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# Constellations – a space in time that's filled with moving

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# **Constellations – a space in time that's filled with moving**

This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**Deanne Nichole Leber**

Edith Cowan University

School of Arts and Humanities

2016

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## **ABSTRACT**

Constellations in the sky have been a source of inspiration, in both science and literature, for aeons. Working within the constraints of the ‘official’ 88 constellations, as devised by the International Astronomical Union, this study involved researching the myths and histories of constellations, and then creating a collection of poems based upon those. Thematic connections between the eight modern constellation “families” or groups of constellations were explored and it is in these groupings that the poems work, to tie together, through experimentations with language, a somewhat cohesive fabric of poetry.

Each constellation consists of three poems. The first is a dense prose poem. The poem is then reconfigured, containing elements of the old prose poem, but offering new associations and meanings as punctuation and words are removed. The third and final poem reflects the actual constellation shape, as observed in star maps. It is a movement of poetic archaeology, with new poems emerging through excavation of the first two pages. The poems challenge notions of language, such as closure, dealing with repetitions, renewal and discontinuous narrative threads. There is an element of play with the work, and the final page encourages reading beyond the left to right formation of conventional reading structures, instead making connections to be traversed in an improvised reading process.

The poems are presented as four pages for each constellation. Three pages are the poems, and the fourth page, on the reverse of the final constellation shape, is the actual constellation map. The pages are clipped and folded into a black storage box. This design is to encapsulate the feeling of discovering a box of maps, with the folding and unfolding process aimed at being part of the play involved in reading and discovering the poems.

Accompanying the box is a Powerpoint presentation on a USB stick. This is a ‘Twitter’ type feed, where a one sentence epigraph, derived from the beginning of each constellation, is inscribed in a continuous feed, in an attempt to illustrate the futility of trying to comprehend and keep up with an endlessly shifting landscape of words online, and in particular, in social media. The 88 phrases revolve aimlessly across the screen. It becomes a blank space, littered with odd words and phrases, recognizable but fleeting.

The accompanying exegesis discusses language, mapping and orienteering. It explores theoretical concerns in poetry and language, and how, by looking at constellations and the way we interpret them, that they can be seen as metaphors for the way the constellation poems have been created.

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The staff at Edith Cowan University have been incredible. Over the years, I've come to consider ECU Mount Lawley as the place I come home to. In particular, I would like to thank Dr Marcella Polain for her early guidance in *Constellations*. I would also like to mention Professor Glen Phillips who provided the inspiration and drive in my undergraduate studies, and who passed on a passion and grounding in poetry that I will always carry with me.

I couldn't have travelled this path without the support from some very special people in my life. Firstly, I would like to thank my family. My family is large and extended, with parents and partners, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews. I love you all and carry a little of you in everything I do. I would like to thank my Mum for her love and support and for helping find the folds. I would like to thank my Dad, for his love and faith in me, and for reminding me that this life is a happy one. Thank you.

I am fortunate to have formed lifelong friendships, and am grateful to the wonderful people who have been there along the way. A special mention must go to Jason Vernaleo. Over the years, your support has inspired me to keep going. You understand the writer in me.

I would like to acknowledge the International Astronomical Union/ Sky and Telescope, for allowing me to use the star maps, on which the poetry for this collection is based. I would also like to state that early versions of some constellations have appeared in: *Indigo, Westerly, Cottonmouth and Queen Vic Knives*.



Dearest Nathan, after 20 years of marriage, we discover more about each other every day. Thank you for your love and understanding. You are my heart spirit. Thank you for your patience, and for helping with the Powerpoint – all that you do is motivated by love, and I treasure you. Now I can do some spring cleaning and get rid of those piles and piles of paper!

Finally, Ezekiel, my beautiful boy. Every single day, I thank the universe and the stars that you are here. I am the luckiest mother in the world because I have you. I thought I understood the shape and shades of love, but the day you were born, my world was transformed, and I found meaning and sanctity in life. And it sounded like laughter and tears, and saying hello over and over.

Thank you for allowing me to explore the skies, learn the names of those bright sparks, and tell some of their stories in poetry.

And so, I am here, in gratitude.

i) *Constellations: A rose, an object, a space.*

One of the most distinct and savoured memories I have, a space that I ruminate over again and again, is being the Flower Girl at my Aunty's wedding. I loved my ankle length apricot dress, with sheer peach overlay, ribbons and bows tied and twisting, white curls of cotton trickling down from the tops of my socks. I loved my little cane basket, overflowing with apricot flowers I can't name and Baby's Breath filling in the gaps. At some point in time, maybe at the wedding rehearsal, my Aunty took me aside and gave me a cream and lace, heart-shaped pillow. One side was blank, cool crisp cotton, with two apricot threads. The other side had a rubbery print of an illustrated boy and girl. The boy was giving the girl a red rose. There was a quotation beneath the cartoon that read "love is giving her a red rose". I remember giggling at the picture and being in awe of the role I would play at the wedding. I treated my duty of carrying the pillow very seriously. I was a little nervous, holding the pillow stiffly in front of me as I walked, one perfected step at a time. I carried the meaning of love. Only my Aunty and I knew the truth, the hidden words, the illusion of the white space. My sweaty hands, my nervous laugh, my tiny skips. Two rings of gold, stitched to a blank space. I was aware of that space, how it felt and what threatened to spill out from beneath its surface, uncontained words.

The pillow unraveled an idea of what love is (or should be). The possibility of love was reduced to a single phrase. All my ideas of love – unconditional, parental, sibling, first love, last love, love at first sight, hard love, fast love, were reduced to "love is giving her a red rose". It attached itself to my heart like a tattoo slapping the skin; its ink slipping beneath my soft epidermis, just as the picture and words echoed into the pillow's fluffy membrane forever. There seemed to be a permanence to the letters, something unchangeable, something unable to be edited, something about love that lasts forever.

So the pillow reveled in its own story. Love involves a boy and a girl, and the boy giving the girl a red rose. Love involves a heart shaped pillow with two rings and apricot threads. Love finds itself carried carefully down an aisle. Had the pillow contained daisies or lavender or Golden Wattle dripping, or flowers that I can't name, I may have had a different understanding. And had the pillow charged its meaning to

friendship, or apologies, or bon voyage, then perhaps a red rose would mean something other than love. To me, that cream pillow sealed the fate between the picture and the fragment. I could feel the wishing as I carried it, moving it through a space filled with lace apricot and an Elvis love song playing. It felt like the stuff of coins in fountains and string on fingers and snow domes and candles and cakes. And stars falling, of course, stars and their soft pull into light.

I've discovered, with all the enthusiasm and clumsiness that comes with exploring the depths and shallows of love, I've discovered that it doesn't always accompany a red rose. Apologies, deceit, conceit, can all come with red roses. Burnt toast, sloppy kisses and Band-Aids can all come with love. Yet I stubbornly persist: if I'm given a red rose then there's every possibility love is calling. If I see a red rose, it immediately leaps out as a sign for love, *the* sign for love, the legitimized idea of love I *love* dreaming of. Love that has been printed onto heart shaped pillows. Its shape, its curves enclosing the sign. The space filled with red petals pouting. Love is giving her a red rose. Love isn't giving him a sunflower or plucking her a weed, although I've made a million wishes into the wind with those. I've insisted on red roses, sulked for them, held my breath and threatened to pass out for them. On Valentine's Day (the great day for the price of love, the prize of love), my breath skips every time I see a red rose, my heart uncontrollably willing one my way. Love files down its thorns so it can be held between fingers. Love is giving her a red rose made blunt, made crimson, made soft enough to rest your head upon, not to sleep. Love is wrapping petals into poems, the small pricks, sufferable.

So, the top of the pillow was cream and trimmed with lace, wasn't it? Two apricot threads tied the wedding rings to it. The apricot matched my dress and the clips in my hair, the little floral basket, and perhaps, my shoes as well. After the wedding I kept the pillow. It came to represent an aspect of me: a pretty young Flower Girl, skipping, did I skip? I held something fragrant and sacred. I memorized the underside of the pillow. I showed no one, only my Aunty and I knew what lay beneath. Did she remember? She's no longer here; this is her absent validation. I kept the pillow on my bed, secret side down. I traced its curves, memorized its message, to look at, not to nap upon. Shhh.

I remembered the wedding often, prying open its shades and fragrances. I traced my fingers over the pillow, looping the two threads between my fingers. I tested their pull,

and rehearsed them being tied, untied, tied. I remembered wearing an apricot dress and walking carefully down the aisle, while the insides of my stomach were tripping over themselves. At some point, little things, like cream lace pillows, suddenly disappeared. For no reason I can remember, it was gone. I remember the threads, and the phrase “love is giving her a red rose”. My recollections are incomplete, fractured and condensed. I can’t remember exactly how the pillow felt. The materiality of the object has been replaced by a psychological reaching and stretching. I remember it when I’m writing, as I remember this and how to write it out. The pillow, its physicality removed, fits into the chronology of my life and has become immersed in a powerful life experience. Remembering it is like remembering a part of my identity. I carry it as though it were a solid mass, as though it completed me. As though identity were complimented by an impartial object, of material and lace and fluff.

Memories, such as those of pillows and red roses and meanings, gather together to form constellations of belonging and being. I remember my bedroom from when I was ten years old. I had a heart shaped pillow on my bed. I had an apricot dress in my wardrobe. Apricot clips on my dresser. Memories become our maps, ways to navigate our realities. Memories help secure where we have been and help determine where we are going. They explore the borders of our relationships with others. They are signs and signposts, rewriting any erasures. They are seams, laced and tied. They are phrases of meanings and objects we gather together, to hold. If they weren’t, museums would be empty halls. This would be an echo into oblivion.

I have a little of a hoarder within me. I pick up shiny things and dull things, collect things to remember things. The extreme hoarder remembers *everything*. Why won’t a hoarder throw away an old, tear stained face cloth? Because what will they do when they need an old, tear stained face cloth? Why replace what you already have? The hoarder in me knows it’s not about one piece of linen, it’s boxes and boxes of linen. It’s linen in the sink and in shoes and in baby cradles. And it’s the smell of a thousand pieces of linen and the feel of a thousand pieces of linen. It’s the memories of the linen, the million wipes and cleans and shines. It’s cream pillows and red roses and love spilling over pages and pages. It is the abundance in a reality of an ever-shifting material landscape. It is trying to do the impossible – to remember by remembering, each event stretching from you to me, decaying, and all of the distance and narratives

between us, made for carrying. A moment linked to a memory linked to an object. I am comforted in knowing my apricot flower girl dress was somewhere in my bedroom. If you tie a ribbon around your finger to remember, do you remember the ribbon? And the relief as it's undone? The hoarder in me traces the shapes of my memories again and again, coaxing them out of my ten year old self's bedroom and into today's existence. The hoarder in me cries because I can't find my pillow, wiping tears on an old piece of linen.

We salvage personal myths when a person dies. How they lived is measured by the porcelain in the cupboard, the apricot clips in the dresser, the statuettes of life's twists and turns in the display cabinet. Their pieces of linen. Empty meanings that are voiceless, no narratives to adhere them to any point in time. It's a Mini Skip on the front lawn, and the grab for objects. I once bought an antique vase that was exactly the same as my dear Nanna's. The vase doesn't have her history imprinted upon it, but its signification is imprinted on me – the vase has become a memory of Nanna. In a similar way, apricot lace stretches towards me wherever I go. Love hearts and red roses sink into my skin, suckling gently on my romantic veins. Is this how I will be remembered? Will they delete my hard drives, my USB's, my screen savers, my escape from work, life, my escape to work, life. My tears, how they stained. My pillows, how I didn't lay upon them. How will they remember?

Ordering objects prevents being overwhelmed by details of events that swirl around us continually. Objects become constellations to which we pin ourselves. We identify with them, caress and penetrate their surfaces, plying them with memories and emotions. We navigate their territories and borders. Make small stories, and large make believe. The colour of a heart shaped pillow or a red rose, a scrap of linen, merge to complement, complicate and construct identity. They are artifacts for the engravings memories leave behind. I understand my feelings by the way I remember.

Our desire to order and control, has carried over into the ways we construct, explain and move about the world around us. The constellations in the sky help orient where we are in the universe. The UBD, with dusty pages, GPS and Google Earth, with their startling ability to effortlessly capture moments of the reality of our external spaces, give us directions for orienting within our world. Globes of blue and green, show borders,

containments and spillages. The map, like memory, is contained in space that's always moving, never fixed. Mapping lets us know where to begin and where we can go to from here. Apricot shadows remind me, map me, remember me.

If words are the residue of life's longing to describe itself, then a cream pillow is a physical representation of that longing and remembering. Without the words "love is giving her a red rose", the picture becomes a silent sign, a less meaningful gesture. The words work as a map legend, guiding me. Perhaps then, my favourite maps are poems, with poets as the cartographers. Which poet has not discovered that love is giving her a red rose? What poem can't see the significance of a heart shaped pillow with lace and apricot threads? What rhyme can't dance on the tongue, kissed into the lips of a loved one. Poems guide and explore our territories, the lengths and widths of our emotional skin, our stained linen. They are etched into the inky wells of language, waiting to be remembered, retraced over and over again. I think love is giving her a red rose. I think love is as many times as you can remember it. Try opening it out and then fold it back again. Love is these paper strings, tied around irises, guiding to the underside of all things.

ii) *Constellations: Mapping an object, a space.*

To me, love has always been about trying to pin the heart to the moment to the object to the one soul that will carry me beyond constellations that spin above. Very carefully, love's wings will place me there, softly, arms folded in, legs polite and shy. I want a love that can be carried down an aisle and pinned in that sky. A love that is violent with dishes and crushed open by jazz. That sits softly on the bed, to lie upon together, not sleep, but dream, remember. A love that ties shoelaces and bows. Wipes tears and kisses away. A love that reads poetry and saves lines to remember, for later, on the bus, on the train, in the bath.

In a big bang universe, where we are all speeding through space, moving further and further away from each other, I want a love that can anchor me to a memory and give me moments to which I can cling. To guide my way around the traffic lights and islands that pause the blood weaving through my temples. Those disconnected thoughts that bubble up here and are gone there. I want something tangible and traceable, something that can be imprinted in ink, casting a shadow across pages unravelling, the pleasure of being read making me breathless. I want love because that is what makes words move for me, with me, in me. Words are my body's skin, mapping its heart. A heart shaped pillow tied with string, dancing on my fingers.

