Distant voices

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DISTANT VOICES
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from
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by
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ABSTRACT

‘Distant Voices’ consists of two parts: a collection of poems and a thirty-thousand word exegesis.

The poems are presented in three groups.

In Vocoder four long poems explore, in different ways, the idea of displacing the authorial ego with a kind of writing at one or two removes, through the process of translation, ventriloquy, mask or disguise. Speaking French presents 101 deliberate mistranslations of some of Rimbaud’s ‘Illuminations’ and poems by Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Verlaine. At the Movies is a group of narrative, discursive and reflective poems that speak about various movies and their cultural settings.

The exegesis is also presented in three parts. In it the poet John Tranter is discussed in the third person.

Part 1: About the Poems discusses the means of production and some of the theoretical implications of the poems presented in this thesis, partly in the context of Tranter’s earlier work, as the poems develop, extend and criticise some of Tranter’s earlier literary strategies.

Part 2: Prior projects discusses Tranter’s forty-year career as a writer, editor, publisher, radio producer, critic and anthologist, relating these changing roles to the writing in his twenty-odd books and his other projects, and attempting to trace a developing strand of experimental practice that finds its apotheosis in the process of translation, ventriloquy, mask or disguise underlying the thesis poems.

Part 3: Dream-Work looks at the three poets who have most influenced his work: Arthur Rimbaud, the Australian hoax poet ‘Ern Malley’, and the contemporary US poet John Ashbery, and also at the tripartite structure qualifying much of Tranter’s writing. Poetry is seen to occupy a liminal position in the Venn diagram where three fields overlap: dream theory, movie creation and criticism, and literary creation and criticism.
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Epigraph

We know that all literature is a form of disguise, a mask, a fable, a mystery: and behind the mask is the author.

— Leon Edel