Other titles in the UWAP Poetry series
(established 2016)

Our Lady of the Fence Post by J. H. Crone
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A Personal History of Vision by Luke Fischer
Snake Like Charms by Amanda Joy
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Communists Like Us by John Falzon
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Praise for Previous Work

Conversational, intelligent, wide-ranging and witty, Hecq’s poetry is distinguished, too, by its acerbic tone and its confidence—LISA GORTON

... roaming in her poetry between experimentation and high tradition... Hecq targets the self-reflexive play of language—ANTHONY LYNCH

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A work of high originality and courage, which composes a new music, compelling and uncanny, by sounding the often untranslatable abyss between beings and sexes—MARION MAY CAMPBELL

... readers will come away feeling renewed, invigorated, deeply inspired by Hecq’s unique talent—RICHARD HILLMAN

The uncanny pleasures of this text are many—the precision of the language, the weaving of myth into the everyday, the distinctiveness of the narrative voice, the poetic conjunction of events—FIONA CAPP

Out of Bounds probes the rhetoric of chance invoked as a symbolic structure. Violent, active, disturbing—MICHAEL FARRELL

A fascinating and deeply engrossing philosophical fable... In Out of Bounds Hecq has created a superb personal scripture—ALI ALIZADEH

In Couchgrass, Dominique Hecq breaks through the surfaces of the everyday to reach the garden of tangled connections in which we find our life roots—MARIA TAKOLANDER

Like poetry itself, couchgrass spreads everywhere despite one’s best efforts to eradicate it. Invasive, rhizomic, a denizen of cracks and crannies, couchgrass also has antibiotic properties. Like couchgrass, Dominique Hecq’s latest book will establish its little fibrous roots even in the mind’s most unpropitious earth—JUSTIN CLEMENS
Books by Dominique Hecq


Dominique Hecq

Dominique Hecq grew up in the French-speaking part of Belgium. She read Germanic Philology at the University of Liège and then flew over to Australia where she completed a PhD on exile in Australian Literature. She also holds an MA in Literary Translation. Dominique is the author of a novel, three collections of short fiction, five books of poetry and two plays. Her awards include The New England Review Prize for Poetry (2005), The Martha Richardson Medal for Poetry (2006), and the inaugural AALITRA Prize for Literary Translation in poetry from Spanish into English (2014). *Hush: a fugue* (2017) is her latest book of poetry.
Dominique Hecq
Hush
a fugue
for David
The spirit-child is an unwilling adventurer into chaos and sunlight, into the dreams of the living child

Ben Okri
Some of the pieces in this book were published elsewhere, bearing a title that has been removed here for the purposes of aesthetic integrity. Grateful acknowledgements are due to the editors of the following publications:

1110: One Photograph One Story Ten Poems 2: “Oranges and Lemons”

*Double Dialogues: In/Stead* 3: “Alabaster”

*Double Dialogues* 17: “Reading in Braille”

*Centoria* 4: “Strawberries”


*La Traductière* 30: “Reading in Braille”

*Meniscus* 1:1: “Tomorrow, the Sun”

*Meniscus* 2:2: “Felt”

*Offshoot* (University of Western Australia Publishing, 2017): “Quickening”

TEXT: *Journal of Writing and Writing Courses* Special Issue 7: “Glitter”

TEXT *Journal of Writing and Writing Courses* 15:2: “Oranges and Lemons”

TEXT *Journal of Writing and Writing Courses* Special Issue 35: “Crypts of Making”

*The Invention of Legacy* (Rodopi, 2016): “Letters to the End of Grief”

Towards a Poetics of Creative Writing (Multilingual Matters 2015): “Blue Like an Orange”

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Led astray by a smattering of wild strawberries one early morning in June, I wandered off into the neighbour’s garden. I was not aware of doing anything odd: a scent of roses, carnations and a late-blooming lilac, the sheer beauty of the lime tree showering pollen. I was startled by my grandmother’s troubled and insistent voice calling out for me. Calling out. Calling.