I am trying to reach beyond the limits of what words can do, pinned on the page, limited by the dimensions of margins and flat surfaces. In a universe where words are flying, surfing on lines, moving further and further apart, their paths are scratched into space. By the time the reader enters the page, the omissions and deletions have been engraved. Here are the *Constellations*, the words which are left behind. Writing becomes an act of stretching, past familiar groupings of stars, navigating strange skies. I chase the unfamiliar and all possibilities experienced, felt, imagined, inscribed as poet and as cartographer.

Where else but in a page or inky night, can I dip my fingers into the memory of a love heart pillow and its gestures of love. Where else can I plant pauses, the pregnant silence left at the end of each sentence, the anticipation for the next. Stars colliding in asterisms, fingers tracing the lines here to there and back again. I hope they are

(re)discovered, taking root and sprouting more than traces of themselves, that they may become something still soaring, still moving from the big bang shudder. Among the chaos of a million dissident voices, a trillion unstable stars, poetry pours out of pens, into computers, onto pages. A spillage from an unstoppable montage of days and their dreaming. And with it, the stories, attaching themselves to constellations, myths, imaginings. We tie them down with Pinterest pins, Facebook likes. I shake them free, erase lines, disconnect. Dip my fingers and point, over there, yes there, to the side, there.

Mapping introduces itself as a way in, a way into the moment, the object, the person. It is a way of creating intimacy, as poetry does, within a field of words. It helps to ascertain where we are, how we arrived, where we will go. Mapping gives the impression that the swirl of disorder surrounding us, particles from the big bang, is stabilized against chaos. Space itself appears transformed by the process of mapping. It becomes contained, in language, in pictures, in abstractions, lines and connections. In poetry, it becomes a way to read, to impart stories, to open ideas and meanings.

Mapping can be seen as part of a psychological process, whereby details are merged together, so that memories and information may be better understood and recollected (Kulhavy & Stock, 1996, pp. 123-145). Kulhavy and Stock (1996) discuss George Miller, who described the process of “chunking” in memory. “Chunking binds distinct bits of input information together in meaningful ways so as to form new units containing greater amounts of information” (Kulhavy & Stock, 1996, p. 131). Similarly, through mapping, we are able to discern details and information. For example, hospitals being illustrated by a cross. We can access the map via easily discernible groupings. In *Constellations*, “chunking” can be seen as a way of moving around the blank space, revealing the final constellation shape, the groupings of words that cohere to a renewed whole. The signifying epigraph at the beginning of each prose poem, serves as both signpost and glimpse into the following poems. It can be seen as a phrase that has been “chunked”, a distillation of ideas to a single sentence. A flash of cohesion in an unstable surface. The impermanence of memory and the shadow lights it creates.



Grouping details also helps the short-term memory to collect information efficiently (Kulhavy & Stock, 1996, pp. 123-145). Mapping can be seen as an aid to memory, presenting information in a way that the mind can grasp and interpret quickly. I gather together threads from an apricot dress, gold wedding rings, a heart shaped pillow and roses. They come to represent an event. Where memories blur, and boundaries spill over, uncertainty abounds. We try to seal our moments, to close and contain these groupings, within weddings, birthdays, Christmas, scars, scratches and poetry, always poetry.

It has been proposed that “a structurally coherent image supports computational efficiency in working memory” (Kulhavy & Stock, 1996, p. 136), which further complements the idea of the mechanics of memory. By grouping information into an image, the memory is aided in retaining and retrieving information. Advertising does this well. As do logos, ticks and red wax seals. Celestial constellations are also an example of this. Familiar asterisms are easily identifiable and act as a point of reference in an otherwise effervescent and uncontainable field of stars. In relation to mapping, Dent suggests that the cartographer seeks to integrate “all the map’s elements into a clear, meaningful, visual whole that can be readily understood by the reader” (Dent, 1972, p. 81). In writing *Constellations*, the lines between words help establish the constellation shape. The lines are a framework, to hang the words upon – a graphic representation to assist in the reading of word/stars. *Constellations* perform the task of presenting possible narrative threads in language, a mapping of ideas and their potentials. They signal the connection between the sky and the page, and how words move between the two.

In *Constellations*, I am striving to play with asterisms that “chunk” to create meaning. The reduction of words to reflect the final constellation shape is a process of scraping away linkages, and watching as words recede into the space of the page. The anchors are new phrases, new images, in which we can make new connections and unravel revived ones. The “meaningful, visual whole” changes, as the space becomes charged with movement. The ribbon is removed from the finger and the pillow finds a space to sleep. Writing becomes the memory, the relief as it comes undone, the relief in the recognition, a cohesion in the madness.

If you imagine that it happened, if you can taste it, smell it, resonate from the impact of it, is it any less a reality? Is it real to you if it's real to you? Memory is conflated by imagination. A delicate thread separates them, to be twirled with your fingers, in your mind, again and again, changed and renewed. The distance between them is separated by the mind's witnessing of itself. The engraving of events as real or imagined, wears the same grooves. Poetry captures those traces, those moments suspended between the reality of yesterday, and the absence of my body in my imaginings of tomorrow. *Constellations* are caught between those moments, untangling and writing. They are the straightened out pieces, the groupings that are pushed into a cohesive shape, narratives that twist between each other, and all of those irregular moments and fantasies, stripped down to the little agonies that can't be explained, but point to scars and the outlines of scars to come.

Blaut discusses the "natural" ability which children appear to have, whereby they are able, at a very young age, to discern maps and to move about a mapped environment, relating features within the map to their exterior surroundings (Blaut, 1991, pp. 55-74). I have seen my own child trace a path on a map. At four years of age, it seemed impressive, especially as it was a task achieved before conventional reading had been learnt. As an older child, he now enjoys pirate maps. The X is a container for secret treasure, a reward for the dutiful obedience required to read and interpret the spaces in reality, from the spaces marked on a folded page. There is a liberation that occurs, with the revelation of truth, uncovering what was hidden. Although it may be contentious to imply that anything is "natural", as a tool that enables us as "humans", mapping may be as important as the ability to use language and create meaning. Poetry can be seen as a further extension, a tool, to map what is hidden. We cover our X's in rhyme and metaphor, emptying the spillage of treasure and sand and wrong turns, back up, try again, all contained in pages. There are revelations, but poetry also pries open moments, again and again, not just one path, many paths. And not just walking in words, but skipping and dancing.

Blaut (1991, p. 57) also states that we have an "inability to perceive any ordinary landscape from an earth bound perspective". We have to "have to imagine them as though looking down on them from the sky" (Blaut, 1991, p. 57). It is from this "height", that we can establish a sense of place and logic to our surroundings. It can be

very difficult to visualize an overseas journey, for example, without lifting oneself above the earth, orienting by borders and oceans, blues and greens. The further we need to travel, the higher we go. When we fly, my son likes me to follow the flight map – where we are and where we are going. He understands the dots for places, like he understands the X for treasures. Time also becomes implicated, as distance is measured in time as well as kilometers, we are time travelers.

*Constellations* elevate the viewer from the page, opening space between words, pushing the constellation shape into view. Because the body is restricted to a reading experience at eye level, the constellation shapes are spread across the mind's sky. It is like lying on your back, and pointing at the space between stars, dragging stars together, moving your body for a better view. The poems do work as maps, and constellation shapes can be found in the actual sky. They can be experienced, in foggy midnight breath and cool dew.

By contrast, shorter journeys can be undertaken according to specific landmarks, not necessarily detailed by a map. For example, a green letterbox may be a crucial sign for location, but may not appear graphically. In *Constellations*, the minutiae of detail is contained in the prose poems. Navigation is as much by the small details, the plastic rose, the origami heart, as with larger themes and events, life, birth, death. If I try to remember an event, I think of a pillow, an apricot dress, I take myself above the event, beyond the etchings of memory. By writing it, it becomes fixed in space, it becomes dimensional, measurable and observable. I can lose myself trying to find a green letterbox, find myself caressing an apricot dress. I can pin a word to a star and read by its soft light. I am in walking distance, nearly there, a stanza away, one word closer.

Maps can be described as “representations of the space we inhabit” (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013, p. 1). Maps are not reality itself, but an interpretation of reality. As representations of space, they give us signposts to recognize and navigate with. A map of the world reflects a certain perspective, but is not the “true” image of the world (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013). By mapping, we make connections with and gain an understanding of information contained in our surroundings. If I memorize the phrase “love is giving her a red rose”, it does not necessarily contain a truth or reality, but becomes a lens, through which my perspective is focused. The way I remember, and

what I remember, can be seen as functions of my reality. Maps glean the landscape and approximate the difference between it and the viewer. Dorling and Fairbairn (2013, p. 25) describe the history of cartography as “the continuity of people’s attempts to bring order to their ‘reality’ by setting down their world-view in map form”. *Constellations* are representation of the space inhabited by words in myth, domestic and personal history, and imaginings. There are signposts and clues, unravelling a plethora of meanings. They are representations but not reality itself. They only approximate views, and engrave them in the tiny details contained in each word/star. Dazzling one word at a time, disorienting when grammar is removed and words spin, detached from each other, they become strange worlds, unfamiliar, but inviting.

Cartography can be seen as “reducing the spatial characteristics of a large area – a portion or all of the earth, or another celestial body, putting it in map form to make it observable” (Robinson, Morrison, Muehrcke, Kimerling, Guptill, 1995, p. 9). By making it observable, it is able to be experienced, to come “into view” (Robinson et al, p. 10). The sky cannot be experienced in a tactile way, and mapping stars helps to make it observable and comprehensible against the vast chaos of night. We can’t hold the sky, palm over palm or trace out any edges with fingertips. We can only tip the dark and light over our eyes and watch its shadows, letters and numbers, gathering on pages. Folding, unfolding, the pleasure pushing onto skin.

*Constellations* also work to bring things “into view”. The epigraph at the top of the prose poems, work as a tool for this, by condensing the ideas and pointing to the poems that follow. The pages undergo transformations, as the dense prose poem is reduced to a final constellation shape, where only a few word/stars sit in space. Those words become the focus, the easily observable. The process is an enactment of bringing things “into view”. The pleasure is in the closeness, where there is an inability for touch, the breath, the warmth, the light, the words, become the arches to delight and play. We can’t touch stars, but can enjoy the tracings of words that follow imaginative leaps and domestic realities. Maps rely on scale to bring the representation of what is being mapped into “manageable proportions” (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013, p. 25). The map is almost always “smaller than the space it represents” (Monmier, 1993, p. 21). As expansive as the constellations are, on the page, we can have a sense of distance and place, a kind of X marks the spot understanding of where we are in the universe, in this page.

The motivation and “mind” of the cartographer is “imprinted on every map” (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013, p. 7). The cartographer makes decisions affecting the overall map design, such as “what features to omit, include, emphasize or deemphasize” (Rossano & Morrison, 1996, p. 135). Maps can be seen as portraying “one (or at most merely a few) person’s view of the world”, and therefore their “prejudices and ignorance” as well as “agendas” (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013, p. 39). For example, features which are deemed significant may appear larger in scale or focus, than less “significant” features (Woodward, 1985, p. 513). Similarly, it can be seen that the poet, as cartographer, inscribes their motivations and desire in language. My selections, omissions, lines and reductions, are reflected in poetry. As much as I try to shake loose an imposition as “poet”, I am, inevitably, conflated with the work I move about on pages. Even when my desire is to reinterpret a myth, which has recognizable elements, I affect the poem, and its familiarity, by its construction. Further to this, the process in which I eliminate words in *Constellations*, to reveal the “actual” constellation shape, is restricted by the words I’ve used in the first page. The creative decisions made resonate in the final poem.

Maps provide evidence of how the world has been viewed and how it now is viewed. David Woodward, when discussing medieval world maps, notes that “maps in general need not be seen as reflecting only spatial realities and perceptions or pictures of the earth stopped at a given moment in time. They may also consist of historical aggregations or cumulative inventories of events that occur in space” (1985, p. 519). These “cumulative inventories” serve as narratives of histories. So a heart shaped pillow, a rose and a thread, are interwoven into the memory of how I experienced childhood, how I reflect upon it as an adult, and how I write about it as a poet/cartographer. Mapping, in this way, is an attempt to create reality, but instead comes to reflect the ideology of a space in time. The way we interlace computers into daily activities may be an example of how this space in time is measured. All of our Facebooks and Tinders and Instagrams and Googles are pinning us in time, already dusty and already, ones and zeros disintegrating.

The surface of a map has an “implicit dependence upon the survey of a stable terrain”, giving the impression of a fixed, rigid area being mapped (Chambers, 1993, p. 188). Thus, just as mapping creates an illusion of stability, we attribute in practice a similar illusion of stability in language. However, slippages occur as meaning shifts, alters and

is renewed. *Constellations* illustrates these slippages, by altering the text and placing it into new surroundings, stripping away the stability and leaving word/stars drifting in space. It is an action of trying to stabilize a wall of words, against the rush of movement in language, grasping for an anchor, a foothold. Poetry pushes itself into the page's surface, and offers a hand up.

Woodward states that, in the nineteenth century, maps “were intended to show geographical reality structured according to a coordinate system, such as longitude and latitude” (1985, p. 510). This “geographical reality” provided the illusion of a fixed, determined reality. By placing it in the realms of a measurable coordinate system, mapping gives the appearance of being an impartial, scientific phenomenon. As more detail in mapping has become possible, so too has the notion that mapping contains accuracy. As Harley states in regards to European map users and makers from “at least the seventeenth century onwards... increasingly promoted a standard scientific model of knowledge and cognition” (1989, p. 4). However, the realities, which mapping attempts to close, are constantly shifting and subject to reinterpretation and change. Similarly, *Constellations* work to open language and meaning, through the reinvigorating of word/stars. The second and third pages of every constellation, is a revitalized version of its previous self. Some linkages and themes can be established, but disintegrate into new ideas and stories. Threads are tied, cut and stolen. Agonies become pleasure, domestic activities become politically charged.

