

Pegs Jars Keys Gaps Nets

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authorised theft

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The AUTHORISED THEFT series of poetry chapbooks is published by the International Poetry Studies Institute (IPSI) based in the Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra. The first collection of five chapbooks: Cassandra Atherton's *Pegs*, Paul Hetherington's *Jars*, Paul Munden's *Keys*, Jen Webb's *Gaps* and Jordan Williams' *Nets* resulted from discussions connected to IPSI's Prose Poetry Project, inaugurated by IPSI in late 2014. IPSI supports and promotes collaborative and collegiate poetic work in a variety of forms, and encourages the collaboration of poets with other artists – such as Caren Florance who has designed this chapbook series.



Cassandra Atherton



Dr Cassandra Atherton is an award-winning writer and scholar. She has been awarded a Harvard Visiting Scholar's position from 2015–2016 and was a Visiting Fellow at Sophia University, Tokyo in 2014. She has published eight books and has two poetry books forthcoming in 2015: *Trace* with illustrations by Phil Day (Finlay Lloyd) and *Exhumed* (Grand Parade). She is the current poetry editor of *Westerly Magazine*. Cassandra was a judge of the Australian Book Review Elizabeth Jolley Award in 2014 and was invited to judge the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards Prize for Poetry and the Lord Mayor's Prize for Poetry in 2015.

Pegs

Research Background



This chapbook encourages the defamiliarisation of the quotidian by taking the common, household peg and presenting it in a range of new guises in prose poetry. Ultimately, this focus on the peg and “peg prose poetry” aims to demonstrate beauty in the unremarkable. The peg also works as a lynchpin in the way it links, and is linked to, the quotidian in the other chapbooks in this collection.

This is part of a practice-led research project that focuses on the way in which poetry can lend wonder to the mundane.

Research Contribution

Wallace Stevens described in his poetry the “malady of the quotidian” and the “dull weight of everyday regiment” (1997: 81, 449). However, Siobhan Phillips argues that Stevens also celebrated the “possibility of fresh invention” by calling the quotidian a “health”, a rejuvenating “over and over of renewed mornings” (2009: 4). This turn from viewing the mundane as tedious, to contemplating the every day as rich and memorable, is a significant shift in scholarship. In this way, the writer is said to explore the way in which attending to the mundane can assist in confronting existential truths. Indeed, Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (2007: 1) argues that the ordinary can only be understood via the phenomenon of the extraordinary, and vice-versa. Prose poetry is the perfect form in which to explore these preoccupations as it can be argued that, “The poem uses a prose style to play up an extraordinary situation, or on an apparently mundane story that becomes wildly stylised” (Scottish Poetry Library: n.p.).

Research Significance

This chapbook challenges the western tradition's bias against the mundane and ordinary (Rainey et al 2013) and advocates for a poetry of the quotidian. The peg is at once familiar and yet defamiliarised in these prose poems. In addition to its usual purpose as an object to hold clothes on the line, "peg" also stands for a measure of alcohol and a verb for "throw", among other things. The linking of five chapbooks of prose poems on the quotidian, encourages a dialectic evaluation of the "kind of radiance in dailiness" (Rainey et al: n.p.).

Works cited

Gosetti-Ferencei, Jennifer Anna 2007 *The Ecstatic Quotidian: Phenomenological Sightings in Modern Art and Literature*. University Park Pennsylvania State University Press

Phillips, Siobhan 2009 *The Poetics of the Everyday: Creative Repetition in Modern American Verse*, New York Columbia University Press

Rainey, Lawrence, Alex Beaumont and Benjamin Madden 2013 "Ordinary/Everyday/Quotidian", Centre for Modern Studies, University of York, https://www.york.ac.uk/modern_studies/research/quotidian Accessed 25 August 2015

Scottish Poetry Library, SPL Guide to Prose Poetry, <http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/sites/default/files/FORM%20prose%20poems.pdf> Accessed 25 August 2015

Stevens, Wallace 1997 *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson, New York NY: Library of America

Previously published

“Yellow” in Cassandra Atherton, *Trace*, 2015, Braidwood: Finlay Lloyd Press



Paul Hetherington

Paul Hetherington is Professor of Writing in the Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra and head of the International Poetry Studies Institute (IPSI) there. He has published nine full-length collections of poetry and won the 2014 Western Australian Premier's Book Awards (poetry). He was a finalist in the 2014 international Aesthetica Creative Writing Competition (poetry), shortlisted for the 2013 Montreal International Poetry Prize and shortlisted for the 2013 Newcastle Poetry Prize. He is one of the founding editors of the international online journal *Axon: Creative Explorations* and a founding editorial committee member of the **Meniscus** journal. In 2002 he was the recipient of a Chief Minister's ACT Creative Arts Fellowship and he was awarded one of two places on the 2012 Australian Poetry Tour of Ireland. In 2014 he was awarded an Australia Council for the Arts Residency in the BR Whiting Studio in Rome.



