

LEARNING TO LOVE THE OLD

The wrinkles in the withering, like a Shar Pei dog.

The motif of motion, the creaking of a warped door.

The sheen of skin, weathering like her leather bag.

The hum of the heart, hesitating ... steps in the dark.

The liver in the gut, lingering, the robin dazed on a frozen lawn.

The brain in the skull, blundering, through the dense snowstorm.

The fingers failing a fine tuning, a pianist lacking good form.

The toes curling missing their grounding, the pitchfork, worn.

She resolves to gather up her parts into a neat

Parcel and listening to the night's silence, swim to the far shore.

Reincarnation

The question of reincarnation comes up again.
Like a blade of fresh green grass each spring.

If so, I want to be an animal like a tiger, or a tree like a Cyprus.
The answer between the two of us changes daily.

In the patch of yard in front of our city building
I note the perfect rose-colored bud unraveling.

From itself so slowly. Pointing to it, I say
To my doorman, "I long to be that pink winter rose."

"No, you don't," he answers with a nod.
As if to forbid to anyone a life span so short.

Solo Traveler

At the Denver airport, pushing a purple carry-on suitcase. How easy to roll this twirling item, one of human's better inventions, you think. At age 81 appearing fragile, feeling proud to be able to travel by yourself. Wheeling to the gate and then whirling around the shops, you find the Tattered Cover Book Store. In the poetry section, locating the exact book you want, "The Best American Poetry 2023" (with guest editor Elaine Equi). Pleased, remembering that years ago, she was your teacher. Paying for the book you tuck the receipt into the pages to serve as a bookmark. Wheeling the suitcase back to gate 43 asking permission to sit beside a woman with her dog sprawled on the seat next to her. The pooch has scraggly, gray hair and dons a service vest. "I am a dog person," saying to the owner as the corners of the woman's mouth turn up that you interpret as a show of pleasure. The pup who has handsome bushy eyebrows, flashes his knowing eyes. In a few minutes boarding time arrives. At the check-in counter, asking to board first because of your age, and the checker nods yes and waves toward the plane. Down the narrow aisle, wheeling the case side-ways. At seat 21F, a stocky woman standing near three little blonde daughters, immediately offers to lift the bulky item into the overhead bin. Relieved, grateful, scrunching over two seats, at last to reach the window. In a few minutes, two youngish women take the middle and aisle seats. Pleased, you observe that they are readers too. The one with tousled blonde hair, opens her paperback of James Baldwin's, "Notes of a Native Son." Her friend on the aisle, wears a knit ski cap over dark, wavy hair that flows toward her novel, the title of which unfortunately isn't visible to you. The friends joke and laugh with each other and flash an occasional smile in your direction. You surmise that they may teach literature. On the smooth flight to New York, each of you opens a volume and settles into their own private literary journey.

My Day

Silence. All is quiet on the home front.
Then suddenly, flood gates swing open.
Ripe seeds burst out of tight pods.

And then, just as suddenly, we halt
in our tracks, like a floundering hippo, stuck.
Then a breeze rustles our flimsy tail feathers

as if we're agile birds in flight and we join
the motion of the sparkling white sheets
dancing with wind on a loose clothesline.

Ode to Scribbling Bad Poetry

Let's face it. We have to get the words out: words on the page or on the computer screen. We could, instead shout them outloud to our dog or cat. But words on a page don't hurt anyone. Self-expression beats shooting a gun and we don't take ourselves too seriously when writing a bad poem. A bad poem does not have to be read. If we can't come up with a good poem or are too lazy or uninspired, we can always write a bad poem. We will still tickle the brain cells. Better to arouse the neurons from slumber, rather than let them sleep dormant like brown bears in winter. When we write bad poetry, we can show off a sense of humor and play with vocabulary. We can break rules as often as egg shells. We don't have to submit bad poetry to literary journals for possible publication or rejection. Furthermore, a bad poem leaves a lot of room for improvement, especially if the scribbler is inclined at some future time to apply herself.

"I'm scribbling," an old beau of mine, Professor Freddy (Wilfred) Cartey was accustomed to spouting although he was a very serious writer who set up the first African Studies program at Columbia University. I was briefly a girlfriend of his; I was not a poet. I was a college student and even then, scribbled. But Freddy was a genuine poet who taught literature and wrote books. A tragedy how his life ended as he became increasingly disabled from Sickle Cell Anemia. But while scribbling, I remembered my old writing friend, Freddy whom I still hold in high regard. Here's to you, Freddy. You, a true poet, live on in my memory. You wrote good poetry. You were full of life and Caribbean rhythm. How many remember you now? How many who knew you in the glory days of your youth are still with us, or writing, today?

You see, dear reader, I have succeeded in writing a terrible rambling poem that lacks continuity, rhythm, and rhyme.