

**Nine Stanzas In honor of Sharon Kilfoy's "Fabrications"
made for Madison's 150th Birthday**

Sesquicentennially stitched,
we are all in the mix.
She has hitched our remnants
to a hopeful star.

She has impaneled us nine times over
not as a jury in judgment, but in celebration
of what has been weave-worn, sleeve-torn,
now reborn into art.

We handed over our hand-me-downs,
our sweaters, sweatshirts, scarves and skirts
She catalogued, collaged and kaleidoscoped
boas, belts, brocades, bibs, bonnets, buttons
bric-a-brac and bell-bottomed slacks

Then invited us to quilting bees
where seamy connections were wrought
among soldiers, dreamers, anti-war activists,
dancers, dressmakers, and political schemers,
Mothers who knitted caps for their daughters' chemo
And sons who transgressed the bounds of seriousness to
give us *The Onion* and ask, *Whad'ya know?*
while our t-shirts told us:
Touch the Earth, Save Seeds, Free the Donuts, Take Back the Night

Here's a neck-tie that swirls like a happy snake
bearing the image of Willy da Shake
Yes, we read the classics here
We know that *the quality of mercy is not strained*
And we know the answer to Hamlet's question: *To be or not to be?*
Though we have slogged through many a *winter of our discontent*
in search of summers made glorious by street festivals and beer gardens,
painters in the park and trapeze artists swinging from trees
lit by arcing magic

We have backed the Packers and the Badgers
and brandished our weed whackers as we
befouled our lakes and cleaned them again and again.
We have founded rape crisis centers, sites of respite,
and made theaters out of garages
We've been wordsmiths, Olympic skaters,
polka dancers, bakers, & brat-makers.
We've cherished grand ideas and grandchildren.

Look how those dresses fly on a diagonal
doing the hoochie koochie with garter belts
and graduation tassels!
See how that embroidered slipper noses in
eager as a puppy

See how she has quilted us in, gathered
lace, feathers, fans, jackets, gloves,
and how many lost loves--
Doll clothes and gum wrappers caught
flying out of this life and into that larger place
that makes us a community

See where the moths have eaten through
to tell us time's tolling its bell
for the best of us and the rest of us
who are whole and holy, broken and blessed
on this isthmus that we call home.

~Andrea Musher, Poet Laureate of Madison

Andrea Musher