

The Atlantic

by Mathew Paust

Can't say I'm a poet

I've tried

Doesn't come out right

Sounds affected, pompous

Plus, I haven't read that many poems by acclaimed poets

And too many I've read had for me somewhere within them

A hint of the supercilious

A preemptive smirk, a ho hum if you don't get it

Tone

Intermittently I do

Do verse

A notion seizes my fancy

I play with it, enjoy wordplay surprises

More than merely clever or learned

Connivingly oblique or smugly vague, but words that work in

concert

That get it right, the harmonics, the core of an insight, of a moment

With an ingenuous

Tone

The first poems I tried to sell, seven, I recall

Went to The Atlantic

Written during a break from the Watergate hearings

They came back, of course, but with a personal note: "clever, but oblique"

Phoebe-Lou Adams wrote this of them

My sole professional critique

I have the note somewhere, with the poems

The rejection stung, of course, but I cherish her generous

Tone

