10H Remote Learning Assignment #4

1. The form I’m asking you to try this time is called **loose-blank-verse-with-enjambment**.

The basic definition of **loose blank verse** is that every line has 10-syllables.

The definition of **enjambment** is when a line ends in the middle of a sentence, but the sentence continues onto the next line. In other words, the line does not end with a natural, grammatical pause such as a period or comma. A line that does this is said to be *enjambed*, whereas a line that does end with a natural pause is *end-stopped*.

Most free-verse poems (including those in unrhymed couplets) make use of enjambment. Not every line in a poem needs to be enjambed in order for the poem to have used enjambment, but at least some. Enjambments give a poem downward momentum, and the discrepancy between sentence length and line length can be a pleasing source of syncopation, tension, and semantic layering.

Go back and look at some of the free-verse poems you liked best, and pay special attention to the effect of their enjambments. (BTW, the part of the sentence that gets relegated to the subsequent line is called the *reject*.) Some enjambments create pleasing effect, whereas some may be obtrusive or distracting.

So, what this assignment amounts to is the writing of poems whose lines are all 10 syllables, and some or many of which don’t end with natural pauses.

1. These are 2 examples…

Bill Knott’s “Advice from the Experts” is in **loose blank verse**:

I lay down in the empty street and parked

My feet against the gutter's curb while from

The building above a bunch of gawkers perched

Along its ledges urged me don't, don't jump.

Here is a poem of mine in **loose blank verse:**

Grandpa at the Hollow

That sound a horse makes, inside a grumble,

outside a grunt, just short a sigh of relief,

you make too when you draw your list of jobs

and greet me like a warrior come home:

kill thistle, hill-up spuds, prune grapes, saw down

dead wood (oil chainsaw, two tractors), fence posts,

and whatever Dorothy needs done. Gee wiz,

you said with authority and triumph

when Buddy kicked your head, I must

go up to the house for a moment--take

a break.

Did you take a break when Grandma

died last summer? I know you didn’t make

that sound a horse makes, inside a grumble,

outside a grunt, just short a sigh of relief

because I watched you touching her casket,

wincing like God took a spade to your shin.

1. **Loose Blank Verse** is a much less restrictive version of **blank verse**. I find blank verse too stifling for my use, but many still use it today. The difference is that traditional blank verse builds in a meter or rhythmic pattern, not just a syllable count. I like using just the syllable limit because it pushes back ever-so-slightly against my saying whatever I want to say however I want to say it. That little bit of resistance produces more interesting ideas and images in more interesting language; and sometimes having to *complete* a line forces me to be more (or in some cases less) detailed.
2. Two of the best blank verse poets of all time are John Milton and Robert Frost. It would be worth your while to see/hear what traditional blank verse sounds like. In the case of Milton, just read the first stanza, because the link I’m giving you is of his book-length epic *Paradise Lost*—it would take a really long time to read the whole thing, and I hope you do so on another occasion. You will also find Milton’s language rather archaic. Frost’s “Birches” you should read all of:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44260/birches>

<http://triggs.djvu.org/djvu-editions.com/MILTON/LOST/Download.pdf>

FYI: Varieties of traditional blank verse include *iambic, trochaic, anapestic, and dactylic*.

An iamb is a nonstressed syllable followed by a stressed. A trochee is a stressed

syllable followed by a nonstressed. An anapest is two nonstressed followed by a

stressed. A dactyl is a stressed followed by two nonstressed.

A traditional line of blank verse has five of any combination of these, making five

total stresses or beats. The most common type of blank verse line is five iambs, or

*iambic pentameter* (you may have learned about this when you studied Shakespeare).

Those five iambs would add up to ten syllables, **hence loose blank verse’s 10-syllable**

**line.**

1. **HERE IS THE ACTUAL ASSIGNMENT: Write 2 more poems of your own. At least one of them should be in loose-blank-verse with enjambment. The other may also be in this form, but could be another form with which you are familiar**. The *topics*, based on your nominations and votes, are: **really long sentence** and **life in quarantine**.

\***If you accept this mission, share poems with me by Monday 3/30\***