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Three Poems

by Cy Dillon

Address

Fifty years later I can't forget the awkwardness of that scene

The old man laughing quietly and slipping back into the dark woods
The scrawny rooster we thought he'd want
An embarrassment in his left hand

Freeholder, veteran of World War I
We loved him
Could trust him with our lives
But never quite let him be a man
We children using his given name
But careful to always say "colored"
And to always save him a bit of what we really didn't need

How had he learned to forgive us
Working beside us in the fields
His wife helping Ma with dinner
His daughter sitting evenings with us
When the folks were away
His own work waiting until last

Living all those years on the next farm
He was dead before I realized
I had been tricked by familiarity into
Denying him even
The simple respect of saying "Mister"
Losing the chance to learn
From a master of the art of silence
A virtuoso of self-deprecation
As dignified a man as I ever knew

A Continental Divide

From what loose sleeve do the mountains
Pull these clouds
Assuring abundant rain
And mist where trees root
Secretly above us
Doing their best
To survive the West wind's acid
Billowing from plants that
Light our work
Weeping into Albemarle Sound
Or the Gulf on the other side

Gone, now

For a few years he carried
The spark of life

That bright mystery
Among us
And now he returns
To the dark earth

His life was not long
Or easy
But lightened by a peaceful heart

Newcomers found a welcome
In his silent presence
And he sought no enemies

Young, he was soft and beautiful
Aging, reserved and patient
He loved the sun in winter
And deep shade on a summer day

When he drank
He held the water dish like a lover
But he preferred
Stolen sips from buckets
Thick with mud

It is good that hunger and pain
Are behind him
But I dread the cold
Dark mornings without
His delight at being called for food

Cy Dillon is Director of the Library at Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia, and co-editor of *Virginia Libraries* (<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/VALib/>). A graduate of Washington & Lee with a PhD from Arizona State, Dillon writes a column on open access publishing in *College & Undergraduate Libraries*. He has published poetry and book reviews in journals including *Maverick Magazine*, *Nantahala Review*, *Savoy*, *Eclectica*, *Red River Review*, and *Oyster Boy Review*.

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