

Sentenced Poetics: Introduction

Nicole Markotić

Here, I welcome five spectacular poets into these pages, poets whose work ranges from the run-on sentence, the sentencing of the canon, the sentence made manifest, the line-broken sentence, and the prose-infused sentence. Susan Holbrook's run-on sentences encompass a "weak" female protagonist, one who tracks her ageing/female/non-fit body inside the very prose in which she scrutinizes contemporary attitudes toward the environment, women, and other politically charged concerns. Her concern is with her body, ever forward-moving, but also with the world external to her body, the world that impacts her body, literally and poetically. Sonnet L'Abbé critiques loyalty to the canon at the same time as she yawns the yoke of sonnets with contemporary blitherings that wrong the tribute, that sell more sellings. Her tight form erupts at its seams, surges as the "got" ruptures into "going." In his essay, "I Wanted to Write a Manifesto," Robert Kroetsch writes that "under the pressure of mere memory,"—he's recounting a story about his school years—he hears his language "threatening to disintegrate" (42). Note the emphasis on orality, even as Kroetsch gives accounts to readers how important writing and the alphabet has been to him: an erotics on the "efficacy of language" (47). For Meredith Quarterman, the politics of the manifesto include writing worlds that unshow themselves, diving into—and playing with—the political elasticity of prose. Her narrator begins with a straight-forward tale, but the words themselves become both distracting and absorbing. Weyman Chan's poem chases line after line, dreaming people into linguistically-authentic punctuation. His words scatter in linear fashion, introducing themselves at each left margin with heightened ceremony, only to fall into fairy-tale madness—again and again—as the right margin approaches. Kate Hargreaves's poems

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pivot on verbs—the doings and undoings—the effort of concentration part of a system that fixates, and that grips. Her last piece a run-on line that returns to Holbrook’s runner, that curls into Quartermain’s “toes.” The texts in this collection—written across provinces—speak to each other, not because of shared content or overlapping “material,” but because the poets here embrace the ground-pounding and the every-day profound, determined to read what’s not written, to remember what’s under erasure, and to circulate drastic ideas. Ludwig Wittgenstein once wrote that “within all great art there is a WILD animal: tamed” (37). But these poets reject the subduing of literary creatures. The poetry here trusts beyond cages, riotous and shaking.

WORKS CITED

Kroetsch, Robert. “I Wanted to Write a Manifesto.” *A Likely Story*. Red Deer: Red Deer College Press, 1995. Print.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Culture and Value*. Translated by Peter Winch. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Print.

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