



POETRY & THE CONTEMPORARY SYMPOSIUM

ABSTRACTS

Thursday 7 July

3.45-5.00

2.30-3.45

Sally Evans (University of
Wollongong)

David Holmgren, Sue Fitchett, Patrick
Jones (University of Western Sydney),
and Peter O'Mara

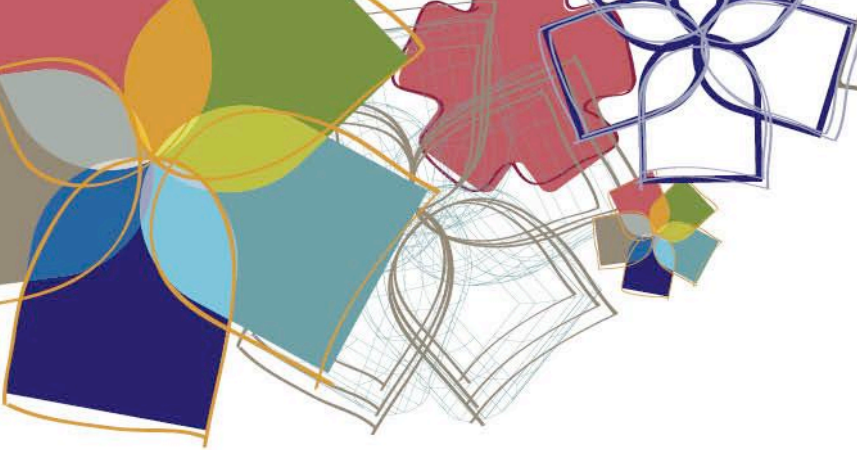
**"Mez Breeze and the Cyber-Syntax of
Code Poetry"**

**Roundtable: "Poetics and Future
Scenarios: Poems and Poets in an Age
of Energy Descent and Climate
Chaos".**

Since the early 1990s, Australian digital practitioner Mez Breeze has written poetry that combines, or hybridises, the 'natural' language of human communication and the highly codified structure of HTML and other digital languages. Known either as *mezangelle* or, more broadly, as a subset of a wider movement of *codeworks* or code poetry, Breeze's work is characterised by the interpellation or insertion of multiple words or phrases within one another, and by the inclusion and adoption of certain conventions of digital code. These conventions include the use of non-alphanumeric characters and of phraseology from both computer command languages and from digitally-mediated communications such as instant messaging. Codeworks of this sort result in syntactical and lexical fields in which meaning is fluid and subjective. By offering a subjective reading of Breeze's codeworks, and deconstructing the play of syntactical

The panel will comprise of:

1. An introduction to energy descent and climate scenarios by David Holmgren (co-originator of the permaculture movement, author of many books including *Future Scenarios* (2009).
2. A paper on the subject presented by New Zealand poet and editor Sue Fitchett (whose books include *Palaver Lava Queen* (Auckland University Press, 2004) and *Eat These Sweet Words*, the lesbian volume of the *New Zealand Anthology of Lesbian & Gay Poetry* (1999).
3. Patrick Jones, "The Poetics of Transition: From Ecological Crisis to Permapoesis"
4. a reading specific to the subject by poet Peter O'Mara.



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and lexical meaning within code poetry, this paper examines some of the tensions that arise in contemporary digital creative writing. In particular, this paper focuses on the interactions of linearity and association that characterise contemporary digital poetics.

Tamryn Bennett (University of New South Wales)

“Towards Comics Poetry”

What are the possibilities for comics and poetry interactions? In what ways do comics utilise poetic devices of segmentivity, countermeasure, line breaks? How can poetry experiment with this hybrid textual-visual language? To what extent can comics poetry inform non-sequential and non-narrative textual analysis?

This paper attempts to answer some of these questions by employing Rachel Blau DuPlessis' concept of segmentivity within a comparative analysis of comics panels, gutters, speech balloons, captions and poetic devices of line breaks, stanzas and countermeasure. This examination is exemplified by experiments in comics poetry from Dino Buzzati, Kenneth Koch, Warren Craghead, Bianca Stone,

Matt Madden, Sean Michael Williams, Eroyn Franklin and my own comics poetry collaboration with visual artists Skye O'Shea, Jackie Cavallaro and Tamara Elkins. Examination of these creative processes and development of a symbiotic textual-visual language within both comics and poetry illuminates the relevance of visual language to contemporary poetic practice.

Mark Young (*Otoliths* editor)

“Stochastic Acts: the search string as poetry”

Reality, my reality, is a set of alternate realities. As are your realities. & yet, even if we gathered up, created a set of, all the sets of alternate realities in the world, it would never be complete because a set cannot contain itself. So, therefore, another set, & then another, & another. Infinite Chinese boxes if you like. Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness theorem in action. Zeno's paradox.

What do I mean by alternate realities? Think about the news channels on cable TV. Fox, Sky, CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, ABC, TVNZ. Think about their takes on events. Think how differently, depending on their bias, they present



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the same story. Flick across them & it's sometime difficult to realize it's the same story they're presenting. The Libyan uprising as seen by Libyan State TV, by other Arab States, by the various voices of Western democracy. Think about those who aren't given a chance to see it.

