**Poetry from Daily Life: When stopping for coffee sparks a connection**

By Marcus Cafagna

*This week’s guest is Marcus Cafagna, who was born in Michigan and lived in Pennsylvania before moving to the Ozarks to teach poetry writing at Missouri State University. Marcus says he gave up playing the violin when he was 12 to become more serious about writing poems. He has written short stories and book reviews but always returned to poetry. A favorite book to write, "All the Rage in the Afterlife This Season," took 15 years in the making. Marcus is a film buff and sports fan and quite proud of his son, Diego, college bound in the fall. ~ David L. Harrison*

**"The poet’s job is description"**

In mid-December of 2014, I found myself shaking off the cold as I waited in line at the embedded coffee stand located inside the Dillons supermarket on East Sunshine here in Springfield. In the process of grinding coffee beans, juggling boiling water, and frothing milk, my barista told me that, as of Christmas Day, the Dillons chain of supermarkets — including the one there on East Sunshine where he worked — were slated to close.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Ted Kooser writes “the poet’s job is description,” recording “observed particulars,” — sensory images from the minute details of daily living that we might otherwise miss.

Standing in Dillons that winter morning, watching for the last time this man breaking into a sweat as he performed the rituals of making my Americano espresso drink, with room for half-and-half, I witnessed the drama of the dilemma he faced, the impending loss of his job during the holiday season. It reminded me of how unexpectedly we sometimes feel connected to each other.

**For the Man about to Lose His Job at Dillons**

The barista turns up his brogue

as I wait at the counter for him

to pour my Americano with room.

Clouds of steam push up

around his rusty mutton chops,

coating his worry lines in sweat.

He’s getting laid off

after Christmas, after he’s done

tearing down the roaster,

the grinder, the espresso machine.

He’s been working in the Ozarks

for a company in Kansas

owned by Kroger’s in Ohio.

Because only this one market

turns a profit, every store

in the chain is closing.

The one that was across the street

is now a career center,

where folks like my friend

will file for unemployment.

Friend. That’s what he calls

me today after he snaps

on the lid and I tip him and turn

to go, but I don’t

even know his name.

*Marcus Cafagna has published his poems in hundreds of literary magazines across the country. He is the author of three books of poetry, "The Broken World," a National Poetry Series selection, "Roman Fever" and "All the Rage in the Afterlife This Season." His first book was selected by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Yusef Komunyakaa for The National Poetry Series and published in 1996. He recently retired from Missouri State University. “For the Man about to Lose His Job at Dillons” is reprinted from "All the Rage in the Afterlife This Season" (Finishing Line Press, 2023).*