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41ST ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The Poetry Workshop

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

STIRRING THE POT by **Leonard Seyfarth**

ONE BREATH POEM by **Geoffrey Landis**

CLEVELAND by **Jason Hy**

AFTER THE STORM by **M.A. "Doc" Janning**

A NICKEL AND A NAIL by **Yaseen Assami**

KAERU by **Mary Turzillo**

BABA YAGA by **Dwayne Thorpe**

DEATH POEM 2 by **James Lawless**

TRIPPING BY **M.A Shaheed**

PRODIGAL DAUGHTER, CLASS OF '68 by **Diane Kendig**

FANTASY by **Sara Ireland-Cooperman**

WISTERIA AND VIOLETS by **Jill Lange**

GRAMMATICALLY INCORRECT BEHAVIOR by **Dail Duncan**

ON PO CHU-I'S "A DREAM OF MOUNTAINEERING" by **Rob Farmer**

FINCH FAMILY by **Kathryn Brock**

ODE TO PIERRE by **Marilyn Thornton Schraff**

CURMUDGEONS by **Alyson Widen**

365.25 by **Chris Franke**

THE RIVER by **Arlene Ring**

CLASS REUNIONS by **Fred Schraff**

THE OLD POET GETS THINGS FLOWING by **Robert McDonough**

STIRRING THE POT

The man,
whose wife was a painter,

and the woman,
whose husband was a poet,

talked, loved,
did separate things,

and when it became time to do it,
in the arts, I mean,

she painted,
as though her pictures were poems,

and he wrote,
as though his poems were pictures.

Leonard Seyfarth

ONE BREATH POEM

I think
a one-breath poem
is not enough to say everything
that can be said in a poem
or which needs to be said in a poem,
but it is enough
to say
something,
even if it is only
to praise
cherry blossoms.

Geoffrey Landis



CLEVELAND

Worst winter in 50 years:
snow for two months,
wind chill minus 25,
fingers freeze in minutes.
Sun, what was that?
Interstate highway crawls in a single line.
Gray, dead sticks —
you call them trees?

Culture of bigoted criticism,
competing for status and knowledge,
sucks my aliveness away,
until I know no better either.

You have no clue what you're asking,
asking me to be here.

Jason Hy

AFTER THE STORM

After the storm
old Euclid Creek
that quiet stream
now thunders
rumbles
and roars
as it rages
over the falls
to rush,
mutter,
and grumble
through ancient beds
carrying,
pushing,
and shoving
all in its path
on eternal cycle
to lake,
and sea,
then back to cloud
to storm again.

M. A. "Doc" Janning

A NICKEL AND A NAIL

Sitting in the dark,
surrounded by the funky, four corners life has carved from the bitter-sweet past,
of some half-hearted effort to be free from the cautions of a broken man's effort to
understand the needs of the many,
or just the one next door.

Listening to the cold winter wind whispering the blues;
about the coming of spring,
tapping out a tune about the last scream of a melting snowflake,
searching for a soft place to land.

Watching life creep away in the shadows of a forgotten lullaby.
Remembering the song mother sang, as she faded away into a place surrounded
by hope and desperation.

Watching father turn small chances into major provisions,
while he rehearsed the hopes and dreams of Eric Dolphy, McKinley Morganfield
John Coltrane and Emmett Till.

Waiting for the sun to rise, while the roar of a tear etches fond memories.
of tomorrow's goodbye.

Yaseen Assami

KAERU

Instead of cranes, you folded frogs;
tiny as a boy's fingertips.
But, you did not get your wish.
And now I find a thousand paper frogs,
here and there, where I mislaid them;
and I wonder, if I thread them all together
like garlands in Shinto shrines,
will you come back?

Mary Turzillo



BABA YAGA

Far in the sunless forest, stirring her pot alone,
hut by hill, in shadow lives the ageless crone.
And, oh, her hand is skinny, and, ah, her single eye
Glow, like new-stirred fire, when the traveler comes by.
"Are you on an errand, or is the quest your own?"
she asks as she stirs with her long spoon,
the floating meat and bone.
"My family sent me," says the boy,
"lest its promise be forgot,"
"You are welcome here," says Baba,
and she hurls him into the pot.
Then, when a girl comes shyly
knocking at the door,
old Baba Yaga asks again, "What have you come for?"
"I came for a secret reason,"
and her cheek is a scarlet spot.
"Good!" says Baba Yaga, and shoves her into the pot.
Then a third came knocking,
but shook a puzzled head
when asked the sacred question:
"I don't know," he said.
"I came because of the forest,
and also because you are here,
and something in the shadows
called me to come near.
And it has to do with me
but also with all; back there."
"Welcome!" says Baba Yaga
and offers him a chair.

Dwayne Thorpe

DEATH POEM 2

Japanese death poems
are complicated enough
when you also have to think
soft sounds, dazzling smells,
and then hire an executioner.

