

Richard Harrison

Confessional Poem

Yesterday I wrote a confessional poem, but my wife, who always reads me first, said it was just a journal entry. It's been years since I was that far from a poem and thought I was that close, but I trust her. Today, before class, a student was zipping through a Rubik's Cube, knuckling the box into panels of many colours, then a couplet, then one, then many again. Within two minutes, not even looking, he was done. I asked him to do it over so we could all watch, and having watched, have something with which to begin the writing of the day. I wrote that the planes of the cube going in and out of order as the student twisted the game were like the drafts of a poem, sometimes deliberately torquing towards the opposite of the desired end because the poem is a way we give in to a logic that lives within us but is not our own. I was thinking of that poem I couldn't write, an apology I wish I'd made years ago, and carry with me even though two things are true: the person I would have apologized to is dead now, and what I want to apologize for is speaking badly of them though it was only to my wife and so they never knew. The poem was like having an argument with someone in a dream, then going up to them in daylight wanting to make amends. Last time I did that, the other person reminded me that I had done nothing to them, but I apologized anyway because they had done nothing to deserve what I did not do.