

University of Canberra

Owen Bullock,

Resonator: Unearthing Poetry

Research Statement:

The poems in *Resonator* are a selection from the creative project of my PhD, ‘Understanding Poetry – How semiotic concepts can help reader and practitioner’. The poems respond to my research into syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations; ideas from Derrida, Barthes and Kristeva on the situating of poetics, and the works of the New Zealand poets I analyse. Far from confining the mechanics of poetry, semiotic concepts have opened up numerous possibilities for me to explore, with fresh understandings and dynamics to consider. The experience of studying in Canberra stirs up memories and comparisons and ways of looking at the self. The range of poems includes found material, Ekphrastic poems, conceptual and formal experiments, writing from the subconscious and writing biographically.

Collectively, the work takes the Japanese form of haibun (prose and haiku) as a model. In the past, I’ve kept my writing of contemporary poetry and exploration of haiku and related forms separate, but in *Resonator* I interweave them, working within the constraints of each form, but also watching as they collide and fuse when placed together. The connections or gaps between sections of some poems (like haibun) necessitate cognitive and imaginative leaps, which reflect the influence of multiple forms of media on our society and the products of a postmodern age which blur the boundaries of genre.

Biographical note:

Owen Bullock has published a collection of poetry, *sometimes the sky isn’t big enough* (Steele Roberts, NZ, 2010); two books of haiku, *wild camomile* (Post Pressed, Australia, 2009) and *breakfast with epiphanies* (Oceanbooks, NZ, 2012), and the novella, *A Cornish Story* (Palores, UK, 2010). He is a former editor of *Poetry NZ*, and was one of the editors who produced *Take Five: Best Contemporary Tanka, Vol IV* (Kei Books, USA, 2012). Owen is a PhD candidate at the University of Canberra.

sem

I live in the institution
of my mind

End the buffering

*

especially not a trope

helicopter parents

naked without a phone

I might look like the obsessive/compulsive one

*

he said 'I am'
. . . never heard any more from him

at the atomic level
things are separate
they still affect each other

the whirr
of the motor
on the fan

38°
you see things
in yourself

*

publicise others?

I don't even

waiting to be asked

climate controlled

for your comfort

tweet you

network engaged individual

versus the surveilling state

Sunday morning

three pigeons

on the stave

*

\$30 for the both

authentication

Tuesday

a young man squirts his arm pits

at the bus stop

*

“& a scatter of light . . .

it touches the stars” - Alistair Paterson

hats off

navigating
the waters
to a settlement

writing late
(tired tomorrow?)
worked out
unclouded

rained

*

scrawled in excrement
on a wall

it could be mud
I sniffed it
but couldn't tell

*I am
a gay
fag
shit*

only yesterday
I wanted to say something about
self-reflective exercises
but didn't get a chance

*

you haven't read it yet?

I can read music for classical playing

but I like jazz

bollards

a thousand gravestones

he sometimes

deliberately

does things the hard way

wore a red & brown zigzag cardigan

for ten years

but no one got the joke

his partner persuaded him

to let go

*

who's your go-to poet?

the man on the bus

who says hello to everyone

the two young women

who sit and have a real chat

(the way he lights up)

the man busking

selling loose poems for \$2

who welcomed me to town

with one called 'The Visitor'

the student sheltering from the rain

who asked if I was waiting for someone

and leant me his cell

*

don't work so hard

the shock
doesn't sink in

racing through lists

moments commodities

hours investments

this day

a stock market opportunity

a child waves to you
another tries to get out of his trundler

the manager
longs for
a steadying hand hold

for a moment
my skin smells of your skin
I feel delicious

*

spider threads
link the immaculate
air conditioners

a child's painting
hangs on a string
rotates in the air flow

*

*I've mellowed out a bit
remember me in Year 7
I was insane*

what's conscience?

*that's when you care about
what you do*

signs of the Buddha: long earlobes
wheels on the soles of the shoes

*first you bought an ironing board
now you want to buy an ironing board
and iron*

*that second hand shirt has two stains on it,
how much did it cost?*

*\$10
that's \$5 per stain*

*the extra ironing board
will make a great bookshelf*

*

*I can play
kind of guitar*

value in a system

she's already ninti

*

potentially dissident

exogenesis –

did life

transplant here?

