

Marion May Campbell's launch of Dominique Hecq's *After Cage*, 2nd edition

7 July 2022

Liquid Amber Press Zoom Poetry Evening

Introduction from Rose Lucas (Editor, Liquid Amber Press)

Liquid Amber are delighted tonight to launch the second edition of Dominique Hecq's innovative poem *After Cage*. Poetry is a wonderfully broad church – in terms of themes, styles, preoccupations and of course poets themselves. Hecq's work brings us challenge, throwing open conventional expectations of what poetry might be and what kinds of voices and structures it might use to engage us as readers. It startles us out of any comfortable sense of meaning, using tools of language/s, spacing on the page, textual variation, metaphor and association etc to catapult us into a destabilising territory of silence, speech, mortality and raw energy. Buckle up!

First published in 2018 by Girls on Key, this second edition of *After Cage* keeps this provocative work in print and has provided an opportunity to renew and revisit its poetics of limit, rhythm, embodiment and the power of language. As the title implies, Hecq's work takes as its key motif, the famous experimental composition of John Cage to explore within the art form of music, the bewildering relation between silence and the possibilities of articulation. The epigraph which Hecq uses from Cage describes his experimental art in this way: 'to compose a piece of uninterrupted silence It will open with a single idea which I will attempt to make as seductive as the color and shape and fragrance of a flower. The ending will approach imperceptibility.' Beauty, the abyss, the rhythms of the body, the potential for poetry to enable us to see ourselves and the world we operate in differently – it's all here, in Hecq's own astounding serial composition in word and movement on time and silence.

I'd like to warmly welcome Melbourne poet and academic Marion May Campbell to launch this second edition of *After Cage* tonight.

Launch by Marion May Campbell

I'd love to seize this chance to celebrate Dominique Hecq's extraordinary creative practice throughout her many works of fiction, poetry, performance, literary theory, poetics, and criticism, which explore the limits of writing, the extreme terrain in which it finds no sure foothold, no readily (or readerly) mapped topography.

It's staggering to consider the phenomenal, protean proliferation of Dominique's output to date. This is a writing practice which probes *interrogatively*, and disarmingly questions key aspects of contemporary culture; a writing that constantly reinvents itself, never nosing its prow smugly into a mooring preceding it, but dreaming up new modes of reader-navigation (or hijack) via the text as a set of interrogative dice-throws into the unknown—

On edge, and hair on fire, [she feels] for the edges of genre

[Hecq in 'Interview with Eugen Bacon' available @

<https://paulsemel.com/exclusive-interview-speculate-authors-eugen-bacon-dominique-hecq/>)

Dominique's practice is marked from the beginning by this acute recognition of the productive instability of the human subject; its re-inflection through linguistic refraction from language to language, register to register, genre to genre, and the *sheer exhilaration of its hijacking* by unconscious forces. To make oneself vulnerable to these seemingly random irruptions takes great courage, but the rewards are immense, as is testified by such recent works as *Tracks*, *Hush*, *Kaosmos*, and *Smacked*, along with wonderful and influential works of scholarship like *Towards a Poetics of Creative Writing...*

Everywhere, Dominique's work suggests to me that if we can make ourselves over as affective-corporeal subjects through a Joycean staging of intensive affectivity, igniting and transmuting the image-field, then we can also transfigure our culture at large. Like James Joyce, as celebrated by such feminist thinkers as Hélène Cixous, Dominique riffs and runs in multi-dimensional puns (I'm thinking of the beautiful *Kaosmos* which is intimately linked to *After Cage*), exploiting, like Mallarmé, the gutter margins of the page, that abyss of darkness marking the spinal fold of the pages, using vertical anagrammatic encodings to counter the horizontal movement of the text, or to make it veer into new dimensions. Along with their emotional power, the beauty of these experiments derives from the dynamic-improvisational energies of language being activated into wild dance, then pulled into pattern by formal

constraints, whence they are recharged, and again released – whether these constraints operate through fugal repetition via word-clusters, sound-sequence, or image-constellation. Always deeply empathetic and wildly inventive, this is a writing of the wound, of the abyss cut through the psyche, the howl beyond the reach of language.

Of the generation of the poem, and especially of this present text, the new edition of *After Cage*, Dominique writes in ‘Uncaged: **Poeming, choreographing, dancing**’

A poem begins as an inner disturbance — the loss of equilibrium that impels rhythm. In this proprioceptive moment which may be conceived as a disturbance of ‘primal unity’ (Henry 2008: 126), I become restless, unable to settle or to focus. ‘My self’ is a caged animal and it begins to pace inside its cage. The best thing would be to walk off this inner disturbance.

Hecq in *Axon: Creative Explorations*, Vol 10, No 1, May 2020, np.
available @ <https://www.axonjournal.com.au/issues/10-1/uncaged>

So, it begins with a loss of equilibrium impelling rhythmic departures, an incipient blood-beat felt subcutaneously, through the feet, subsequently, under the tissue of the page, as it were. Here is a further investigation of silence and a choreography borne of it, a scanning of the text-to-come, its subtle pulse, its rhythmic dreaming. If dance is a sounding of the prelinguistic body, between falling and flying, here a mothering silence is sounded stethoscopically, through the bodymind, for its latent music, a *score* to incite, via the now more-insistent rhythm of the dance-to-come, whereby new sites of dreaming might take place?

Poet and academic Marion May Campbell’s recent works include the poetry collections [languish](#) (Upwell 2022) and *third body* (Whitmore Press 2018), and the memoir of her father *The Man on the Mantelpiece* (UWAP 2018) She lives in Drouin, on unceded GunaiKurnai land