

Swinburne University of Technology

Dominique Hecq

Glitter

Biographical note

Dominique Hecq is Senior Lecturer and Research Leader in Writing at Swinburne University of Technology's Faculty of Higher Education (Australia). She has a PhD in literature and a background in French and Germanic languages, with qualifications in translating. She has published in the areas of literary studies, translation, creative writing, psychoanalysis, and pedagogy. With Russell Grigg and Craig Smith, she co-authored *Female Sexuality: The Early Psychoanalytic Controversies*. She is also the author of *The Book of Elsa* (a novel), *Magic*, *Mythfits* and *Noisy Blood* (fiction), *The Gaze of Silence*, *Good Grief*, *Couchgrass* (poetry) as well as two short plays (*One Eye Too Many*, and *Cakes & Pains*), performed respectively in 2001 and 2004. Her most recent award is The Martha Richardson Medal for poetry (2006). She was short-listed for the inaugural Blake Prize for Poetry (2008) and highly commended in its second year. *Out of Bounds* (Re.press) is her latest book. Email: dhecq@swin.edu.au

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Glitter

I rhyme to see myself
To set the darkness echoing
Seamus Heaney

We now live in our own house at the edge of the city: a luminous structure jutting out of a hill above the Merri Creek, with both sunlight and moonlight reflecting on stainless steel surfaces. It is a changeable house. Sometimes it feels safe as a church, and sometimes it shivers and creaks. In summer it stands its ground solidly deflecting the heat. In winter it rocks like a boat. What binds this house is the sky. From my fiction room I can see the city skyline slowly emerging from the night as lights are flicked on in offices. It is a house with its own integrity of life lived, dreamed and made.

It is now time to finish the book in which I sought the face of my child, the voice of my twin, the book in which I found the face of the moon and a disconcerting multiplicity of voices stirring the shadows all about—rumours that prised me from myself only to fade, restoring me to some clamour only to leave me dispossessed. With nothing in my hands but time. With time, yes, life went on. With time life went on as I watched my first born learning to organise it into *now*, *yesterday*, *tomorrow*. With time we made other children and our children made things. And I made the music I could no longer bear to listen to.

Why is white white?

Chalk, rice, zinc
 Crystal falls
 Limestone graves

Phosphorus
 Lightless body
 Alabaster

Fifteen years of life lived at dream's edge. Fifteen years of hands meeting needs to *posséder la vérité dans une âme et un corps*—to take possession of truth within one single soul and body, as Rimbaud said. Fifteen years of writing limits, looking for latent truths, finding buried knowledge. And the ultimate truth in between grief and guilt. All this at the expense of losing your mother tongue and cracking your voice. But you kept alive as you turned affect into feeling, feeling into emotion, memories into fiction, fiction into being in a relentless process of littering and lettering loss, hope, love.

It is a matter of existing within that polarity—between the white centre and the vast periphery, between the black in the white and the colours in the light.

To exist is to stitch a wound.

To write is nothing but to stitch a wound with a child's hand.

Hand
Star of David

vide-la
tu la vis
la vida
 words emptying out
 vacant in the silence within

Stitch ouch itch *we eee*

I am doing it again

fragmenting my narrative as I feel the anxiety rising
 cutting up sentences / words / reaching for the letter / through metaphor— *eee...*

I cut some lethal umbilical cord that binds me to Time.

The dynamic involving grief and narcissistic delusion comes to a head in the image of the hand. The hand becomes a star and so stops meaning in its tracks. Though the star names the dead child, it firmly inscribes him in culture, albeit with the heavy legacy it bears in the Judeo-Christian tradition. David is now outside of me. Memorialised. Through mourning, a mourning that entails fragments and a passage from prose to poetry, from sense to non-sense, *sang rouge* to *sang blanc*.

The fragment as the embodiment of the energy needed to begin. A beginning that involves reinventing the notion of endings, of death and loss. And so from prose to poetry, because metaphor touches towards the unsaid unsayable in the new beginning while metonymy only says what can be said.

And so from the black of my heart I trick myself to write out the white into glitter.

To untie myself from the world. To tie myself to it. In English (says my last born).

