41st Anniversary Celebration

The Poetry Workshop

October 19, 2014
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 
Gloths, 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 hurlts 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
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.
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,
than 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
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