



Poetry
Society

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SPARE MULE



newsletter

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



President's Corner

Dear Poets,

Thank you to all who attended our MSPS Convention in September! Poet G.C. Waldrep led a helpful exercise on metaphor and an interesting discussion of his writing process. We heard about Australian poets, learned more about line breaks, and honored our summer contest winners. All in all, I count the event as a great success and am grateful to all those who put the Convention together! In other MSPS business, please note that *Grist* should be on its way to you soon. Dawn Harmon is now our Membership Coordinator; please see the [Membership](#) and [State Anthology](#) sections of the MSPS website for more information regarding due dates and dues. Next year's convention will be September 13-14 in Springfield. There will be more information to follow as we get closer to the event.

After challenging you with pantoums, ghazals, and rondeaus, it should come as no surprise that I have yet another form that employs repetition. This one will be quite a task as it's a long, complex form requiring 39 lines (!). The sestina makes use of repetition of the same six ending words in a particular pattern:

1 2 3 4 5 6
6 1 5 2 4 3
3 6 4 1 2 5
5 3 2 6 1 4
4 5 1 3 6 2

2 4 6 5 3 1

(6 2) (1 4) (5 3)

Each number above represents the final word of the line, and each set of numbers is a stanza. The poem ends with an envoi (three-line stanza) in which all six words are repeated; each parenthetical is a line, with the first number repeated in the middle of the line and the second repeated at the line's end.

Sestinas typically do not employ rhyme or any set meter. I am partial to Elizabeth Bishop's "Sestina" as an example of the form, though many other models may be found online. The sestina lends itself well to story-telling because of its length. As I tend to write lyric rather than narrative poetry, this form stretches my poetry "chops." I've put one of my sestinas below as reference. In it, I've told my grandfather's story using his military service in WWII as a starting point. To reference the flag, I chose six ending words with a patriotic theme: stars, stripes, blue, red, life, and white. As another flag reference, each line of the poem has thirteen syllables. Thanks to *Third Wednesday*, where this poem originally appeared.

“A Sestina for My Grandfather, on Flag Day”*

I. When you were young, tow-headed and depression-poor, stars
 were bright and closer to your outstretched hands. Thick black stripes
 of broken land more fertile and sweet. Your eyes more blue.
 The sassafras and oaks a more pleasing shade of red.
 When you were young and eager-limbed and hungry, your life
 flung out before you like a cotton sheet, long and white.

Patched denim and clay-caked feet and rented fields, your white
arms fiery in the sun, would not suffice when screen stars
and Uncle Sam ordered you to wear another life.
So you signed up, shipped out, faced front, stood straight, earned stripes,
called cadence in the California scrub, gaped at red
woods, played harmonica and rifle ‘til your face was blue.

But mortar fire makes a young man change his mind. By blue
German rivers you stroked the girl in a black and white
photograph you kept creased and close. Through landings on red
sand, battles bulging from forests under frozen stars,
you dreamed of poles of beans, round heads of cabbage, fat-striped
melons, rows and rows of tasseled corn bursting with life.

- II. Then flashes in the August heat brought you back to life and waiting bride with spunk and wavy hair and soft blue dress. From a small Paducah church filled with song and stripes of colored light and dust, you took a promise and white-skinned, beaming wife to a ruined rental house with star light and chickens in the attic. You made jokes and red tin roofs that sang in rain storms. Behind a pulpit, red-faced and open throated, you led tunes of faith and life. You battle snakes, colds, flies, pickles canned with dill like stars floating in brine, rain in hand-dug cisterns. With blue lips and sore knees at the dairy, you raised two kids on white milk, worry, and ice cream with pralines and candy stripes and chocolate ribbons. You put on grief and grey pin stripes at the funeral for the youngest, arms stiff, eyes red.
- III. Now you fight arthritis, ulcers, regret, tiny white pills at noon and six. You shave off crab grass, thinning life and whiskers, calluses and thickened nails in curved blue moons. You crawl in yellowed sheets under the dimming stars, lose thoughts and white hair, wear baggy pants and skin and striped afghans. You tend star jasmine and roses, white and red, pruning back life, returning to the soil, bruised and blue.

*This poem was originally published in the Spring 2012 issue of *Third Wednesday*.

Good Luck!

Carla Kirchner, MSPS President



KUDOS

Kudos

Pat Durmon

Member of the Merry Bombadils

PRA in Arkansas has asked Durmon to be their keynote speaker in their Poetry Day. The event will be on October 13 and in Little Rock.

Durmon won some awards on the National Level: NFSPS. Durmon had two 1st Places, one 3rd Place, and a First Honorable Mention. The honorable mention is not in *Encore*, but the other three poems are printed in *Encore, 2018*.