James Lawless



TRIPPING

I bent a minute tripping
and spent it in
seclusion.
The cost was straightforward.
I did not want to straighten it
out.
My mind, my thoughts, my words
made me the literary Frankenstein
of my time.
Drawing conclusions with my
crayons – then the paper went
wooden.
Nightmares ran away in daylight
being ambushed by vitamin
D.
I borrowed a dime to spend
more time with the meter
maid.
Alkaline water and green tea
were sending me messages.
“Stop it right now!”

M.A. Shaheed

PRODIGAL DAUGHTER, CLASS OF '68

At the last class reunion, Mike mentioned we saw
"Bonnie and Clyde," which I thought I saw
with Colin — but no, that was "Funny Girl,"
or maybe with Mark, from my church,
unsettled I knew Spanish when he didn't,
as though bilingualism were against our religion.
Every reunion, Gerry's latest wife
abrades me for not going out with him,
breaking his heart that way. Finally I told
the third, "Look, he never asked me out."
Still, Larry did and I also went once with Terry,
since he wanted to go to the Sadie Hawkins dance;
but Josette had broken up with him. We doubled
with Mitch and Tammy, whose lives
took such opposite tacks they've never been
in the same room since. I'd forgotten all these,
told my students I never dated in high school.
"You can't imagine life before the pill," I said.
But the class chat board on "First Year Out"
brought it all back. Kelsie, a cheerleader
from Framingham, posts she was bored of suburbia,
much like Rikhil, from India, who posts, "I don't
want the life the people in my small town in India have."
True dat. It was never about birth control,
since my sense of sex was three years away for me.
Then, it hit me, like the rest of the sixties:
in the seventies. After Kennedy, after King,
after Kennedy, after Kent State, when the unearthly
quiet descended, I tried to go home. It wouldn't
have me. I hadn't been prodigal, and I was a daughter.

Diane Kendig

FANTASY

I never thought my fantasy would include
Me,
Washing dishes,
Listening to music without lyrics,
 Wisps of frizzy black hair
peeking out of a head-scarf.

Me,
Cradling a curly-haired child
With a milk mustache

Most of all,

I never thought my fantasy would include
me as someone else
and you just as you are

Yet as I lie in bed at night,
Ruminating about touch, taste and sight,

it IS you
Just as you are.

It is the smell of musty sheets.
the taste of your eyelashes.
the feel of your five o'clock shadow.

It is me, as someone else,
And you, just as you are.

Sara Ireland-Cooperman

WISTERIA AND VIOLETS

One reaches down
from heaven.
The other stands firm,
grounded in earth.

On a May morning,
looking closely
at individual trumpet and florets,
Heaven and earth
appear much the same
after all.

Jill Lange



GRAMMATICALLY INCORRECT BEHAVIOR

Punctuation arrived late as usual
to the cocktail party to meet the author.
After that the Thesauruses showed up uninvited.
Then the Forward was a little too pushy.
It was a mystery why the Bibliography was spewing four letter expletives (*!#@),
but all credibility was gone.
And although freelance, the normally reliable guest of honor never did show up,
blaming it on some emergency having to do with their appendix.
The worst though were two paragraphs, hanging out at the bar,
shamelessly prepositioning the editor for a closer layout between the covers.
At that point several books left without a word.

Dail Duncan

ON PO CHU-I'S "A DREAM OF MOUNTAINEERING"

Another autumn summing up the year
with yellowed leaves.
Old friends slip away with them.
Others wait their turn on frail attachments.

In evenings warmed by wine and firelight
I turn to your ancient mountains
rising in comfortable seclusion,
their rivers winding out to distant provinces.

In dream we share
I climb a thousand crags,
explore fresh valleys,
"step as strong as in my young days"

Pity we must return
to the pain of aging
and memory's burden of lost times,
all fallen away before our dreams.

Rob Farmer

Published in *Cedar Key Poets 2013*, a chapbook published by the Cedar Key, Florida Poets Group

FINCH FAMILY

On warm June evenings,
the porch glider is the place to be;
surrounded by white and purple
clematis on the trellis.

Among green leaves and growing apples,
perch the finches. They watch
the hanging geranium-basket,
and me.

He, with flashy head, trills
the most delightful song, but plain brown
Mrs. Finch continues to fly from tree
to fern, to tree, to fern,
in front of me.

She flits to the hanging fern,
across from the geranium basket,
chirps at me, flies to the tree,
then to the fern.

Deep in the geranium foliage
is a nest of tiny, naked chicks
with wide-open mouths.

She doesn't fly to the geranium basket.
Her babies are there!

Though swinging on the glider,
with clematis, fern, and trees
all around, is my favorite pastime,
these early summer evenings,
just for her, I go inside.