In the volcano's eye at Lake Taupo in New Zealand where generations of granite lay mute under water and stones float on water I watched my children tumble and splash as I grappled with fire words for the incandescent ending to their brother's book. In the volcano's eye all was slipstream of light, pumice and water. All aglitter. And on the surface of the gleaming water where cold volcanic ash shimmered a child's face drifted across. On the shore froze a salamander in mid flight.

I am a salamander crawling through fire
 caught in your gaze
un / harmed

Would you say poetic discourse can transmute the spectre of death and regenerate desire?

Would you say when poetry collapses death unwinds the textures which bind us to desire itself?

At Lake Taupo at the end of the earth I was out of time. I was inside Time. What I saw on the mirrored reflection on the surface of the water of the hole created by the volcano is what Narcissus saw and what Orpheus looked for.

Ghosts are go-betweens. They tell us where death resides. Where life is. They tell us that art is an entwining of death and life and what lies in-between. At the end of the earth I came full-circle. *Sshh*.

Letter by letter, on the litter of another language I have stopped the torrent of grief and *jouissance* that would have been the end of me had I written in my mother tongue. Mother. *Mater*. Matter.

In another language I am matter's light. Shadow's light. The future, not the past.

'T is done. I have put death to death. I have returned the night to the night. For now.

Smell the intoxicating scent of jasmine—the way it clings. The life and death of scent, the absence clinging, rustling, like a voice.

Eurydice, Eurydice, Eurydice.

From the window of my fiction room I can see the light now slanting through the trees, mottling the garden with golden speckles, overshadowing daybreak's smatter of crumpled shadows. Steam rises from the ground as if the earth itself is being boiled from inside out. The day is fresh, streaming with flecks of light and dust. All is pure rhythm, all pulsating glitter, a pre-inscription.

There are splashes of silver everywhere in a grey green, grey blue landscape. A flush of oxidized copper green spreads in the Japanese cherry by the front stairs. Spring is here in a hurry. Two rainbow lorikeets swoop into the camphor laurel next to the window to eat the berries. The sap running on the bark of the blackwood looks like honey. Honey-spangle day.

Even from this window the Australian sky is huge, the middle distance hazily expansive. A sky to get lost in, float, find a soul exfoliating itself. Sunlight sparkles and crystallises in the breeze that comes from Bass Strait

I am becoming other, but nothing like the expected antipodean transplant you would have expected. I am an *extimate* exile.

As the din of dawn dies I listen to the nothing there—this still inarticulate speech of the heart. And I want to tell them about the shrieks and colours of the lorikeets. I want to tell them about the sky. I want to tell them how their sky is now my alphabet. I want to tell them about the gratitude I feel for the weird conjunction of events that brought me here where in the budding branches of the bushes and trees and in the light I see sky words. In these sky words is light's eye, the source of metaphors, a curious and persistent feature of the natural world that language leads us into: a minute attention to spottiness in things, an attention so marked that we sometimes have the impression of an obsessively pointillist word painter at work behind the scene. This word painter I call the spirit child.

Research statement

Research background

Current international studies in Creative Writing are focusing on re-defining the concept of research as particular to its discipline while re-assessing the value and meaning of theory (Krauth and Brady 2006; Harper and Kroll 2007; Magee 2009; Smith and Dean 2009). Concurrently, recent developments in the theory and practice of psychoanalysis have identified writing as a means of understanding subjectivity through what the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has called *suppléance*, a stand-in that helps the ego cohere and in some cases prevents subjective dissolution (Lacan 2005 [1975-76]). While existing research at the intersection of these fields recognises the *significance* of the creative process as an illustration of *suppléance*, it has overlooked its very *mechanism*.

Research contribution

‘Glitter’, the last chapter in *Hush*, a memoir of cot death, addresses the question of the *mechanism* of *suppléance* by performing it. In doing so, it determines that *suppléance* arises out of the need to overcome an anxiety that veils the threat of subjective dissolution. Further, it suggests that this anxiety can be overcome by turning away from the metonymic axis of language by favouring its metaphorical axis, thereby breaking new ground in the field of theory.

Research significance

The significance of this piece is that it provides the key to the mechanism of *suppléance*. Its value is attested by my being invited to speak at a national symposium hosted by the Lacan Circle of Melbourne and the Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis (March 2010) and at an international conference hosted by ACLALS (London, March 2010).

Works cited

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