

# Afterlife

*A Villanelle*

by [Cristina Nehring](#) (October 2024)



Tears of Love I (Giorgio de Chirico, 1960)

**I checked the** clock and wandered through;  
The gates of hell were open wide;

I kept on going through the flames that grew.

It was my moment; my lover could not be replaced by another so true.

He preceded me through those notorious gates  
I checked my watch and wandered through.

I knew I was early; I was happy to queue  
To see him ahead, my heart's costly core;  
I just kept on walking through the flames that grew.

He was a quarter century older than I, I knew;  
I feared for his passing each hour most days,  
But when he traversed those damned gates, I checked my clock  
and I followed him through.

My beloved, I need you:  
Let me find your burnt hand  
I just kept on walking through the flames that grew.

Never in the afterlife could I eschew  
Under any conditions my passion for you,  
Which is why I checked my clock and wandered through  
To hell with you. I kept on walking though the flames that grew.

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**Cristina Nehring's** most recent book is *The Child Who Never Spoke: 23 1/2 Lessons in Fragility*. She is also the author of *A Vindication of Love* which made the front page of the *New York Times Book Review* as well as two books in French. She writes for *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. She lives in Paris with her daughter.

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