

In May

for Barbara

Joann Condellone

(Kvasir Poetry Reading, September 21, 2007)

In May, the last freeze borne,
the last cold rains rained
the warming soil is ready for turning.
With the first cut and the next
the old light rises from the earth,
Rises to Tuscarora to fall again in dew.
With spring the remembered and remembering mingle
in the rising and the falling
of the light.

In May my friend Barbara says, "It is time to act your age".
She does not mean my fifty-six years or her seventy-five years
or the two hundred years of the sentinel red oaks
that guard the valley
or the bone age of deer and opossum
or the flint age of the arrow heads among the furrows
or the fossil age of the trilobites on the creek bed,
but star age, the age of light above Tuscarora and below.

In May we turn the soil with spade and shovel,
and work the furrows with hands and hoe,
until the dark demands that we stop
and remember rising and falling.
And there above the valley the galactic plain arrives:
Light and the history of light arrayed above us.
As the bits of dead stars burn bright in our blood,
we learn to act our age.

ANNIVERSARY

The winter- heavy cedar hangs
Over the feeding birds.
Its ice chains melting in the first thaw,
The green recoil gathers below.
The Jenny wren returns and rules the porch.
I have forgiven her for flying
Into my hair in the dark.
She has forgotten that
Twice I tore her nest out of the Rosemary bush.
She is here to peck some suet
Or find a husk of bug buried
In the last of the dry firewood.
In the house the young cat ambushes my pen.
The tea is hot, the fire warm.
On the Saturday opera
Aida and Radames sing their long goodbyes.
Under the new heat, the brightening hours,
The days grow big as mountains.
Across the continent under the Elms
The old man lies dead these two years.
Who will find the Morels in the spring?

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