Jars

Research Background

The poems included in my chapbook are part of a practice-led research project that explores ways in which “ordinary” things we know well in our quotidian lives, and which are chiefly and usually associated with practical functionality – such as jars – have a wide range of often hidden metaphorical investments and associations.

Research Contribution

Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ference writes that “modern poetry seems in part devoted to defending the margins of unknowability that surround the horizons of the known” (2007: 123). José Rodríguez Feo remarks in 1948 on the “mysterious relationship between the quotidian and the marvelous” (1986: 168). These comments develop Husserl’s phenomenological position that the world is never fully given in actuality, and emphasise how the “known” in quotidian life is, at least theoretically, only a small part of everything that may be known or perceived. This is an important strand of modern thought and modern poetics, further investigated in the creative works in my volume.

Research Significance

In producing creative work around the idea of “jars”, some of which range into broad issues about how we know, think and apprehend the world, my creative work explores the notion that the consideration of familiar things may provide various conduits into lateral ways of knowing not only things, but also ourselves and others; of discovering new veins of thought; and of identifying significances that we “know” but have been unable to otherwise articulate. The poems in this chapbook quiz our usual taxonomies, emphasising that these are often shadowed or haloed by a range of unexpected, sometimes mysterious associations, knowledges and investments.

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Gosetti-Ferencei, Jennifer Anna 2007 *The Ecstatic Quotidian: Phenomenological Sightings in Modern Art and Literature*, University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press

Stevens, Wallace and José Rodríguez Feo 1986 *Secretaries of the Moon: The Letters of Wallace Stevens & José Rodríguez Feo*, ed Beverly Coyle and Alan Filreis, Durham: Duke University Press

Paul Munden

Paul Munden is Postdoctoral Research Fellow (Poetry & Creative Practice) at the University of Canberra, where he is also Program Manager for the International Poetry Studies Institute (IPSI). He is General Editor of *Writing in Education* and *Writing in Practice*, both published by the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE), of which he is Director. He has worked as conference poet for the British Council and edited *Feeling the Pressure: poetry and science of climate change*. His collection *Asterisk* (smith|doorstop, 2011) combines poems with photographs (by Marion Frith) in exploring Shandy Hall, the former home of Laurence Sterne. *Analogue/Digital*, a volume of his new and selected poems, was published this year.

Keys

Research Background

The *Keys* poems represent one result of a collaborative research project in which unlineated poetic work was written to a brief (dictated in part by the group), to a schedule, and allowing a designer to control the final, published shape – things that poets traditionally avoid.

Research Contribution

Adrian Wanner states that the prose poem “is presented in a frame that invites the reader to regard the text as a poem.” (2003: 11). This notion of the frame, in contrast to poetic form (including that of free verse), questions the manner in which poetry is most effectively encountered, and the invitation that poetry makes for the reader to engage. With **Keys**,  framing seeks to equip the reader with a pre-verbal grasp of entering the individual poem’s world and, perhaps, the hidden corridors between the poems in the set – even between the sets of the collaborative project as a whole.

Research Significance

If the prose poem (and the prose poem sequence in particular), eschewing poetry’s more familiar enticements, can persuade readers to engage with curious fragments and find pleasure in finding connections between them, this points to a revitalising, fluid exchange between writer and reader, endorsing Linda Black’s assertion that “the prose poem encourages thoughts to be continuous, to twist and turn, hold themselves up short, or open out into a broader perspective, sometimes travelling at great speed.” (Black 2012: 2)

Works cited

Black, Linda 2012 "Begin with a Hook", *Magma* 54

Wanner, Adrian 2003 *Russian Minimalism: From the Prose Poem to the Anti-Story*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press

Jen Webb

Jen Webb is Distinguished Professor of Creative Practice, and Director of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research in the Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Canberra. Her research focuses on the relationship between the world of art and the broader social world. Recent books include *Art and Human Rights: Contemporary Asian Contexts* (with C Turner, Manchester UP, 2016); the poetry/photography collaboration *Watching the World: Impressions of Canberra* (with P Hetherington, Blemish Books, 2015), and a poetry pamphlet titled *Stolen Stories, Borrowed Lines* (Mark Time Press, 2015). Jen is lead investigator on the ARC Discovery Project “Understanding creative excellence: A case study in poetry” and chief investigator on the ARC Discovery Project “Working the Field: Creative Graduates in Australia and China”.