To read Durmon's weekly blogs, visit: patdurmon.com.

Jean Marie Purcell

Purcell entered and won 2 HM's for a contest in the magazine *Writer's Digest*. According to her, there are 25 unranked mentions and thousands enter. The poems she entered and that won were, "A Pig Questions Human Perversity" and "Phillip Larkin Didn't Marry."

Marilyn Smith

Smith will be at a speaking engagement at the Hickory County Historical Society on her book *A History of Highway 65 from the Middle of the Road*.

CHAPTER UPDATES



Chapter Updates

The Merry Bombadils (*formerly Crawford County Bombadils*)

The Crawford County poetry group has changed their name to “The Merry Bombadils.” The group continues to organize as **Dawn Harmon** continues with the business of being the editor of *Grist*.

If Members-At-Large would like to join this group, contact **Teresa L. Howard** at HowardT@missouri.edu.

Current members include **Dawn Harmon, Teresa Klepac, Pat Laster, Carol Moon, Pat Durmon, Freeda Nichols, and Marie Asner.**

The Merry Bombadils members with web sites and blogs include:

- **Freeda Nichols** at <https://freedanichols.wordpress.com/>
- **Pat Laster's** blog spot <http://pittypatter.blogspot.com/>
and website <http://www.patlaster.com>.

The Merry Bombadils are also exploring new poetry forms and exchanging information through e-mail.

Author Unknown

We are enjoying a new semester and new faces. We are currently serving 8 to 10 portions of “critique pie” each Friday at 10:00 a.m. We are occasionally visited with a poem from *Psecret Santa*, our anonymous poet, or a dropling from **Dr. Mark Tappmeyer**. September graced us with a reading from **Dr. G.C. Waldrep**, followed by a question-answer session. In it, he offered nuggets of wisdom, spiritual direction, and an admonition to avoid cliché. He challenged us all to live a life far surpassing anything resembling cliché. The theater department invited us to construct ekphrastic poems based on our viewing of their production of *Wit* by **Margret Edson**. Our offerings are to be presented at the after-show discussions.



RONDEAUS

Rondeaus

“Counseling Session” *by Marilyn Smith*

You fall in love with eyes of blue,
full supple lips all kissed with dew,
soft, silky hair the color red,
make plans to meet that fine redhead,
and take a chance for rendezvous.

You know right off what she will do,
twas done before, it's deja vu;
you see that girl, you lose your head,
you fall in love.

If you would wait, and only woo,
take things real slow, she might not shoo.
Yes, take things slow, have feet of lead,
ask her to lunch, we all need fed,
wait for her love, while you pursue,
you fall in love.

“Drawn from a Deeper Well” *by Todd Sukany*
Published in Lucidity Online, January 2017

This poet’s goal is to pour something plain,
write to buzz your mind like a fermented grain,
compose words you can chug and then thank--
getting blasted on them won’t break the bank.
Cheers to something of worth, nothing in vain.

You think me mad but let me explain:
from what you sip drips your loss or gain;
splash a round of stiff stuff into your tank.

Pour something plain

that’s flaming hard on the brain.

Let a story begin in a pub named Pain,
bring a friend or two, weep and be frank--
savor a way through the heart-sorrows drank
with Bitterness and Loss-on-the-Rocks. *Again.*

Pour something plain.

"FRIENDS" *by Pat Laster*

Member of The Merry Bombadils

I love my friends, both near and far,
those in a church, those in a bar,
the ones in far-off Oregon,
in Berryville and in San Juan.
I'll mention them in my memoir.

Most stuck by me, few didn't—par
for some friendships' blips on radar—
for those who shared the goings-on,
I love my friends.

The friends from high school, college are
now up in years, but not a scar
of aging yet. Our marathon
through life, through pain? We soldier on.
I laud them loud with my shofar:
I LOVE MY FRIENDS!

"It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's..." *by Marilyn Smith*

They float along their lazy trails,
on windy days, it never fails,
we look up high, and all about,
and see a few, is there a doubt,
with graceful flair, they ride the gales.

They have no wings, nor any tails,
all puffed with air, no need for sails,
to guide them forth, along their route,
they float along.

All gender free, no showy males,
no drab females, with sharpened nails,
they make no nests, nor do they root,
they simply go where'er they suit,
the Walmart bag's long life prevails,
they float along.

“My True Love” by *Laurence W. Thomas*

Member at Large

My true love said to me when we stepped out together,
“We could eat at the corner bar unless, of course, you’d rather
dig something out of the fridge at my house like some leftover ham
and enjoy it with a DVD in the comfort of my home
which would save not only money but all that cooking bother.