Kathryn Brock

ODE TO PIERRE

I have a little tea-cup, a Poodle, tiny toy.
I call him my puppy-love. He brings me so much joy.
He weighs over five pounds now, a chubby little pet.
His height's about eight inches; no bigger will he get.
In time he was a show dog. Some trophies he did win.
Once so white and fluffy, far different now than then.
This sire has grown much older, blind and has few hairs;
but he is still my Petey-pie, so much for me he cares.
He is quite a cuddle-bug and shadows at my feet.
He knows he's my bodyguard. I know he's cute and sweet.
He's jealous of my sweetheart, and likes with him to fight.
How he growls and snaps at him, is such a funny sight.
He is getting up in years, though still the alpha male,
enjoys when he pleases me, and wags his tiny tail.
He's like a small baby, and nestles to my chest.
When awake he begs for treats; sometimes he is a pest.
Every time that I sit down, he wants upon my lap.
Then, when he gets all comfy, takes him a snoring nap.
How he does communicate, is much to my delight.
He talks on the telephone. This dog is very bright.
We share a home together. He is good company.
Pierre is very special, more than a dog should be.
He is my little buddy, and he is my best friend;
another of life's blessings to me that God did send.

Marilyn Thornton Schraff

Published in *Labors of Love*, 2014

CURMUDGEONS

Curmudgeons steadfastly refuse to say
anything good unless it's about self.
Highfalutin' and full of themselves,
yet forever out of sorts and especially stubborn,
they doggedly pursue what they think is wrong,
because of the principle and grandiose feelings.
Headstrong, they insist only their opinion is right,
never lose arguments, though definitely disagreeable,
since they insist on having the final word.
Grumpy is how they wake in the morning,
so they're generally crabby to extremes.
You know their mood ahead of time,
due to their inability to change or listen to others.
Respect is not a virtue they recognize.
Forget kindness, – it's not worth making the effort.
They are nasty and fretful,
pretentious and cantankerous,
surly, testy, and unpleasant to be near.
Here's hoping that you don't come across
a curmudgeon or two.
They are quite a breath of stuffed air.

Alyson Widen

365.25

As for holidays, I
always had a special
fondness for the ones
I got paid for, that

I didn't work on,
when I could take
pleasure in what
pleased me, albeit,

peace ... and quiet.
My take on celebration
is that there is something
to say for each day

of the year ... on which
what pleasure one
can take may be
found.

Chris Franke

THE RIVER

It's a deep dark place and time.
My heart is obscured.
The light is tentative, dim, sporadic.
Sometimes thoughts and feelings travel by touch alone
and they bump and turn on paths unlit.

The vines grow thick, like a grown man's arm,
then twist together,
making an almost impenetrable covering.
A sword could hardly hack a way out.
No, this is dense, deep, forest growth;
springing up seemingly overnight.

Yet, somewhere, if you listen closely,
you will hear a trickle
Could it be?
The sound of fresh water?
Yes. Hidden deep deeper in my heart
there is that river –
the water of life.

Will it find its way to the surface?
Will it well up and overflow?
Maybe not today, not even this year
or the next, things being what they are.
The jungle of existence crowding closer,
intense and overbearing.

But always the river runs fresh,
in the deepest parts of my heart,
being fed
by the Source of Life Himself.

One day it will burst forth, absolutely
overflowing all boundaries,
and sharing life.
But, for now, the water's there.
And it is enough.

Arlene Ring

CLASS REUNIONS

Class reunions attempt time travel.
Attract the proud and the curious,
or offer attendance disincentives
to disinterested or embarrassed.

Some may wish to show classmates
just how far they have come.
Others may prefer to conceal
just how far they have fallen.

Distances are measured versus time;
in appearance, achievements, wealth
offspring, and future plans. Many vie
in unspoken mental competition.

Seeing old acquaintances may serve
to confirm or refute past decisions.
Afterwards, some will take home
Gratitude, regrets, or both.

Fred Schraff

THE OLD POET GETS THINGS FLOWING

The toes of his boots barely showed
above the water. Out the door,
through the mud-based water, down
a slight but sufficient slope,
where he could start the trench
It was easy at first: wedge through the grass,
dig the moist soil from the trench sides
to get a good slope, keep moving toward the house
through the garden rocks they had tossed
into the passage, hoping to make a walk way
but ending with chunky mud.
The problem with covered rocks is
finding the edge, to get under.
Bang, bang, squish, heave, bang, bang, bang ...
He didn't have much patience
but the job didn't care how he felt.
With the last shovelful of mud
away from the door-sill, the impossible part
of the job disappeared. How, he'd worried,
could he get the water out of the cellar, over
that inch-high sill? How smoothly
it flowed, under the warped wood, down
the length of the trench into the garden.
This must be how DeLesseps felt.
Gravity's a wonderful thing to have on your side.

Robert McDonough



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