Mapping has evolved, therefore, to become more “scientific”, with an emphasis being on accuracy and measurability. This further propels the notion of there being a reality that can be contained and explained by mapping. However, maps aren't transparent documents which contain a truth or reality, but work as a filter (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013, p. 64). And while the cartographers crafted their skills, creating more and more “accurate” renditions of space, modern technology has overtaken and negated the impact of the individual cartographer. According to Dorling and Fairbairn, digital mapping has resulted in an “advantage over conventional maps of not imposing the cartographer's” view of the world (2013, p. 114). However, as Monmier states, “graphics software no more guarantees good maps than word-processing software assures good writing” (1993, p. 12). A user must be skilled in principles of mapping in order to create successful maps, effectively communicating ideas. If the map is poorly

constructed, it will misrepresent the “reality” it is trying to depict, and the reader is lost. And while there may be pleasure in drifting from pillows to string on fingers to roses, falling in a river may not be as delightful.

Computer technology is also able to produce poetic work, through computational texts. This is where the poet has no control over the words. For example, sites online sites generate “automatic” poems, randomly placing words together. And while some engage the writer, by selecting from broad categories, such as weather or seasons, others negate a writer altogether, it is created with minimal interaction, just the clicking of a button. In a sense, the last page from *Constellations* reflects a similar effect. As the final shape reflects the actual shape of the constellation, I am limited to both the page and to the words available from the first poem. It can be seen as a computational process, a rigid frame, or filter, in which the words come together. The poet as cartographer relinquishes control and the poem becomes its own work.

Historically, map-making had been a skilled profession, as it was not easy to reproduce maps. There was an exclusivity in maps, as they could not be accessed to those without some power or economic advantage (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013). By contrast, today’s maps can be both accessed and created by individual consumers. Computing software and the internet, have led to easily reproducible maps. As Rhind states, “a huge amount of information on mapping is available and accessed, reflecting its widespread importance” (2000, p. 296). The proliferation of electronic texts and information available on the internet for the poet is also staggering. The poet as cartographer, is able to navigate this spillage of information, accessing an instant audience, with endless reproductions, in a space where no exclusivity exists. The map is available to everyone, the poem is available to everyone. The poem is a mechanized Frankenstein of words, grafted together from rhymes in chat rooms, to animated Gifs professing love with a red rose with a love heart pillow, smothering the reader.

Further to this, Google Earth gives the individual user the power to locate a specific address, as well as providing photographs of the surrounding areas. Since satellite technology uses pictures to sketch landscapes, this type of mapping can be seen as an exacting science. This perpetuates the myth “of there being one true map of the world” (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013, p. 67). However, satellite technology is also another filter,

another perspective. Thus, mapping can then be seen as a collision with a reality, not reality itself. Google Earth reflects one moment in time. In *Constellations*, the three poems also represent a space in time. At any other moment, the words removed from the second page could be altered, affecting the final constellation shape, the shape is directly impacted by the filtering process. As in mapping, there cannot be a finite view of a moment in time in poetry. A rose, a heart shaped pillow and two threads can only be experienced by the method they are recalled and caressed by the reader. They are parts and pieces, minutes and seconds, endlessly shifting, moving closer to time, and then away again. Furthermore, as the views in Google Earth can be collated to create an accurate 'picture' of a space over time, so the reader of *Constellations* can participate in a proliferation of 'meaning' over time. Both personal and public, tears and laughter.

Further to this, if we map a suburb, and then reduce the scale, smaller details, such as individual houses, become obscured, and may disappear altogether. This also works in reverse, where maps are enlarged and localized details become clearer. Using Google Earth illustrates this point. A user can key in a location, and satellite pictures zoom in as much or as little detail as the user wishes. Features can be seen from 'street level' or further out. In viewing *Constellations*, the process of removing words, bring the focus of the last constellation shape, similar to a close up or using a telescope to see stars. By moving through *Constellations* in reverse, the context and backgrounds to the loose 'narratives' can be seen. New and surprising ideas emerge, the poet as cartographer is excavating a landscape of text.

In flat maps, the pages hold transformations of landscape. Mountains are leveled, buildings reduced to horizontal planes. We understand, or take for granted, the relationship between the "real", external world, and the negotiation between that and the map. Monmier states that "...all maps are generalizations. In most cases generalization results because the map cannot portray reality at a reduced scale without a loss of detail" (1993, p. 22). So the *Constellation* shapes are a shaving, a reducing of words to both bring into view the final shape, as well as a transforming of the page to be able to contain it. The landscape becomes alphabetical stubble, sculpted by the act of shearing words away from spaces, creating pockets where, between the smooth grooves of empty lines, new meanings appear.



Mapping, then, is a way in which “three-dimensional spaces are transformed to two dimensions” (Kulhavy & Stock, 1996, p. 140). It isn’t possible to represent the detail and composition of earth on a “flat plane, paper sheet or monitor screen, without some form of deformation being introduced” (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013, p. 28). As Robinson, Morrison, Muehrcke, Kimerling and Guptill also argues, “geometrical transformations” are required for the map to be effective (1995, p. 11). There is also a mathematical function inherent in maps, whereby “real world” points are transformed into lines on the map (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013, p. 28). The mathematical function has added to the scientific leaning of maps. That maps can be measurable and accountable, mathematically and scientifically, adds to the assumption that maps have legitimacy and reflect a stable reality. There is also a transformative aspect to *Constellations*. In order for the final constellation shape to ‘fit’ in the page, some are made smaller, others larger, some spin sideways, others in corners. The shape remains the same as the actual constellation in the sky, but if you compare two poems, they are separated by their mathematical inconsistencies, especially in relation to each other. It’s a creative leap, entangled with measurable, mathematical equations. They fit in the sky, in isolation, but together, are distorted and disorienting.

Maps provide a method to control and dominate areas, as Dorling and Fairbairn argue, “as devices to exert control over space” (2013, p. 53). Boundaries define inclusive and exclusive areas. What is contained in the mapped area is controlled and known. Thus, maps help to legitimize borders. Over time, they shift and change according to the dominating force. For example, an atlas from the 1980’s will show the USSR. Thus, as Harley notes, mapping is “as much a commentary on the social structure of a particular nation or place as it is on its topography” (1989, p. 6). A hospital or art gallery may be featured on a map, as significant landmarks, whereas the omission of ordinary residences reveals the notion of what is considered “important”, as well as social structure. Hospitals and galleries are often communal areas, public places. They reflect how a government might provide for its citizens. I navigate *Constellations*, their boundaries defined by words and the spaces their ripples cause. There are myths and memories, there are moments and love. Borders are fluid, as punctuation is removed, and the words are free to roam, invent new paths, create new constructs in space, new meanings proliferating from new surroundings. What is excluded, omitted from subsequent constellations, becomes as important as what is included. Is the final

constellation shape somehow privileging that text as the final, complete, enclosed border? Or is it liberating the dense prose poem from its initial meanings and values?

Dorling & Fairbairn suggest that mapping was used to “claim lands before they had even been occupied and before geographers knew at all precisely where those lands were” (2013, p. 73). Uncharted lands were a source of fascination and potential conquest. Conley states that “the unknown was an integral part of cartography prior to the eighteenth century” (1998, p. 23). The unknown spaces were filled with possibilities. This can be compared to the mapping of our celestial universe, where astronomers are trying to catalogue and determine what exists in the (in)finite reaches of space. Momnier supports the notion by suggesting that maps can also point out what we “don’t yet know and still need to look for” (1993, p. 17). There are maps beneath maps, all possibilities, and mapping is a process of moving through spaces, erasing and connecting, over and over. I want to inhabit those spaces. I want to dig around the red rose, pull apart the love heart pillow, colour in the apricot shades. And I want *Constellations* to suggest what exists in space, how it moves, how it feels, and how many voices may actually be spilling from the stars. To show how language moves through space and beyond the page, beyond word/stars, into the realms of limitlessness, penetrating the skin of words and the way they feel, moving through our eyes, our tongue, our mind.

Mapping uses symbols as a means of imparting information about the mapped area and is a form of communication (Dent, 1972, p. 80). Communication in written language, is formed in a similar way. We gain understanding from learning words and their associations, while we understand how the map works because we understand the symbols contained within it, and how they relate. As Blaut points out, a dictionary is the equivalent to a “map legend” (1991, p. 60). Both maps and language work within a sign system. Kulhavy and Stock state that the viewer’s interpretation is “unlikely to yield sound conclusions, any more than using dictionary definitions of words predicts the meaning that people assign to them” (1996, p. 123). As literary and perceptual aids, “maps amplify an author’s sentences and paragraphs” (Monmier, 1993, p. 3). Maps assist in explaining issues, by giving visual representations of specific data. As Monmier states, “words *with* maps can be far more powerful as a vehicle for scholarly exposition than the same words *without* maps” (1993, p. 7). In *Constellations*, the

reverse side of each constellation, contain the constellation map by the International Astronomical Union. The connection between them, establishes a dialogue that describes, within the realms of astronomical terms, and poetry, the limits of the star/words. I hope that the maps amplify the reading experience, and continue to help with the notion of 'bringing into view' the constellation shape.

From a search engine, information is easy, digestible and forever moving and changing. This is a mapping of ideas, where the work has been done by someone else's algorithm. The internet is mapping the things you buy, the music you like, the books you read, the news that interests you. Computers are also mapping our personal life, blurring the boundaries between personal and private. In social websites, we scroll through people's friends and acquaintances, find where they work, where they study, flick through photos of vacations, children, weddings. I remember when the idea of the internet dwelled in the realms of sci-fi novels. It is closer than the apricot dress, and further than the loss of a heart shaped pillow. We were paranoid about "Big Brother" and the possibilities of national identification cards. Today, we are voluntarily putting their information online, giving up privacy at an astonishing rate. Every key stroke we make is recorded in hard drives, search topics recorded on search engines, profile views recorded on Facebook. On Facebook alone, one can delete their profile, but, according to their privacy information "Copies of some material (ex: log records) may remain in our database for technical reasons" (Facebook, 2015). The previous Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, stated in regard to data retention laws, "It is not what you're doing on the internet, it's the sites you're visiting... It's not the content, it's just where you have been, so to speak" (Griffiths, 2014). In March 2015, the Senate passed new metadata laws, where two years of phone and internet records for consumers, will be retained.

Will we be aware of what we have lost? The course of mapping may in fact hold a sinister outcome. If we map everything that we are, if we dissect, measure, control every aspect of our lives, what happens to personal freedom. What happens to heart shaped pillows and what happens to red roses? What happens to constellations that are reduced to ones and zeros. As Rhind states, mapping, "irrespective of the form in which it is held – paper or digital – it underpins many activities of the state and private industry; it facilitates certain types of leisure activities world-wide; and it is central to geographical

education...” (2000, p. 295). As a tool, mapping is used in a myriad of ways, from psychology to cosmology to genetics to poetry. Its impact is undeniable.

Markham eloquently states that “were all the maps in this world destroyed and vanished under the direction of some malevolent hand, each man would be blind again, each city be made a stranger to the next, each landmark become a meaningless signpost pointing to nothing” (1942, p. 20). The terrifying disintegration of memory, which comes with disorders like dementia, can be seen as the mind losing its own personal maps. Memories shift and disappear. And in poetry, old journals, thrown out in the confused grieving that comes with death, accidentally tossed into the mini-skip, evidence of a life, its explanations, discoveries, proximity to stars, lost. Our “perception of the world is constantly being moderated by our experiences of mapping” (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013, p. 4). Our lives, our spaces, our universe, all impacted by the tracings of maps. Should maps disappear, and the knowledge supported by them, we may turn to the skies once more and try to unravel paths in ways we cannot imagine, when the strict lines dividing the stars have been erased. I’ll be there, watching the threads fly free from my fingers.

iii) *Constellations: Mapping a space and a word*

From this height, how can I describe the way I try to gather the world into my pen? When, in truth, it's not usually a pen, just the tip tapping of my fingers against the plastic squares of my keyboard. There have been pens here and there. Mainly on buses, and next to the phone. And for the many scrawled drafts of drafts of drafts, I've used pencils and erasers. Vintage creativity. Lines spinning every way, disappear, reappear, blown across the page. Those odd geometrics jutting out in the wrong places. Trying to fit star maps together, alphabetical jigsaws, so many times printed and shifted and printed again. Angles askew. How to describe those alphabets roaming among celestial globes? Where am I among the confusion of dust and borders and shrapnel streaming from starlight? How can I encapsulate where I'm spinning from, where I spin to, where I become undone, where I become. I've mapped my body my hands and their spillage into these watery lines. I've surrendered myself to science, mapped my universe my pillows my view into space, and all of its dimensions, endlessly shifting, and me with it. Where am I in orbit, in which orbit am I?

Astronomy can be considered as “the oldest science”, where humanity is “bound to ... his need to find direction, to orient himself in his travels, to organize his agricultural work, more in general, to command nature and the seasons and to plan the future” (Giunti Editorial Group, 2003, p. 10). Science itself is part “observation” and “experiment”, and it is in this way astronomy is studied, as an art that cannot be felt, touched, and, when looking at the potential infinities of space, exists almost beyond the realms of measurement (“Science”, 2015). Our ability to organize and orient ourselves on this planet, stems in part, from those skills that explorations and interpretations of the night sky have given us. Astronomical mapping has given a method to assert power and control of our external environment. Gazing at the skies directed our questioning, our quest for understanding. Space itself became a tool with functions.

Mapping space and the universe not only aids our understanding of the skies, but also of earth. From our safe gaze, we are able to see who and where we are and the scale of our tiny lives compared to all that is between light and dark spaces. The study of space is ongoing and its parameters ever shifting. The way that we understand and explain our

solar system, galaxy and universe is constantly being revised; indeed, as technology changes, our understanding of our celestial surroundings alters.

In creating *Constellations*, the function of mapping can be seen as an attempt to control my own universe, implicating limits of both time and distance, through the reduction of words and their re-constructions. How far the rose is from your smile relates to how far the Andromeda constellation spins above. Our distances and our closeness defined by memory and its stretching. What we cannot touch – a star, a galaxy – is obliterated by what we can sense – the warmth from our own star, the spin of our own galaxy. Tripping at the end of the escalator I pluck a red rose and a shooting star falls. The wish is the same. As facts are adjusted, and our perceptions alter, so does our understanding of where we come from.