Think about how stories are often displayed. Concurrently. Thumbnails on the screen, maybe half a dozen. Add a text box with another story. Add a subscript tickertape parade that scrolls six word stories across the screen. So much information presented to us in a single sight bite that it seems impossible we could process it all at once. & yet we do. We might not make sense of it, but at the very least we make a sense out of it.

5.45-6.15

Vivienne Plumb (University of Woollongong)

“Fact or Fiction: Meditations on Mary Finger”

Vivienne Plumb (writer) and Veevee Palumbo (curator and critic) will present a lecture/performance that focuses on the symbiotic relationship

between artists and writers and critics, curators and archivists.

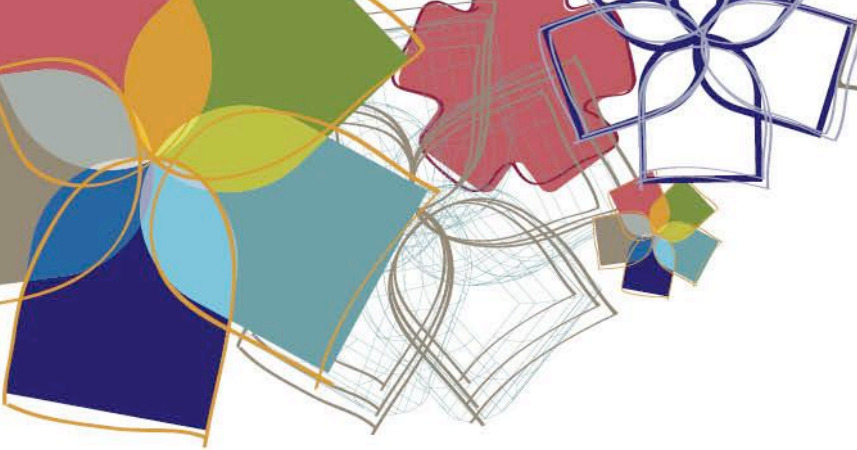
Friday 8th July

9.30-10.30

**Jill Jones (University of Adelaide),
Bonny Cassidy (Deakin University),
and Claire Gaskin (University of Melbourne)**

Roundtable: “Poetics of Unimprovement”

In a statement published in the 2010 Festival Issue of *Five Bells*, Jill Jones describes her recent work as “unimproved, naïve” in the sense of “not explaining”. Are writers and readers of contemporary poetry trapped, she asks, “by technologies of perfection and finality”? This panel offers responses to that question and to notions of “unimproved” or “naive” poetics, from three poets: Jill Jones, Bonny Cassidy and Claire Gaskin.



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10.30-11.45

Kent MacCarter

“Calculated Enjambment: Continuity and Discontinuity of Rhythm in August Kleinzahler’s Poetics”

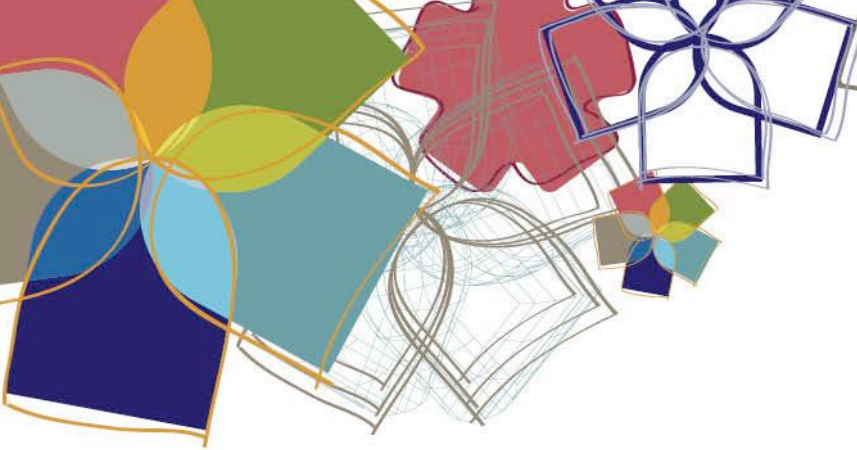
In Terry Eagleton’s *How to Read a Poem* (Blackwell, 2007) he states, fundamentally, that a poem is a “fictional, verbally inventive ... statement in which it is the author, rather than the printer or the word processor, who decides where the lines should end”. This paper explores the enjambment and, ergo, lineation – at times each other’s proxy – of August Kleinzahler’s poetry and the manner in which it facilitates his unique urban/urbane music. Free verse is a well-established form in Kleinzahler’s repertoire. It is within these jagged lines that a reader becomes primed to shift their attention to rhythm and sound as they are clear instances where linguistic units and versification conflict. I assert that lineation and its machinations, enjambment inclusive, grants Kleinzahler’s poetry its capacity to represent the rhythmic quality of his modern speech, diction and intended elocution in a much more thorough manner than prose. This is a

fundamental process in the sculpting of the Kleinzahler ‘sound’.

