

M I

P O

Matt Shears

Were you to bump into Matt Shears near the punch bowl at an uncomfortable party, and, to break the awkward silence, you were to ask, "So, what is your favorite kind of fruit or vegetable?" he might respond "the blueberry" and "perhaps the yam." He is a sporadic but committed reader, currently involved with Claudia Rankine, G.F.W. Hegel, Mary Crow Dog, Ronald Johnson, Alan Moore, Alexander Kojeve, Friedrich Nietzsche and C.S. Giscombe. He lives with his wife, the fiction writer Aimee Phan, and their three cats, Beelzebub, Beaujolais and Positano, in escalating disarray, as they are in the process of moving to the Bay Area.

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THE INTERVIEW

Please describe your favorite poem or kind of poetry.

I like poems that strive for originality without slipping into preciosity or self-congratulatory cleverness. I think poems are an intellectual experience, as opposed to an anti-intellectual experience, but not at the expense of laughter or silence. Mind/Body dualism is so 17th century. By "originality" I mean something along the lines of revealing the latent and/or overlooked/unexamined/repressed in Experience in whatever form these things request of the writer. In short, I think the Martians should rearrange the furniture, and that the Poet shouldn't know if he/she wakes or sleeps.

If you could spend a day with a living poet you admire, what would you do together? What might a passerby overhear?

I'd like to think we'd go hiking somewhere. Hopefully, passersby would overhear laughter.

If you were able to place poetry in the world where it does not seem prominent, how would it behave there?

It would not behave.

Where will we see you and your work in five years?

I'm not much for extended forecasts, but I am looking forward to finding out!

Tell us a story: what drew you to poetry in the first place? Why did you start writing?

I wrote my first poem after my grandfather died. But I don't really think that is what drew me to poetry. I mean, you can't go around hoping for important people in your life to kick it so you can squeeze a poem out of the deal. I learned that poetry is about "company," and by that I mean the company you keep, your own "news that stays news," from Claudia Keelan. She introduced me to William Carlos Williams, and from then on I started looking for other friends—living, dead and anywhere in between.



Which relationship is more important:
a) poetry and politics or b) poetry and philosophy? Why?

I think that poetry is always already politicized. That is to say, whether conscious or unconscious, overt or implied, the Poet's creation by, involvement with, and production of language is a political happening. On the other hand, insofar as "philosophy" suggests intellectualism, wisdom, investigation, analysis and/or inquiry, I would say that Poetry (sorry, Hallmark!) aspires toward this condition without wanting to be resolved in it, or to be reduced to a system. Ronald Johnson's *Ark*, for example, is a philosophical text that Philosophy proper couldn't reduce to purely rational discourse. At its margins, philosophy gravitates toward this definition of poetry; Heraclitus, Nietzsche's Zarathustra, and Blanchot's work come to mind.

THE POEM perpetual I of its erasure

perpetual I of its erasure, where another.
when in the dark.
when they were becoming, original
aboriginal
had the symphony broken down.
nothing could have been further from,
rediscovering discovery.
in a field.
that was alphabetizing
alpha, the aleph
when it was homogenous.
would it open, into different darkneses.

it could not situate, to ask
a question that was wanting there.
there were no, interruptions.
eruptions.
things that could never be falling.
never acquired.
things that could never be not acquired.
the bells, the bell tower.
the bells, the bell tower.
when the expedition set out, if speaking.
never an arrangement.
when/where never fallen.

the closed rank, concealed
its inception, what bridged beyond it
from within it.
again it would arrive, and again.
each time destroying nothing—
where the beginnings of its dream
arose in separations.
reparations.
she turned toward him, among the fields.
what lifted away from there
in its representations.
she turned away from him, among the
fields.

nothing more gruesome contained
anything fuller than
what had been replaced,
superseded.
the architecture of it;
coming down, the vortex of vision
all hail, block letters
belles lettres, in its anti-bellum
nomenclature.
human nature, legislature.
that this could not be photographed.
do you mind if we ask you some questions.

there could not have been, a “situation—“
while nothing allowed history.
as they were turning into crystal / flowers.
the dance that had been breaking,
(in) the duration of mimicry
the laurels crying—
where things were being salvaged.
among the cries,
the echo of those who had not been
descried so lovingly.
as though a life, a crystal slowly.
where the day had become encrypted.

that they were collateral,
and lovingly willing. an insurance policy
that was gathering, in the clouds
that were remaking everything, slowly.
lowly, the most holy.
the time that had been posited
as use value, the usefulness they were
loving willingly.
in banners that spread and spread.
in anthems that caught in the wind,
that caught in the throat,
where reasons that were not necessary.

perpetual I of its erasure

the broken cars played.
in the mind of the broken biosphere.
where the broken cars were playing,
in the severance pay
that had filled up its "territory."
its "biosphere" was not hermeneutic,
hermetic, when Hermes had been.
later, the broken mercury.
had it been more like a holiday.
in the choice that had not.
with its potential/ideal
somewhat reacting/leaching forward.

granules flared, (rocket's red)
without redness, what suspended a name.
in an otherwise euphoric.
phantasmagoric. euphonic.
that the death-in-life had been reversed,
where the reversal remained
unclosed, sonic, the redness of it.
when it had been superseded.
as though a tangible wish,
an assembly line of imaginary tulips / ships
filled with a defunct language.
the 1,001st word, and so on.

one that was red that was crying
in the aftermath
where the fallout, the fallout shelter
had driven away.
where the drawing up / drawing out was named.
they had been trained.
where one that was red that was
crying out, had mistaken.
its position(s).
although nothing more could fit, on the map.
had the excavation.
it was saying itself, as it was disappearing.

in my catacombs, the complete explosion
where birds slung outside perception,
where they perched.
in perches that had been clung in flux,
where so Heraclitan.
as though the Titans had reversed / reserved fate.
and birds that flung forward, into my eye.
o my catacombs, that had shattered its love.
such that flight could not depart.
again in the rain, the coming of the train.
in the interim of speech.
had there been the ease of a glance, then.

THE END

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