Gaps

Research Background

Prose poetry is a hybrid, even marginal, form that is of comparatively recent – 19th century, and particularly French Symbolist – origin, and associated both with

experimentation and subversion (Delville 1998). The prose poetry in this work is part of a wider project involving a number of writers who are experimenting with form, and whose content is occasionally subversive in that it eschews the solitary practice of most poetry, and deliberately attends to collaborative writing processes.

Research Contribution

The myth of isolation has long shaped both the work and the attitudes of contemporary poets (Pheby 2010). This project moves between collaborative and independent practice, as well as between poetic and prose modes, to review and refine creative practices and critical thinking about practice. It interrogates the “law of genre” (Derrida 1980) and explores ways of re-imagining ways of reading and understanding the lived world.

Research Significance

This work has yet to find its identity beyond the circle of participants in the prose poetry project, but locally among the members of the project – it has already **has** an impact on modes of seeing, writing and communicating both political and imagistic approaches to the work of poetry.

Works cited

Delville, Michael 1998 "Stephen Fredman's Poet's Prose: The Crisis In American Verse", *The Prose Poem: An International Journal*, 7 (n.p.)

Derrida, Jacques 1980 "The Law of Genre", *Glyph* 7: 202-32

Pheby, Alex 2010 "The Myth of Isolation: Its Effect on Literary Culture and Creative Writing as a Discipline", *Creative Writing: Teaching Theory & Practice* 2.1 (February): 51-58

Jordan Williams

Jordan Williams is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra. She has a PhD in Communication awarded for her creative thesis combining cultural theory and new media poetry to do with space, place and embodiment. She makes digital poetry in addition to teaching, supervising PhD students and carrying out research into writing, poetry and digital forms of both.

Nets

Research Background

Nets gather in, encase, ensnare, are powerful metaphors for the organization of contemporary life. But there is always the chance, fortunate or not depending on context, that something will slip through the net. The poems in this chapbook reflect the anxiety of those netted in everyday situations beyond their control: death, aging, mental illness, identity theft and so on. This practice-led project undertaken jointly with typographer and artist, Caren Florance, explores the outcome when the prose poem form and typographical manipulation of that form share a

conceptual basis, with both researchers employing the net metaphor in their creative practice.

Research Contribution

The prose poems themselves, as distinct from the typographical arrangement and design, are influenced by Bertolt Brecht and Charles Bukowski. Philip Thomson (2006: 226) writes of Brecht that “[h]is verse is characterized by everyday language and rhetorical phrasing.” Russell Harrison (1994: 111) describes Bukowski’s poetry as relying on metonymy rather than metaphor and argues that its power arises from this because “it does not stand for anything other than itself.” The predominance of everyday language and reliance on rhetoric in the net poems reflects both the anxiety of everyday capitalist life and the typically regular structures of physical nets. The danger in using predominantly metonymic language in prose poetry is that one can end up with a very short story rather than a recognizably poetic work and the research challenge in composition of the poems was to employ this everyday language to describe mainly everyday situations while achieving the “more” that is poetry. Florance’s arrangement of the text further challenges the status of the work as prose poetry through a layout that responds spatially to the net concept, thereby deconstructing most

of the poems into arrangements of single lines. The effect of the layout, however, heightens the feelings of anxiety engendered by the poems.

Research Significance

This chapbook manifests the materiality of poetry as an outcome of the collaboration between poet and visual artist. The poems employ prose poem form and prose language yet achieve a poetic expression of the anxieties of everyday life.

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Thomson, Philip 2006 "Brecht's poetry", in Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Harrison, Russell 1994 *Against the American Dream: Essays on Charles Bukowski*, Santa Rosa  Black Sparrow Press

IPSI: International Poetry Studies Institute

The International Poetry Studies Institute (IPSI) is part of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research, Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Canberra. IPSI conducts research related to poetry, and publishes and promulgates the outcomes of this research internationally. The institute also publishes poetry and interviews with poets, as well as related material, from around the world. Publication of such material takes place in IPSI's online journal *Axon: Creative Explorations* (www.axonjournal.com.au) and through other publishing vehicles, such as *Axon Elements*. IPSI's goals include working – collaboratively, where possible – for the appreciation and understanding of poetry, poetic language and the cultural and social significance of poetry. The institute also organises symposia, seminars, readings and other poetry-related activities and events.

CCCR: Centre for Creative and Cultural Research

The Centre for Creative and Cultural Research (CCCR) is IPSI's umbrella organisation and brings together staff, adjuncts, research students and visiting fellows who work on key challenges within the cultural sector and creative field. A central feature of its research concerns the effects of digitisation and globalisation on cultural producers, whether individuals, communities or organisations.