

Meanderings of an Aged Mind

Kay Fay

Xlibris (December 2009)

Softcover \$10.00 (80pp)

978-1-4415-9229-3

Meanderings of An Aged Mind, the title of retired junior high teacher Kay Fay's slim volume of poetry, gives her licence to expound upon any number of subjects that she knows best—schools, schoolchildren, homework, parenting, spirituality, and reflections on growing older. After opening with three of her best efforts, “8th Grade,” “Criticism,” and “8th Grade Girls,” the teacher's orderly mind takes over to ruminate on an alphabetically arranged series of sixty-six topics from A to W, “A Texas Yank” to “Working.”

She approaches her task with focus, good humour, whimsy, and wisdom. Most of her poems are didactic in nature and contain lessons to be learned, whether about criticism or the “payback time” of grandparenting. Some, like “The End of an Era” and “The Kids Are Grown” are nostalgic, while others like “The Last of May” and “Geritol Lamentations” are wryly realistic about life's expectations. Several poems look to a higher power for help, while “Our World” urges readers to look to themselves and ask, “How can I make the world I see / A better place for us to be?”

Fay's presentation and her choice of topics will appeal to fans of old school poetic practices. Iambic pentameter, rhyme schemes, and classical forms or variations of the sonnet, ode, ballad, dramatic monologue, and rhyming couplets are all represented here; modernism and post-modernism are not. The constraints of the forms she uses, however, and her attempts to follow them often result in disrupted emotional flow or obviously forced rhymes, as in, for example, “A real friend never goes away / If only in our hearts they stay,” where grammatical correctness has been sacrificed to obtain the rhyme. Other efforts are more doggerel than poetic, such as “Grandparenting,” with its opening: “Grandparenting is really great. / We have a lot of fun. / We give the grandkids what they want, / Some candy and some gum.”

Fay's poems are neat, tidy, and clean, but without any wild flights of imagination or emotional binges. They meander as her title promises, but are subject to the constraints of an orderly mind.

(February 15, 2010)

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