Andrew J. Carruthers (University of Sydney)

“Sonic Ekphrasis from William Carlos Williams to Jackson Mac Low”

In this paper I explore the concept of “sonic ekphrasis” in the poets William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Robert Creeley, Jackson Mac Low, and Anne Tardos. I distinguish this concept from Siglind Bruhn’s “musical ekphrasis,” itself a remarkably taut and useful definition, simply because it concerns sonic transformations of literary texts, rather than, as I am concerned with, the literary echoing or mimetic account of musical and/or sonic units or wholes. On the border between onomatopoeia and description but neither both at one time, sonic ekphrasis visits the unexplored regions between word and sound where poetry “about” sound (in time) is concerned. I propose to extend theories of sound and sonic immediacy in poetry and poetics along a specially constructed American genealogy that find roots in Stevens’ *The Man with the Blue Guitar* (1937), and Williams’ *The Desert Music* [(1954) turned into a



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composition by Steve Reich (1983)], and continued praxis in Creeley's *Echoes* (1982) and Mac Low and Tardos' performance pieces or "simultaneities." In the unfolding work of Jackson Mac Low and Anne Tardos, I ask how sonic ekphrasis collides poetry with music, or whether there is any such collision in the first place. Taken together, I discuss the possibility of using sonic ekphrasis as a mode of analysis in poetics, recording, and in textuality at large, claiming that by shifting the freight of attention from visual to sonic ekphrasis, poetry listeners might tune in to something unheard of.

David McCooey (Deakin University)

"The Poetics of the Digital Audio Workstation"

12.00-1.15

Jack Ross (University of Wellington)

"A Brief Poetics"

Scott-Patrick Mitchell (Edith Cowan University)

**"this is what it sounds like :
performance poetry beyond**

postmodernism"

This paper looks at performance poetry and the influence of Black Mountain and L=A=N=U=A=G=E Poetry on the manner in which voice became the most vestigial measure of the line. The aurality and tonality of performance poetry is examined to highlight theoretical connections with postmodernism while reinforcing the traditional lyrical and mnemonical capacity of the traditional form, particularly in the advent of social media. Poetry by Olson, Ginsberg, Antin, and Hejinian along with spoken word from Laurie Andersen, is examined to highlight the process.

Peter Minter (University of Sydney)

"Writing Country: Indigenous Poetics and the Open Field"

My early poetry was particularly influenced by the poetry and poetics of the Black Mountain school of the United States, essentially the "open field" poetics of Charles Olson and the organic compositional poetics of Robert Duncan. In more recent years I have turned my attention to interpolations of modernism and postmodernism in transnational Indigenous poetics, especially as they



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speak to compositional practices that sustain an ecopoetics of organic embodiment, becoming and reciprocity. This exploratory paper proposes a theoretical meeting between the “open field” poetics of Olson and Duncan, and an Aboriginal compositional ontology I describe as a poetics of Writing Country.

2.15-3.30

Janet Charman

“An Encounter With Chen Li’s ‘Wooden Fish Ballad’ - As Translated by Chang Fen-Ling”

After his first talk I approach the Analyst from The Lacanian Institute. Are you going to say something about Brarka? I ask. Quoi? He says. Brarka, I say, Brarka Ettinger. Oh! You mean *Brarsha*. Do I? I say. Yes! He says: But how do *you* know about her? From the internet. (Weeks ago, I’d looked up ‘matrix’ to see if it described the way we writers were scattered about the hotel: So near and yet so far...Further down the page, there it was: ‘Matrixial Borderspace’) She’s the artist, The Analyst says, I *know* her, I have one of her paintings. *Do you?* I said. But, will you talk about her ideas? (He gives a Gallic shrug.)

(He didn’t, I made that up.) She went off in her own direction, he says. I nudge him with my elbow: Is she Trotsky to your Lenin? He doesn’t smile so I go back to my seat. Suddenly, in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, there’s a knock at my hotel door: It’s Chen Li! With Chang Fen-Ling’s translation of his ‘*Wooden Fish Ballad*.’ It makes me so mad!

Jessica Wilkinson (University of Melbourne)

“Voice, Music, Sound: Poetic Histories Beyond the Printed Word”

In this paper I consider the ways in which Susan Howe’s vocal-acoustic collaborations with musician David Grubbs extend the dimensions of her poetic explorations of history, and the implications that this work has for the recovery of marginalized subjects. The collaboration between poet and musician for the albums *Thiefth* and *Souls of the Labadie Tract* has dramatically transformed and enriched Howe’s already complex texts (specifically *Thorow*, *Melville’s Marginalia* and *Souls of the Labadie Tract*), connecting them with sounds that powerfully interpret and extend the moods and ideas of the printed poems. My paper will discuss the



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various components of these recorded works, how they provoke different responses from the listener, and the ways in which Howe continues to present a “picture” of the past/world that is multiple, shifting, and always developing.