*

a boy

nods & mutters

at numbers on the bus

intersection

lanes

funnel

half the city has name tags on strings

the work of art

not the icon

an oil on canvas town

learning to skip

ahead

The National Collection of Everything

it's a very shirt tucked in kind of place

but a lot of people are carrying tunes

*

talking about art
he foams
at the mouth

bus stop
one homeless man
introduces us
to another

bus ride
her pigtail
hangs in my notes

*I'm not allowed to stand for very long
I've got a certificate from the doctor
in case mum asks me
to go round the mall with her*

*in Year 9 we had to make
a controversial art work*

*

I need more glittery headbands

A Wild Concession Card Must Be Shown To The Driver

*

“I could not swallow the lake” Clarence Major

I tried

full of bricks
whole eucalypts

museum
not enough
dust

families
walk by the water
cycle

*

she has
a poet voice

*I'm stuck here in the middle aisle
wondering what's going on*

*

did you have words you didn't earn?

he called me an Imagist

embodied

enminded

I live here now

reflection is not highly thought of

don't just keep going

transmitted, how you feel

always exploring the new land

a company called
disjunction media

an almost song

*

I wouldn't know an app
if it knocked me over

(I wonder if there is an app
that knocks you over)

the idea of the origin
of life is so mysterious
it's not real

*

*did you feel the solstice
blowing in? you didn't?
most people could feel it
blowing in, it's going to be
a hot summer*

we heard you used to go

Bullock Resonator: Unearthing Poetry

to a discussion group

the way you elbowed him in the guts

what was that about?

she remembers what she wore

the night she met her husband

daring

no one dared me
to do anything

I dared
to break the aerial of the car
to take dirty magazines
to school

to help a woman leave her
violent husband
twice

I'd like to say
everybody told me I was crazy
but some of these were secret

I gave up smoking
when I was eleven
gave up sucking my thumb
when I was eleven
gave up wetting the bed
when I was eleven

according to the *Primal Scream* guy
my childhood ended
when I was eleven

but not for
any of these
reasons

symptom

that's not what you're here for

to live a life
and in living, announced
at birth, continued with each
affirmation of name,
status to the evocation of
personality,
the writer of poems and stories
and the years that came first . . .

to cross out the shadow on the moon
to scribe the dance and paintings of dancers
I'm language
made into and out of
to immerse
in what the other has written and live it too
disappointments at what's read
precede delight, often in
the same
text
that's changed everything
nothing, time moonched
perspective munted

I'll put a rainbow in your hand

fill a death with everything except certainty
feel at home on the street

we don't like roles

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at the hairdressers

someone says

I don't want to misunderstand the sign

he is a

once it's become a mirror

can glass be glass again – paraphrasing Wanda Coleman

when did I exist without

words?

before I uttered

a time

I can't go back

the writing's all over my face

you read me

know my mood

just like the

psychoanalyst

he doesn't remember

being a baby either

may or may not

want to go back

to the mother-god

gargling declared

mother

mirror

breakfasts

we ate alone
stole open
rice pudding tins

when my brother beat me to the top crust
I took out all the slices
and got the crust from the bottom

I became a vegetarian
when I was fourteen
Mother said, *you can do your own cooking*
from now on

gave me
ten pounds a week

I went to Tesco's
bought milk, eggs, potatoes, spaghetti
kept the food in a suitcase
under my bed

I didn't know how to cook spaghetti
the packet stayed there for two years
till I left home

I lived on omelettes
and boiled potatoes
with salt

not there

“I will patiently
reinvent your foment” – Michele Leggott

She didn't tell me
she was pregnant before

Father didn't say
ee an mother woudn gettin on

Ie didn't know 'Arry
awned part a the owse

Ie didn't think she'd ever want ta leave
she'd ever actually gaw

Ie didn't think the roof woud 'old
when the railway carriage rattled

didn't expect Gran woud 'it me
with the buckle

didn't realise me son
woud walk owt sa young

didn't think Ie'd miss un