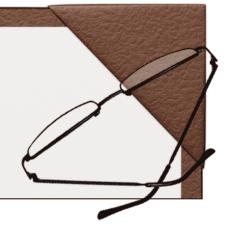# Parliamentary Poet Laureate

POETRY CONNECTION: LINK UP WITH CANADIAN POETRY

Aisha Sasha John (1980 –   ), is a Toronto poet and dancer. Her first book of poetry, *The Shining Material*, was published in 2011 by Bookthug Press. Her current manuscript is called *The Book of You* and a selection of it was published as a chapbook called *Gimme yr little quiet.* There is a useful interview with Aisha on the Bookthug website. In the fall of 2013 she will be in an artist residency in Morocco.

Poem for discussion:

sensational enough

unpublished

I said that I would do some things.
I said a lot of things.
I don't care.
I don't care what I said.
All I care about's
the softening
of my glorious
bod
whose shoulder activity
culminates on stage in a flap -
I said I look like a frigging bird.
and all the pores I've had are full.
and all the purses keep their crumbs.
I said
keep your crumbs, purse.
what is this. I said purse you keep your crumbs.
and as I want to be boiled, I am boiled.
and as I want to be needed so too that.
and as I sit here radiation oncology good afternoon Aisha speaking
yeah that.

as I sit here yeah that and the people calling me
are dying and I'm dying
too but mostly I open my cheeks

are we going to hope on
are we going to like salmon
spawn red
curved along our neck as we breed and die as we breed and die
is the beginning here where the last time I got flowered
I flowered myself
and as you are gentle and as I am'nt
and as you are gentler and as I am not not n-not
gentle and I'll never be quiet

I was worried
about what sensations I would accumulate before I expired
which means what I was experiencing say the grace
of sight
and my glorious bod jumping, say
were not
sensational
enough
and then you call me first, tell me a half story, I put you on hold cuz I'm working
good afternoon radiation oncology
and then you stop, and I call you back to hear
why exactly you cried in your voice lesson and I still
gave my broken stapler to the only male admin assistant to fix

I don't know why being
isn't enough for us.
do you want to come to me and I will pay for our glee
with an afterwards longing.
I can hold up your waist, you're light, I'll argue
I am soft, you're sharp, I win, you
prickle. I am writing about you until I die and then I'll
look at us some more.
I have the most fun in your face.
I am always on the telephone
and I will wear the poem

around my waist
and lavender oil
on our temples
to be tempered
holding your superior and impossible
waist
in a black-owned bar on bathurst street.

tyger tyger
stuffed and wee
as your nest of sticky notes
cordons you
you tyger I don't love you
but I do want those sticky notes
to put alongside leaves
who knows I might never, never again read.
now that I know that I know what I know
I think that what I would
I think what I would like to do is
what I want to do is
sing

For discussion:

1. How does a writer/poet "fight against the dark"?

2. What are some other poems that deal with this topic?

3. What part does theatre play in performance poetry?

4. What is the difference between "poems of the stage" and "poems of the page"?

5. How does a poet prepare to deliver a "performance poem"?

Writing prompts:

1. Compose a list of "notes to the self". Notes on things learned, things to investigate, things to feel sorry about, things to change. Turn your list into a poem.

2. Make a list of comparisons: I am gentle/you are not; I am a worrier/you are not etc. Find a thread in these lists to compose a poem.

3. Open a newspaper or check on line for today's news. Compose a poem from the headlines or bits of information that catch your eye.

4. Find a news story and place yourself in the center of the narrative. Become the person/ animal/ geographical location. Write from this perspective.

5. Find lines from a poem that is a personal favourite. Use these lines to inspire your piece of writing by
    - using as an epitaph;
    - using in the context of the poem itself.

(Notes prepared by Terry Ann Carter)