Linda Weste (University of Melbourne)

“Poetic and Narrative Interplay in three Contemporary Verse Novels (2007 – 2010)”

The contemporary verse novel presents an excellent opportunity to advance understandings of poetry as narrative. This paper foregrounds the productive interplay of poetic- and narrative- strategies in the verse novel’s doubled dynamic. An analysis of the discourse of three contemporary Australian verse novels: Lisa Jacobsen’s *The Sunlit Zone* (2011), Diane Fahey’s *The Mystery of Rosa Morland* (2008), and Judy Johnson’s *Jack* (2007) demonstrates that poetic constituents in the verse novel effect a productive interplay, rather than an incongruous relation, with narrative strategies. Spatio-temporal locators in *Jack* for instance, work in close cooperation with poetic tropes in the task of temporal compression.

Segmentation also impacts upon teleology and temporality in *Jack*, shaping the reading experience by accelerating, decelerating, or even deferring, the forward progression of narrative. Such findings contest conceptions of poetic- strategies as auxiliary to narrative- strategies in the verse novel. The implication for contemporary reading practice is that the narrative of a verse novel is not read ‘against its poetry’, but rather, ‘through’ its differentiating mode of discourse, ‘verse’.

3.45-4.55

Stuart Cooke

“The Problem of the Heart in Contemporary Australian Poetry”

In a recent review of an issue of *Southerly* magazine, Joel Scott suggested that if “we are to engage with the language of the heart in a contemporary poetics, [it] will happen largely through a conversation with Spanish-language poetry.” He was referring specifically to my translation of a poem by the Chilean poet, Pablo de Rokha. What is it about de Rokha’s poem that proposes “a language of the heart”? And why is it so easy to differentiate its English translation



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from much contemporary Australian poetry? Such questions will lead me to critically assess what seems to be the predominance of an emotional neutrality in Australian poetry and poetics. Grief and suffering, as much as unbridled joy and delight, are profoundly important parts of contemporary experience; they are, furthermore, provocative, shocking emotions that can catalyse change. In Australia, however, it seems that many of us have become too “comfortable and relaxed” to want to change anything with our poetry. As much as this paper will critique the abundance of limp irony and robotic detachment in Australian poems, it will also pay tribute to some of those poets who do *not* fit this mould, and will propose some ideas about why their heart-felt languages are so important.

Lindsay Tuggle (University of Sydney)

“Alice Notley’s Contemporary Mythopoetics”

In 2001, Alice Notley began writing a feminist epic that centered on unearthing a ‘geologic-mythological connection’ to the past. In the wake of September 11th and the ensuing ‘war on terror,’ *Alma*, or the *Dead Women*

(2006) evolved into an anti-war polemic that wields mythopoetic language as revolutionary ‘weapon’: ‘this work is an attack’. *Alma* incorporates elements of Greek, Sumerian, Egyptian, and Native American mythologies. Notley interweaves unfolding war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan with the cultural legacies of massacres such as the Trail of Tears. Notley describes *Alma* as a work of literary shamanism seen through the eyes of an invalid heroin addict, who enters the land of the dead through hallucinatory dreams. Along with the cult of ‘dead women’ who surround her, *Alma* inhabits her own world, ‘secretly thought by a woman dreaming and dead.’ Collectively, the women form an elegiac chorus that employs ancient rituals of inscription and conjuration. Central to *Alma*’s shamanic practice is the construction of poems as binding spells, or curse tablets, a practice common throughout Mediterranean antiquity. These texts were inscribed on thin sheets of metal and often pierced with nails for the purpose of influencing by supernatural means the actions or welfare of individuals against their will. Curse tablets were usually buried near water or sites of violence; graves were the most common deposition site. The



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preferred graves were those of people who died by violent or unnatural means. Tablets were often placed in battlefields, mass graves, or places of execution for enhanced effect. These inscribed prayers called upon the dead and specific deities to intervene against an injustice or crime, often an act of violence or theft. Through her invocation of poem as 'weapon', Notley exhumes and incarnates these buried artifacts of literary history. This paper will explore Notley's work as an extended meditation on the power of language to affect global change. Alma suggests that collective mourning in the face of a seemingly unending war requires the invocation of old gods and the creation of new ones. It requires an epic – it is an epic act: at once personal and global, intimate and abstract.

Kate Lilley (University of Sydney)

"Jacket and the Worlding of Australian Poetry"

Certain Anglo-American commentators understood *Jacket* Magazine as an index of experimental life and liveliness outside their known borders; a possible sign of the revivification of an international avant-garde practice facilitated by the

worldwide web's networked utopia. Meanwhile the Literature Board of the Australia Council rejected Tranter's application for funding to pay contributors on the grounds that a certain ratio of Australian content was not guaranteed. *Jacket's* address (www.jacketmagazine.com) did not use an Australian domain name and Tranter has commented that he did not regard it as an Australian publication. On the other hand, as the co-editor of *The Penguin Book of Modern Australian Poetry* and the compiler of the web-based project, Australian Literature Resources, Tranter has played a significant role in the ongoing formation of a national poetic canon. *Jacket* was the largest, most noted and most read little magazine ever published from Australia and its metamorphosis into *Jacket 2*, now based at the University of Pennsylvania, is complex and ambivalent process. The occasion of *Jacket's* 'passing' or handover was previewed by a special session at the 2011 Los Angeles MLA in which I participated along with Tranter, Marjorie Perloff and the new editors of *Jacket2*, Michael Hennessey and Julia Bloch. This paper is a reflection on that occasion, on *Jacket* (the Tranter and Tranter/Brown era) and its sequel, the launch of *Jacket2*.



