

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Word Woman

Sestina

A bit of a challenge: six unrhymed stanzas of six lines each. The words at the ends of the first stanza's lines recur in a rolling pattern at the ends of all the other lines. The sestina concludes with a tercet (three-line stanza) that also uses all six words, two per line.

Below is the form, followed by a stunning example by Colorado poet Aaron Abeyta.

a
b
c
d
e
f

f
a
e
b
d
c

c
f
d
a
b
e

e
c
b
f
a
d

d
e
a
c
f
b

b
d
f
e
c
a

ab
cd
ef

**1,017,900 pounds,
by Aaron Abeyta**

every day thirty trains pass through el paso
the trains are five hands of five different railways
that follow the green border of river trees
the weight of one engine is 581,400 pounds
and 436,500 for a fully loaded tender
but when there is too much weight

he returns to the miracle of his five fingers weightless
hummingbirds that hover over the passage
where trains carry like pacific waves 436,500 tender
images of parallel lives the railways
are two hands never meeting two wishes never pounding
two bodies never touching windblown trees

and yes in this metaphor two desert willow trees
on two sides of the rio grande both wait
he for his juarez Beatrice and she for the pounding
thump of a guitarron from a well lit house in el paso
later the music will follow her in many ways
like leaning trees that do not touch almost tender

she will not know the tenderness
the plucked notes of old love songs diminishing in the april trees
which grow among dark switching yards and cold railways
he guides trains in with a lantern lit with one flame without weight
an inexhaustible blue flame hottest where the light passes
through cloudy glass the lantern weighs 16 ounces

the lantern is a pendulum in his hands which rhythmically pounds
the lantern is his heart an empty room where he is the tender
each day his lantern heart beats over 100,000 times in el paso
in juarez she listens but guesses it is only the trees
the way they rustle and lean almost bent by the weight
of a breeze among the motionless trains blooming from the railways

there are five paired lines and each railway
represents a place where nothing is measured in kilos or pounds
where love defies gravity and prayer has no weight
a prayer that is more patient than mountains a tender
prayer that flutters like butterflies in pine trees

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a prayer that recalls no border no jaurez no el paso

he will always wait for her among the trees
and railways that carry engines and tenders that weigh 1,017,900
pounds a glance from his love will float away all the trains in el paso

Poet and presenter Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer is the author of If You Listen, a three-time award winning book of poetry, editor of Charity: True Stories of Giving and Receiving, and leads TAG: You're It seminars on creativity, positive attitude and finding purpose. Visit her at www.wordwoman.com.