

His Essay on the Meaning of Poetry

by Larry Strattner

He swallowed the last gulp of his fifth Mountain Dew. 2AM CST.

“Poetry is conceit; emotional, intellectual or technical. Arguably, the three elements may, at times, coalesce in one personality...” He keyed, Select All on the options toolbar and Deleted.

Began again. “The only true test of the poet is form. Few are able to pass this first test of...” Delete. This essay would be difficult in extreme. Perhaps fatal. Not adept at scholarly obfuscation, hyperbole or fractured logic, he was beginning to see a downward slope ending in a disastrous cliff over which he would plunge screaming “onomatopoeia...”

“A society in vocal decline does not support the lyrically cadenced work of the true...” Scratch that. He had even tried a voice recognition package to capture his spoken, caffeine crazed ravings. Seemingly extemporaneous, fluid garlands, later held under throbbing daylight were vapid; impervious to edit.

“First lines of what passes for poetry today could all well be substituted with, ‘There was a young man from Coxsackie’...” No. Uncomfortably in the reader's face. Though possibly true. He saved it out to see if it would scan.

“Poetry is not meant to be per se understood, rather to create a mood or place the reader may enter viscerally, experiencing the poet's inner emotional self, enveloped by a unique construct of words in the same way a viewer would ideally be immersed in a Jackson Pollock painting. To see Pollock as a paint splattering dementia case is to miss the point ...” Fuck. This was going from bad to worse. All he wanted was his fucking MFA and to teach at some college in the woods where he could enjoy a bag of Cheetos and bang a few sophomore art majors. Why had he ever taken this class?

“How can one write a poem in texting abbreviations?” Note to self: Check on this later. Thought he saw a glossary on Wikipedia. Could make me the next big thing. Scratch idea. Keep to self. He clicked on Save As, entered, ‘Pander.’

“Emily Dickenson and AA Milne represent the nadir of modern poetry. As did the unknown authors of Beowulf (notwithstanding Shamus Heaney) they construct understandable, metered statements with an occasional moral attached, they...” He pushed back his chair and contemplated the screen. Yes. This would get the job done. He began to type in earnest, his mind straying occasionally to imagined sophomore asses.