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Saturday 9 July

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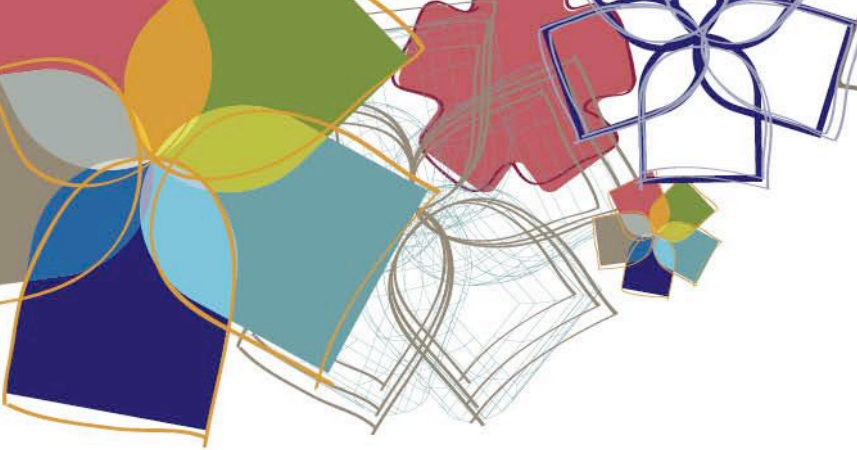
**John Tranter (Journal of Poetics
Research editor)**

Hidden in Plain View: constructing the poems in Starlight

In this paper I will talk (in a practical rather than a theoretical way) about the strategies underlying the writing of many of the poems in my latest book, *Starlight: 150 Poems*. Many of the poems in the book derive from a doctoral thesis (in Creative Arts) which I completed recently. They explore, in different ways, the idea of displacing the authorial ego with a kind of writing at one or two removes, through the process of translation, ventriloquy, mask or disguise. In 'The Anaglyph' I have taken the first word or two and also the last word or two of each line from John Ashbery's 1967 long poem 'Clepsydra', and written material of my own to fill each line out. 'Desmond's Coupé' is a mainly homophonic translation (rather, mistranslation) of Stéphane Mallarmé's 1897 poem 'Un coup de dés...' 'Five Quartets' is a truncated version of T.S. Eliot's poem 'Four

Quartets' which, at nearly a thousand lines, seemed to me to be far too long. This version is Eliot's poem with most of the words removed, and runs to a more economical seventy-five lines. The next 83 fourteen-line poems present deliberate mistranslations, involving multilingual dealings with an English-only speech-to-text computer program, of most of Rimbaud's 'Illuminations' and poems by Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Verlaine. The poems have been reworked extensively, and each contains a line or phrase from various poems by John Ashbery, though in a few cases these have been lost when the poems were revised. Seventeen of these poems, mostly in a different form, appeared in my collection *Urban Myths* in 2006.

The 56 poems in the last third of the book were written during a six-week Fellowship at the Civitella Ranieri centre in Umbria, Italy, in 2009. With a French novelist in mind, I have titled this group of poems 'Contre-Baudelaire'. They began as radical revisions of some poems from Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (second edition, 1861) and relocate and update the concerns of the poems, while attempting to keep most of Baudelaire's obsessions more or less intact.



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Michelle Cahill

“Durga, Kali, Sita, Krishna and Feminist Identities in Asian-Australian Poetics”

This paper discusses how gender complexities inform the themes and poetics of female Asian Australian poets using the frameworks of transexual Hindu deities and transnational discourses. I discuss how diasporic subjects experience double and even plural identities. Arising from this are autobiographical constraints, indeterminacies of time and place, topologies with unclear demarcations, fictive and subjective or linguistic slippages. I make reference to poems by Dipti Saravanamuttu, Carol Chan, Miriam Wei Wei Lo. How are feminist notions of culture and self reconstructed and revisited and how are they placed within broader literary contexts of Asian Australian writing? How can bisexuality intersect boundaries and can it be expressive of transnational identities? To what extent is myth a site where historical elements can be performatively reconstructed? These female poets have written about culture, language, myth, sexuality in ways that embody, with fluidity, a complex sense of identity and inheritance. My paper

references problematic categories, which tend to homogenise and simplify the Asian Australian poetic into a static, hermetic and patriarchal sub-genre. The implications are that a heteroglossia already exists as an alternative to more dominant tropes. I argue that feminist, gender complex perspectives in Asian-Australian poetry are rich, nascent and deserving of appraisal.

Astrid Lorange (University of Technology, Sydney)

“There is no future, and the future is spanking”

Last year I wrote a paper on the topic of ‘spanking,’ following on from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s essay “A Poem is Being Written,” which in turn revisits Freud’s “A Child is Being Beaten.” Sedgwick’s essay theorises desire, transgression and punishment characterising the experience of reading poetry on the one hand, and the experiences of erotic identification on the other hand.

