

The Provost

One has to be an academic
In order to know of the post
That belongs to the person
Who is the college provost.
Of all the curious positions,
It isn't one that to me beckons.
It more like that of a farmer who
Wishes to herd a flock of chickens.

He is the leader of a faculty
Composed of many self-deceivers,
Composed of a diverse bunch,
A rag-tag group of non-believers
In the wily provost's ability
To lead and guide, and to teach
Them as faculty, his only duty.
And so, he stays out of reach.

Still, the Provost must stand
For what the college stands.
For, if he doesn't do this thing
Then we faculty tie his hands
With querulous quarrels and spats.
Like chickens we'll fly over the fence
In the name of academic freedom
Never bothering to make sense.

The Provost believes he can depend
Upon his considerable power, when
In fact, he has very little power.
All he can do is stay and tend
The academic garden, mostly forlorn

For we faculty will proceed to go
Blithely ahead and do whatever
We wish to do and do it just so.

The curious thing is, that each of us
Will work along an individual way.
And later in the term when we stop
To see how well we say our say
We find, much to our surprise, that
What has happened looks like chance;
It isn't proper, nor fit, but it seems
To be a version of a very crazy dance.

The provost knows this, of course.
That is why he is so often flustered
His faculty really hasn't a clue -
They are after all sequestered
From reality, and, let's face it
If herding chickens is a fine art,
Herding a faculty is much more so.
Still, I'm glad it's not my part

So here's to that fussy old man
The provost, long may he pretend
That he really does lead his merry
Band of faculty, it's no great sin.
Let him have his academic toys and
All those inscrutable processes and norms.
In spite of often being at cross-purposes
We do, after all, fill in his damned forms.

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