



University of
Southern
Queensland

Insights from Trauma

A Portfolio of Poetry

Portfolio of Creative Works

Kate Cantrell (UniSQ)

[Portfolio Submission Years: 2018-2020]

Insights from Trauma

This portfolio of poetry, *Insights from Trauma* (2018-2021), consists of three poems that employ poetic devices and techniques to interrogate the way that lost, missing, or murdered children are represented in contemporary Australian media and literature. In doing so, the collection traces the way that narratives of lost children have changed over the past 60 years and reveals, paradoxically, how lost children feature disturbingly through their absence, which is the same phenomenon that occurs in the popular media when Australian children are reported as missing. This research is significant because it shows how Australian children are publicly memorialised and remembered, and demonstrates how the death/disappearance of the Beaumont children (1966), Azaria Chamberlain (1980), and the Clarke children (2020), function as signal crimes, which are morality tales, embedded in the collective memory, that frame how new crimes involving children are publicly viewed and interpreted (Innes 2015).

Portfolio Items and Publication Details

1. Cantrell, Kate. 2018. 'The Satin Man' [poem]. *Meanjin*, 77 (4): 125.
2. Cantrell, Kate. 2019. 'The Five Stages of Grief' [poem]. *Cordite Poetry Review*, 93.
3. Cantrell, Kate. 2020. 'Things You Lost in 2020' [poem]. *Westerly*, 65 (2): 140–141.

RESEARCH STATEMENT – Insights from Trauma [Portfolio of Creative Works]

Research Background

In *The Country of Lost Children* (1999), a seminal study of the lost child motif in Australian literature, Peter Pierce argues that the figure of the lost child is an old colonial nightmare that haunts the Australian imagination. Over the past two decades, other literary and cultural scholars have extended this trope to broader social, cultural, and political phenomena, including the colonial experience of childhood (Torney 2005); national anxieties about space and belonging (Frost 2001); and more recently, the discursive implications of White Vanishing (Tilley 2012). However, these studies are limited to literary and cultural representations of the lost child that overlook the importance of the lost child motif in Australian poetry.

Research Contribution

This collection of poetry, *Insights from Trauma* (2018-2021), consists of three poems that employ poetic devices and techniques to interrogate the way that lost, missing, or murdered children are represented in contemporary Australian media and literature. In doing so, the collection traces the way that narratives of lost children have changed over the past 60 years and reveals, paradoxically, how lost children feature disturbingly through their absence, which is the same phenomenon that occurs in the popular media when Australian children are reported as missing.

Research Significance

This research is significant because it shows how Australian children are publicly memorialised and remembered, and demonstrates how the death/disappearance of the Beaumont children (1966), Azaria Chamberlain (1980), and the Clarke children (2020), function as signal crimes, which are morality tales, embedded in the collective memory, that frame how new crimes involving children are publicly viewed and interpreted (Innes 2015). The value of this work is attested to by the fact that all three poems are published in Australia's oldest and most prestigious literary journals: *Meanjin*, *Westerly*, and *Cordite Poetry Review*.