

Southern Cross University

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Capturing the glimpse: Revelations on creative manoeuvres

Abstract

Creativity involves revelation: a moment of recognition, a coming into knowledge. These moments take many forms, and are inherently individualistic. They contain shifts in perspective, and provide a turning point in the creative process.

The authors of this paper access physical landscapes to precipitate these moments. Our creative manoeuvres are located in what for us are sites of longing and belonging. The landscapes are geographically isolated places; deserts and the bush, in largely ignored country.

What eventuates from these moments are what we're referring to as *glimpses*, an awakening of the senses and a growing appreciation of awareness: the way afternoon light filters through trees, the silence at the edge of the desert.

Many poets capture these glimpses, hold onto them to savour the physical sense of belonging they create, then try to evoke them in words. It is in the evocation of this glimpse in words that there arises a feeling of absence, and the memory of the glimpse can inspire a sense of what Arnold Zable (2008) referred to when he explored nostalgia back to its Greek origins as being both *nostos* (the return) and *algos* (pain).

In this paper and presentation, we will explore these themes in relation to our poetry, providing insight into the process and practice of capturing the glimpse.

Biographical note:

Dr Lynda Hawryluk is a Senior Lecturer in Writing at Southern Cross University where she is the Course Coordinator of the Associate Degree of Creative Writing. Lynda has facilitated writing workshops in regional Queensland and Canada. She is the Deputy Chair of the AAWP and has been published in a variety of academic and creative publications.

Leni Shilton is an award winning poet and writer of short creative non-fiction. Her work is published widely in anthologies and journals and broadcast on PoeticA. Leni is a PhD candidate at Southern Cross University.

Keywords:

Poetry – Place – Longing – Glimpse

From *Giving Voice to Silence*, a verse novel based on the life of historical figure Bertha Strehlow. These poems explore moments of fear and wonder at being exposed and isolated in the Central Australian desert – by Leni Shilton

Dream Language

The Language felt in the rocks,
on the air through grey leaves.

A land language I hear on my skin
as it moves like a veil over my face.

Sound that touches under skin
like water seeping through sand,

that birds know before it is sound.
A scent cushioned on wind, on currents over hills,

in cloud,
in rain when it finds itself falling.

The flick of a bird's wing,
dust that falls as it turns.

And light, ragged on the horizon
brushed orange in the mountain's profile,

a misted rainbow of colour;
fading to dark, with dotted stars,

lanterns to guard the cold night.
All sound, like a long held note.

The language fades from my ears,
but echoes loud in the land.

I move through rock,
creep in the dark, watch the night animals come.

The dark a type of home,
a tranquil breath

of giving in,
giving up, giving over.

A small moment
where all others wash off

into dreams
and I stop worrying for the first time.

Sound

A falling stone
rattles from the cliff
and me, alone at the waterhole
listening.

I must write the beauty onto the page,
but the pen is a dead weight
in my hand, and the book
is part of the ground.

I listen for his return;
I pray not to be alone for long.
If I call, will he hear me?
But my strangled throat
twists in its tube.

I might die here,
for love, for beauty

and the moment would pass
so quietly.

The birds still at the water;
ants, lizards.

The moment gone – soft, small,
a whisper barely heard.

References:

Carter, P 1987 *The Road to Botany Bay*, Faber and Faber, London, pp. 84-5

Dickinson, E 1997 'I died for beauty', *Emily Dickinson*, McNeil, H (ed), Orion Publishing Group, London, p. 31

Strehlow, B 1945 'A Camel trip to the Petermann Ranges across Central Australia' *Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, Proceedings for the session 1944-1945* Vol. XLVI Gill York Gate Benham Libraries, pp. 31-4

From *Capricornia Poems*, a collection of poetry and creative nonfiction responding to notions of landscape and belonging in Central Queensland – by Lynda Hawryluk.

Sandalwood Sunset

Grey butcherbirds scatter into the silence of a lazy still afternoon
Housebound felines settle back to humidity-free sleep, antagonised no more
The last shrill peep of a honeyeater
Changes blue sky to a pinkish sheen
Full green leaves of a mango tree rustle
And shake from invading masked bandits
Batwings stretched out against a deepening dusk
It's so quiet up on Zonka's Hill you can hear the waves lap at Fisherman's shore
The screech of little blacks like fingernails on a chalkboard
Breaking the gloaming in two
Mango tree murder spree over they head towards Wreck Point
Sharp silhouettes against a glimmering bay
The full moon ripe and pendulous hanging over the headland
A mound of dense bushland, solid and still yet soft
The tide bounces off the Bluff and a cool breeze blows through the pandanus
Like a sneaky possum stealing forbidden fruit
Darkness settles over the bay like a mosquito net protecting us
The red glow of a coil in the window blinks in the moonlight
Candles flutter, dancing solo *tours en l'air*
A radio voice from the next street floats across to us
As we sit and soak in this sandalwood sunset

White horses wash away worries

Spinifex scatters stresses like so many brittle seeds before them
The tide ebbs and flows against the shore here
Without a worry in the world
On an island in an enclosed bay
So close, so far; the real world just across the waves

Every footprint leaves an imprint
A depression in the earth
Much longer lasting than indentations in the sand
Every teardrop leaves a hollow
In the landscape of *Kanomi*

Shrill laughter echoes through caves
Where ancestors went to rest, to sleep for an eternity
However long that may be

The wind picks up, the sea turns dark
A she-oak slumps forlorn
The weight of our presence sags the shoulders
Of every old tree on this island

White horses rear up wildly
Over the top of an onshore breeze
Nostrils flared, eyes wide open and wild
Charging towards the shore

They race to an unseen finish line
Break down on the edge of an ocean
That slaps my feet and ankles
And will swallow me whole if I let it

Reference:

Rowland, M 2004 Myths and Non-myths: Frontier 'Massacres' in Australian History – the Woppaburra of the Keppel Islands in *Colonial Post: Journal of Australian Studies* no. 81

Research Statement

Research Background

The themes of place evoked in these poems resonate with a sense of nostalgia using a ‘language of a condition of special use’ (Steiner, 2010 p.72). This specialised language triggers emotion, pointing towards the ‘glimpse’ (Heaney, 1995 p. xv). The glimpse provides moments of revelation in the inspiration for the work and the distillation of emotion released through the reading of the poem, somewhere between ‘the unconscious and the never-really-known’ (Hetherington, 2012). This is the poetry of ‘edge country’, creating a sense of longing for what was, or what could be, within the place and the emotion of the place.

Research Contribution

The preceding work explores loss by writing about remote Central Australian sites known to the poet, placing the historical figure of Bertha Strehlow into the text. There follows multiple echoes of yearning, drawn from intimate knowledge of the country and the history of place (Strehlow, 1945), a sensation further explored in the latter poems, describing the experience of inhabiting landscapes in Central Queensland.

Research Significance

The notion of the glimpse contributes to discussions about the metaphysical origins of poetry (Magee, 2009) and its evocation in words; what Webb (2009) calls ‘phenomological understandings and insights’. These ideas form the connective tissue between this poetry. Our work on landscape and poetry explores knowledge building about the composition and practice of evoking the glimpse. These poems contribute to a PhD project on verse novels, with the latter two performed in Lismore NSW and informing another collection of verse.

List of works cited

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