

Mr Symes Addresses the Book Launch

His approach to the stage has the hint
of swaggering dance about it,
head bent low,
contentment swollen in his paunch,
self-satisfaction sweltering a halo,
the seasoned wood-carved gameshow smile
ready to meet the imminent applause.

There is something beyond praise
in this clapping—a hunger
or an expression of power
that cuts and shapes one's image
no matter what is said or done.

But the man in the Hawaiian shirt
is measured and cool, armed
with a few ice-breaking jokes
and the eternal in-house critic,
a kind of paranoid literary Columbo
who scuffles suspiciously
across his mindscape and taps
a cigar on his cranium
every time he threatens a wrong move.

Julian Zytник