**Frost at Lighthouse Beach** *by Partridge Boswell*

He’s out early with all the other dawn and shell seekers

imitating wading shanks, treading his own delible barefoot

thread along the backwash of Sanibel sand—puttering

and pausing, stooping for stray sparks of littoral bling

at his feet, maundering on—the woolen ham of his head

dipped, fixed on what could be periwinkles, sea biscuits

or whelks slipping through the frothy film and spillage.

He dodders at the surf’s effervescent hem, baggy khaki

trousers rolled to his shins, Tommy Bahama luau print

festooned with swaying palms and surfing wahinis splayed

open to the navel of his barrel chest, turning a liver-tinted

tulip over in his leathered farmer’s palm, his ancient lips

imperceptibly kissing each word mumbled under his breath

heedless if anyone might sense his affection for the waking

light or be the least bit curious in his discoveries, undaunted

by deadlines or lectures or harvests of young unripe minds,

not wielding an ax-helve or weeding a garden or needing

to justify wedding a vocation with an avocation—just on

vacation, seizing whatever washes up and catches his eye,

his crenshaw cocked to one side in a crux of amazement

cresting the decisive moment when he almost pockets his

treasure for a shelf or a grandchild’s slack-jawed awe

then tosses it back without a sigh.