

[The Red Shoes](#) [1]

March 14, 2016 [Featured Poetry](#) [2]

Hybrid Poetry by Amy Jo Trier-Walker

Finalist of the 2015 Talking Writing Prize for Hybrid Poetry

(Listen, Pocket, let me tell you of my Red Shoes ~ poor, motherless rags ~ Mother trudging down the rugs ~ old home, a crude gathering: filthy hair, ridiculous ashes, piles of dishes and plaster, piles of chicken skin, split eggshells, doll legs ~ so much poison dust ~ do not move ~ there are nine doors out of the kitchen ~ one is for the termites ~ I've switched red scraps for the happiness of clean, of shiny Red Shoes ~ still never skip, or spoken to ~ Mother never hears the fire in the walls ~ yearn anything ~ confirmed crippled case ~ there, Mother stands, behind the pantry door ~

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(Listen, Pocket ~ I'll sleep in the coop, the broken windows, the shelves for holding ~ why did they have to glow so scandalous ~ the wink wrapped in her church and whispered, snide ~ stained apples disapprove ~ I loved the red lost ~ turned, admiring, and informed the Shoes: never Sunday ~ sneak down, Red Shoes ~ let's walk along her door ~ Old Soldier Redbeard, may I ask your permission ~ could you not rot Mother into the pantry this time ~

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(Listen, Pocket ~ dust and tap the Shoes ~ stay for his wink, beard askance ~ Mother never dusts the piles ~ cannot hear the choir burn ~ Mother does not, does not ~ not reminded of being crippled ~ he calls me Girl ~ little twirls now, Girl ~ Mother can't know what she's playing ~ he carried me, still dancing, tugged, pried me askew ~ returned to the top shelf ~ never touch the eyes ~ cried, help, Red Shoes ~ peering, longing after ~ filled with ill ~ I want so much, so anything ~ no gaze, like desire, like a person in love ~ no mother ~ no harm fastened with buttons ~ let's touch heels to the crack on the fifth step ~ urge to sway down ~ the steps, Mother ~ do you see, Mother, anything ~ *glory, glory, hallelujah* ~ *since I danced my burdens down* ~ come down, Red Shoes, come down ~

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(Listen, Pocket ~ Redbeard to the right ~ Mother in the pantry ~ Red Shoes straight ahead ~ they sure dance muddy ~ dark between, twirling against him ~ sling, Old Beard, faster now ~ what beautiful omens ~ tugged, glued, hopped ~ dance and dance ~ *burdens down, Ma, burdens down, Ma* ~ rain and sunlight and twilight terrible ~ no rest, from him ~ no rest, he wants ~ *I'm a'climbin' Mother's ladder* ~ the churchyard's dread ~ pronounced to dance ~ dancing is a sin, Girl ~ wraith dolls hung to burn with the beams ~ bones door, entrails door ~ door to motherless door ~

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(Listen, Pocket ~ there are three shoes to fear ~ they will dance ~ Red Shoes give no mercy ~ briar mourners ~ *ev'ry round goes brighter and higher* ~ Preacher's Axe, tremble ~ I never begged for fate ~ *I'm goin' home to be the burnin' ~ I'm goin' home to have no mother* ~ cut the still living feet ~ Red Shoes cling to nothing, Axe ~ forest of severed feet ~ forest sight, not crippled ~ the way, please, Crippled Crack Willow Tree, around the shoes? ~ around the mother doll? ~ the way, please? ~



Art Information

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Amy Jo Trier-Walker is a tree and herb farmer in Indiana and the author of *Trembling Ourselves into Trees* (Horse Less Press, 2015). Recent work can also be found in *Forklift, Ohio*, *Handsome*, *Ghost Ocean*, *Word For/Word*, and *inter|rupture*, among others. She is the poetry and art editor at *Black Tongue Review*.

On the hybrid nature of her piece, she says:

'The Red Shoes' began as an auditory erasure of the folk tale as retold by Clarissa Pinkola Estés in *The Red Shoes* (Sounds True, Inc., 2006), an audiobook based on a section from her *Women Who Run with the Wolves* (Random House, 1992). By auditory erasure, I mean getting down most of the words I hear, but leaving many behind as well. I section the resulting word bank into lines that call to one another, but they're still not all that separate, hence a separation through punctuation rather than line breaks. I use a tilde as punctuation because it's approximate—any word could have been missed and another written down, and any word could

have been combined in a line before or after where it ended up.

This process begs for hybridity; its strength lies in the rolling along, the gathering up of energy and images and sounds that would otherwise be calmed by the pauses in traditional lines of poetry. It comes closer to rhyming than any other form in which I write; the hybrid form seems to invite rhyming without being limited by it. This form even draws in songs, perhaps because of hybridity's residence on the ledge, allowing me to be more open to things I might not immediately think of or reach for. I actually started to hear 'Glory, Glory, Hallelujah' in my head, stronger and stronger, every time I worked on revising this piece. Eventually, I listened.

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