Galileo asserted that there is mountainous terrain on the earth's moon, as well as sunspots on the surface of the sun. Galileo's claims suggested that celestial objects were flawed, and reflected the imperfections abundant on our own Earth. Galileo's statements were contentious and vehemently resisted by some, as it threatened the beliefs of scholars at this time. Protests included; why would God create a world that isn't visible to the naked eye, and what is the point of having objects like mountains on the moon? (Andrade, 1964, p. 123). Space exists - with no need for a witness. So what is the point of writing poetry if it's not to be read? What is the point in believing a rose can contain meaning, memory, emotional elasticity? Perhaps *Constellations* will never be wholly read. Maybe I'll be the only one who will know their distances, the way they spin in their own pages, relentlessly throwing off phrases and light, lines webbed between them. I like to think of them in their box, in the middle of a room. Spitting out words like a small, warm fire. Throwing off light here and there, people folding and unfolding, again and again. Its imperfections, such as dull repetitions, would be difficult to ascertain, as they are in parts and pieces their own poems, and one would have to scan each constellation set, in order to analyze, for example, via computer. Or, vintage study, with a highlighter and pen. Again and again.

My *Constellations* are flawed. How can any piece of writing be anything but imperfect? The reader makes them otherwise. I like to think word/star's beauty lies in their rubbing, the friction that occurs when phrases bump against each other and jostle for

attention amidst the rubble of discarded word/stars. They are in places mountainous and lush, in others, barren harsh, with a few words determinately flashing against a dry and impenetrable landscape. Some will lay abandoned, others beg resuscitation, again and again. The point of *Constellations* is to play among the flaws. It is in the exploration of space and what lies beyond the movement of words pinned in the page. And it's the way those words repeat, endlessly flashing significations in renewed galaxies, blinding lights and black holes, sucking in alphabets, spinning out the meanings, the pillars of creation, the dust of some big bang movement.

The astronomical, celestial sphere mirrors earth's geographic sphere. Perhaps a desire to replicate this comfortable familiarity led to this similarity. By using the geometry of a sphere, astronomers "locate a star using a grid system analogous to the latitude and longitude system geographers use for pinpointing a place on Earth" (Kerrod, 2003, pp. 16-17). We are lengths and widths, parts and pieces, digestible and dividable. By the setting down of lines, dictating ways to read from left to right, trace your fingers around a globe, watch how lines radiate from the poles, how X marks the spot in places, crossing over. *Constellations* have used lines to act as a tool to both open up meaning and direct reading. Lines aren't dictatorial, one doesn't have to follow the particular pattern. They are not perpendicular, regularly spaced, easily digestible. They spin in many directions, with many trajectories, many possibilities. In some cases, one can almost see the shape they represent, almost, a recognition, a familiar sign. *Constellations* also draw lines between myth and memory, form and space, the ways we separate and come together, again and again. By adapting the geometry of star maps, they become mapped themselves, objects that can be referenced to and located within the parameters of a page.

It's earth's gentle spin which gives the impression that the sun moves across the sky in the day, and stars across the sky at night. Earth completes this cycle once a day (that's how a day is measured (Kerrod, 2003, p. 16). Similarly, the earth traveling in its orbit results in a difference in the visibility of constellations over a period of approximately three months. These changes can be seen as seasonal (Kerrod, pp. 20-21). I have set out to create a similar illusion, that *Constellations* are moving. Although the word/stars are, in a sense, stationary, the space between them 'moves', pushing word/stars, jostling them about. As the space grows, new meanings are teased out, new relationships and

structures are formed. I try to orient the poetry within the page, to guide, through the removal of word/stars and phrases, seed and shape future constellations. Lines go beyond the regular lines of text, and are drawn over and again, with new shapes. Word/stars are inevitably located and referenced by their surroundings. The constellations are an act of disintegration and reintegration. The erosion of space unearthing new galaxies.

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) divided stars in the northern and southern hemispheres into eighty-eight constellations (International Astronomical Union, 2015). These constellations included those from Ptolemy's time, as well as modern constellations (International Astronomical Union, 2015). The constellations contain and support the sky, so that every piece of the sky is 'contained' within a constellation outline. Thus, the standardization of the constellations was completed in order to have an "official" means by which astronomical regions can be explained. Although there are many cultural interpretations of constellations, the writing of the skies into fixed constellations indicates that there is a dominant cultural force in place, and that the fixed constellations represent that force.

I "hang" all of my poems on the frame of each constellation, adhering to the IAU "official" eighty-eight. It is noted there is some variant in constellations – stars may fall within the constellation "boundary", but not connect within the shape/ outline given in the star maps. The maps themselves are open to variation. (International Astronomical Union, 2015). *Constellations* consist of the connective outlines. There may be stars that are still moving within and without those shapes, not represented in the poems. The main motivation, creatively, for this decision is that it provided an artificial framework – a point (or collection of points), to both leap from and to. It acts as a containment for the poems – with boundaries and borders, connecting and separating. The *Constellations* universe is filled with star/words, blankets of texts, which land within the (illusory) fixed, constellation shape.

Further to this, the lines connecting constellation shapes are arbitrary, in that there are no relationships or rules regarding their shapes and their placement in the sky, and no level of "fixed" or "true" outlines. The myths and stories attached to constellations, often relate to characters and creatures in those stories, and the associations between



them. The later constellations, such as those in the *La Caille* and *Bayer* family groups, contain objects, often with no stories attached. They are shining signifiers, constructed paths and patterns which proliferate tales I have taken from personal iconography and my domestic environment. At times, the stories in the traditional constellations overlap the modern, with shared imagery and repetitious phrases. *Constellations* feel the pressure of the force of the history behind the stars and the way they link together, but utilize that pressure to create something that is (re)invigorated.

The word/stars that in *Constellations* reflect the constellation shape, usually with each word replacing a star on the page. In some cases, small groupings of word/stars are kept. This is because in language, as well as constellations, groupings occur, and at times, it has been beneficial to use a couple of words to convey an image, where one word/ star might not work as effectively. As stated previously, the constellation shape becomes a frame for the poem to ‘hang’ upon. If one looks at pictures of constellations, lesser stars are often included. In *Constellations*, I have tried, as much as possible, to keep words relating to the mapped constellation, as used by the IAU, not the figurative, pictorial constellations, and not the stars depicted in IAU star maps which are ‘outside’ or ‘inside’ of the lines which form constellation shapes. It should be noted that for *Mensa* and *Microscopium*, I looked outside the IAU maps as theirs didn’t contain connective lines. I’m imposing a ‘limit’ to the word/stars used. As stated, I’m using the outline, constellation shape and connecting lines, to create the final constellation poem. It is a connection between lines and the way lines direct a reading. It is the moment of coherence, a fragment in time, the capturing of the end point, before everything disintegrates back into a blanket of word/stars again.

How is reading *Constellations* like time? When the word/stars are placed in their constellation shapes, they create the illusion that they are pinned to a moment in time. But they actually rest within a text of fluidity and movement. Stars in the sky project light that is millions of years old, so old in fact that the star may have already ‘died’, only we see it’s spectral light because of the length of time it takes to travel to Earth. With writing, we can package words into a page and send it travelling, from yesterday to some far imagined future, intact, but perhaps with parts and pieces of its possible meanings erased, and at the same time, opened and inviting re-interpretations. This is the effect of time on language. The familiar is made strange and the strange is made

new and comforting. Living languages continue to evolve, and its writings follow. *Constellations* are themselves time travelers. The distance from the first, dense, prose poem to the final constellation shape, is transported by the expansion of space and the evolving word play that comes from the removal and erasures of word/stars. The final constellation shape is not necessarily dead stars shining, it's word/stars beaming possibilities in an endlessly shifting landscape of text and meaning.

*Constellations* are an act of approximation and in some cases, amputation. I did not sit down with a compass, a globe and some transparencies, to 'accurately' replicate the sky in poetry. It was never my intention to ratify my creative work with numbers and degrees of movement. *Constellations* could be seen as being computational in their development, but they inhabit an inaccurate and shifting space. The final constellation shape "hangs" on the frame of the IAU constellation, with the artistic representation draping the scientific. Diagrams, such as by Johann Gabriel Doppelmayr, who was a cartographer and astronomer, and lived between 1677 – 1750, elaborately decorated celestial maps, as in the *Atlas Coelestis*, depicting pictorial representations for each constellation shape, such as Gemini – the male twins (O'Connor & Robertson, 2006). *Constellations* are suspended on the skeletal shapes, on the bones of the ideas of myth and imagination, the peripheral decorations, the word/star blankets in the prose poems, decorate the page. Myth and memory entwine to create a plethora of stories and meanings, an untangling of potential ideas and lose narratives to create paths with. Poems themselves become layered with word/stars flashing like jewels, like crocheted edges, embellishments of language and textures, the embroidered word/stars of play. The prose poem, itself layered and dense, can be seen as a type of weaving. When looking at the *Constellations* in reverse, there is an effect of details and decorations, increasing, expanding, proliferating.

I can't count the ways and times I have attempted to write a 'life story' narrative. Every time I have tried, memories and the multiplicity of their implications take over, and I find myself beginning again and again. They are multiple experiences in multiple spaces. Like so many writers espousing so many verses about constellations. They attempt to enter moments such as a red rose and a soft pillow, and the gentle whispers of pre-dawn lovers. I see the temptation to give over to a fixed experience, to map one meaning, one way of inhabiting a space, as a temptation that can never be satisfied.

I see *Constellations* as a way of teasing out voices, of offering multiple perspectives, multiple dreams, multiple word/stars exploring multiple spaces. There is no, overall, cohesive voice. It is a shifting, ever interacting movement that offers no overarching narrative of a life cycle. There are bends and curves, futures and pasts, and a present that is in the endless play of sounds of phonetic junctions and ruptures. There is no editing down to a single story, a single thread. It is the taking of word/stars and making them work, making them test each other and encroach upon their personal space. It is about personal space becoming uncomfortable and crowded.

We yearn for coherence and it's unsettling when we don't get it. Perhaps, there is a predictability in *Constellations* because of the pre-existing mapped skies, which are named and secured, which could be interpreted as presenting a fixed reading. If the reader is aware of the final constellation shape, when reading the first prose poem, then the interpretation could be that the word/stars are in fact pinned in place, they are where the scientific placement of them commands. Even so, the computational outcome is affected by space itself, and how the shape shifts across the page. They aren't neatly centered and designed. Even when working with one cohesive image, it is extremely challenging to have the final constellation shape both, as a mechanically sound object that relates to the IAU shape, and as some kind of creative impetus, a chain of word/stars that can be interpreted and reinterpreted, that are colourful, and surprising, when reworking the prose poems that they spring from.

The International Astronomical Union website states that "like true love and many other of the best things in human life, the beauty of the night sky is not for sale, but is free for all to enjoy" (Andersen, 2015). When the sky has tactile dimensions and can be seen as a coherent territory, perhaps then we will trade off its parts and pieces successfully. *Constellations*, at least in my aspirations, will be free of commodification, to enjoy like a red rose, a heart shaped pillow, a star.

*Constellations*, their presentation, in a box, folded in like maps, invites an appreciation of the poems at leisure. The box itself, vintage in appearance, gives the impression of discovering something old and precious, antiquated and yellowing with time. The pleasure lies in the folding, unfolding, the spinning out of word/stars, the linkages, the language. It is exciting to consider where else they might appear – out of their

contextual surroundings, on walls, being performed at poetry readings, printed in journals, unrelated and unchartable, enjoyed in odd and unexpected spaces. Projected onto globes. In tents with word/stars as pricks of light. As part of a collage of transparencies shining against ceilings. Words heaped in a bucket, retrieving a word/star here a word/star there. Word/stars in wrong places. Words folded into maps, into pockets. Folded out orient a path. Words in pillows in stems of flowers. Words imprinted on cartridge tapes, unraveling, the light and dark spaces spilling over each other.

Artists such as Anne Carson, utilize the box as an object to conceptually present her work. She created an epitaph for her brother titled *Nox*, which has the appearance of a “squat grey aspect of a grey tablet” (O’Rourke, 2010). The box represents a coffin, but is also a gathering place, somewhere to collate the traces of one’s life – photographs, letters, postcards. *Nox* has the effect of being an “accordion style” piece, with work spilling out from the box in this way (O’Rourke, 2010). *Constellations* also has the sense of breaking containment, with the maps at risk of falling out, and of being misplaced within the box. The box in *Constellations* is a storage unit. It is a place for the tactility of memory to explore. It can be unpacked and packed. The aim was to create a piece that is stored, kept in dusty places. Like *Nox*, it is a place for love heart pillows and memories of plastic roses. A box of special things, mixed with the ordinary, everyday keepsakes of time. Further to this, musical artists such as Enya, utilize the box as collectable pieces to accompany music, for example, a Box of Dreams. The box becomes gift, memory, artwork.

*Constellations*, in its actual presentation, resists commodification. It also resists being distributed electronically. It is a tactile, physical collection of work, almost like a catalogue of poetry. Part of the experience of *Constellations* is the delving into the box, the discovery of maps, the opening of worlds and possibilities. I don’t anticipate that a bound collection of work would be as effective in encapsulating notions of mapping and language, defying the implications of computers (making books and maps curios, and no doubt, eventually, redundant). This is a resistance against the digitalization of words. Further to this, the epigraphs at the beginning of each constellation group, is incorporated into a “twitter” type feed. This feed appears like a live update in Power Point. It reinforces the notion that ideas in social media are fleeting and nonsensical. It

would not be expected that a reader could necessarily understand or draw any kind of narrative from the moving sentences. Rather, a line here or there would register, and then time, moving the sentences on again.

An example of another artist working in a medium that differs from conventional book construction is Karen Hanmer. Among her work is a piece called “Star Poems”. This creation can be read like “a traditional book, can be removed from its jacket and unfolded flat to reference historical astronomical charts... or can be folded into an infinite variety of sculptural shapes, or unfolded flat as a kind of map referencing historical and contemporary astronomical charts” (Hanmer, n.d.).

