.**

**The number of lines in each stanza is fixed at nine. The number of stanzas is not fixed and each stanza has its own rhyme pattern. Here is an example of a Lai:**

## For Thee

*Greater love have I  
Than stars in the sky  
For thee  
"til this world doth die  
hope you wish to lie  
With me  
On wings we will fly  
upwards bye and bye  
Earth free.*

*Ryter Roethicle*

## Lai Nouveau

A little harder form that has an eight line stanza and is similar in idea to the Villanelle. In this case the first two lines are the refrain and are used as the last lines of the subsequent verses. The last verse including both lines but in reverse order.

The difficulty with this form is of course picking a rhyme pattern that is strong enough to last even two verses giving us a pattern of:..

**A1. A2. b. a. a. b. a. a.... a. a. c. a. a. c. A2. A1..** As may be seen the alternative rhyme can vary from stanza to stanza.

## Loves End

*Drip, Drip of the rain  
Driving me insane  
I scream  
My love is in vane  
Feel my heart, my pain  
No dream  
Loud beatings in strain  
The hurt will not wane  
  
No love to sustain  
My blood cold in drain  
Dark stream  
Hurt I can't contain  
No hope I can regain*

*Black fleam*  
*Driving me insane*  
*Drip, Drip of the rain*

*Galadrial Myst*

## Virelai

This is another adaptation of the Lai and uses the short lines to set the rhyme pattern of the next stanza. The last stanza linking back to the first by setting the rhyme of its short ones to the 5 syllable line of the first. Thus we get a rhyme pattern of:.. **a. a. b. a. a. b. a. a. b.. ...b. b. c. b. b. c. b. b. c.** and if the next stanza were the last it would be.. **c. c. a. c. c. a. c. c. a.**  
Here is a very unusual example of Virelai instead of being light, Thunderstorm has managed to add the heavy velvet curtains of a Black poem.

## Evil Reigns

*Evil reigns at night*  
*Grows with waning light*  
*Beware*  
*Be still, don't incite*  
*She prowls, she will bite*  
*Take care*  
*Clasp your garlic tight*  
*Windows locked, in spite*  
*She's there*

*Luring to her lair*  
*Dragging by your hair*  
*Hush.. or*  
*She will take your air*  
*Life is not her care*  
*Stupor*  
*May help or a prayer*  
*But it's your despair*  
*Says lore*

*She will very slow*  
*Release your blood flow*  
*Full flight*  
*She may then bestow*  
*Pleasure down below*  
*Despite*

*Your life draining so  
Final kiss she'll blow  
Goodnight*

*ThunderStorm*

## The Lai Poetry Challenge

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# Rondeau

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The Rondeau is a very underestimated and sometimes a very challenging poetry form. It consists of three stanzas, a quintet (5 lines), a quatrain (4 lines) and a sestet (6 lines), making the poem a total of 15 lines.

The first phrase of the first line usually sets the refrain **R**.

The whole line may be used as the refrain. It has a rhyme scheme of, **a. a. b. b. a.....a. a. b. R. .... a. a. b. b. a. R.**

The meter is considered be open and the French style is not bound by a rhyming pattern and also is more of a light and buoyant even "flashy" form of poetry which uses short lines. The English style however, is much more dour and serious, even meditative and uses tetrameter or pentameter. Here is what I consider to be an excellent example of the English Rondeau form.

## In Flanders Fields

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie*

*In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.*

*Lt. Col. John McCrae, M.D., 1872-1918*

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## Rondel

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The Rondel is a very beautiful but neglected poetry form having lost its popularity to other forms in the passage of fashions. Basically its has 13 line and forms around two rhymes.

There is a refrain which it is set by the first two lines of the first stanza.

The rhyme pattern is very simple being **A. B. a. b.... a. b. A. B.** Quatrains for the first two stanzas and a quintain for the final one, consisting of: **...a. b. b. a. A**

The meter is usually eight syllables.

As a variation a second line may be added to the final stanza Adding the full refrain to make it a *Rondel Prime* or a *French Sonnet*. Doing this also allows a variation in the rhyme pattern of the final stanza which is now sestet: **...a. b. a. b. A. B.** if required.

It will give you something to play with and think about and I hope have a lot of fun with at the same time.

Here is an example of the basic form.

*I know that I have met my love  
Somewhere in the mists of time  
And that ever in the stars above  
We meet and share and you are mine*

*We have a life others dream of  
When fates decree to be sublime  
I know that I have met my love  
Somewhere in the mists of time*

*United only by man's stars above  
Separated by a different clime  
A union that will be so fine  
And secure in the knowledge of  
I know that I have met my love*

*Ryter Roethicle*

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## Rondine

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The *Rondine* is a very neglected and a very challenging poetry form consisting of two stanzas, a septet (7 lines), and a quintet (5 lines), making the poem a total of 12 lines.