“It doesn’t matter where we eat so long as I can be there
with you,” she said. “Eating out—or at my house—either
suits me fine because with you, both places are the same,”
were my true love’s words to me.

“I like spending my days with you more than any other
I know. You are better company and a much smoother
talker, and it’s fun spending lots of time
with you as partner, you know, a kind of team
to face the challenges of the world in all kinds of weather,”
my true love promised me.

“No More Birthdays for Me” *by Marilyn Smith*

I wonder why we celebrate,
from birth to date, each year same date?
Are we quite mad, do we not know,
as years go by, more wrinkles show!
We must wise up, it's not too late.

The gifts, the cake, evacuate,
on calendars, erase the date.
We celebrate each year you know,
I wonder why?

I really don't participate,
in birthday games, all fun abate,
don't open gifts, don't break a bow.
Take my advice, make aging slow,
I now am younger than my mate,
I wonder why!

“A Puzzle Nut” *by Marilyn Smith*

A puzzle nut, you might call me.
The crossword kind I do with glee.
Sudoku on the other hand,
is something I would not fall bland;
a challenge yes, gives brains a spree.

The word-find kinds I must decree,
are not much fun—try one you’ll see.
The Jumble words stump scholars and
a puzzle nut.

In cryptoquip, a equals c,
l equals r, s equals d.
I love that kind, words fairly land;
helps to prevent minds filled with sand.
I know declare, I’m proud to be,
a puzzle nut.

"When Inspired to Write Verses, I'll..." by *Jean Marie Purcell*

grab any handy scrape, before I forget
and then give full vent to a split couplet,

It will do--scratch paper thrown away--
when moved to tackle that budding triolet.

Have near at hand a brand new yellow pad,
before I attempt my own "Iliad."

Use the backs of gum wrappers from my purse,
if I must, at the onslaught of free verse.

Expecting a pert Petrarchan Sonnet.
I'll seize anything at all and write on it.

Materials come; materials go.
I'll scrounge to recover that waylaid rondeau.

When I feel an oncoming villanelle,
engrossed, I'll let the housework go t' hell.



OTHER POEMS

Other Poems

"Delta, Rising" *by Dewell H. Byrd*

Strapped in
Waiting
Usual chatter
Recorded of course
Six hours of boredom ahead.

Flight 151
JFK to SFO
Biting a 90-mph headwind.

Streak of black
Lights flash by
No one breathes
Trembling, lifting
Steep into abyss.

Woman reclines her seat
In my face, strokes rabbit's foot
For reassurance.

Retired teacher across the aisle
Reads her paperback

“Hey, Teach. Need any help
With them big words
Just raise your hand.”

She smiles
Nods
Maybe flight 151
Will slide by
Pleasantly.

“Good Natured” *by Todd Sukany*

Missouri red birds,
stark contrast
to this dusting
of snow and ice,
 still life
between branches
between yards.

"If Only..." by Marie Asner
Member of The Merry Bombadils

Every once in a while, comes a day when the house
smells like mountains with walls of forest green,
windows looking through crystal air,
a scent of snow and freedom is written
on the wind outside the shutters

I want to run with that wind,
but the sash around my waist is a mile long
and belongs to another

Around me, in lazy circles, planets revolve
along the horizon, no particular hurry at all

The one who keeps secrets is the one
with a bottle in his hand, icy glare at the sun,
and the type of language that is heard
in the breeze off the rose bushes, teachers not around

...while the world shivers in its place.

"Nothing Special" by Frank Adams

Member at Large from Riverside, Missouri

When asked how my day was

I automatically respond with -

nothing special happened today.

I don't know why - because,

if I thought about it,

I would say - *I am here -*

here in this world

and I have no idea why.

I don't know where I came from

or where I am going. That I am here

is a miracle - and that I am

surrounded by miracles -

that I am blessed to be part

of this creation.

“Rhythms” by Carol Louise Moon
Member of The Merry Bombadils

Every word from you whether
in patterns of raindrops in cool quiet
evenings—or lightning, every other
interval of heartbeat since we met—
or skipping rocks below a sunset.

Ebb and flow of ocean's waves
into this tide pool—rippling
edge of foaming weed behaves
intuitively, insisting
on its own rhythmic jiggling.

“Still Kickin” *a Cherita by John J. Han, On the Edge*

freezing rain outside

a poet is dead

I have met her once

Google takes me to her Facebook page,
where she posted, under a smiley photo,

I enjoy giving poetry readings...

“Where Are Sisters?” a *Cherita* by John J. Han, *On the Edge*

a female colleague’s e-mail

she quotes an edifying Bible verse
addressed to “brothers”

I wonder if she thinks males need
more instruction than females
or if she thinks females are part of males.



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