



Chaconne

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Text set in ITC Veljovic 14 point.

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CHACONNE

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CHACONNE

for Trane

(49 variations)

After the rain
lost
in chrome dioxide
sound no more
words

Heard where the air filled
under the orange trees
the last sounds
so passed the hours
in the east

That you were part
of that
a spiral
organisation
gathered about waters

Blood & muscle
sound no more
the receiving station
lost
black bird phosphorescence

Dark
Ziryab would only sing
of that
framed
beauty

Invented a plectrum
of an eagle's wing
his power & method
spread through the Maghreb
in sound

The slave singer
tuned
roots
lutes
outshone poets

Sweet Qalam
was
a Basque girl sent when
young to study in the
east

Silk in her own tongue legato & strophic
como rayo de sol
lost
the pain

Returned upon itself
a spiral
in the quantum void
riff
blood & muscle

Down
slowly behind the
shadow falls
off
it evaporates

Phosphorescence takes the
focus off
sensation of
hearing wood
in a forest

Maybe
a Miles groove
maybe collapsed lungs
the human experience
of burning nights

Instruments
fretted accordingly
spread
rosary of sound in
praise

A night with Bird the way
you blow
say
there was
logic in harmony

Rosary of sound
cut into the strophes
a durable epic
seldom
in the glamour

Play
lute
riff
preserve the link
allow grace

Words
because we are not
under the orange trees
sound
hieratic roots

Say there was logic in
harmony and you were
part
of that
engineered resonance

Hearing the
collapse of language
in
muscle & blood
riff

Say you were lost in
the Muslim
world
glory tumbled like
flutes so thickly gyric

Human moods
in a motley
art of words
in harmony
control

Broken verse
sung by everyone
played at prayer-time on
twenty-seven
drums of gold

The shadow falls slowly
down
behind phosphorescence
falls
gathered about waters

In the
dream
palace
of Al-Mahdi a hun
dred *laúds* performed

Avempace would run
after the drover
so as
not to lose the
sound

Framed
in
the shell the blood
equinox
dreams

Speaks of patterning
in the Mozarabic
lute
jayal carrizo
laúd rota rabel

Black bird added a fifth
bird
black pearls
Africa lazy bird
shakes for grace

In different modes play
xocra nura
play
dulzama gaita
Melodic
chain
in a single line
two simple canons paired
in spiral

Rustic rhythms
seven groups
in threes & fours
control
in the east

Trumpets straight & curved
shawms or *chirimías*
horn castanets
of burning
stones which crack in the heat

Words
overheard in the street
pitch
as if out of nowhere
pristine

Strange
oxides
filling the burning lungs
streams cut in the rock
rosaries of water

From Central Park West
amour
from Dahomey
fall
flutes

Dance
evaporates
the shadow
falls
in strange particles

The chords begin to flow
sweet
pastorale of ghosts
if you look hard enough
you'll see after the rain

Dreams
and schemes
on late night radio
allow grace
at the sharp moment

Sound
chases the train
heat
under the orange
grove *habib*

Praise
María Pérez
La Balteira plucked the
young soldiers
confessed to them

Africa
Alabama
speaks of
patterning
dance just for the love

Play the blues to Bechet
blues to Elvin
blues to you
desire the songs the slave
scales

On far-off summer nights
while
the melody of talk
stills you're
out

Your art
in the gold fluent tongue
organisation
broken mathematics
upward from the bass

You'll see
a love supreme
burst
free
air

The resonance
derived from
speed
angelic phrase-ends
cut into the strophe

Cut
fade sound & vision
when there is no longer
any sound the room is
filled

Allow
grace at the sharp moment
hieratic
“your sound has no more
words”

Originally a Spanish dance, the chaconne is a series of musical variations on an unvarying ground bass. In Bach's *Chaconne* for unaccompanied violin (final movement of the Second *Partita*), the bass is implied. In the poem, a sequence of 49 syllabic line-patterns cycles through a five-line stanza form, making a total of 49 stanzas without repetition (the 50th would repeat the structure of the first). Titles of many compositions by John Coltrane are interwoven. Proper names include those of mediaeval Arabic-Andalusian musicians, for example Ziryab, nicknamed "Blackbird" for his dark skin, who added the fifth string to the *ud* (oudh, lute). Unfamiliar words are mostly names of musical instruments. Much of this stuff comes from Ann Livermore: *A Short History of Spanish Music* (1972).