

The Singaporean Poet

Late reply to a writer that asked, "What are our poets like?"

Let's begin with an elder who called our colonisers
 "perfidious albion" and wrote like Yeats to outdo them.
 The religious poets, both old and young, so full
 of pity for everybody else unwilling to meet heaven.
 The ones for whom obscurity is a metaphor
 for the closet. The ones that shun the topic of selfhood
 because their lives are boring; with no interest
 in parsing individual suffering and its transcendence.
 The lyrical flâneurs, the masters of irony
 and detachment, the intellectuals with their love
 of form and their ability to convey just about
 everything and nothing at all.
 Confessionals with their scars and unsteady hearts.
 The multi-hyphenates on social media, spreading
 the good word about their good work, their artistry
 and their relevance, locally and abroad.
 Champions of minority languages, proudly
 indignant for taking second place to the lingua franca;
 fanning the flame of their mother tongue
 in the hearts and minds of the young.
 Migrants who remain determined to matter.
 The rebel and the marginalised, preaching
 to the converted so they never feel alone;
 or howling in the echo chamber of themselves,
 walled in by censorship and indifference.
 The ones who refuse to perform their work
 and those who choose only to perform.
 Those who never publish or have stopped,
 given up, moved away; who nonetheless write
 with or without readers to love or condemn them.
 The poets who are some-of-the-above or none-at-all.
 The poet for whom the poet is but an image
 amongst images; who crosses the mountain
 of the ego and never looks back;

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leaving words behind like the moon still irradiating
that long way ahead into an infinite morning –
this poet doesn't exist.

Cyril Wong