

from A CONFUSION OF MARYS

Rupert M Loydell

A CONFUSION OF MARYS

'With your long blonde hair and your eyes of blue
The only thing I ever got from you
Was sorrow, sorrow'
– David Bowie, 'Sorrow'

as if

a true portrait

sorrows known sorrows shared

solitude

swords in shoulders

seven sorrows

seven moments of despair

venerated images

statues carried everywhere

a madonna in the window

graffiti on the wall

neon halo in the twilight

shadows in the square

a confusion of stories ideas and myth

stone tears moving eyes

as if as if

everyone else is a non-believer

ANNUNCIATION MANIFESTO

(Rose M. Barron's 'Madonna Tableaux')

'We cannot live in a world that is interpreted for us
by others. An interpreted world is not a home.'

– Hildegard von Bingen, *Selected Writings*

Outside boundaries of faith and spirituality,
the process of performing is important.
I am interested in symbols of excess,
the handcrafted construction of sets,
superficial and cultural constructs,
unexpected moments, imperfection
and humanness juxtaposed with
religious and sacred iconography.
I am re-inventing and reclaiming,
examining my identity as a woman
and twisting expectations of
what a woman represents.

CUT-UP ANNUNCIATION

Mystery is essential,
extremes are essential.

Spirit into matter:
the paradox resolved,

state of grace
the form of the contract,

the distance from faith
a seed of hope planted.

Some of the loveliest paintings

are meditations on absence.

KINDRED SPIRITS

after Chiharu Shiota

To be filled with time, to be filled with time, an empty canvas made from white dreams, her bed warm with spider love and silence, desire and song. A wedding will not take place but the empty past is there for all to see. Tomorrow pours through a slot in time, ready to fill the future, festooned in desire. Her bed is extra large, warm with silence and love; ash hangs in charcoal music. Sleep tight. My nightmare is an abandoned stage: angel long gone, adrift in a boat, Mary's silhouette outlined and full of dreams. My room is filled with breath, pouring down the wall, ready to run away after we have packed small bags and planned our escape. I am knotted tight in the corner, waiting to be filled with air among the shadows, where images pile up. Webs of meaning and association, hidden steps and messages we cannot read, linear shadows and sleeping souls; kindred spirits in a place we are not allowed to visit.

WHAT HAVE I DONE?

'I am either owning up to myself as the cause of such an action, qualifying my causative contribution, or defending myself against the attribution, perhaps locating the cause elsewhere.'

– Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*

A curious way of tidily containing...
kind of well shaped yet loose, unfinished.
Was it the story you were expecting?

What is Mary's role in the scheme of things?
We can know ourselves only incompletely,
can never fully choose or understand.

Perhaps we fashion our world view
according to key players we come across
or find. One could certainly look.

The madonna drawn over the bride
drawn over the matador next to the horse

drawn on the poster pasted on the wall:

layers of meaning and memory,
eyes everywhere, looking through.
It's hard to believe for long.

You walk past, disregarding stone looks
and troubled apparitions, choosing
instead your own version of events,

unwilling to take the blame
or accept yourself as damaged goods,
each moment like the first.

KEEPING IT IN PERSPECTIVE

Art criticism conjectures the snail in Francesco del Cossa's *Annunciation* as a visual balance but also as indicative of 15th Century self-awareness, the flatness of the scene, the knowledge that Nazareth was not at all like this.

Mary cannot even see the angel, her view is blocked by the pillar which symbolises God in the room. The city beyond, painted in detailed perspective, could not be built, but looks impressive.

Architects and planners are discussing new ways to create multigenerational living, or at least offer the possibility to those who may not desire it or perhaps know what an extended family is.

There is no end to the progress of knowledge and science, although funding is hard to come by. Every research meeting I go to interests me and I theoretically relocate my work. But I have been to too many meetings, changed my ideas too many times.

We keep coming back to the fact that arts improve the quality of life although that cannot be substantiated or statistically proven, and I do not want my poetry to work through empathy or ego.

There is no end to the ways this story can be told.

'A Confusion of Marys', a sequence of poems and prose poems in progress, considers, writes back to and reimagines, the religious myth of the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary, in terms of re-versioning, accumulation, variation, and ekphrasis. Many paintings and photographs depicting the annunciation were used as research and inspiration, including works by Fra Angelico, Andy Warhol, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Francis Picabia, Lino Manocci and Rose M. Barron. The work is part of an ongoing exploration of this material and associated themes such as colour, religious art, Renaissance art, spiritual/alien intervention and intrusion into the human realm, symbolism, and contemporary art. Previous publications centred on these topics include *Dear Mary* (Shearsman, 2017) and *Impossible Songs*, a collaboration with Sarah Cave (Analogue Flashback, 2017).

Rupert Loydell is Senior Lecturer in the School of Writing and Journalism at Falmouth University, a writer, editor and abstract artist. He has many books of poetry in print, including *Dear Mary* (Shearsman, 2017) and *The Return of the Man Who Has Everything* (Shearsman 2015); has edited anthologies such as *Yesterday's Music Today* (co-edited with Mike Ferguson, Knives Forks and Spoons Press 2014), *Smartarse* (The Knives Forks and Spoons Press, 2011), *From Hepworth's Garden Out* (Shearsman, 2010) and *Troubles Swapped for Something Fresh: manifestos and unmanifestos* (Salt, 2010); and has contributed to *Punk & Post-Punk*, *Journal of Writing and Creative Practice*, *Musicology Research*, *New Writing*, *Axon*, *Text*, *English*, *Revenant* and *Journal of Visual Art Practice*.