Spanking, as adjective (to describe affecting newness, liveliness, showiness, suddenness) and as verb/noun (the act or event of slapping buttocks) converge in a



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poetics: a poetics that urges one to consider the expectations and consequences of being a relation. Sedgwick teaches us that there is much at stake, and if we want to do anything, we have to be willing to risk the punishment of intense curiosity, interrogative perversions, and all manner of difficulties. What's more, we should enjoy the punishment. Because the risk of not being punished is far worse: the risk of being co-opted into, commissioned by, and complicit in, the insidious violence of normalising processes.

In this paper, I will look at the work of Gertrude Stein, and will introduce the concept of 'futurelessness,' as set out by Lee Edelman. Edelman's manifesto against 'reproductive futurism' – the ideological trump-card that posits heteronormative reproduction as the unequivocal telos – seeks to re-imagine queerness as that which works against this fundamental teleology. I will talk about how Stein's poetry produces without reproducing: produces meanings, produces difficulties, produces problems, produces thinking, produces pleasures. And I will talk about how this non-reproductive production arouses a certain kind of critical

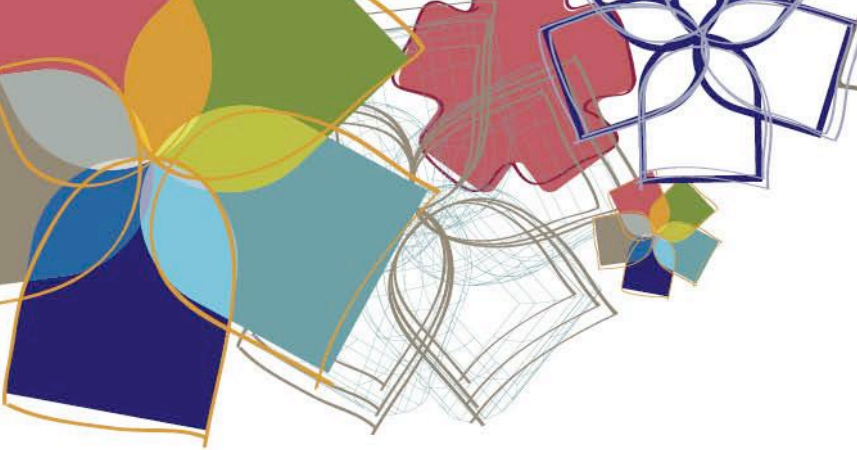
reading practice, entirely prone to consequence.

11.25-12.40

Joel Scott (Macquarie University)

"Under the Influence: Leaving Bloom Behind"

"Seedy Freudianism" is how David Antin described Harold Bloom's 'theory of poetry' outlined in *The Anxiety of Influence*. The true aptness of this description might not be initially apparent. Beyond the immediate seediness typical to Freudianism is a more complex relationship between the concept of the seminal text/author, the reproductive image of the father and son, and the struggling seed of poetic influence. Bloom's system falls prey to a masculinist imaginary that is also common to popular science representations of human reproduction, in which the seed is the active, masculine gent, and the ovum the passive recipient of creative action. In Bloom, the Lucretian clinamen is thoroughly anthropomorphised, the business of strong poets in isolated confrontations with their male forebears. I would like to propose a more molecular



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approach, in which literatures, bodies of work, writers and translators coalesce in the manner of cells fusing through communicative proximity. To illustrate this approach, I will look at the work of three contemporary writers: Korean poet Kim Hyesoon; Korean-American poet and translator Don Mee Choi; and the Latina writer Susana Chávez-Silverman. The relationships between texts, literatures, languages and writers in the work of these three women, actively resists the Bloomian straight-jacket, and an analysis of it paves the way for more contemporary and inclusive conceptions of intertextual relations.

Jen Crawford (Nanyang Technological University)

“Death and the Poetics of Teeming in Yeow Kai Chai’s ‘Memento Mori’ Poems”

When I have fears that I may
cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my
teeming brain...

Keats

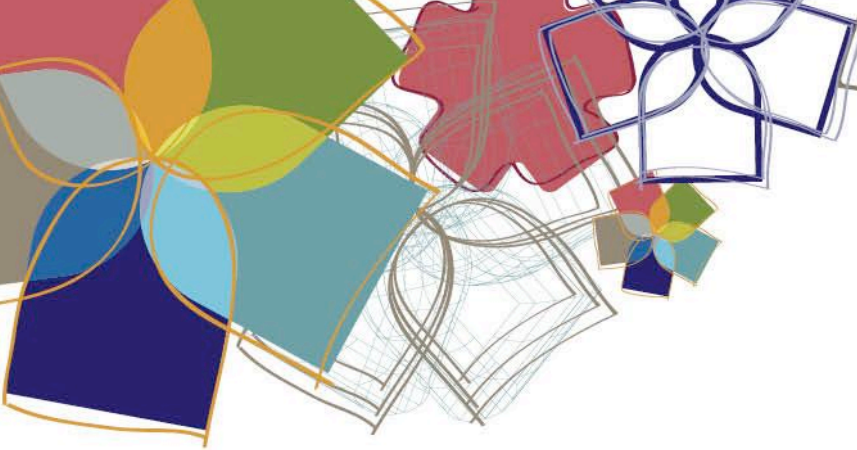
Singapore poet Yeow Kai Chai’s 2006 collection *Pretend I’m Not Here*

