

Balancing Quatrains

On Mother's Day

Grandparents return grandson to daughter on Mother's Day.
They load the car with his backpack and electronic gear.
Grandson umbilicals his IPOD to the radio,
negotiates volume and quietly texts on his cell phone.

Grandpa focuses on driving. Backseat, Grandma distracts
herself from loud, offensive, foul-language lyrics,
slam-bam, crap-rap rhythms, demeaning,
degrading use of mother in a hyphenated word.

Head and heart-throbbing, Grandma struggles with pounding sounds.
She tries to pick out triple rhymes of hip-hop, but hears
Baby, baby, baby—I love you! I love you baby, baby, baby
Women are not babies. Her grandson is a teen.
Grandma groans and tries to quell futile, oft-stated criticism.

Finally—Michael Jackson with “Billie Jean”, “Man in the Mirror”, “Beat it.”
Grandma chimes in and writhes rhythms in her seatbelt.
She sings to join, not blot out the tunes
but tone-deaf guys plead for her to stop.

Grandson silently texts. Grandma seethes for suffrage.
Painful words and songs continue to trouble her.
He has loving cards and gifts for Grandma and Mom.
Grandma waits for disconnection from discordant notes to deliver her.

Balancing Quatrains:

Introduced by Bill Siverly at the 2012 NW Poets Concord

1. 4 quatrains and 1 quintain in the middle. 2 quatrains above and below.
2. Content in quatrain 1 is reflected in quatrain 4. Content in quatrain 2 is reflected in quatrain 3.
3. First two lines in quintain lead to the chiasmus middle line which is the pivot point for the next two lines and lead to the last two quatrains.
4. Chiasmus is a balancing device (literally a crossing). The second of the two juxtaposed phrases or clauses is syntactically inverted.
5. In this poem the pivotal line which reverses mid-way is in italics. The middle line balances the poem.
6. There is a thematic parallelism and a balance in the stanzas.
7. Only add syllable count and rhyme if you want to do so.