Throughout the world, there are wonderful examples of images and myths which engage with constellations. One example of constellation/ star mythology is via the Nakshatras from Hindu astrology, which are derived from 27 Nakshatras (asterisms). They can be seen to “represent our journey from the moment of birth to the moment of death” (Trivedi, vii, 2005). Each Nakshatra engages with symbols, deities and details the nature/ functioning of the person it represents. This is similar in function to the twelve constellations of the Zodiac family. Ashvini for example is correlated with Aries, and represents the “beginning of everything”. It is seen as forming a “horse’s head”, and its name is translated as “Horse-Woman” or “Born of a Female Horse” (Trivedi, p.3, 2005). The main deities that preside over this Nakshatra are Dashra and Nasatya, which translate to “bringing help” and “truthfulness”. Stories associated with them often include “two heroic brothers” solving issues (Trivedi, p.4, 2005).

Similarly, the asterism of The Pleiades or The Seven Sisters, has many varied myths attached to it, ranging from the ancient Greek, to ancient Egypt and Maori. Stories spill from these asterisms, as people interpret and explain, create and teach, by the formation of stars. They become embedded in their own interpretations of the skies.

One consequence of establishing an “official” group of constellations, is that those which do not fall within this group, can be seen as “outside” or “other”. Instead of a multitude of stories, our scope becomes limited. With *Constellations*, I have tried to pry open established mythologies, renew stories, and rewrite the epic into the domestic. By

adhering to the loose framework of myths and connotations directly related to the IAU constellations, it can be seen that the poems reinforce the notions of privileging those stories. However, although I've taken the established, "official" route, I both celebrate those paths, and try to move beyond them, creating an expansive sense of work and an energisation of ideas and stories. When the sea monster appears I drive him towards Andromeda, kicking stars aside to get to her bones. They are familiar motives, but in new dialogues and patterns of work.

Rudolph Arnheim writes "in looking at an object we reach out for it. With an invisible finger we move through space around us, go out to distant places where things are found, touch them, catch them, scan their surfaces, trace their borders, explore their texture" (1969, p. 19). We can't explore constellations texturally. Our understanding of them has to be explained in other terms, such as in language and through mapping. Similarly, like language, constellations, with their arbitrary shapes, their empty hieroglyphs, are potentially meaningless. It is our desire for meaning and coherence which attaches ideas to them, as are signs in language. Thus, I set out *Constellations* as experienced through the play of reading and the extensions of meaning provided via language and the way the word/stars rest on the page. So, I challenge my reader, trace *Constellations*. Their shapes come from the webs weaved between them. In hundreds of tiny narratives that cling like red roses or apricot lace, or stars that beg interpretation, blinking madly in the night sky. They'll speak each time a word/star appears, unsecured from its moorings.

Driver indicates that in the nineteenth century, geography may have been "a moral attempt to order and thereby control the seemingly chaotic industrial city" (Domosh, 1991, p. 102). As discussed previously, geographical mapping helps to create a smooth surface, making a plethora of multidimensional details easier to discern, for chaos to be contained. It is my intention, however, that *Constellations* initially collapse into the chaos of their surroundings. Without punctuation, they are torn loose, transformed and reconfigured. They drift, forming new connections and associations, new shapes of containment and resist being colonized as stabilized meaning. In discussing colonization and exploration, Panek states that explorers "set out, voracious for knowledge and experience, until they had devoured the globe. There was nowhere to go but up" (1998, p. 33). Once we mapped our surfaces on earth, we looked for new spaces to inhabit. We

treat our constellations in the same way as the geographical study of earth, by borders and waters, lengths and widths. Navigators “claim lands before they were even occupied and before geographers knew at all precisely where those lands were” (Dorling & Fairbairn, 2013, p. 73). We are mapping spaces, while being unaware of what those spaces contain. Unknown universes spilling over our imaginations, ignited by pictures of celestial light and shade, shimmering in a field of incomprehensible mathematics.

iv) *Constellations: Orienteering a Space*

The earth, spinning as it is, imperceptibly twirling on its axis, gives the illusion of a stability you can walk on, write on, base an existence upon. The illusion is comforting. I can write my way into the page and know where I am. I can lose myself staring at the stars, but feel confident from where I stand, they are pinned, as am I. We are moving through space, the distance between us, no matter what we try to grasp, a pillow, a rose, time moves on, space moves on. Our perspective, toes slipping in sand, tries to stabilize our footprints, but it's not possible, the grains are shifting. Even our borders, the way we have mapped out oceans and edges, are changing – there is no permanence. The stories I tell are re-told. There are no new narratives, only the effect of tears on the paper, or personal histories repeating.

*Constellations*, its alphabets pressed into an A4 page, has the illusion that its letters are stationary, yet there is movement. Meanings are shifting, as are the physical spaces between word/stars. Pages are turned, words are reconfigured. Lines are drawn across the page, to be read in squares in triangles, in odd lines that break out, beyond the edges of the page. There is a constant pressure to be contained, stable, permanent, but it isn't achievable. We have to find a way to navigate the page, to orient our readings. Letters scattered here, there.

The similarities between mapping and reading, as well as language, can be illustrated by the physical sport of foot Orienteering. Perhaps it is our desire for coherence, for a starting and finishing point, as well as our ability to order and interpret signs, stabilizing our surroundings, that has led to the growth of this sport into an international phenomena. There is a point of departure and an improvised trail to follow, a game, with rules and meanings. “The core task of orienteering is to find all checkpoints in an unfamiliar and changeable environment as fast as possible” (Li & Zhang, 2010, p. 34). Further to this, they state that many teachers find orienteering has a sense of “play” (Li & Zhang, 2010, p. 35).

This element of play thus characterizes both reading language and Orienteering. In *Constellations*, I strive for the reader to play, to treat the pages as spaces to climb around, phrases settling in word/star formations, orienting by fragments. There are no



fixed meanings in *Constellations*; the reader can divine their own associations and satisfactions. The presentation of *Constellations*, in a box, ready to be opened up, unfolded, read and folded in again and again, is also aimed at the activity of play. We open the memory, explore the rose, the pillow, close it in and imagine the ink imprinting the difference. In writing *Constellations*, I have erased and retraced and erased, again and again. The act of sculpting the word/stars, a source of play as well.

In *Dorado*, a goldfish spins meaninglessly around a bowl. Language is spun out, as associations gather, a narrative converges on the page, and all the while, the goldfish is spinning. There is playfulness in the continual returning to the fish, stuck on sentences and phrases. The interior world and exterior world are explored, the world within limits, the world spilling over its edges. The goldfish appears again in *Piscis Austrinus*, and this time is caught in a plastic bag, on the way to a new home. It is still spinning, it is still caught, but in new surroundings, a new view for the drive, a new space to inhabit and play in for a time.

Orienteering is described as a “running sport” (McNeill, C., 2010, p. 1). As Eccles, Walsh and Ingledew state “winning is achieved by being the fastest to navigate through points, known as controls” (2006, p. 77). Further to this, they state that “the orienteer must visit the controls in a specified order” (2002, p. 68). Orienteering is physical and requires spatial interpretation and comprehension. The competitor is continuously moving through the course. Using a map and a compass, a competitor navigates their way across uneven, sometimes difficult, terrain. The orienteer must “be able to relocate him/herself on the map in terms of his or her position in the environment” (Eccles et al, 2002, p. 69).

Thus, although orienteering is a competitive experience, it relies on personal interpretation of the course, as the orienteer is faced with the “dual-tasking strategy of moving and reading the map simultaneously” (Eccles, Walsh & Ingledew, 2006, p. 85). Our ability to read text and maps as text, is also an intensely personal experience. The outcomes depend on the decisions made within texts. As such, both reading and orienteering are a personal experience. Neither requires interaction with others. In orienteering, the focus “is transferred to the challenges of the intellectual task and the validations of self-ability” (Li & Zhang, 2010, p. 36). The orienteer/reader paces

themselves, makes their own decisions about paths and meanings. In *Constellations*, the word/stars can be seen as performing like control points, guiding and anchoring the reader within the page. Reading itself is an act of movement, between lines, between units of meaning, between pages. As discussed, orienteering is a running sport, it is a sport of movement. There are pauses between control points, word/stars to recollect and reconsider. Control points, like words, can't be moved or physically collected, but are gathered metaphorically (marked on a map, read as part of a poem). The reader spins for a moment on a grubby page, folded over and out and in again.

In *Constellations*, the final poem reflects the actual star map formation of each constellation, in the sky. The way the reader traverses the lines drawn between star/words can be improvised, and it depends upon the decisions of the reader, as to the order and direction of reading. For example, in *Piscis Austrinus*, it is not clear where the poem begins. “*the pull*” are the word/stars in the uppermost section of the page. If the reader continues to read to the right, the next word/star is “*peel*”, even though “*flesh*” appears sooner in the formation. As far as a cohesive narrative, the poem may appear to work most strongly, when the first word/star read is “*flesh*”, and the poem ends with “*the pull*”. Again, this element of play opens the text, as the reader traverses the lines in whichever order they choose, retracing for repetitions as well as new associations and meanings. Play is encouraged along the lines, which connect and disconnect words/stars. In orienteering, the multiple possibilities for deciding routes, enables multiple pathways to be considered. The orienteer aims to achieve the quickest or best route, whilst the *Constellations* do not necessarily have a desired or optimal path.

*Constellations* begins with the dense prose poems, sentences slowly dragging across the page, an invitation to be read again and again, to induce a myriad of meanings, forming web like connections with other constellations and family groups. As the punctuation is removed and new associations and connections are made, we are able to interpret the text faster and faster. There is movement, similar to the physical movement of navigating in orienteering. The reader paces themselves across pages, making decisions about meaning and phrases, some take longer to digest, some are skipped over quickly.

Eccles, Walsh and Ingledew assert that a “strategy used by expert orienteers was simplifying the information provided on the map to the minimum required to navigate

the course successfully” (2006, p. 78). As with *Constellations*, the reader can draw out the path to navigate the poetry. This can be done in reading the sequences both ways, that is, prose poem to final constellation shape, and reversed. The constellation shape becomes a constant to work with, like a “hand rail” in orienteering. A “hand rail” is a feature on the map which makes the route “safe and simplify the map reading” (McNeill, 1996, p. 123). It uses aspects in the environment, such as fences or streams. Similarly, the constellation shapes help to orient and support the language of the poetry.

There are suggested sign posts in *Constellations*, word orders can be interpreted as they appear on the page, but there is no direct hierarchy or structure to follow. Clusters form, words shuffle, until the final constellation shape appears. As with orienteering, it requires a reading of interpretation, negotiation, and spatial considerations. Eccles, Walsh and Ingledew states that “successful performance in orienteering requires visual attention to three sources of information: the map, the environment and travel” (Eccles, Walsh & Ingledew, 2006, p. 77). So similarly, the reader interprets the poetry, within the page, and traverses the possibilities and implications spun out between the three poem sequences.

Orienteering is an intellectual endeavor, as well as physical. “A crossword puzzle for the mind to solve while the lungs and legs exercise” or as “intelligent movement” (Disley, J., 1979, p. 17). Eccles, Walsh and Ingledew confirms that orienteering is “highly cognitive” (2002, p. 68). Further to this, Guzman, Pablos and Pablos suggests that map reading is a key skill in successful orienteering (2008, p. 162). Eccles et al states that in the expert orienteer “there is evidence of an acquisition of complex encoding methods and retrieval structures”, which assists the mind in reading and navigating the mapped environment (2002, p. 69). The mind is tested as it calculates routes to travel. Reading itself is a cognitive activity, which requires skill in order to participate in the creative implications of what is written. In *Constellations*, the “intelligent movement” can be seen in the progression through the poetry sequences, the turning of pages, the renewal of forms. The mind gathers together phrases, moments that cohere, and carries them through to the end poems/constellations. There is also an act of reaching, both within the sequences, and to other constellations and families. This is another “movement”, the creation of new pathways and ideas, from the connective tissue of the texts.

The orienteering course is measured by straight lines between control points, but the length of the course can increase with the orienteer's decisions to traverse the route in a particular way. The map used by the orienteer includes details of features such as gates, ditches and vegetation, information such as "natural and man-made features" (Eccles et al, 2002, p. 68). Ultimately, it is the orienteer's choice as to which path they take, as they pursue "the routes they have chosen for themselves" (Kjellstrom, B. & Kjellstrom, C., 2010, p. 157). The "rapid sifting of evidence and the weighing-up of the pros and cons of alternative plans is what the sport of orienteering is all about" (Disley, J., 1979, p. 87). The orienteer must decide for themselves how to navigate the course. *Constellations* similarly, provide an intellectual freedom, with the reader determining paths and control points, via word/stars and how they spin in space, how they are connected, disconnected, and cohered into constellations of meaning.

At the beginning of an orienteering competition, the course is copied onto the competitor's map from the Master Map Area (Disley, J., 1979, p. 45). Any control points that don't appear on the map must be copied in (Boga, 1997, p. 6). The course shape is then created by joining together the control point circles with lines. The map correlates with its surroundings, and as Eccles et al states, "the orienteer must be able to relate information in the environment to certain symbols on the map" (2002, p. 69). Of course the map is essential to the navigation; "the orienteer compares the map and the environment in order to navigate through the environment" (Eccles et al, 2002, p. 82). Similarly, each *Constellation* sequence of poems, includes a copy of the celestial map from which the final poem shape is derived. These maps were developed by the International Astronomical Union, and are the "official" star maps for constellations. The poems use the maps as a framing device, the word/stars draping the shapes, orienting a field of word/stars in a shifting universe. The lines in the final shapes, help to form a cohesive work. The poems are faithful to those "mapped" shapes, as far as possible. The writing and rewriting of the constellations to reflect the shapes, has been an exhaustive project. So many erasures, so many pencil scrapings, so many again and again but slightly left or down or right. It has been a project of mapping a space of words, literally etching into the page, ascribing word/stars to line connections and intersections.

As Eccles et al states, “the map is a printed representation of the environment” (2002, p. 75). In *Constellations*, the angles and connections of the word/stars in the constellation shapes, are also similar to the angles and connections in the constellation map. The maps can be seen as abstractions of a final “reality” (although not “reality” itself), the poem’s final shape, its ultimate destiny. Disley states that the orienteer “craves more detail and information” in maps (1979, p. 50). These details help in physical orientation within space, as well as assisting with planning possible routes. Maps can also be seen as “a representation of the environment that is still some distance away” (Eccles et al, 2002, p. 77), time is implicated in the mapped state. Even when the reader feels they have ‘arrived’ at the final constellation shape, the gravitational pull of the next sequence (hopefully), moves them on. There is no end point, no finality, no closure, only pathways and clearings, moments of pause within a field of activity.

