Practicing for My Defence

The Devil’s Advocate, dressed as the mailman, lives in my building, holds open the door for me while I check my mail, asks me about my thesis.

I tell him I’m “doing” my master’s in English, knowing he won’t quite get it if I tell him too much.

“Well, what’s it about?”

“I’m writing prose and poetry in Cree and English.”

“Well, what’s it about?” he persists.

“I’m writing about linguistic diversity and why that’s important and the shame and tragedy that so few care and the wisdom we stand to lose
if we let it get down to one
colonial language like English.”

“Well, that sounds pretty subjective,”
he says, assessing my argument.

“Yeah, I guess it is,” I concede,
readying myself for the defence.

“Well, if it’s so subjective
how can you support it?”

“Have you ever taken a
graduate course?” I ask,
feeling the need to take
a cheap shot. I’m on a roll now.
“You betcha, I’ve got lots of support.
Just because something’s subjective
doesn’t make it any less valuable
than something that’s objective.
Just because something’s got a pile
of numbers and graphs and statistics
behind it doesn’t make it more
valid. That’s quantitative
research. Something that’s subjective is qualitative; sure it’s subjective but it’s artistic, more expressive.”
I follow him up
the stairs because he’s in 303
and I’m in 305. I manage
to distract him, ask him about
the weather and whether
or not he’s ever wiped out
on the blasted ice
when he delivers the mail.