

Introduction to Seven” Whimsical Poems

We all have our urges. Mine often tend to be poetic. In this selection, I bow to my whimsies and offer an eclectic conglomeration of poems which take on various subjects as well as forms. There’s a certain amount of experimentation and some imitation in this collection.

“Do Not Fetch the Wrist-Wretch” is a minor and hyperbolic cry out against the excesses of personal technology. I did not have a specific “smart” watch in mind but rather the entire genre (admittedly still in its infancy). I am not blown away by “smart” devices. My “smart” TV keeps telling me that I am *not* on my home network when I know that I am; the “smart” house in Ray Bradbury’s short story “There Will Come Soft Rains” does not know that humans don’t live there anymore. Still, we not-so-smart humans line up around the block every time a new “smart” device goes on sale. Do you know who’s smart? – The ones who market these things!

“Rhyme Time” (which you can find on my PEOPLE page) was the product of an encounter with a very intelligent high school senior who needed much urging to help him avoid the dreaded and highly contagious “senioritis” – at least for a day. It describes the journey undertaken by me to get him to the land of the educationally successful. The orchestration was complicated and at the same time centuries-old simple. Enjoy the trip.

Next, “Romin’ Charges” is a very generalized lesson in – or rather an impression of – pieces of the history of the Rome of centuries past. It is partly the product of all the studies of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, partly the result of all those Hollywood epics I saw as a younger version of myself as well as TV shows such as *Spartacus* and *Rome* and partly from the year of Latin that I had in college – and, no doubt, a bit of my reimagining of those times. Take it for what you will. We all have our memories and our impressions of various people and places.

“Jury Duty” - well, I was called to jury duty a few times. I never got to a trial, although I was a reserve juror in one case, but that case was settled right before the trial began. However, I do consider myself an expert on jury selection (“voir dire” in Latin, and from my partial attendance in two different law schools at separate points in my earlier incarnation), having taught

Twelve Angry Men, Inherit the Wind, and To Kill a Mockingbird (Remember Tom Robinson?). This is a poem which highlights some possible unfortunate idiosyncrasies of our system of jurisprudence.

“a – la – ee” is my tribute to the very creative poet ee cummings. It is always tempting to try to replicate or imitate his style. I love the anapestic rhythms of “anyone lived in a pretty how town” and “Maggie and milly and molly and may” as delightful in their auditory appeals. I enjoy watching students goes through mental gymnastics and light up in their discovery of the meanings of “!blac” and “r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r” and especially the reasons they were written in the way they are printed. Lastly, I love the cyclical theme of his “old age sticks” and the way it echoes a similarly themed (but not written) poem, “Grampa Schuler” by Ruth Suckow.

I love some of the older raps. I enjoyed Will Smith’s “Parents Just Don’t Understand” and (I confess) Vanilla Ice’s “Ice Ice Baby” and I loved the rhythms of M. C. Hammer. My favorite rap lines (“It’s like a jungle sometimes / It makes me wonder / how I keep from going under”) come from Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. However, even though I am not a language prude (Have you ever been with me when I was driving my car and someone cut me off on a highway or was too lazy to use a turn signal?) I am not a big fan of the raps that rely so much on cursing and unnecessarily using the “F” word over and over. Still, I can appreciate rhythm and a lively message – and I wish I could afford tickets to *Hamilton* - and so I wrote a sample rap, playing with words in the title “It’s a Rap.”

“The Sell – a – bration” is a comic (I hope) take on our national holiday which fills our collective stomach. I am *sure* that the original dinner between the Pilgrims and the Wampanog “Indians” was a healthy one since methods of refining sugar and making *tons* of people unhealthy hadn’t been perfected yet. Still, you might approach this poem as one alluding to *all* the victims of abuse and misuse by those with power over history. That’s just food for thought.