*Constellations* also “crave” details. The mechanics behind the synthetic constellations, such as *Telescopium*, depend upon the minute observations of distance and time. In myth, the internalized feelings of inadequacy by Andromeda’s father Cepheus, lead to his betrayal. The aimless spinning of a fish caught in a bowl in *Dorado*, becomes an unwilling observer of the reader. Tiny word/star clusters form, gravitating to each other, evolving into ideas and possibilities. The details of familiar motifs and fragments, that recur again and again, help to stitch details into place. Patterns and repetitions help to shade the pages, with the final constellation shapes culminating in the details inscribed by celestial maps. The reader decides where to cohere, where to fall apart, which direction to take. They improvise the reading, leaping between word/star gaps.

As a metaphor for reading, orienteering offers further similarities. Both reading and orienteering require an interpretation of symbols, and the desire to make connections. Sension-Hall states that orienteering involves the selection of “...symbols in the proper order to create the correct symbol chain” (2011). The orienteer needs to be as skilled in the understanding of symbols as the physical tasks. Further to this, “the map isn’t the terrain, the map is a representation of the terrain and you have to translate the map in order to be able to use it” (Eccles et al, 2002, p. 75). The interpretation of words is a similar process, with the translation of symbols (alphabet) into word units, which connect and interact with others, to create word “chains”.

In referring to orienteering, McNeill states that “the possibility of getting lost gives the sport an element of adventure” (1996, p. 10). There is excitement, a sense of risk. This risk is measured by time, if the orienteer gets lost, they lose time (Eccles, 2002, p. 74). Eccles et al notes that “time is the performance criterion in orienteering” (Eccles et al, 2006, p. 84). Ever lost time while reading? The reader, absorbed by the text, becomes implicated in the page. In *Constellations*, there is every possibility that the reader will lose themselves within each poem, and within each page. Petals fly loose, a love heart pillow loses its stuffing and the words one thought were reading a particular way, become an entirely different collection of ideas altogether, as the second and third pages proliferate new meanings and associations. There is pleasure in losing oneself in the landscape, on a hill, in a field of words. The reader spins, folded out and in, trying to orient relationships between word/stars, between poems, between constellation family groups.

In *Constellations*, each constellation connects in some ways with the other constellations both within and outside the eight constellation family groups: *Ursa Major, Zodiac, Perseus, Hercules, Orion, Heavenly Waters, Bayer* and *La Caille*. Small narratives, rhymes and repetitions connect and gather meanings and associations the reader can explore. Characters become signposts, as does the dialogue between lovers, the light between the blinds, soft sheets in twilight. Ballerinas, blue shells, eggs, feathers, rivers, skin, aisles. A goldfish in its bowl. The final constellation shape can also be read as a sign post, with word/stars settled into their formations, ascribing a “way” of reading, an entry into the page.

One phenomena in orienteering has been created online. GeoCatcher is a global treasure hunting game, where people use GPS technology, to attempt to find hidden treasures (Groundspeak, 2015). The website states that there are ten million users worldwide. Rather than become redundant in the age of electronic mapping, orienteering has embraced the new technology and celebrates mapping in a new and exciting way. It is hoped that *Constellations* can be seen as an exciting revision of the stars and their, at times, ancient stories. For example, *Andromeda* and *Cassiopeia*, live in a world of selfies and foodies. The older stories are folded out and in, worked against their own revisions and their ancestral pinning.

Further to the notion of technology and its effect, Twitter uses “Tweets”, which limits communication to 140 characters at a time. Its users write brief statements, which scroll down a user’s live feed (Twitter profiles that the user has ‘followed’, so that they subscribe to that profile’s Tweets), (Twitter Inc, 2015). Twitter utilizes “micro” fiction, such as “six words”- where six word poems are shared between writers. In *Constellations*, each constellation sequence begins with a short epigraph, which is like a signifying flag, or descriptor, for the constellation poems. The epigraphs are collated in a PowerPoint presentation, and then programmed to flow down the page, like a “live” Twitter feed. With eighty-eight epigraphs, the effect is to illustrate that information only permeates in parts and pieces. It’s very difficult to comprehend and interpret all of the phrases and thoughts that are proliferating through electronic space. As in orienteering, the epigraphs themselves also work as ‘control points’, and act as another entry way “into” the poems. They are both complete and fragmented. They provide a moment to pause, and to initiate a process of linkages, to cohere meaning and play within the text that follows. Twitter can be seen as an abbreviated communication for an impatient, time constrained reader. A new way of orienting the news, gossip, ideologies and global trends.

It is noted that an enjoyment of the outdoors, and the natural environment is a benefit of orienteering. Running and climbing, are physical endeavors that take energy and promote general health. As Li & Zhang state “... the central nervous systems of the participants in orienteering are most active” (2010, p. 37). There can also be a sense of “connection” with the landscape, as its shapes unravel and clues to its formation are navigated. Constellations are also implicated in landscape. There is something satisfying about lying on the ground, exploring the stars in a moonlit night. As well as the connections through seasons and transition phases of stars, the night sky itself is a banner for the world, one that may not always be visible, such as due to light pollution, but appears as a constant, unaffected by events on earth and civilizations. In the brief moment of time that we inhabit, it is only the connections that we make between stars which shift and change.

My son has a familiar plastic sphere that spins on an arch of silver, and lights up his room when he can’t sleep. It is a stable earth, he is not old enough to understand the blending of borders, and how they shift, the spillage of blue over sands. I look at star

maps and see the shapes my wishing invents. I turn on a star maker and my son's eyes trace the arbitrary pricks of light shining on the ceiling. And then *Constellations*, adhered to the page. So many word/stars, so much potential for play. Time can't be mapped. It leaves its marks in outdated globes on dusty desks, or in heart shaped pillows resting on the beds in our minds, curling at the edges. Its implication with the future is in its conspiring with promises.

Memory, and our understanding of the world, is always shifting, always moving. It is sketched for a moment, pinned, and then moves away again. We enjoy the possibility of coherence, the totality, in mapping of our environment, of our things, for a brief moment, and then they're gone. As Hejinian states, "memory is a trick of coincidence", we remember and reinvigorate the moment (Hejinian, 1996, n.p.). Details blur, boundaries move, memories evolve, time moves us on. So we look to the distance and try to estimate what we will become, look at how many ways we will experience our world, and how we will try to contain it. Orienteering in a space of time that's filled with moving.



v) *Constellations: Where language marks its moments*

*Constellations* can be situated, given their nature, within the late twentieth century movement usually identified as ‘Language Poetry’. Language Poetry provides a point of departure for exploring some of the theoretical implications of the work. Language Poetry started in the San Francisco Bay area of the United States in the seventies, as a vibrant community embracing innovative and exploratory writing. Greer describes the work as “a collective, multiply voiced poetic project” (1989, p. 336). There is an “impulse to situate language poetry – to name and define its place in contemporary poetry”, however, as a multifarious phenomenon, it resists being “fixed” as a movement (Greer, p. 336). The theoretical issues pertaining to Language Poetry can be thought of as “an activity; a reading/writing *through* a particular discursive field” (p. 342, Greer) which may resist “a unified identity”, however, the “public manifestations” of poetry “exhibited a more or less stable core to the movement” (Kim, 1994, para.4). In short, some threads cohere behind Language Poetry; indeed, *Constellations* themselves are also threaded to Language Poetry in multiple ways.

Perloff states that for Bernstein, poetry is never “natural” (Perloff, 2007, p. 20). It “emphasizes its medium as being constructed, rule governed, everywhere circumscribed by grammar and syntax, chosen vocabulary, designed, manipulated, picked, programmed, organized...” (Bernstein, 1984, p. 39), a premise that the Language Poets foreground deliberately. For example, poets may frame a work with artificial constraints. In “My Life”, Lyn Hejinian used “self-imposed formalism” of lines equaling her age in constructing her autobiography (Quinn, 2000). This works as frame for the work to “hang” upon. This type of approach can be seen to challenge notions, such as “naturalness”, by foregrounding “devices which organize otherwise disparate elements” (xii, Hartley 1989). The frame is a medium for the expression, but not the only medium. It also becomes a way into the view. *Constellations* are similarly based around a frame, with the poems a result of specific construction. There are eighty-eight sequences of three poems, each relating to one constellation in the sky. Word/stars seem to “disappear” from the first dense prose poem, creating a renewed formation in the second poem, through to the constellation shape in the third page. The constellation shapes mimic constellations as they appear in the International Astronomical Union star maps. The words appear suspended in space, replicating the lines connected in the sky

– but they are not “fixed”, there is no “true” formation or ultimate meaning. The word/stars themselves don’t actually “disappear”, but are blocked out in white so they aren’t visible. Thus, the framing mechanism dictates an apparent elision of text, which in reality is an illusion; just as stars are present even if not visible to the eye, the words remain although no longer seen. This is replicated in the PowerPoint presentation, where the words are “framed” around a Twitter type “feed”. The epigraphs from the beginning of each prose poem are compiled into the presentation, which scrolls through the phrases, mimicking the futility of trying to make meaning or engage with a continually moving surface, such as in Twitter. The words also “disintegrate”, that is, with each successive cycle, words are ‘removed’, creating a revised “reading” of the work.

Written texts, such as in Language Poetry, can be seen to perform a political act, in seeking to disrupt capitalism with its resistance of texts as consumable products. According to Woznicki (2000), the “codes of capitalist language”, which Language Poets seek to interrupt, include “narrative, the unified author, the passive reader and... totalization”. Narrative in *Constellations* can be gleaned through broad thematic connections within the poetic sequences. For example, trails emerge from the *Perseus* grouping, with ideas relating to vanity, narcissism and jealousy. Narrative can also be established through devices, such as with repetition of phrases, for example, “in a world without eyes” and clusters of words, where similar phrases gather together, slightly altered and renewed. However, there is no overarching narrative, no “through line”, in which a final “meaning” or coherence can be ascribed. In short, the text resists narrative closure. Instead, many potential ‘stories’ can be teased out, with multiple possible conclusions offered. Nor does *Constellations* have a ‘unified’ author as the sequences represent a multiplicity of voices and perspectives.

In the *Perseus* family, the poems shift in perspective, from Andromeda to her parents, Cassiopeia, and Cepheus. Some sense of narrative connectivity can be ascertained through the reading of this sequence. Voices can be identified and attributed to characters. However, once the poetry moves to Auriga, perspective shifts – from Perseus and Andromeda, to Hephaestus. There is then, a multiplicity of perspectives and narrative threads. An unidentified and constantly shifting “I”, often genderless, other times overtly sexual, androgynous, passive, violent and quiet. The voices

converge into stories that separate and merge. Phrases like “*wonder of wings*” and “*magical things*”, recur throughout the sequences, shifting perspective again and again. They are weightless – not attaching themselves to a particular identity – free falling. So the unified author is challenged by a plenitude of voices. The reader takes on the task of deciphering and attributing the play between them.

Further to this, *Constellations*, like Language Poetry, intervenes in the process of passive reading. Instead, the reader is “active”, necessarily participating in their own meaning-making exercises, in the ‘play’ within the *Constellations*. Thus, the reader is both reader and architect, making their own decisions about the work. There is no totalization, no overarching meaning or conclusions to be drawn.

Lyn Hejinian rejects the “authority of the writer over the reader” (2000, p. 43), disrupting any conventional relationship between the “active (dictatorial) writer and the passive (victimized) reader” (Hartley, 1989, p. xiii) and diminishing the power the writer may exercise in controlling dominant meanings. Perloff quotes McCaffrey, that the result is a “major alteration in textual roles”, disturbing the “productive and consumptive” roles of “writer and reader” (2007, p. 18). Perloff, continues with McCaffrey, in that the text operates as a “communal space of a labour initiated, by the writer and extended by the second writer (the reader)” (2007, p. 18). The reader becomes a “producer or co-producer of the text” (Andrews, 1996, p. 12) Arguably, altering “textual roles”, then, brings one “closer to altering the larger social roles of which textual ones are a feature” (Andrews, 1996, p. 12), unsettling the overarching narratives and narrative voices which imply a type of truth or reality. Reading *Constellations*, then, hands over power to the reader, in the progressive erosion within each sequence, inviting the reader to decide upon elements of the text, such as sequence order, page order and word order.

The notion of writing as a coherent product, and then producing this within a capitalist framework, situates poetry as an economic commodity that participates in a profit-making system. *Constellations*, presented as they are, in a box, folded like ‘maps’, resist this commodification process in their actual production and the way they are constructed. There is no book, there is no final object, as even the maps themselves can be placed in arbitrary ways within the box – they can be filed according to constellation

family groups, or alphabetically, or thematically, or at any random place the person with the box chooses. They may even be lost in the process of reading, left behind inside another book, or under a shelf, bed or chair.

I would argue, however, that the resistance of *Constellations* as a commodified product has other implications. Aside from not being produced as a “book” /object, the collection won’t be eligible, to enter in some literary awards. For example, the Western Australian Premier’s Literary Awards 2014 website (State Library of Western Australia, 2014), includes as entry conditions “must be published works in book form”, where the definition of a “book” via the Oxford Dictionary includes “A written or printed work consisting of pages glued or sewn together along one side and bound in covers” (“Book”, 2015). There is a category for Digital Narratives, but no alternative for hard copy writing. Similarly, the NSW Premier’s Literary Awards guidelines includes that entries in ebook format “must be accompanied by bound copies of the printed text for assessment purposes” (State Library of New South Wales, 2015).

