

Five Poems

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Almost There

Once, like a hive, it teemed with inhabitants
And now it's an old hotel with a history

no one cares to remember. The sign out front
Hangs sideways, the rusty hook will not give in.

Often I find myself lingering by the half-open door,
looking for faces, hearing voices I knew.

Dwelling in the past, it's called, but I would be less myself
to close the door and pretend to let go.

The face I see is only mine
I am the father, son, brother,

lover, the rejected, the guilty. A man
estranged but there is no stone around my neck.

Maybe there is redemption for those who confess.
Those who ask the erotic to come up to the room

but insist it leave before morning.
Night obscures what the early light bares.

The fecundity of pleasure may be a last outpost
for the apple eaters. It is time

to reach for the round full buttock of the day.
Forget the ghosts with their beads of repentance.

Admit you tasted the wild life without hesitation,
without the jaded residue of self- analysis.

Admit desire thinks it's a forever candle
and burns on after the icon's been stolen.

And somewhere between day and night, between desire
and memory, is a place of unresolved calm.

To know some truth and move on without proof
open to love without insistence.

Return Of The Native

When one has been away a long time
from the care-worn furniture of memories,
the simplicity of habit,
home is like an awakening,
low shallow breathing and
a slow steady heartbeat
not unlike your own.

It's how you can sit and stare
from one room into another.
The painting of a pickup
in a farmyard never looks the same
or the candle in the window
doesn't have to burn, and the
bronze sculpture's always in motion.

There is a presence here like
the flow from lover to loved,
a rush, out of control, and then the rag & bone
intrusion of all that has passed.

Is there something lost when polish
turns to patina, unnoticed?
These walls have listened to voices
now faint even in my own ears.
Maybe it's change I resist
and why I must leave and return.

After Dark

Light from above casts no shadow,
closed lids open doors to upstairs

rooms, guests have never left. Faces
from childhood's involuntary memory,

left behind in a bin of old toys
or so I thought. Now like stone fossils

found in overgrown fields,
at the foot of a dead tree.

Visitors insist and I acquiesce. They
pass before me in silence.

I want to tell them I've moved on.
But it's a boarding house and once invited,

not even confrontation closes a door.
It's easier to pass in the hallway

and say nothing. There is no closet
where innocence may play the flute.

Flawed Words

I watch patiently for the finches of Spring
who come out of the cold gray winter

to new green limbs. It's the natural way. Clay
yields to the sculpture's will, his forefinger,

thumb and heel of his hand. But words drift
in the dead calm waiting for the current through the inlet.

Poems sit on high backed chairs behind tall shaded
windows in upstairs rooms no one has slept in.

The mind raps on the front door, an orphan,
urchin in the street, with only words of survival.

There is no answer. A thin coil of doubt
slithers under the door. I should shrug and

accept, no one is home. I should play the game,
fool myself about the right time and place.

But admit, patience is only a visitor in the search
for clarity using precise language. Words germinate

like a shaft of warm light through a winter window.
Yet I worry, do they say what I mean?

Some Things, Not Meant to Be Seen

It's one thing to read an obituary but another
to walk through a house lived in for so long a time.

See the litter of a life no longer controlled
by the need to present one's self to the world.

An intimacy seldom allowed while the person
pulled insistently on the ragged shoelace of an old walking shoe.

Head bowed, wavering gait, resolve more remote,
legs walking the narrow line of habit.

Even the teak footrest had heel prints. But every thing
had a tag, a pretense of value to those passing through.

There is no one left to stare out the window
at the giant oak on the path to the river.

Garage Sale, the sign out front covered the mailbox.
Curious neighbors didn't know the smiling faces

of a new generation come to get rid of the old stuff.
It was hard not to be an intruder here.

But the coffee cup on the table
had a small sticker, twenty five cents.

Contributor's Note

Jack Wolfeich calls himself a palm tree poet from Cocoa Beach, Florida. But that would be more the port of call for this rag sailor and tells little about what goes into writing verses in the shade. After retiring from teaching English, Psychology, and Counseling in the East Hampton Public Schools, and sailing from Maine to the Chesapeake every summer, the big passage remained, a chance to do "what you've always wanted to do." The classroom, four walls and the window were left behind.

Wolfeich's poems have appeared for three years in a regional anthology, "Driftwood," which is published in Central Florida. He was a semifinalist in the 2003 Davoren Hannah International Poetry Competition out of Dublin, Ireland.

From the journeyman aspect, though only a reader of poetry while teaching, in the pursuit of "precise language for complicated matters," Wolfeich has studied with

Cornelius Eady, Marie Howe, Kelly Cherry, Sharon Olds, Martin Espada, and Robert Creeley. The most influence on his work has come from workshops with Stephen Dunn at Stonecoast, Eckerd College, and the Chautauqua Poetry Festival. He has been a featured reader on two occasions at the Artwell Foundation in Torrington, Connecticut, as well as local readings in Florida.