

TEXT

JOURNAL OF WRITING AND WRITING COURSES
An international electronic refereed journal published twice yearly

Beyond the Line: Contemporary Prose Poetry

Special Issue for *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Programs*

Just a couple of decades ago, prose poetry occupied a very minor corner of the poetry spectrum, although in fact many major poets have published works in that form. As early as the mid 1970s, anthologies of prose poems were emerging in the USA, but they were preceded by work produced in Europe: the Romantic Fragment of the 19th century German scene (which was quickly adopted by British Romantics), and then the early 20th century experiments, and particularly the poetic avant garde in France.

Scholarly writings on the prose poem trace its history, and discuss its difficult relationship to genre: is it a fragment; or a very short story; or an imagistic moment; or just a poem without linebreaks? Michael Delville argues that it is less a genre in itself than the platform for multigenre literary production. David Lehman points out that it has been disciplined, at least in the USA, although till recently that nation has been a major contributor of prose poetry: despite its quite substantial history in the domain of practice, its refusal to obey the rules of genre, and its insistence on disrupting conventional publishing practices, led it to be widely ignored by the gatekeepers. Lehman dates the contemporary US prose poem to 1990, when Charles Simic won the Pulitzer Prize for his collection.

Now it is becoming (almost) a staple; across Australia, major poets are adding the prose poem form to their oeuvre, and though few dedicated publications yet exist, prose poems are salting the competitions, collections, anthologies and literary journals. International poets too are extending into the prose poem, exploring its affordances. And why not? In a letter to Arsene Houssaye, Charles Baudelaire wrote famously:

Which one of us, in his moments of ambition, has not dreamed of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical, without rhythm and without rhyme, supple enough and rugged enough to adapt itself to the lyrical impulses of the soul, the undulations of reverie, the jibes of conscience? (1970: xi)

We invite poets and scholars of poetry to contribute essays on the topic of this form to extend knowledge and offer new creative insights on:

- the canonical and/or alternative histories of the prose poem;
- its present and the effect on publishing practices;

- its effect on form, mode and content;
- avant gardes, experiments, performances;
- the materiality (material elements) of prose poetry;
- its relation to lyric and language poetry;
- its relation to the short story and/or prose fragment; and
- its possible future.

Essays on the prose poem that do not fit one of these suggestions are also welcome. Essays that adopt a creative mode or voice, and/or weave new poems into their argument, are particularly welcome.

Final submissions should be between 5,000 and 6,000 words in length. Peruse any of *TEXT* journal's issues to familiarise yourself with the journal's conventions and standards (<http://www.textjournal.com.au>).

Timeline

Expressions of interest 30 September 2016 (a brief note is all that is required; contributors will receive a response within a week);
 Manuscripts submitted 30 April 2017 (all submissions will be double-blind peer reviewed, and the manuscript and reports returned to authors by 30 June 2017);
 Rewrites and final versions submitted by 15 September 2017;
 Publication release October 2018.

Please send queries and submissions to jen.webb@canberra.edu.au, with the subject line **Prose poetry**.

References

- Baudelaire, Charles. *Paris Spleen 1869*, trans Louise Varèse (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1970)
- Delville, Michael. *The American prose poem: poetic form and the boundaries of genre* (Gainesville FL: University of Florida Press, 1998)
- Lehman, David (ed) *Great American Prose Poems: From Poe to the Present* (New York: Scribner, 2003)
- Monroe, Jonathan. *A poverty of objects: the prose poem and the politics of genre* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987)
- Riffaterre, Michael, *Semiotics of poetry* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978)
- Santilli, Nikki *Such Rare Citings: The Prose Poem in English Literature* (Cranbury NJ and London: Associated University Presses, 2002)
- Robbins, Amy Moorman. *American Hybrid Poetics: Gender, Mass Culture, and Form* (New Brunswick, NJ, USA: Rutgers University Press, 2014)