As well as the challenge for *Constellations* having no finite form, or ‘bound’ version, it is also a very large collection for a book of poetry (264 pages of poetry), it is unlikely to be taken up by a publisher, as there is an inherent risk in something so large and unwieldy. This is amplified by the fact the work comes from an ‘emerging’ (and somehow not ‘emerged’) writer. Thus, the very format which heightens the potential to resist closure as a bound book, becomes the mechanism that excludes it from the category of published, commodified poetry in the first place. Indeed, the grammatical structures which support meaning-making arguably operate as supportive structures of Western ideology (Wallace, 1998). The “unreadability” of a text works to block the production of meaning a production that can regarded as capitalist. In situating the *Constellations* in the incomprehensible night sky, removing the supportive tissue, including narrative and grammatical structures, the word/stars blink aimlessly, inviting play and rejecting totality, operating, as Houlihan (2000) has described, as “a protest” an intervention against the inevitability that all “meaning is a socially constructed, contextual and therefore, tainted entity”.

Words are “our own usages of a determinate coding passed down to us like all other products of civilization” (Silliman, 1984, p. 167). They are never fully “our own”, they

become objects which we use like tools. They have functional abilities and values are placed upon them (Silliman, 1984, p. 167). The value “converts them into a social hieroglyph” we try to decipher. As part of the value placed upon words, a “commodity fetish” results. As Silliman argues, words “take on ‘mystical’ and ‘mysterious’ character” as they become “commodities” (Silliman, 2003, p. 8). The International Astronomical Union “official” constellations, reflects a similar hieroglyphic value. They are passed as a way of “reading” the sky and navigating space. *Constellations*, with their final constellations shape, also reflect a kind of “hieroglyph”, one which invites in deciphering its multiplicity. They are a tool for experiencing a constellation, framed within the page. Stars move, space moves, space is transformed in a two dimensional page. The constellation shapes in the sky traverse beyond the two dimensions, beyond the word/stars blinking tirelessly. Language Poetry attempts to “demystify” language to try and disrupt the capitalist ideology which places such value on words, and *Constellations* supports this process by not privileging language, and by its mechanical construction.

Undoubtedly, then, Language Poetry supports the notion of an “open text”. Lyn Hejinian states that the “closed text” is one in which all the elements of the work are directed toward a single reading of the work” (2000, p. 42) while the “open text is one which both acknowledges the vastness of the world and is formally differentiating” (2000, p. 41). The role the reader must accept, as active participant in meaning-making, gives the reader a part in the “social process of production” (Houlihan, 2000). By leaving “the connection between various elements open” the reader is able to “produce the connections between those elements” including controversial, contradictive ideological issues (Hartley, 1989, xii-xiii), which includes gender relations and power in *Constellations*, among others. For example, in *Vulcepula*, there is sexual play, “*Between feasting and dishes you sink teeth into nipples*”, a teasing which then evolves into “*Feathers and I thought I saw fur*”, a primal, physical attraction. The physicality is highlighted by “*Your teeth dissolve my watery bones*”. The lovers are tasted, bitten, eaten. The interplay is genderless, there is no “he” or “she”, their bodies merge and cascade over each other. The language penetrates the interplay, from “*breathe*”, to “*skin*”, to “*bones*”. The lovers are interrupted by “*You make meals of me. I do the dishes. One by one. Shattering against the wall*”. There is a shift as the sexualisation of the senses, becomes dominated by the domestic. The power and control breaks

through the attraction and by the poem's end, the lover, having been "eaten", brings the physical sensations back to poetry. "*These pages are mosaics from those pieces. In this and that we are delicious.*", and this is where power is gleaned from. The point just before the pen is put down, the point where we realize it is writing. The connections are for the reader to make, the challenges are in the reading.

One way to understand reading the open text, the ones that invite the reader to be intimately involved with creating multiple readings, is to consider how the text impedes any 'sort of closure' and provides only a 'pivot'" (Perloff, 1985, p. 237). Pivoting gives multiple perspectives, it implies a panorama of angles, not one but many viewpoints. The pivot explores possibilities and slight repetitions, shifts, like Stein's notion of cinema. "It is not repetition if it is that which you are actually doing because naturally each time the emphasis is different just as the cinema has each time a slightly different thing to make it all be moving" (Stein, 1967, p. 107). So pivot also implies movement within the text. *Constellations* are situated in the vastness of never ending, "open" page(s), a collection of alphabets dumped, again and again, in patterns of production, inviting the reader to orient and reorient themselves, via constellation shapes and renewed couplings. Potentially, *Constellations* can be seen as a spontaneous reading experience, with the multiplicity of word/stars "pivoting" within space.

There seems to be a desire for "coherence" in reading. The reader "strives to find a pattern, an order, a meaning in chaos" and "before settling for separate, unconnected pieces, beautiful as they may be, we will look hard for connections" (Houlihan, 2000). The allocation of the actual constellations, were evidence of this desire for coherence, to orient and situate ourselves with some certainty. In my *Constellations*, these connections are between the three page poetic sequences, as well as in the formation of new poems from the old, the excavating into the third constellation shape poem. The reader has a desire to make "sense", to create "order", but *Constellations* resists this, in its construction and within the smaller units of poetry. Bernstein suggests that instead of "designing a garden", perhaps we could be "making a path" (Bernstein, 2001, p. 40). By making a path, the reader is responsible for the development of meaning and play. *Constellations* engages the reader in this way, as the reader participates in the development of their own sense of understanding, the rewritten and reconstructed

second page, before traversing the multi directional lines of the final constellation shapes. There is a potential for delight in play and that sense of play can be a focus.

As stated above, one of the devices used to “open” a text is to disrupt the narrative. This can be done by placing disparate shards, such as where “words and lines are distributed irregularly across the page” (Hejinian, 2000, p. 43), for example, in a work where “the order of the reading is not imposed in advance” (Hejinian, 2000, p. 44). Silliman indicates that the effect of placing lines next to each other, which have “only tangential relevance”, is “disorienting” (Quinn, 2000). A coherent narrative implies authorial presence and a cohesion that transmits “meaning”. However, “meaning” and “meaning-making” can be seen as an illusion and disruptions provide possibilities for alternate, multiple suggestions to proliferate. Where discontinuous narrative threads are present, so are potentials for reading. Potential in the significance of a red rose, of a word/star that blinks, lonely, skin feathers preparing to fly. The constellation shapes, traverse across the page. Reading is not just left to right, or up and down, but both, and all at once, sometimes left, sometimes a curve, sometimes backwards.

Narrative ‘threads’ characterize *Constellations*, offering and also withdrawing potential story lines, with no fixed meaning. The reader can read the poems in isolation, and can construct the poems by connecting linkages between each other, within each three poem sequence, or within the constellation family. In other words, the structure ensures that reading becomes an “improvisation” where “one moves through the work not in straight lines but in curves, swirls and across intersections” (Hejinian, 2000, p. 44). The threads may hold up separately, as units of meaning, or they may blend in a montage of imagery and ideas, thus actually underscoring a continual “construction” in poetry (Hartley, 1989, 37). Rather than being a completed and closed work, the poem becomes one which is subject to revisions and reinterpretations. The reader takes part in play, as words move through the page, in curls and crescents, connecting in new lines, new directions. In *Constellations*, cutting words from the second page increases the fragmentation already evident in page one, and then exacerbated by subsequent deletions in the third poem. There is no imposed hierarchy to read the renewed sequences. Reading itself is an improvisation, where there are multiple possibilities, some which go against traditional reading processes (from left to right on lines, for example).

The first pages of constellations, such as *Mensa*, there are no actions or events, it is more an emotional striking at the page. For example, there is a relationship between lovers and the way they connect. “*Thinks he’s the first to contemplate renaming me*” indicates that marriage may be a possibility. The phrase reduces marriage to an activity of naming, an action in words, but not in actuality. It is a resistance of the power of naming. The narrative trails are also in the way the voices respond to the lover, such as with the knowledge of past unfaithfulness (“*I was always an unfaithful lover*”), and with the transformative nature of sensuality, “*My obedient skin rises before him as if new again*”. There is little narrative direction that can be discerned – the writing instead becomes, “*the site of our observing our observing*”. The second page teases out new meanings and ideas. The phrase “*dispose of the plastic*” moves to “*page*”, trails a physical gap, and rejoins the reading at “*as if new again*”. The “*skin*” of the flesh has been transformed into the “*skin*” of the “*page*”. By the third page, “*skin*” has transformed again, this time it is “*emptying*”. The outline of this constellation suggests that the reader traverses the page length wise, across, right to left, as well as bottom to middle. There is always movement, both within each page, but also in the reach across other pages and other poetic sequences.

Repetition is another device to “open” the text, by reinserting ideas into renewed surroundings. Hejinian states “the rewriting that repetition becomes postpones completion of the thought indefinitely” (2000, p. 44). Further to this, Stein writes about “insistence” and that there can be no repetition because of insistence “in its emphasis can never be repeating” (1967, p. 102). Stein also states that it is the “moment to moment emphasis in what is happening that is interesting” (1967, p. 117). Wherever words or a phrase are repeated, they never convey exactly the same meaning or intention, as they change and evolve. Different highlights and features can be displayed, as well as difference in the functions of words. Repetition offers a potential re-reading of the words and a regeneration of ideas. As discussed previously, there is a continual “construction”, as each sequence seeks new associations and possibilities in meaning making. In *Constellations*, the text utilizes repetitions in two main ways. The first is through the repetition of words and phrases, from the first prose poem, and into the next poems in each sequence. There is a performative aspect to these rewritings, and when spoken aloud, the repetitions are easy to hear, as well as slightly disorienting, as the listener is remembering, as they move through sequences. As Stein states,



“remembering is repetition anybody can know that” (1967, p. 106). Phrases and words are repeated within each of the three poems in each sequences as well. There are slight variations with the repetitions, highlighting again, the sense of “pivot” in the work. For example, in *Norma*, the first page has the phrases “*I know the difference between silence. But if you were ever to carve a way into me. Carve a new body from these watery bones*”, in the second page it becomes “*between you me the watery ones*”. The slight difference renews the sequence and energizes the work. It is transformative and anchoring at the same time. The pivot retains some perspective, something to grip, but also shows movement, the writing is rippling, moving.

The “open text” suggest further importance in relation to *Constellations* which are sourced from the night sky, an object that invites naming, coherence and stability, from cultures around the world. Different people see the sky differently, create diverse meanings, even when looking at the same sky. Same sky, every night, every day. Our stories are different, the lines between stars are different. Constellations have no order, the lines connecting them aren’t fixed, or “true”. There is no beginning or ending to the constellations, they just are; and how they are experienced is up to the individual. *Constellations* has no beginning or ending. It is an invitation to play, an entry point to the sky, to the page.

McCaffery, (cited in Perloff, 2007, p. 18), states that Language can be considered, “above all else a system of signs”. It is made into comprehensiveness by the effect of “difference”, between signs. Hejinian states that “utterances are made intelligible because of differentiating features” (1985, p. 276). Language Poetry plays with signs, creating, rather than “transparency”, a “plenitude of signifiers” (Silliman, 2003, p. 16). Language can have the appearance of being “neutral, transparent, natural”, but this notion is resisted in Language Poetry (Hartley, 1989, p. 34). Language becomes “material and primary and what’s experienced is the tension and relationship of letters and lettristic clusters, simultaneously struggling towards, yet refusing to become, significations” (McCaffery cited in Perloff, 2007, p. 18). In *Constellations*, word/stars blinking in the sky, await signification.

Woznicki (2000) states, that for Silliman “the sentence becomes the smallest unit available to signify meaning”. The gaps “between sentences like line breaks in a

traditional poem draw our attention to the sentence as unit of meaning” (Woznicki, 2000). Hejinian adds that “what stays in the gap remains crucial and informative” (2000, p. 46). The gap can also be a site of improvisation and interpretation. It exhibits a delay in the continuity of “meaning”, but provides opportunity for play and reflection. “The gaps between sentences... the visible seams... draw our attention to the materiality of the words as words, not simply as transparent signifiers” (Hartley, 1989, p. 7). Hejinian states where there are “sizeable gaps between the units... the reader (and I can also say the writer) must overleap the end stop, the period, and cover the distance to the next sentence” (2000, p. 46). Actual gaps in *Constellations*, help readers to make this leap. These gaps create tensions within the text and provide a sense of play for the reader, extending the connections between words, probing the shapes within the page. For example in *Reticulum*, the second page has the word “Galaxies”, a gap to the right, and then the words “bump and curve”, the gap then extends to the next line, so the reader’s eyes are directed in a “curving” movement to the left, which then reads “slice” and “memory”. The reader participates in the “leaping”, creating connections across spaces, curling into new meanings and associations.

Language Poets can be seen as writing not in order to “enclose the world (define, delimit, decipher) but to move within it” (Hartley, 1989, p. 5). There is movement in language, resulting in revised associations and patterns. Connections travel trajectories beyond the page. Words resist their boundaries. Although they can be seen as trying to contain or impart some “reality”, they are in fact a vehicle for a perception of reality and not reality itself. Greer writes that McGann, in relation to non and anti-narrative strategies, sees Language Poetry as “an alternative to established forms of realism and idealism, significant for its capacity to disrupt or deconstruct those forms of order which are already in place” (Greer, 1989, p. 337). Language Poetry brings awareness to the fact that language does not represent realism and that it can’t contain a direct reflection of the world. Its play is its significance. Hejinian states that language never rests and that any string of words is “entirely free of possible narrative or psychological content” (Hejinian, 1985, p. 279-280). Further to this, she states that “language itself is never in a state of rest” (2000, p. 50). *Constellations* reflects this ideology, with the poems presented as a point in time, not in a state of rest, continually moving, with alternative meanings and stories proliferating. The movement is between narratives, which are teased out through repetitions and rhyme, that crowd the first pages and then breathe

through the second and third poems, the relief of the final shape – as though there is cohesion and enclosure. But the third page is also moving – across the page, in every direction. No longer a past, present, future, but movement between them. All possibilities.

Play and pleasure within *Constellations* includes the potential for conceptual presentations of the writing. That is, poetry which isn't in "a single fixed state but can vary according to the medium of presentation: printed book, cyberspace, installation, or oral rendition" (Perloff, 2007, p. 33). Being able to experience the poetry in a variety of ways opens up the poetry and postpones completion or being fixed. For example, an installation of the *Constellations* would offer an alternative, physical experience of the work, with moments that resist being contained. The final constellation shapes could be displayed on walls, with pins in words and string connecting their boundaries, while recordings of the first pages from each sequence contained in portable players, for the reader to listen to as they read. A box in the middle of the room holds the folded constellation maps/ sequences. On the ceiling, the PowerPoint presentation, projected, continuously playing. Those renewed word/star combinations blinking overhead. By challenging notions of how poetry can be experienced or presented, the work itself becomes a disruption, a shout out to the (perceived) silence of the reader.

