
Cultural Daily

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Poets on Craft: Gloria Mindock and Lori Desrosiers

Bunkong Tuon · Wednesday, April 7th, 2021

For this thirty-third post in the *Poets on Craft* series, we have Gloria Mindock and Lori Desrosiers.

Poets on Craft is a cyberspace for contemporary poets to share their thoughts and ideas on the process of poetry and for students to discover new ways of approaching the writing of poetry. In the face of a pandemic that is both viral and political, it is a resource for strength and creativity, friendship and beauty, love and rejuvenation. It is thus a celebration of the beautiful and eclectic minds of contemporary poets. This series is intended for educational purposes only.

The format is as follows. I emailed poets these questions: “Generally speaking, how do you build a poem? How do you start a poem? How do you move from one line to the next? How do you know when to end a poem?”

With the exception of length requirement, poets are free to respond in whatever manner they find appropriate to their styles and concerns.

Access to *Poets on Craft* is democratic. Generally speaking, anyone can have free access to these posts. With that said, please consider supporting our poets by clicking on the links in their bios and purchasing their work.



Gloria Mindock is editor of *VerenáBarva Press*. She is the author of five books of poetry and her 6th book, called *Ash*, is forthcoming from Glass Lyre Press. She has been translated and published into 10 languages. Gloria has been published in numerous literary journals including *Gargoyle*, *Web Del Sol*, *SpoKe*, *Constellations: A Journal of Poetry and Fiction*, *Ibbetson*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Unlikely Stories*, *Pratik: A Magazine of Contemporary Writing* and *Nixes Mate Review* and anthology. She was the Poet Laureate of Somerville, MA in 2017 & 2018.

Starting to write a poem is easy for me. Many things trigger the start for me. At times, I know what I will write about such as the atrocities committed in various countries. I research, listen to testimonies on the internet, talk to witnesses when I can, and my poem starts from there. Other times, I am inspired by the poetry books I read or something someone said. I have always had great empathy so it is easy to put myself in someone else's shoes and write. This comes from working as a social worker for 40 years. I have a long history of acting in the theatre and writing dialog. This helps too.

Once I start writing the poem, the lines flow for me. I do not have to think about it and write freely without forcing anything. I write in unlined journals first. Once the poem is written, I let it sit for a few days, then go back and edit the poem. If I'm happy with it, I will send it out for publication. If I 'm not and it can't be fixed, I throw the poem out. It is important to write as much as you can even when things are not coming out how you want. Eventually, it will.

Writing endings to poems comes naturally and I know when it is done. If I continue to write when it should have ended, I can tell I am dragging the poem along. I recognize this when I edit. Usually, I know when I said all I can and that its time to end the poem. Trusting my instincts is important and vital for the poem. I love when poems end with a punch. There is something to be said about strong endings.



Lori Desrosiers is the author of three full-length poetry collections: *The Philosopher's Daughter*, 2013, *Sometimes I Hear the Clock Speak*, 2016, and *Keeping Planes in the Air*, 2020, all from **Salmon Poetry**. Two chapbooks, *Inner Sky* and *Typing with e.e. cummings*, are from Glass Lyre Press. Poems have appeared in *New Millennium Review*, *Contemporary American*

Voices, Best Indie Lit New England, String Poet, Blue Fifth Review, Pirene's Fountain, New Verse News, Mom Egg Review, and many other journals and anthologies. Desrosiers holds an MFA in Poetry from New England College. Their work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Founding editor of two journals: *Naugatuck River Review*, a print journal of narrative poetry and Wordpeace.co, an online journal dedicated to social justice. (Author photo by Adrienne Mathiowetz)

I find a poem in many ways. Some days a phrase I hear strikes me, sometimes I scribble in a notebook while listening to music or other people's poetry, sometimes walking in nature or awaking from a dream. At home, I tend to write at night, when the house is still, when the only sounds are crickets in summer or the pellet stove in winter. The calm allows my mind to open up to whatever comes. I like to start with a blank page, usually on the computer, sometimes in a notebook. I like to just let my mind wander and see where it goes. One thing I think is interesting about my process, is that I often start with unlined and unpunctuated prose. If after I write I think there is something poem-worthy there, I will work on it in revision and "find" the poem. If I'm lucky, I find a spark in what I have written. If not, try again tomorrow.

Line breaks can be fun and also a challenge to figure out. I want mine to feature strong words at the beginning and the end of the lines. I want them to flow and also make sense syntactically. I want to find the cadence of the poem and figure out if I want there to be a metric structure or to let it sing naturally. I read my poem aloud to myself and anyone who will listen (I recommend critique groups) in order to catch the flow of the lines, to hear if it sounds clunky, if it sounds like poetry.

I like to think a poem will tell me when it is finished, but that's not always so. Sometimes I send a piece off to a journal and it gets published, and I realize after that, it's still unfinished. It's okay to use a revised version when you include the poem in a book, just give credit to the journal. Poems take time. I usually put a poem I'm working on aside for a week, a month, a year, whatever it takes to give me a fresh look at the poem when I see it again, so it becomes work I no longer recognize. That way it's like working on someone else's poem and I can be more objective, switch things around, change the words, even completely deconstruct if I think it will make it stronger. When a poem is finished, every line is strong, every word is the "best" one (as Stephen Dobyns says) and the poem stands on its own in a collection, without needing explanation or other poems around it to hold it up.

(Featured image by Alexis Rhone Fancher)

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