

We conclude our tour of constraints with a showcase of a brand-new form. In May of 2009, Gilles Esposito-Farres debuted the *sextine syllabique*, or syllable sestina, in a message to the Oulipo listserv. The constraint is as such: each line has six syllables. The syllables in the first line must be repeated in a particular pattern throughout the remaining five lines. The pattern looks like this:

123456  
615243  
364125  
532614  
451362  
246531

This is called a “syllable sestina” because the traditional sestina also uses this pattern, albeit to a different end. (Read more.)

Rather than explain further, let's turn to an example, submitted by Michael Schiavo. (He's added a seventh syllable and a seventh line “which,” he says, “mimics the endless playout of B.B. King's “Nobody Loves Me But My Mother” from his *Best Of*.”)

## SOLFA

**do re mi fa sol la ti**  
**la do sol re fa mi ti**  
**mi la fa do re sol ti**  
**sol mi re la do fa ti**  
**fa sol do mi la re ti**  
**re fa la sol mi do ti**  
**ti ti ti ti ti ti . . .**

Ignore all the “ti”s and you'll see the pattern quite clearly. The sixth syllable of the first line (“la”) becomes the first syllable of the second line. The first syllable moves to the second position, and so on.

In February of this year, *Wag's Revue* challenged poets to create syllable sestinas. (Read the instructions we gave writers.) We received a great many submissions, which ran the stylistic and creative gamut, and toyed cleverly with the restrictions of the form.

A couple of lines from one of our selected sestinas will show the ingenuity involved. Consider the opening two lines from Damion Searls' "Proust":

***Remembrance of Things Past...***  
**Pastry, thinks Mom of brunch.**

123456 becomes 615243: "Past" and the first syllable of "Remembrance" combine to form "Pastry," "Things" is reimagined as "thinks," "-brance" becomes "brunch," and a delightful new line is born.

The next several pages are populated by the most exceptional submissions of a generally exceptional crop. We publish eight syllable sestinas, by the aforementioned Mr. Searls, Tiel Aisha Ansari, Winston Daniels, David Hamilton, and Marina Blitshteyn. Where poems only have five lines, the title is meant to be taken as the first line of the poem.

Enjoy.

—Will Guzzardi  
Poetry Editor

# PROUST

Damion Searls

***Remembrance of Things Past...***

**Pastry, thinks Mom of brunch.  
Brunch pasta-free, Mom. Things,  
thinks prince, mmm. Passed tree, eve  
of thing's reprints; passed Mom,  
mum of past things' brunt, sorry.**



# FAULKNER

Damion Searls

**Few and sundry, the the  
the feud the angry sounds  
sound the reef you and the  
*The Sound and the Fury*  
wreath if you sound the int-  
ent read though this sound few**

# SYLLABIC SESTINA

Damion Searls

**Nozzle? Tía says pick  
bigness. Cecil (last tea-  
steep, ick!) unnuzzles his  
Sis. T's all: "Bic? Nuh-uh!  
Ass's naughty pixel."**



# INCOHERENT MIDNIGHT

Tiel Aisha Ansari

**Night in mid-Corinth. He,  
her knight renting comet  
'mid her con. I, tenant,  
rent midden. Her knight cu-  
ckoo! And night-mad herein.**

# THAT'S A WRAP

Tiel Aisha Ansari

**Cuts, if loose, tingle would.**

**Woodcut ills: if tin glows,  
lose wood thing. Cut civil  
elusive woodcutting.**

**Thing: ill-cut, loose wood sieve.**

**Sifting would all lose. Cut.**



# LITERATURE POTENTIELLE

Winston Daniels

**These li-po fills, extras,  
trussed the sex/sleep hills of  
porous, filthy Sleazex  
Expo. “Lee, trust these Phils.”  
(Ill sects, these, of trust.) “Leap,  
Lee!” “Filters.” “Sex.” Puff these.**

# OH, DORA

David Hamilton

**Oh, Dora, come to bed.  
Bed, oh, to do or come, ah.  
Ah, bed, come odor to.  
Toad or bed, oh, come.  
Come to, oh, ah, better.  
Dorko, m'bedoah, oh.**



# THE DRAMA OF 'CALL ME'

Marina Blitshteyn

**Gesticulating 'call,'  
cull jesting. Tickle ache. You  
cue call. Late, just sticking  
in cuticle, chest lay  
lading chess queue. Cultic,  
tick. Late calling, cue jest.**