As Bernstein states "verse is born free but everywhere in chains. It has been my project to rattle the chains" (1999, p. 11). Further to this, he comments that "You can't fully critique the dominant culture if you are confined to the forms through which it reproduces itself" (Bernstein, 1999, p. 4). *Constellations*, with its resistance of commodification (box of poems), its unwieldy size, its state of incompleteness or finality, offers an alternative to both the printed and bound book, as well as to digital reading. The Powerpoint slide is an acknowledgment to the power of social media. This is a culture of disposable meanings, of transient statements, with instant gratification. It is also representative of the hard rubbish in our society. Of what we leave behind, without even being aware of it. The epigraphic statements are barely visible, as sign posts for each sequence, they nod to the constellation, but are not bound by them. It is only by breaking the poems down into their parts and pieces, we can upcycle the phrases, and reconfigure their usefulness.

Further to this, the physical poetic maps and the storage box they are presented in, contrast with the digitalized PowerPoint presentation. Both are on the verge of disintegration – the PowerPoint visually disintegrates as the poetic epigraphs delete themselves, and the hard copy sequences disintegrate, not only in paper, but also from meanings and fixed narratives, as well as memory.

There is pleasure in the folded page. The unfolding, the reflexive memory contained in the fold, always there, pushing to retain its shape. Once the moment is noticed, it's remembered. The folds can be flattened but they remain. There is a pleasure too, in handling the poems, of having a tactility and form to something which cannot normally be held; the sky. They are participatory, inviting the reader to experience the work in the way they choose, to find their own folds, their own sequences. There is the visceral seduction of the page openings, caressing. There is play in the boxes, flicking through poems like index cards, reminiscent of library catalogues, that are being lost to the digitization of the world. Stars no longer beyond reach, the dip and selection. No starting or end points, endlessly experiencing the immateriality of voices, the bodily reaction to language compressed in textures.

In "Portraits and Repetition", Stein states that "any one is of one's period and this our period was undoubtedly the period of the cinema and series production" (1967, p. 106). This was reflected in Stein's "movement" within language and through space. In *Constellations*, the poetic sequences resist the technological transference of information that is occurring digitally. The focus, instead, is paper, concrete, material. However, the by-product of *Constellations*, the PowerPoint presentation, is a reconstructing of fragments, a recycling process. Its presentation, is also somewhat cinematic, as words are deleted from the "feed", new associations appear, until all that remains are the names of stars, those word/stars moving through space. As Stein has observed, "I became conscious of these things, I suppose anybody does when they first really know that the stars are worlds and that everything is moving" (Stein, 1967, p. 101).

*Constellations* also consist of spaces between words, spaces which appear to grow with each consecutive poem. As discussed, this is an illusion, the poems traversing space, framed within a page, bearing the constellation shape. The final poem in each sequence is arbitrary, in that there is no "true" constellation poem, they are word/stars and lines

hovering over a moving field. Craig Watson stated in an interview with Chris McCreary, that thinking occurs in the “negative space” or gaps. He refers to Gomringer and the principle which scientists call “subjective contours”, which he describes as “the human tendency to see patterns and shapes in the object of the gaze. We make constellations by filling in the gaps.” (2003, p. 3) Those gaps are a site of great intrigue for me, as are the lines connecting word/stars, creating gaps which allow for new connections to spill out. The constellation shapes break the rigidity of the line, which now travels across the page, in a multiplicity of directions. We view the page as a flat surface, words spread across it, but the stars are connecting at different depths in the sky, at different depths to a red rose and at different depths to a heart shaped pillow, and at different depths in this.

vi) *Constellations: A space for moving voices*

I can't count the number of times I've started again. In remembering and in writing this. It's a symptom and a sign, Schizophrenia gets in everywhere, especially in words, especially in poetry, especially in the beginning and especially at the end. And especially in wounds, those daily wounds. My Schizophrenia has given me a sensitivity to words and poetry, red roses and constellations in the sky. And so I've moved through *Constellations*, a little hesitant that, inevitably, they must end. I caught word after word, pushing poems further and further away, but all the time they were coming closer and catching up and then somehow the voices merged and I was here. Reeling in the light of a big bang universe receding into a slumber. Resting on the page.

So the page is a space where voices merge convincingly. *Constellations* has a multitude of voices, peeled away, abstracted, giants rattling pins of light, little bursts of affirmations, often with feathers, often with skin. As an Educator for a mental health service, I present my story, my lived experience with mental illness, to community groups, paramedics, social work students and police. And as confusing and complex as psychosis is, for me, an uncontrollable and unedited star shower of words and sensations, the audience always, inevitably, seeks out the threads of coherence, the single story, the rational point of view, the authentic, overarching experience, which must, in order for the psychology of a person to be seen as healthy and well adjusted, *must* take over and obscure the multiplicities of personal iconography, language and experience. I find myself erasing possibilities, clipping back the multitude of voices that have narrated the stories that impacted upon my own voice. The voice that tries to explain, to rationalize and examine words and their star beginnings, and where I belong in their formations. If there is a life narrative, it's a side effect left behind from living, a day to day, everyday existence. In the stars, the narratives we leave behind, have left behind. We gathered stories in the twilight of our minds, the appeal of objects layered over stars, objects over everything. The merging of our voices, the merging of everything into a sky, verging on comprehensible, verging on dissolving.

In my Schizophrenic mind, chronological narratives are difficult to sustain, and as with beginning again, and never knowing where or how to end, the writing in *Constellations* moves around inside of itself. Memories return, with escalating consequences. A wrong

decision implicates a thousand future selves. Good actions resonate and stitch back together broken moments, but the tenuous fabric of time is only embroidered and repaired, it is never anew. Constellations are revisited and reconfigured. So *Constellations* are never resting, never resounding with finality. In this state of movement, the writing becomes implicated in the present formation of word/star combinations, which prescribe the selections for the order of the poems. Time is relational, and entwined with the next word/star, and the previous word/star and the word/star that appears renewed when others are removed from the page. Similarly, there is no chronology in Schizophrenia. Everything is happening all at once and not at all. There is a wind, cyclonic and powerful, on a still, silent night, the crickets are singing, swept into a churning sky.

I have always struggled when trying to explain Schizophrenia. Partly because it's difficult to explain your mind, with your mind. But additionally, it is an illness shrouded in myth, with many confusing its symptoms. It is an illness of illusion, where voices merge and splash over the edges of the page. Reality is dubious; there is no shared, agreed upon perspective. There are many realities, many possibilities, a multitude of sequined eyes shimmering at the back of the chimeric mind. Explaining Schizophrenia is draining. Similar to explaining a joke, the effect diminishes the more you try to explain how it works. Once the shock of announcing you have Schizophrenia settles into the mind of the person listening, symptoms and controlling them become background static, because really, the only word they heard was Schizophrenia. I'm talking about it now as it relates to *Constellations*. An explanation may amplify the reading experience, but it doesn't encapsulate the effect of its processes. For *Constellations*, the exegesis discusses some of the theoretical implications within the work, but ultimately, they are an act of play. This is not an Operational Manual for the poems, but an opening for dialogue about them. The way we caress a red rose in words, not how the leaves photosynthesize. Maybe this is part of the pleasure of reading – an interaction with an experience outside of, or affirming of, our own internal processes and dialogues. And in *Constellations*, a shaking around of the bridges between words.

Mental illness is a naming mechanism, and its repercussions are hard to shift, as its implications include the division between a 'normal' sensibility and the mentally 'ill'. Schizophrenia is a difficult name to carry and its naming casts a shadow over all

actions, words and imaginings. It is a gnawing mechanism that eats away at the implicit trust we have in a shared reality. You can share realities with me, but not if you're crazy. It is a kind of social leprosy – there are not many labels that carry such confused and repelled reactions. The phrase “psych ward” is often delivered with fear and revulsion and the Schizophrenic sits in its shadow, eyes gleaming, hysterical laughter bubbling up and out, the observer unsure as to which voice is calling, trying to drag them down their ghastly rabbit hole. I hope that *Constellations* is a counter to the hysterical Schizophrenic. There is at times, the gentle push in rhymes from a red rose or vintage pillows, and at other times, the sexualized, multi voiced, delusional lover, trawling the sky with a butterfly net, plying wings into the framed page. A tension between a desire for resolution and a desire for proliferation. Where multiple sites of pleasure are teased out, where multiplicity is celebrated. And there are those times where the cascading voices and imagery fall away, and we can pause, wait for the mail, open a letter, read quietly. Schizophrenia is an aspect of me, as is brown hair, blue eyes and hard feet. It is an aspect of my body. It is where my voice erupts from. *Dorado* is an aspect of a group of stars, connecting between particular points of light, but there are many other stars within its grouping, other possibilities. Stars themselves aren't just pins of light, they are fire, they burn, and in *Constellations* as well as in the sky, they narrate.

It may appear that the prose poems in *Constellations* have been skimmed for the easy patterns that fall into place, the easy constellation shapes. But those pages were erased and reconnected and retraced, again and again. Pivoting on the page. Moving within the confine of the words pierced in the prose poems. At times, the connections are surprising, a surface reality that is unexpected, concealed in the initial poems. A red rose whose thorns push through the pages. The surprise of the prick and sting. There are no ‘natural’ formations, no template that can be traced, there are only connections that seem to hold the shape of the constellation. I feel discomfort here. As the Psychiatrist, the enforcer of narrative, skims for meaning, somehow captured in illegible notes, blacked out in ‘freedom of information’. More recently the scrawl is replaced with the tap tap tap of keys. The skimming isn't even sweeping the pool for a coherent narrative, just a few tagged words highlighted and enter enter when important. We find the patterns when we connect the lines, group the words, isolate the dialogue. And to the reader, who finds connections and renewal in those second pages, the space is still



moving, they can still see the moving. Time itself – not a page one and page three but the movement between them sandwiched between two possible nows. We can only view time relationally by three.

How many times have I looked at the sky and seen the same stars light different signs? How many times the same skies, different eyes. How many times the same sentence, different words. How many times the same meaning, different signs? How many times the spinning signed? How many times a red rose, throwing off the same hue, a different lover. Perspective preempts what we see. If we are looking for the three connecting word/stars in Antlia, if we know their shape and relationship to other constellations in the sky, we will locate them more easily. We are biased in our perspective, when we know what we are looking for, we can find it. It is the advantage of hindsight. By looking at the star maps in *Constellations*, it is possible to establish a sense of what to look for in the poems. By starting with the final page poems, it is possible to read through the sequence, reconstructing as phrases are added to the constellation shape text. The Schizophrenic ripples spreading. The Schizophrenic mind crowding the page. It is an illness of excess – too many words, the same words, too many meanings, too many dialogues. In *Constellations*, the multiple selves of myth and histories and possibilities. *Constellations* is a process of gathering together word/stars that have potential, a stone thrown onto a line, capturing the ripples. Could have started at any point on the page, so started everywhere at once. No beginning, no middle, just movement, hues and cues of love. Those middle pages – like herding flies.

In my Schizophrenic mind, the big bang is the moment the universe becomes conscious of itself. In *Constellations*, it's the process of removing and adding phrases, of moving between two points, not so much a beginning (first page) and an end (third page) but a space between those, and how they affect each other. Much like the past becomes as incomprehensible as the future, where the earth spins, how it spins, how long it spins for. And depending on our perspective, the further we look back in time, the closer the words join together, gaps receding.

Where did I pluck a red rose from, where will I go to find a red rose, in illusionary words, in *Constellations*, the memories are already fading. Where memory is a frame to hang moments on. Happening all at once and not necessarily in sequence and not

necessarily at all in reality. Like a nuclear reaction where you see the point of light and then the ground rushing up and out, all at once, you can see the explosion moving, and then light and dark. The delay from the trauma to remembering the trauma, illuminated in the future past pit. Those word/stars remembering their formations, their constellations, their stories. Where it feels like we stand at the centre and life moves around us. The red rose feels like an accessory. The illusion is this – the words haven't been deleted in *Constellations*, they're still there. The text has been turned white, so the words 'disappear' from the pages. They are deletions in visibility, not in form. They are a cluster of objects falling away, still in space, still moving through the page. But silent in their moving. Like bleaching the memories. Like consciously forgetting.

*Constellations* are divided into their family groups. By doing so, it provides a space to pause and collect like objects and word/stars. The language interweaves, as do disparate narratives. For example, the Perseus family explores the myth surrounding Cassiopeia and her daughter Andromeda. Perseus rescues Andromeda from the sea creature Cetus. The story explores her father's perspective, and questions why he wasn't able to demonstrate strength in helping Andromeda. It also explores Cassiopeia's vanity and her fatal narcissism. The family groups act as a place to rest and recollect. The Schizophrenic mind ruminates over common themes and perceptions, seeking guides and pathways, where there are none – a clearing to gather focus and lie on your back, trying to absorb the immensity of the sky and its chattering.

The star maps in *Constellations*, are like secrets folded. Maps imply a knowledge, of where the truth lies, the potential of the unfolded pages and how the words organise themselves around them. *Constellations* are folded into boxes. There is a potential that the reader will get lost, not knowing where to begin or end, always present. Like notes in a Doctor's book, there is no completion, no coherence, only moments bubbling up and out. And in those moments a pause collected into poems and then moving on. You throw it out to the world – I'm making meaning! And then it's gone. And it feels like we capture every moment but the moment is also continually moving and affected by the previous moment and then linked with every moment after that. All drafts and all revisions. Why are some moments collected and some slip away? Why is it important to retain memories of being a flower girl at a wedding and forgetting who gave a red rose? All conflated within the illusion of time, we are always running out, with every breath

running out, nearing an end we can't conceive, that others will experience through us. Endlessly recycling one another.

How does language move? We pull words together, stars together, constellations together, to orient and find comfort in familiar repetitions, each night, every night, every day, every sky. I took an umbrella with stars and held it over the page. I curated a collection of word/stars from the pull and how soft it is, the pull to cohere, pulling just under our skin, each night, each sky, gently, gently pulling. And us moving with it.

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