contains his ten “Memento Mori” poems. The poems are busy in many respects, full of bit-part allegorical actors performing hyper-significant and discontinuous actions. Insect activity and surveillance consciousness hum through collaged landscapes and airspaces. Political, social and historical observations shift through codes and surfaces. Keats stood alone “on the shore of the wide world” to think; these poems enter solitude and distance in more transient ways, finding in Death and the epistolary friend momentary vantage points to conceive and address cities of concept and movement, before reintegrating with them.

Matt Hall (University of Western Australia)

“As the Text Bears Witness: A Reading of ‘Es Lebe Der Kong,’ Prynne’s Elegy to Paul Celan”

J.H. Prynne’s elegy to Celan, ‘Es Lebe der König’ deals explicitly with the concept of poetry after Auschwitz, and with the commensurate philosophical theories of Adorno, Derrida, Agamben, et al. The poem, part ode and part elegy, aims to provide a basis from which to assess the notion of a poem



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as “bearing witness” to the horrors of the world. The presentation will provide a comprehensive look at the literary antecedents, ekphrastic references and theoretic propositions which underpin this highly referential poem, and look to provide a distinctive analysis of the concept of the witness, as presented within Prynne’s elegy to Paul Celan. It is through the poem ‘Es Lebe der König’ in which Prynne makes his claim that not only is poetry possible after Auschwitz, it is the fundamental means by which we attest to truth of the world.

1.40-2.55

Siobhan Hodge (University of Western Australia)

“Contemporary Poetics and Sapphic Mythologies”

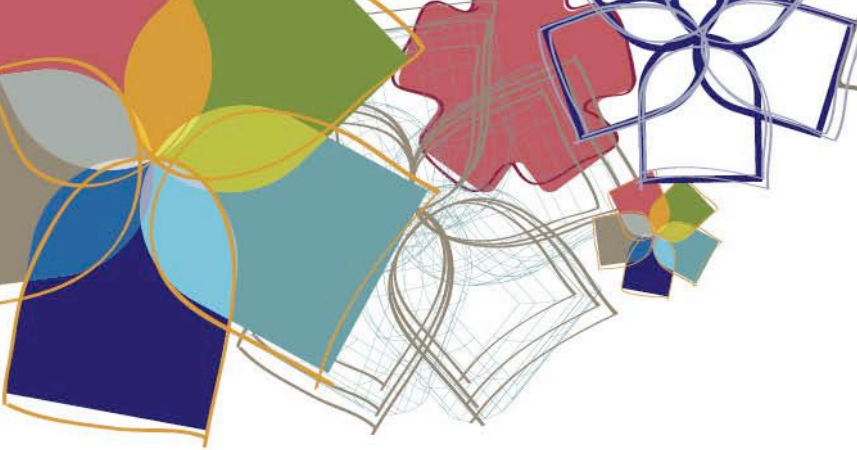
Sappho has captivated the imaginations of a vast range of poets for generations, and continues to do so in English-language poetics, produced in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Australian and Canadian poets Gig Ryan, Alison Crogan, M.T.C. Cronin and Keetje Kuipers reflect on the image of

Sappho, her poetic fragments, and themes traditionally associated with this poet to present new visions of her as a more manipulative, subtly feminist individual than earlier writers have asserted. Their Sapphic adaptations and the wider implications of these, as creative rewriting of Sappho’s mythology as well as explorations of more individualistic ideas, will be explored in detail with close reference to the individual poets’ works.

Duncan Hose (University of Melbourne)

“Give Me Vidas and Razos: The Life of Troubadour Technologies in the Poetry of Ted Berrigan”

To take up and archaeologise old critical terms is the kind of eternal return which characterises the pro-delusional charm of the contemporary. ‘Where once we had ideas for which we needed a vocabulary, now we have a vocabulary for which we need ideas.’ The troubadour as the figure of poetry in the West has never really been retired, evidenced most compellingly by Ezra ‘make it new’ Pound’s fascination for the poets of ancient Occitania.



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I want to check the ways in which Ted Berrigan explicitly positions himself within the troubadour tradition, and how some of the literature surrounding his career as a poet takes up troubadourish textual techniques for producing something of the presence of the poet, in the making of a poetry contemporary with later twentieth century America. The two specific technics of intrigue I want made contemporary with ourselves are *vida* and *razos*; the *vida* as antique 'bio-note,' and the *razo* as a commentary on a poem or an account of the circumstances of its composition. These supplementary prose texts, which were highly formalised in the collation of troubadour poems, are traceable in poetic practices today, and I want to argue their necessity and desirability for bringing people closer to their poets, as either good company or useful pricks (spurs to action).