It is some thirty years after my grandmother’s troubled search for me that I recalled, on the loss of my second son, that quiet dawn in the garden all the way back in the northern hemisphere.

_Eurydice, Eurydice, Eurydice._

Three times Orpheus called in vain. That passage in the Underworld haunts me. So did the many paintings and stories of children lost in the Bush when I first came to Australia, especially the tragic tale of three young boys who wandered off at dusk into the chill of one June day one hundred and fifty years ago, never to return.

The little girl at dawn
in her night gown
sun smattered
strawberries in her hands
opens the world and sweet
ripe words spill

Where is she?

My grandmother had a secret reason to be worried about losing me. I now recall finding myself staring at the photo of baby Zeno, her
second child, weirdly dressed in his cot. A white cloth binds his head. He is wearing a long white dress; pinned on it, a Sacred Heart badge. The photo is black and white and so I can only imagine the colours. The heart is red and bleeding.

I must have wondered why baby Zeno looked so much like a porcelain doll. I must have asked why.

    Shh, shh, shh, Zeno is in heaven, said my grandmother with a mixture of sadness and shock in her voice. You must say a prayer for him, and apologise to God for calling him baby Zero.

In the year 1994 I lost a brother and a child, one to a freak accident, the other to ill-health. All lies. But how to speak of suicide and cot-death in a family where life is meant to be a gift? My grandmother did not survive these lies. She lost the will to live after my brother’s death. The news of my baby’s sudden death most certainly hastened her own. Like me, she stopped eating. Like me, she stopped speaking.

    The little girl at dawn
    in her night gown
    sun smattered
    strawberries in her hands
    opens the world and sweet
    ripe words spill

The truth is in between. It is the story stripped of guilt and fear, for neither fear nor guilt feed the imagination needed to go on living.

What are we made of but longing and sorrow, love and loss? Bruised strawberries in the morning sun.

Grief becomes an echo of echoes, a chancy affair for which we can’t be prepared. In this echoing, the voice of Orpheus calls:

    Eurydice, Eurydice, Eurydice.
Morning hail

gusts of wind

moaning
Halfway through 1994, I believed the worst of the year was over. We lived in a rented house in the inner suburbs of Melbourne. It was a changeable house. Sometimes it felt safe as a church, and sometimes it shivered and cracked apart. A sloping slate roof held it down, pressing heat on us in summer, blowing cold in winter. What kept the house together was skin. Walls of cream gristle called crépi.

It was June 30th, an ordinary crisp winter day. Sunshine and magpies everywhere. After lunch, I took the children for a walk. His hands barely reaching the pram's handle, my first-born insisted on pushing his baby brother. Along the Merri Creek, there were egrets and ibises and ducks. Some turtles and tiny frogs. We sang duck songs and frog songs. I made up a magpie story as we passed a whole family of them. We bought quinces on the way back and I baked an upside-down quince cake. I was almost getting serious about planting winter vegetables, cornflowers and the last bulbs of irises, jonquils and ranunculi before nightfall when I decided against it.

Nights close early in June. Everything seems to stand still, bleak, even gloomy by five. I bundled the children inside the house, drew the curtains and flicked on the lights. It felt safe despite the cold air curling at our feet.

When I turned off the lights well after bed-time, I looked through the window. The roses looked dead but for a few white buds on their maimed limbs.

Why is white white?

Chalk, rice, zinc
Crystal falls
Limestone graves

Phosphorus
Lightless body
Alabaster
I woke up in the night, chilled as the whites in a Dutch still-life painting.

A still-life belongs to time, and we to this stillness.

In his cot, my baby’s face was white wax
as if smothered by the moon itself.

His lips were black.

My voice died out in my scream.

My voice died out in my scream.

Life goes on, they say. Life goes on leaving me—a hiatus.

I became the copula between life and death.

An object with no voice.

*Mère* echo ooooooooo

Why is white white?

Chalk, rice, zinc
Crystal falls
Limestone graves

Phosphorus
Lightless body
Alabaster
Mère echo oooooooo

Why is white white?

An orchestra
in a guitar
colour cascades

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