

**Nine Stanzas In honor of Sharon Kilfoy's "Fabrications"  
made for Madison's 150<sup>th</sup> 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*