



CURTAINS

Mark Young

CURTAINS

By Mark Young

Neo-Mimeo Editions: 2026

Copyright (c) Mark Young, 2026

Some of these pieces were originally published in Alien Buddha, BlazeVOX, dadakuku, Ink Pantry, Mad Swirl, otata, Poetry Remake, RIC Journal, Scud, Setu, & Synchronized Chaos.

My thanks to the respective editors.

Neo-Mimeo Editions
Nualláin House Publishers
Digital Press Project
Inquire at
nuallainhousepublishers@gmail.com

The beguine begins

In his lonely room
he sings the songs
of Cole Porter to
the wall. 24/7 in the
modern tongue, in
the old, night & day.

Quel J-L P?

Whatever happened
to Jean-Luc Ponty?

Did someone get
his name confused

with the starship
captain & beam

him up on to the
USS Enterprise?

desires

wishing words were
places to
be
mapped
& he
had cartographic skills

Curtains

There are things I miss from childhood, but, in the main, they are not childish things.

A single mountain, a dormant volcano, Taranaki Maunga, configured similarly to Mt. Fuji but with its own mythology. The Māori believe that he was once part of a family with the other three volcanoes that inhabit the center of the island, hundreds of kilometers away. That he fought with them, ran away, & the path he took is now the Whanganui River.

More myth, my mythology, before that. The mountain range that "struts the backbone of the land" as I wrote in an early 60s poem. The Southern Alps / Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, growing up with it as one horizon, a wall that both extended & closed in sight.

& I remember the Aurora Australis, Tahu-nui-ā-Rangi, seen later, once only, above & southerly on a road that ran from the end of the suburb where I lived in Wellington down to the sea. Seen just after a dusk that took two hours to disintegrate, to traverse that span between day & night.

That is the trigger for the other memories, because here there is little twilight. Too close to the equator. Dusk - if you could call it that - is a brief entr'acte. A switch is flicked. End of story. No twilight's last gleaming.

I wonder if it's a compression, because that is the thing I do miss from childhood, the extension of time, how you could explore the entire world between sunup & sundown. Wake up, & the end of the day was too far away to see.

Now, it's wake up, blink, & the day is gone.

Ambit ions

Using a
locator
spell, I
track down
my absent
imagination

& find it is
currently
a charged
particle
in the queue
waiting to

audition
for Ameri-
can Idol.

Robespierre resurfaces

It was a
temporal re-
gression
from which
he returned
singing the
Marseillaise
between mouth-
fuls of an egg
& lettuce sand-
wich. Arch-
ival footage
shows there
were times
when he had
all four feet
off the
ground.

A / small town / in North Queensland

Morning is announced by the
raucous flight – visible in that
angular portion of the study
window not blocked by trees

or houses or a power pole –
of either a top-dressing plane
spreading fertilizer across the
close-by sugarcane fields, or a

large group of red-tailed black
cockatoos moving between
their favored eucalypts. One
or the other. Never together.

the underground economy

The contractor
insisted on cash

so I gave him

I fell into a
blazing ring of fire.

Oh Carol

It was a
night just
right for
singing
Neil Sedaka
songs. No
wonder
he had
Leonard
Cohen on
his mind.

He

His life was a
goal-less drawer.

He thought of sushi
as a raw shark test.

He thought abstract was
a bodybuilder's bible.

He hurled insults
from the snidelines.

Because

of my Anglophile education in New Zealand, there are vast chunks of U.S. writing that I have never explored. Unlike Bob Dylan's Mr Jones, I don't think I have read any of F. Scott Fitzgerald's books; Faulkner I cannot read – which aligns him with Australia's Patrick White & Greece's Nikos Kazantzakis; Thomas Wolfe I tried after reading Kerouac's The Town & The City but couldn't get (in to) him. I have never read – which might make me unique on the planet – To Kill a Mockingbird.

Perhaps it has to do with the absence of prescribed cultural antecedents (though much of it has been shown to me as Hollywood movies) & so I have no reference points. There are exceptions, most of them self-subscribed. Moby Dick led me to Melville. Poe & Hawthorne I came to through a liking for fantasy. I've read all the great U.S. crime writers & still love the genre. Whitman's two great poems to Lincoln opened up the marvelous Leaves of Grass. The New American Poetry led me backwards to Williams & Rexroth & Patchen as well as forwards.

So, confessional time. In my seventh decade I am reading Thoreau for the first time, Cape Cod, picked up at the recent local second-hand Book-fest.

& I'm liking it.

Dictum

It is when words fall
that they lose their im-

pact. Must remain in
the air for more than

a second or two, cling-
ing to clothing or twist-

ing upwards in the way
that cigarette smoke does.

Articles

I like using articles to end a
line. Sometimes an article
of faith, sometimes of clothing. &

occasionally a particle of speech
to give the space between lines
that extra bit of *frisson*. It is a

continuity, the way forward, not
the end of the line that some
flat-earthers seem to think it is.

Nijinski reminisces

Exuberance
is in an eye
much more

beholden
to the magic
of the mo-

ment than to
the pattern
of the dance.

