

Michael T. Young – Three Poems

Imaginary Instruments

I drive a little past my destinations
because arrival isn't enough.
Something departs at my entrance
and the wonder of its message lingers.

What hand holds me, what provides footing
beyond the doors? It's like that night
on a beach so far from city lights,
walking over the dark dunes

was rich as walking on water, a trust
rewarded with luminescent waves
and a bridge of stars connecting horizons.
Since then I try to arrange stones in patterns

orchestrating a song played out as people
skip over them. But there's always
another song that breaks the stones,
just as there are definitions the dictionaries

will never contain. It's why, in spite of all
the promises, I will wait in the rain,
listening for that voice calling to me
in a register beyond the known instruments.

Small Signs

Between what I remember of childhood
and what I've forgotten,
runs the rock garden that lined my parent's house.

Smooth stones of white and light brown hardness,
an uneven bed along the walkway, like a frozen river.

I could skip alongside its peaks and pass the arguments
about money or indifference, those rattling the leaded glass,
bounding from the alley in back to the street in front.
But there was something hidden, something tunneling,
sly and fast under my feet. It poked out one day:
a chipmunk, that burrowed down settling among the rocks
as if home were a mound of rigid pronouncements.

For weeks, Dad tried to rid us of the rodent.
First, he shoved stones down the holes.
The chipmunk pushed them out.
Then Dad put a hose down the hole
and ran the water for ten, fifteen, twenty minutes.
The next day, the chipmunk huddled under a bush,
dry and stuffing his pouch with seeds.
Traps were left empty and poison uneaten.
The little irritation persisted, finding a way to nest
and live at our foundation walls.

Finally, Dad posted a small sign in the garden,
it read, "Chipmunk Crossing." And what could not be changed,
became our history, tunnels hidden among stones,
memories cracked open, and only silence falling out.

Sitting Alone in San Rocco After My Father's Death

Tintoretto taught me, that like light passing from air to water,
words too bend and change, passing from doctor
to patient, or father to son.

So under the stained glass, I struggled to forgive you
for what you've missed. Like this city,
like your grandchildren.

But it took the slow time of eclipses, like the moon
weaving sunlight into a skirt. It drifted through
the night you turned your breath so low

your hands became autumn leaves blown
through Venetian canals. I sat
on the cold bench,

threaded by colors of grief. It was the back of a tapestry,
a tangle of stitches, a negative of the beauty
that binds the world.

Michael T. Young's third full-length collection, *The Infinite Doctrine of Water*, was longlisted for the Julie Suk Award. His previous collections are *The Beautiful Moment of Being Lost* and *Transcriptions of Daylight*. Young received a Fellowship from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. His chapbook, *Living in the Counterpoint*, received the Jean Pedrick Chapbook Award. Young's poetry has been featured on *Verse Daily* and *The Writer's Almanac*. It has also appeared or is forthcoming in numerous journals including *Cimarron Review*, *Gargoyle Magazine*, *One, Rattle*, and *Valparaiso Poetry Review*.