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Villanelle

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Nausicaa stood
 Upon the shore
 Alone before

The sounding sea,
 And saw
 The sunlight flee
 The shadow
 High upon the sail,
 And saw
 The sunlight fail.

The lonely years,
 The thought alone
 Of lonely years,
 Brought tears,

Like water
 Over stone.

—JOE M. FERGUSON, JR.

VILLANELLE

*B*ecause time makes a mortal of the human race
 And martyrs everyone who would be otherwise
 There is no beauty painful as your human face.

And poets sing of snows the years erase,
 And fairy tales imagine fallen skies,
 Because time makes a mortal of the human race.

Because you dream of paths your feet will not retrace
 And as a child death blossomed in your thoughtful eyes
 There is no beauty painful as your human face.

And nothing but unkindness is disgrace,
 And no man's beating heart can truthfully despise,
 Because time makes a mortal of the human race.

Because this single flame of our embrace
 Burns in the shadow of a dark surmise
 There is no beauty painful as your human face.

And nothing but the stony bone remains in place;
The heart and clinging flesh divide their ties.
Because time makes a mortal of the human race
There is no beauty painful as your human face.

—JOE M. FERGUSON, JR.

THE SAND-PILE

bound in a worn-out tractor tire
proves continental
presence in the yard: an air
of experimental
desert whose mirages know
a parallel in no Levantine scroll,
whose clothespin camels must endure
whatever myths the six-year-olds conjure.

Nomadic neighbor
boys wink and scuff until the girls'
delicate labor
toward pastry crumbles to sugar swirls.
Then, with a whoop and a pail of water, like drakes
they splay the sand. The eldest makes
his order to gather the stones; the word's a sign:
let it be tanks and a battle-line.

A fable later the caravan's
deserted the mound
to the baby's crab-fast, intrusive hands
and the nosing hound
that annihilate a castle's eminence.
No matter; no drama there has permanence:
the shifting dunes of a sand-pile plot
bury kings next to camels well as not.

—CLIFFORD WOOD.