Amnesiac

He kept his balance in a
small corner of his inner
ear for days like this.
The fishing-poles are
hung with ribbons. Some

sort of festival, though
the catch & the crowd
are small. The faithful
wait for a miracle; but
plenty is in poor supply

this year due to the pesti-
cide runoff from the sugar-
cane farms that cover the
countryside. He paused to
let an ambulance go past.

Parsing Fu Xi

When killing is the
dominant theory
surviving, the Chinese
Book of Changes –
which closely simu-
lates the look &
feel of natural plush
toys – gives one the

ability to ensure that
when they lift a box
they can easily tell
if the box is empty
or full of tsunamis
&/or meteor showers.

A Night at the Opera

Place the main stress
on vocal display. For all
practical purposes
light travels in

straight lines, too fine
to be detected under
a microscope. Is
therefore secondary,

a mineral deposit
stretching out beyond
Pluto, or a spherical
cloud of comets

sometimes foregone
in order to achieve
an objective. Dancing
may also play a part.

The Gift

Supposing it to be
the proper charm
I spell it out. But
maybe my pro-
nunciation or a

shift in meaning
of a keyword
has rendered it in-
operable. So instead
of the largesse I

had hoped
I have only these
small fragments to
bring to you. There is
still a little sense

to them, some
miscellaneous
magic. But, perhaps
if you were to
breathe on them. . . .

According to Leibniz

When the mojo is
working, ivory
can be found
within the pith of
sugarcane. It
is said to be
environmentally
friendly, lighter
than air, can be
posted without an
envelope. Only
those Letters of
a Portuguese Nun
are a poignant
exception, but
even they display
a similar charge,
obey the same
mass magnitude.
In summer, when
the louvers are
left open & the
songs of the no
longer endangered
species float in
from the desert,
it is the best of
all possible worlds.

The Roberta Flack CD

In the evening, in
between the hisses
of the lawn sprinkler
on one side & the
air conditioner on
the other (where

some southerners
have moved in &
are having trouble
adapting to the heat)
L. puts a Roberta
Flack CD on &

in the evening
Suzanne takes my
hand & leads me
to a place near
the river where
there is otherwise

silence.

Meadow Saffrons

(A translation of Guillaume Apollinaire's Les Colchiques)

The meadow is poisonous but pretty in autumn
The cows grazing there
are slowly poisoning themselves
Meadow saffron the color of your eye-shadow of
lilacs

flower there your eyes are like that flower
Violet like the eye-shadow & like the autumn
& for your eyes my life slowly poisons itself

School children come noisily
dressed in their smocks & playing harmonicas
They pick the meadow saffrons which are like
mothers

Daughters of their daughters & the color of your
eyelids
which flutter like flowers caught in a crazy
wind

The cowherd sings very softly
whilst the slow lowing cows abandon
this great meadow ill-flowered by the autumn

Meanwhile, in a galaxy not that far away

Last night The Empire
Strikes Back, & a shot of
Yoda resting his 800-year-
old chin on the hand grip
of his walking stick. &

today I am sitting with
my weary chin on the
handle of my walking
stick, waiting for the plane
to take us to Sydney, five

years after I last flew. In
between, faulty (knees +
hearing + breathing). & no
holograms around to en-
able me to use The Force.

& on the flight south

I find in the seat-back pocket in front of me a finger-sized bar of milk chocolate, & The Road, a book by Cormac McCarthy. Though tempted, I leave the chocolate where it is, but take the book to take home with me. There it will be placed at the back of a queue which already includes the last half-dozen Lucas Davenport novels by John Sandford which I am re-reading & a number of other crime novels picked up at remainder prices in the (almost) local Big W department store.

Dolmens

The light the moon lays
down on the pavement. Faint
footprint or bleached skull.
Enough to see, not to see
by. Small particles exist as
talismans. Talismen? The
night around, the moon
is part of it. Paving is
basedrop, solid to the
touch. Trees are cutouts,
substance only by impli-
cation. Cannot be touched,
cannot be solid. The moon
a round, the night is apart
from it. Neither seen. Neu-
trinos passing. A footprint
gleaming as it fluoresces
in the skull. Small talis-
man, past article of faith.

The Virtue of Crowds

Left alone I would
run out of excuses.

It's a by-product of
staying too long in

the one place. That's
the virtue of crowds.

Swept along with no
idea of where I'm go-

ing, not really caring,
too busy sharing other

people's destinations.
So pick any arbitrary

point to turn even if
still surrounded.

Finally apologizing
if really necessary.

Demeaning the Dramaturg

We will have to wait
for the second act be-

fore anything of import
happens. The open-

ing is purely scene-
setting, inserting a

whiff of color to whet
the tongue, a round of

self-aggrandizement
to pleasure the author.

Mark Young was born in Aotearoa / New Zealand but now lives in a small town in North Queensland in Australia. He has been publishing poetry for over sixty-five years, & is the author of around eighty books, primarily text poetry but also including speculative fiction, vispo, non-fiction, & art history. His most recent book is synecdoche, from Sandy Press.