As with the Rondeau there is a refrain **R**, which mimics the first phrase of the first line, and has a rhyme scheme of: **...a. b. b. a. a. b. R.... a. b. b. a. R.**

The meter is open with the French style and not bound by a rhyming pattern and is a more light and buoyant even "flashy" form of poetry which uses short lines, whereas the English is more formal and uses Tetrameter or Pentameter.

Here is an example by Wesli Court.

## Rondine of the Rare Device

*"if you can kiss the mistress never kiss the maid"*

*The maid will do if your not ambitious-  
Why split the stalk if twigs will make the besom?  
Why kill the roots if one may steal the blossom?  
The garden is a plot of sundry pleasures  
Filled with winding paths and rare devices,  
Here a fountain, there a Grecian column-  
The maid will do*

*Rose O'Morning winds upon the trellis  
All hips and nettle snags and lures at random.  
Is desire the better part of wisdom?  
Brown-eyed Susan smiles from her bed of grasses-  
The maid will do.*

*Wesli Court*

### Rondine Poetry Collection

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## Roundel

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This is a form derived from the Rondeau and Rondine in the nineteenth century by the English poet A.G. Swinbourne. It has eleven lines constructed from two quatrains, and a triplet. The rhyme scheme consists of only two rhymes and a refrain which is made from the first phrase of line one. The convention is for the second line to rhyme with the refrain:.. **a. b. a. B.... b. a. b.... a. b. a. B:..**

## Roundel

*If he could know my songs are all for **him**,  
At silver dawn or in the evening glow,  
Would he not smile and think it but a **whim**,  
If he could know?*

*Or would his heart rejoice and **overflow**,  
As happy brooks that break their icy **rim**  
When April's horns along the hillsides **blow**?*

*I may not speak till Eros' torch is **dim**,  
The god is bitter and will have it **so**;  
And yet to-night our fate would seem less **grim**  
If he could know.*

*Sara Teasdale*

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## Roundelay

The Roundelay is a simple English form with a refrain and was very popular from the time of Chaucer and normally used two couplets with the last couplet in each stanza rhyming and the last line of the couplet carrying a refrain which gives a scheme of... **z. z. a. A:..**

### Roundelay

*written for the Jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon, 1769*

*Sisters of the tuneful train,  
Attend your parent' s jocund strain,  
'Tis Fancy calls you; follow **me**  
To celebrate the Jubilee.*

*On Avon's banks, where Shakespeare's bust  
Points out, and guards his sleeping dust;  
The sons of scenic mirth **agree**,*

*To celebrate the Jubilee.*

*Come, daughters, come, and bring with you,  
Th'aerial Sprites and Fairy-crew,  
And the sister Graces **three**,  
To celebrate the Jubilee.*

*The Full Roundelay written for the Jubilee at Stratford-  
upon-Avon, 1769*

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## Sestina

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A sestina is considered a difficult form of poetry to master. It is made up of seven stanzas with the first six stanzas having six lines, the seventh having only three lines (**39 lines**).

There is a very precise pattern to the sestina's stanzas:

The first stanza is the defining stanza, and the six words that are used to end each line **A.B.C. D.E.F.** are the defining words. They are repeated throughout the rest of the poem in a strict pattern. The following five stanzas are composed by taking the six words that were used to end the last six lines of the first stanza and using them and following the pattern laid out thus:

*Stanza 1..A.B.C.D.E.F.*

*Stanza 2..F.A.E.B.D.C.*

*Stanza 3..C.F.D.A.B.E.*

*Stanza 4..E.C.B.F.A.D.*

*Stanza 5..D.E.A.C.F.B.*

*Stanza 6..B.D.F.E.C.A.*

The final stanza (envoy) still uses the same six words, but in only three lines with the even words descending internally and the odd words rising on the outside giving a pattern of:

*Line 1..B..A*

*Line 2..D..C*

*Line 3..F..E*

Perhaps it will be a little clearer when we look at Mimi's fine example below.

## United

*As time goes by, love between us grows  
No matter the days of frustrated pain  
Our hearts bloom well together, united  
Bonded ideals grown from shared passions  
And truth in trust bade deep between us  
Forever, my tender heart I bestow you*

*A stranger, never was I to you  
And still our friendship continually grows  
Never have I known any other like 'us'  
We share the joys of our lives, and the pain  
While beneath, never far, blazes our passions  
Always eager to dwell in splendour, united*

*None shall ever prevent us being united  
For, we know you are me and I am you  
We build our dreams with our deepest passions  
As our years together comforts and grows  
Now we know the truth in love's own pain  
Because we know what it is like to be 'us'*

*No regrets being said, though, between us  
In our own misery we are united  
While striving for the truth, we found the pain  
I gladly accept the cruelty to have you  
And with resolution, that thought grows  
Just as well do the fiery passions*

*One look, one word from you, urges my passions  
Time then stands still, but how long for us?  
Emptiness filled, yet restlessness grows  
Until the day we are truly united  
And I can lie softly against you  
Only that shall subside my heart's pain*

*Love's joy, the brother of his love's pain  
Each, conquering it's brand of passions  
I share each one with, and for, only you  
Together, we will always be 'us'  
A love that is unique and united  
One that continually evolves and grows*

*As our love grows, so does our passions  
While the pain ebbs to another day for us  
I, in our love united, have become you*

© Mimi

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## Triolet

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This is a fun little form having a rhyme pattern of:...**A. B. a. A. a. b. A. B.** that can either work with the A and B lines being completely repeated or just the rhyme word repeated. The **a and b** are of course just standard rhyme.

