



Opus One, Ready or Not

I was alarmed recently when I realized that not only had I not written a poem in two months, but that my Opus 1 ("The Unfinished Poem") had fallen seriously behind schedule, and that if it wasn't brought back on line soon, cost overruns could be expected.

Opus 1, as some of you may recall, is a five verse poem scheduled for completion in 1999. Its manifold fiveness is intended to point to the condition of humanity, which is symbolized by the number five, the sum of the female two and the male three, or maybe the other way around.

At any rate we have only seen, so far, versions 1.0 and 2.0. Version 3.0 is six months late and 2.0 was never even properly debugged, so it is with some apology that I am led to unveil

O Boy O Boy O Boy O Boy O Boy or Opus 1, The Still Unfinished Poem, (Version 3.5)

Check comes each month from the SSA -
Get to eat a cheeseburger ev-ree day!
O Boy! O Boy!! O Boy! O Boy! O Boy!!

Church down the street wants to save my soul -
It's wiener stew! In a big green bowl!
O Boy! O Boy!! O Boy! O Boy! O Boy!!

Farmers gotta have their produce sold -
So my Stamps can buy it (if it's cold)!
O Boy! O Boy!! O Boy! O Boy! O Boy!!

Food banks dispense the surpluses -
etc.
O Boy! etc.

Speaking of Food Stamps, I don't have any at the moment. This is the normal state of affairs at the end of every month, for all recipients of Food Stamps, because the US Government has determined that Americans eat too much, and therefore makes sure that everyone on Food Stamps gets just exactly enough for two and a half weeks and no more. "It's important that our poor people set a good example for the rest of our citizens", said one unnamed source, recently.

Ok, I said it. But you know that's how they think.

One consequence of the end of the month shortage of Food Stamps is a corresponding shortage of spare change

throughout the land. For as all recipients are aware, the law permits ninety-nine cents worth of change per day in Food Stamp transactions. (Thus the Food Stamp Program also subsidizes the shoelace industry about half of each month.)

Of course it is only an apparent shortage of spare change, as the panhandler's success reveals. This speaks to yet another aspect of the concept change; sometimes I have the change, then times change, and Sam or Wally has it.

Change, Change, Who Has the Change?

- A Poem Cantabile.

Change, change, who has the change?
If I don't get any soon,
I'll get even more strange.
I'll punch at the air and holler and swear,
I'll smash all the clocks and swallow my socks,
I'll get on a stage and I'll rant and I'll rage,
I'll act like a goon, I'll play the bassoon —
if I don't get any soon.

Change, change, who has the change?
If none comes my way,
My brains will derange.
I'll think wild thoughts of government plots,
I'll watch TV and believe what I see,
I'll make up new "facts" and spread them with tracts,
There's nothing I wouldn't say by the end of the day —
if none comes my way.

If you are one of the Sams or Wallys near the end of February, and you've read this far, you might be especially interested in the Dead Poets' Slam scheduled at the OK Hotel on the evening of Wednesday the 25th. I will be one of the live poets in attendance, as I perform haiku and low-ku, in competition with Portland's 1997 Haiku Slam winner. Come for that, or come for the Dead Poets, but whatever you do come and bring that change with you.

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