“THE SILKEN TENT”

by Robert Frost
The Silken Tent

She is as in a field a silken tent
At midday when a sunny summer breeze
Has dried the dew and all its ropes relent,
So that in guys it gently sways at ease,
And its supporting central cedar pole,
That is its pinnacle to heavenward
And signifies the sureness of the soul,
Seems to owe naught to any single cord,
But strictly held by none, is loosely bound
By countless silken ties of love and thought
To everything on earth the compass round,
And only by one’s going slightly taut
In the capriciousness of summer air
Is of the slightest bondage made aware.
She is as in a field a silken tent  
At midday when a **sunny summer** breeze  
Has dried the dew and all its **ropes relent**,  
So that in guys it gently sways at ease,  
And its supporting **central cedar** pole,  
That is its pinnacle to heavenward  
And signifies the sureness of the soul,  
Seems to owe naught to any single cord,  
But strictly held by none, is **loosely bound**  
By **countless silken ties of love** and thought  
To everything on **earth the compass round**,  
And only by one’s going slightly taut  
In the capriciousness of summer air  
Is of the slightest bondage made aware.
POETIC FORM

- **Rhyme scheme**
  - **Shakespearean Sonnet**
    - Consists of a four cluster rhyme. The last two lines are rhyme.
      - Example: a b a b c d c d e f e f g g
    - Each of the fourteen lines has 10 syllables
      - Example: “Is /of /the/ sligh/test /bon/dage /made /a/ware” line 14
    - End Rimes are mostly masculine
      - Example masculine: “breeze/ease” (lines 2 & 4), “Pole / soul” (lines 5 & 7), “bound/round” (lines 9 & 11)

- **Meter**
  - **Iambic Pentameter**
    - Comprised of five consistent iambics or five feet

- **Poetic Devices**
  - Simile: “She is as ...a silken tent” (line 1)
  - Alliteration: “…sunny summer …” (line 2); “…ropes relent…” (line 3); “central cedar” (line 5)
  - Connotation: “silken ties of love and thought” (line 13)
  - Metaphor: “To everything on earth the compass round” (line 11)
  - Paradox: “loosely bound” (line 9)
She is as in a field a silken tent
At midday when a sunny summer breeze
Has dried the dew and all its ropes relent,
So that in guys it gently sways at ease,
And its supporting central cedar pole,
That is its pinnacle to heavenward
And signifies the sureness of the soul,
Seems to owe naught to any single cord,
But strictly held by none, is loosely bound
By countless silken ties of love and thought
To everything on earth the compass round,
And only by one’s going slightly taut
In the capriciousness of summer air
Is of the slightest bondage made aware.

A woman is being compared to a silken tent, a beautiful, soft smooth shelter or covering, that’s in a field and the ropes that keep her tightly tied down to earth, release as the dew of a new day dries from a summer breeze. It allows her to gently move again. Cords bind us tightly. Silken ties fasten softly, lovingly, loosely and they are beautiful.
The Cedar wood is one of the hard woods. It is a beautiful and strong wood and it is has a delightful smell to it.
The speaker notices her relaxed and carefree nature once she yields to the summer breeze.
He notices the confidence she has in herself and the central pole is her strong faith which focus is ‘heavenward’.
It’s the loving countless silken ties of love and thought, those ties with her family and her faith, that keep her grounded, not the binding rough cords of hate, envy or sin.
DEFINITIONS

She is as in a field a silken tent at midday when a sunny summer breeze has dried the dew and all its ropes relent, so that in guys it gently sways at ease, and its supporting central cedar pole, that is its pinnacle to heavenward and signifies the sureness of the soul, seems to owe naught to any single cord, but strictly held by none, is loosely bound by countless silken ties of love and thought to everything on earth the compass round, and only by one's going slightly taut in the capriciousness of summer air is of the slightest bondage made aware.

Relent: give in, yield, cave in
Guys: attachments that steady it
Pinnacle: top, peak, height
Naught: nothing
Silken: smooth, soft, silky, sleek

Taut: firm, pulled straight, stretched
Capriciousness: unpredictability, whimsicality, unreliability
For me, this was a beautiful poem full of metaphor and visual images. It seems to speak about the admiration and affection the speaker has for a woman. He, not only notices her physical beauty; he describes her, as a soft, smooth and beautiful person, like silk, but he notices her inner beauty as well; he describes her character as sturdy, enduring, and protective as a tent. She has an inner strength that keeps her grounded and centered in her faith, pointing “heavenward”.

Though she has responsibilities for her loved ones; the ‘countless silken ties of love’. It is not a burden for her because it is who she is and what she does. She puts great thought into what she does for those she loves; however, when she sees what can happen outside her haven, the unpredictability of life, she recognizes her inability to control it. She becomes aware of her own weaknesses and that pulls on her core.
I personally related to the field, the place where the tent was, as being representative of a more free and relaxed life style verses a hillside or mountain top that would require more struggling and endurance. There are many songs whose lyrics sing about life being a climb, a difficult burdensome climb. Sometimes, I’d like to forgo those climbs and have a beautiful summer’s day field to roam and feel the summer’s breeze on my face.
This is a one-sentence sonnet which is a difficult task to write.

Frost uses metaphor or allegory to praise a woman. The silk is a fine, yet strong cloth, “suggests the refinement of the woman who has reached maturity, as implied by ‘midday’ and ‘summer’.

Frost compares “each detail of which will be applicable to the praise he wants to express.”

A skilled writing performance

Walter Gerasch, Phillips Academy, Andover
Robert Lee Frost was born in San Francisco, California on March 26, 1874.

He was named after Southern General Robert E. Lee.

His parents; Isabelle Moodie and William Prescott Frost Jr. were both teachers. He was introduced to books, reading, and Shakespeare at an early age.

After entering high school he began writing his own poems.

He is regarded as one of America’s greatest poets.

He is a four-time Pulitzer Prize winning American poet.