



PARLIAMENT | PARLEMENT
CANADA

Parliamentary Poet Laureate



POETRY CONNECTION: LINK UP WITH CANADIAN POETRY

Jay MillAr (1971 –), along with Hazel MillAr, is the publisher of Bookthug Press (www.bookthug.ca) and the author of numerous collections of poetry including *The Ghosts of Jay MillAr* (Coach House 2000), *Mycological Studies* (Coach House 2002), and *False Maps for Other Creatures* (Nightwood 2005). *Double Helix* (Mercury Press 2006), is a collaborative fiction collection with Stephen Cain.

Poem for discussion:

4 poems

From *Esp: Accumulation Sonnets*
BookThug, 2009

avant gardes hold up
banks for performance art
any poseur will do whatever
they're just people in
topography's grapple with how
weird will it be to be finished
treading on thin water
yeah - that ice melted
six poems ago used up
these lonely results of art
with the sun's cocaine
like falling world sounds
a herd of field mice
eats shoots and leaves
a dream resistance imagines

poly poly propylene
the rawest scene i ever been

my jet engine modulation
my underdog wisdom of youth
a question of how close
to come to my own shadow
I'm right here idiot
kid logic of phastic cells
how to preserve the worry
of impressions other writers
linger on - insider practicality
and the temperament of confusion
these feathers half wings
perchance the flight mockery
sings what the the song

special collections of the desire
to be anywhere else
hammer drops desperate and needy
snips of haircut offs to fliers
you mail that thing -
work on your right to work
work on the left too
work on the biggest sandbox fits
and start some image revolution
spins of dj cocktails
for an intellectual to be
self-destructive or a kind of
improvement on humanity
when a poem you were working on
comes to an end by drowning

i'm going to walk into that door
the way kids go through paper towel
salon de 1845 inside the Baudelaire
road on road checklist
followed to a company map
my time is a limitation
drives up on an orange tractor
to despair what does it feel
i should be 'doing' something
aleatory cabbage town houses
stand for pestering sunshine
screams of the child we have
no computer books and i am afraid
clemency of abject neurology
better work always under stress

For discussion:

In a recent interview, Jay MillAr revealed the following:

“The four poems in this package are part of a longer work that was composed in a way that is somewhat different than how one might usually think about writing. Rather than having something to say and saying it (i.e. being an "author" in the regular sense of the word: an authority), try to imagine yourself as a receiver of language. The best metaphor I can think of is an antenna or radio, or maybe in more contemporary terms, a wireless internet receiver -- technology that picks up "messages" and "information" from the surrounding environment that are being transmitted, presumably by someone or something. You might be listening to the universe as you know it. There can be much interaction between the mind and the senses if you pay attention to such transmissions -- language overheard and recorded as well as the mind's subconscious thread that constantly engages and "talks" with the self as it interacts with the world. Beyond this vague sense of "accumulation," the composition of these 15-line sonnets are dictated by formal constraint, the small notebook that I used to gather the lines, and the process of entering them into the manuscript -- the typing that became a form of editing after the fact.”

1. How can a writer become an antenna or radio, receiving language?
2. If you are paying attention to these receptions, how do the mind and the senses interact?
3. Where are places you might go to “overhear” language?
4. What are the formal constraints of the sonnet and how has Jay MillAr used them in these four poems?
5. How does typing become a form of editing?

Writing prompts:

1. Become a radio antenna for fifteen minutes. Jot down everything you hear in the form of random notes. Turn these notes into a poem.
2. Think of yourself interacting with the world. What are your compass points? Compose a poem based on these geographical, metaphorical places.

3. Make a list of accumulated ideas. Stretch your topics over a wide range of interests including literary titles, movies, favourite foods, places to visit. Create a poem with these lists.
4. Create a dialogue or interaction between yourself and the small space you live in. Note all sensory details. Create a poem based on this conversation.
5. Jot down phrases and examples of interesting text from the internet. Discover a pattern in this language. Is there a message? Turn the phrases, ideas, textual information into a poem.