

Classic Poetry Series

Matthew Rohrer
- poems -

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Matthew Rohrer(1970)

Matthew Rohrer (born 1970) is an American poet.

Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Rohrer was raised in Oklahoma. He earned a B.A. from the University of Michigan (where he won a Hopwood Award for poetry) and a Master of Fine Arts degree in poetry from the University of Iowa.

His first book of poetry, *A Hummock in the Malookas* (1995), was selected by Mary Oliver for the 1994 National Poetry Series. In 2005, his collection *A Green Light* was shortlisted for the International Griffin Poetry Prize. James Tate said of *A Green Light*, "There are poems in *A Green Light* that can break your heart with their unexpected twists and turns. You think you know where you are and then you don't and it is inexplicably sad. You experience some kind of emotion that you can't even name, but it's deep and real. That's the power of Matthew Rohrer's new poems."

He was poetry editor for *Fence* magazine.

He lives in Brooklyn, New York and teaches at New York University.

Childhood Stories

They learned to turn off the gravity in an auditorium
and we all rose into the air,
the same room where they demonstrated
pow-wows and prestidigitation.

But not everyone believed it.
That was the most important lesson
I learned—that a truck driven by a dog
could roll down a hill at dusk
and roll right off a dock into a lake
and sink, and if no one believes you
then what is the point
of telling them wonderful things?

I walked home from the pow-wow
on an early winter night in amazement:
they let me buy the toy tomahawk!
As soon as I got home I was going
to hit my sister with it, but I didn't know this.

Matthew Rohrer

Credo

I believe there is something else
entirely going on but no single
person can ever know it,
so we fall in love.

It could also be true
that what we use everyday
to open cans was something much nobler
, that we'll never recognize.

I believe the woman sleeping beside me
doesn't care about what's going on outside,
and her body is warm with trust
which is a great beginning.

Matthew Rohrer

Epithalamium

In the middle garden is the secret wedding,
that hides always under the other one
and under the shiny things of the other one. Under a tree
one hand reaches through the grainy dusk toward another.
Two right hands. The ring is a weed that will surely die.

There is no one else for miles,
and even those people far away are deaf and blind.
There is no one to bless this.
There are the dark trees, and just beyond the trees.

Matthew Rohrer

Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence

I'm writing upside down with the space pen,
listening to the rain.

My wife is writing about the Black Death
and its effects on Art, and asks me
"Where are your pants?"
They are on the floor in front
of our new couch, where I arrange them
to spell out L-O-V-E. A vegetable,
mystic thrill runs through me—
the couch is something's antenna. It bears
good love to us here over the laundromat.

I'm waiting for the Light Beings
to remove my roof.
Our bedroom is lousy with clothes
spelling out greetings if anyone's up there
who can read English.

Matthew Rohrer

The Amaranth

is an imaginary flower that never fades.
The amaranth is blue with black petals,
it's yellow with red petals,
it's enormous and grows into the shape
of a girl's house,
the seeds nestle high in the closet
where she hid a boy.

The boy and his bike flee
the girl's parents from the tip
of the leaves, green summer light
behind the veins.

The amaranth is an imaginary flower
in the shape of a girl's house
dispensing gin and tonics
from its thorns, a succulent.

This makes the boy's bike steer
off-course all summer, following
the girl in her marvelous car,
the drunken bike.

He was a small part of summer,
he was summer's tongue.

Matthew Rohrer

There Is Absolutely Nothing Lonelier

There is absolutely nothing lonelier
than the little Mars rover
never shutting down, digging up
rocks, so far away from Bond street
in a light rain. I wonder
if he makes little beeps? If so
he is lonelier still. He fires a laser
into the dust. He coughs. A shiny
thing in the sand turns out to be his.

Matthew Rohrer

Your Book

Strangers came into the apartment
walked right to the bookshelf
to spill beer on your book.

Your book on a hook dangling off the roof
attracted a white horse to the door.

Your book emitted physical waves
into the air, drying my hair.

You climbed a tree to write
your book where you wouldn't be seen.
There was no tree there
until you made it.

The shimmering leaves seemed to be powered by light.
The tree shuffled this light onto strings.
The strings hung from the air.
The printers sewed your book together with them.

Matthew Rohrer