

Mark Young

The Poem About The Poem

came so easily I could not wait
to start / the poem. & yet,
ironically, it was this eagerness
to get on with it that made the
starting difficult. I thought I knew
the journey, knew how the
poem would shape & show
itself. Instead found almost nothing,
a few pieces of past so brittle
that they crumbled as the mind
alighted on them. & in this absence
of obvious landmarks realized
that most of our life is not
momentous, is instead made up
of a series of minor moments that dart
back & forth between each other,
underpinning & overlaying, being
added to until each series achieves
a momentum of its own, a thread
worn smooth by time where I,
impatient, had hoped to find a
knotted cord, a message stick.

A Pause, a Reflection

If you can't dance
then don't play the music.

I have moved away from
spacing my lines across the page
to reflect the length
of a breath
or a pause
or the pace of the words
as they are spoken
& which
at a poetry reading
would be the choreography
that I followed —
a step here
a step there
the throwaway phrase
& the occasional line that reached out
to touch the audience.

from the stage
or the circle of light

Now
I align them
down the side
of the page
as if they were
pieces of a
jigsaw puzzle
where you do
the edges first
& then fill in
the rest of it
later.

Life & Death as Gus Hoo sees it

All of a sudden, the game changed. & I had to close it down. I closed down the greatest economy ever in history. & then, I closed it down. & now we're opening

it. & we saved, by the way, by closing it, we saved millions of lives. If we would have gone to herd, & we knew very little about the disease, if we would have

gone herd, we would have lost millions of people. Millions of people. One person's too much. We're at 140,000 people. One person is too much. We're at 140,000. We

would have lost millions of people. & those people that really understand it, really understand it, they said it's incredible, the job that we've

done.

Just another example of the Indian rope trick

Ambiguity was not the problem. Everything was clear, straightforward. It was what was said that caused concern. *The camisoles have brought chaos to my village.*

Not all interpreters agreed; but, in the main, an overall consensus. Some outliers left. *Spring was never waiting for us, dear. &. The bombs bursting in air.*

The cathedral collapses under the weight of bad karaoke

Was it Jimmy Buffett who
sang about *The Dead Lutheran
Church At Midnight* or was
it only an amateur imitator?

The meter clicks over & I go
into debt. I line up at the
counter & am given gray
robes to wear. Like-minded

people surround me. We all
start bootscooting. Jimmy
Buffett calls the lines, but who's
that offsider who claps her hands

out of time & peremptorily deter-
mines where the apostrophes go?

Close at hand is not / close enough.

Instead of the take them out / put them back neatness of the nearby book-case — one meter away, stand up, two paces & you're there & back — I end up with two piles of books, within arm's reach.

No, one pile really. The other, on the top of the wide two-drawer filing cabinet, is spread, a poker hand laid down for viewing. Except, not the compactness of the cards, more a mosaic, a pattern for laying cartons on a pallet so they bind. The place of more-or-less permanent reference. An atlas, a French dictionary, the Concise Oxford, a book of bird pictures, a general encyclopedia, an encyclopedia of mythology. One open, though the exposed pages vary, the others closed, front cover down.

The pile is on the desk at which I work, books referred to over the last week or two, or else taken down for remembering. Not put back. An untidy pile, across one another, top or bottom up, corners sticking out like a paper lantern. Eclectic, changing with the seasons. A pile left to grow until it threatens to tumble, then put away, leaving an empty place, an open space, room for one book as footprint.

Currently, from the bottom up, *The Communist Manifesto*; *Collected Poems of WCW 1909-1939*; Joe LeSueur's *Digressions on Some Poems of Frank O'Hara*; *The Portable Magritte* replete with markers; Borges' *A Personal Anthology*; *Writings & Drawings of Bob Dylan*; Eileen Tabios' "Brick;" *Alice in Wonderland*; William Gibson's *Neuromancer*. Face up, Miles Davis peers at me from the cover of his autobiography.

I am embarrassed. I look away.