There is no set syllable count, although a standard eight syllables seems common with most of these forms.

### Tremble

*Your very closeness, can you feel me shiver  
Your eyes within setting my heart to tremble  
My soul reaching out for you aquiver  
Without touching, feeling fire, I shiver  
My senses soar, running wild like a river  
Your touch sears, my thoughts disassemble  
Your kiss stirs me, a spiritual shiver  
This love causing my foundations to tremble.*

*ThunderStorm*

Triolet Poetry Collection

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## Terza Rima

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This is another challenging form, but this time is of Italian origin .

In the modern version the syllables are accentuated and usually Iambic pentameter.

There can be any number of tercets (a three line stanza).

Lines 1 and 3 rhyme with each other and line 2 sets the rhyme for the next stanza.

The poem usually end up with a couplet and so is ideally suited to sonnet form as a variation.

In the Terza Rima poem shown below, as well as making a slight alteration to the form (sonnet),

Ryter also tried to capture the hearts beating.

### Sweet Thunder

*(Terza Rima Sonnet)*

*Such sweet, heavenly thunder as we kiss  
my heart pounding loudly thumping  
as our mouths unite in heavenly bliss.*

*Such sweet thunder, your heart beating  
as our hands explore the pulsing heat  
Pressing wildly against me throbbing*

*Uniting, filling, moving to the loving beat  
Eyes half lidded as my hands caress you  
Thrusting hard against me, bodies meet*

*Whimpering, crying as tremors run through  
Hugging closely through descending hotness  
Hearts still beating, beating, loving, true*

*Such sweet, heavenly thunder as we kiss  
as our mouths unite in heavenly bliss.*

*Ryter Roethicle*

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## Terzanelle

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This is a fairly recent American marriage of the Italian Terza Rima with the French Villanelle.

It is a little complicated but I can assure you is an interesting challenge to any poet.

It consists of 5 tercets (three line stanzas) and a quatrain, (a four line stanza).

The middle line is copied to the last line of the next stanza and sets the rhyme for the first line, so we have this constant overlap linking one verse to the next. The scheme is set like this:... **A1. B. A2.... b. C. B... c. D. C.... d. E. D.... e. F. E....**

The final stanza has two lines as previous, one line repeating and one line rhyming. The other two lines linking back to the first stanza.. The previous repeat line can be the second line and rhyme with the first and make up two couplets:... **f. F. A1. A2....** or it can make up the third line **f. A1. F. A2.** making alternating rhymes.

### Terzanelle in Thunderweather

*This is the moment when shadows gather  
under the elms, the cornices and eaves.  
This is the center of thunderweather.*

*The birds are quiet among these white leaves  
where wind stutters, starts, then moves steadily  
under the elms, the cornices and eaves.*

*these are not our voices speaking guardedly  
about the sky, of the sheets of lightening  
where wind stutters, starts, then moves steadily*

*Into our lungs, across our lips, tightening  
our throats. Our eyes are speaking in the dark  
about the sky, of the sheets of lightening*

*that illuminate moments. In the stark  
shades we inhabit, there are no words for  
our throats. Our eyes are speaking in the dark*

*Of things we cannot say, cannot ignore,  
This is the moment when shadows gather*

*shades we inhabit, there are no words for  
this is the center of thunderweather.*

*Wesley Court*

## Terzanelle Poetry Collection

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# Villanelle

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The Villanelle is a wonderfully challenging poetry form. Although comprised only of two rhymes, they are very different in the way they are used.

The unique thing about this form is that the first and third lines of the first verse become the alternating final lines of the next four verses. So the choice of the first and last line is very important and more so because in the last stanza they form a couplet and become the last two lines of the poem.

If things weren't difficult enough already, all the 2nd lines of each stanza rhyme with each other.

The Dylan Thomas Poem below, is considered to be the finest example of this form and to help look at the rhyme patterns I've broken the lines into colour. I've chosen Purple and Red for the first and third lines, Blue for the centre line rhyme and Green for the first line of the subsequent stanzas. This line is probably the most important line in each stanza and the most difficult one to construct and I would recommend care in selecting your primary rhyme.

## Do not go gentle into that good night

*Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

*Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night,*

*Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

*Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night,*

*Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

*And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

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[Any Comments or Suggestions, please email me](#)

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inspiration in creating these websites\*](#)

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