Deakin University
A764 Master of Arts Writing and Literature

ALL727 - Sex, the Body and American Poetry
Tutor/Lecturer – Dr. Eva Birch
Summative Assessment 3 – 2000 Words
Due: 8pm AEST Friday 24th October 2022
Extension approved to 8pm 27th October 2022

Creative Portfolio 1000 Words (1107) – Creative Portfolio
(These hands, extreme presence and other minorities)
Critical Appendix 1000 Words (1041) - (CAConrad) Total word count: 2148
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CREATIVE PORTFOLIO: Serial Poem

'To be nobody but yourself in a world which is doing its best day and night to make you like everybody else means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight and never stop fighting.'

~ e.e. cummings (1965)

These hands, extreme presence and other minorities

This morning, leg wedged between boulders
rocks slicing flesh, saltwater stinging
these hands, bright red, life force leeching out
jagged cuts like invisible barbs carried for years on sagging shoulders
this life might have ended this morning
stranded, soaked and mindful of the mindless tide
I imagined myself pinned under the brilliant sun filled sky
the irony of slowly drowning on such a beautiful day

oh, for the wild running penchant of my disobedient dog
running out to a beckoning unpredictable sea
free, skin loose and wild

such moments of glorious aliveness
and ever-present impending doom

a dog is pure presence
fully focussed and oblivious to judgement
even when admonished
this state persists

undeterred, these bloodied fingers continue digging words from my core
like CAConrad, living in awareness, drawing facets of what surrounds me
sharpening my lens with intense focus, paying homage to internal rituals

You think you know me but comfort zones and projections
attractions and rejections govern interactions
unless you happen to be
evolved, or insightful or one of those rare birds
like the Bird of Paradise otherwise known
as the Bird of Tolerance
and never as Angelou's Caged Bird

this morning I'm doing a CAConrad
trance staring at the streaming light rays piercing my bedroom window
where they illuminate my sleeping escapee dog
where they illuminate the sacred triad of mind, body, and soul

Here I am summoning extreme presence
channelling creative viability
shedding intellect
wandering atmospherically

dogs are always present
always ready for joy and never judgemental

always does not apply to humans
never
never happens
always and never should be banished

I'm a marginalised minority of a minority
four standard deviations from the mean
but I'm no genius

do minority enough and it becomes you
you get accustomed to apartness
you get to see things from the outside in
you get to see things from the inside out

Staring at my hands

life as expressed in these undervalued hands

these well-travelled fingers

holding this pen, typing these words

words trickling out, spirited out

neurons firing, spitting out

spit them out, slap onto paper

two thousand words in a week, two, three

aiming for distinction

for a delusional high

these hands when newborn, delicate fingers grasping

ripped away from buoyancy, lungs gasping

soft pink fingers sucked, reaching, pointing outward

touching skin, desperate for skin

these hands now, sturdy harbingers of ageing

they know the places they've been

the things they've done

these capable gesturing hands, stroking the silky face of my three babies

these loving gentle hands, tending the body of a dying parent

these longing expressive hands

tracing the hallowed flesh of a lover's body

ecstatic caressing of feminine

sensual caressing of masculine

these stiffening hands, this throbbing turgid brain
must produce on command
public and private incantations
must squeeze life's precious blood
pour rainbow wheels of thought energies
into a word ejaculate
like forehead semen in white (soma)tic midge
into an ethereal literary queendom
condensed into essay, to be assayed and judged
the meaningful and mighty overshadowed by a rubric

CAConrad took years to write Amanda Paradise
poets sitting sweating for years creating one poem
a lauded effort is a slow brewing concoction

the poet is forthright, brave, and conscientious
the poet is non-conformist
the poet exudes raw truth
the poet has access to other worlds
the poet is an undervalued minority
the poet abhors deadlines

I am drawn to the courageous poet

of pagan inclinations and ritualistic charm

with a predilection for the preternatural

battle scarred and standing proud in they/their difference

this poet summons the tenacity to write through torment

the growling of leaf blowers harassing innocent leaves

leaves screaming, 'leave us alone!'

industriousness prescribing the external ordering of internal chaos

creating noise cacophony to validate being alive

you can listen to ten hours of leaf blowing on YouTube

surely, they can't be serious?

like the brave (Soma)tic they/them,

I am not an extension of a machine

'I'm creating, I'm writing! I'm screeching, *'leave me alone!'*

There is a blackbird perched in the mirror tree outside my back door

every afternoon, its song, so shrill, so sweet

it sings

oblivious to loud drilling, leaf blowers and whipper snippers

its words send tingles up my spine. It glues me to extreme presence

the faithful blackbird alights the same branch every day of its seasonal return

to welcome it home is almost a religious experience

there is something abnormal about me
you wouldn't know it from the outside, or would you?
I have no prototype; I refuse to be stereotyped
this refusal is part of my abnormality
it is part of my minority status

I've been reading about bisexual
women's understandings of social marginalisation,
'*The heterosexuals don't understand us, but nor do the lesbians*'

I am not bisexual
I am not heterosexual
I am not asexual
I am sexual

I have authority to write about this difference, this queerness, this pansexuality
I can speak to the experience of distrust and exclusion
of being an outsider to the protective minority clique
an outsider to a group of outsiders
I wonder which part of LBGQT+ I'm expected to be?

not accepting the label

does not lessen the experience

of marginalisation

funny that I've never seen myself as queer

before writing this

This morning I trudge wearily on

dogs sleeping but soon to stir beside me

the poet sleeps on a cloud of unexpressed words

restless as a capricious ocean

stirred by contemplations

assaulted by time pressure

it won't be long before

someone starts a lawn mower

no, it wasn't a lawn mower this time

it was an impatient driver nearly running over my dog

swearing, gesturing, and aiming to intimidate

tell me, at what point should I

submit to the false authority of a misogynist?

at what point after I'm called a crazy bitch

should I wilt under the heat of irrational anger?

well toe to toe, I found my wild side emerging

bully! you're a bully! I screeched,

'leave me alone!'

to all the bigots, bullies, and misogynists of the world

you won't get away with it!

heads swivelled at the newsagents

to watch the bully slink away

CAConrad says that poets should be alarm clocks

perhaps I am a sentinel

on the lookout for misogyny and discrimination

unlike the apology of this esteemed poet,

I'm not sorry I threw up at your wedding

this unnecessary pressure kills creativity

again, and again coming back to extreme presence

surrendering

be it present moment rage

or present moment bliss

I am a queer serial monogamist,

poet, mother, Buddhist eccentric

but no woman is an island unto herself