Sam Moginie (University of Sydney)

"Entrepot Poetics: John Forbes' Critique of the Contemporary"

2.55-4.10

Ali Alizadeh (Deakin University)

"Naming the Voids of Multiculturalism in 'Biral Biral': A New Reading of the Poetry of Lionel Fogarty"

As one of Australia's most innovative and prolific Indigenous poets, Lionel Fogarty has been the subject of a great number of studies over the years. The overwhelming perception of the poet's work has been that of a direct and explicit expression of a militantly Aboriginal identity politics. A few scholars have also paid some attention to the experimental dynamics of Fogarty's poetry. This paper proposes viewing Fogarty neither as a post-colonial Aboriginal poet nor as modernist poet per se, but as a multicultural Australian poet, and it argues that Fogarty's poetry, if viewed as multicultural writing, can be seen as a radical and subversive intervention in a political ideology which involves a number of significant and vital shortcomings. By using a reading strategy based on the work of the philosopher Alain Badiou, I will examine the potent and unsettling instances in Fogarty's poem 'Biral Biral' in which the problematics of multiculturalism have been named, and as a result of this naming, the poet has challenged and subverted



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one of the dominant political ideologies of the contemporary world.

Kate Fagan (University of Western Sydney)

“Form and Field in Contemporary Australian Poetry”

The Australian poets Amanda Stewart and Chris Edwards have advanced different versions of a radical, materialist poetic that is grounded in highly measured abstraction. Stewart’s texts are scores for performance that improvise at the level of the syllable (I/T). They explore the voice itself as a cipher for the materials of language, which are fragmented and recovered in disciplined acts of vocalisation. Edwards uses sampling, collage and ventriloquy as tools for reworking fields or ‘landscapes’ that hold multiple, contested stories of origin (Utensils in a Landscape). As readers, what are we to make of this congress between absolute matter and absolute concept – hinted at, perhaps, in the juxtaposition open field? Can any field be regarded as ‘open’ in a post-settlement culture? This paper brushes by the ghost of Charles Olson’s “composition by field” to suggest new approaches to form and

field in contemporary Australian poetry criticism.

David Herd (University of Kent)

“Towards the Pleasures of Merely Circulating: Contemporary Poetry and the Status of the Document”

4.25-5.35

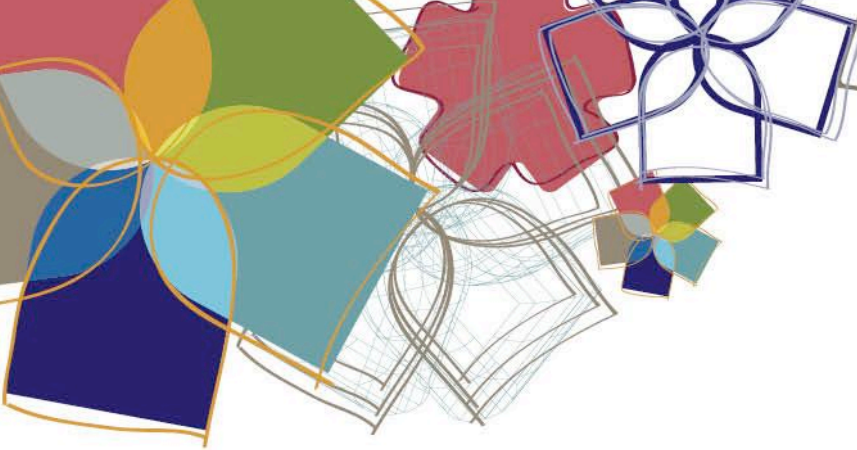
Tim Wright (Monash University)

“Things to Do with Perth”

Tom Lee (University of Western Sydney)

“Poetry as Writing As Vector”

I wish to discuss poetry through the lens of a more generic notion of ‘writing’. With reference to the prose fiction of W. G. Sebald, the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, and the interpretation of Gertrude Stein’s poetry as an experimental science in the work of Steven Meyer, I will consider what writing might come to mean as a “medium that, through better acquaintance, permits one to become increasingly attuned to the complex interrelations that actually compose the objects of one’s thought” (Meyer, 2001: 295). In order to train



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these vague outlines I will follow a series of examples, most prominently through Sebald's prose, where events such as trails, traces, scribbles, notches, marks, striations, wakes, trajectories, impressions and vectors, provide external reference points (mediums) for the movement of thought. The push here is to open poetry up to a more inclusive notion of the graphic that appeals to images, gestures, and performative utterance.

Martin Harrison (University of Technology, Sydney)

"Australian Poetry" and Some Reasons Why We Don't Need It

The talk offers an alternative and very brief blueprint of Australian poetry. As such, it questions the current process of officialising Australian poetry, via both criticism and anthologising, in a so-called long-lived poetic tradition. Perhaps, for instance, there is no two hundred and twenty-three year long tradition - or at least not in a critically meaningful sense. Arguably, too, the study of originating moments in our poetry is of less value than the study of experimental horizons. If we are able to have done with officialisation and bad history, what the paper points to are reasons for confidence in

plotting starting points in relation to critical and poetic achievement, in relation to contemporariness both then and now and in relation to a willingness to confront radically the settlement origins of European poetry and to read the past accordingly.