Dominique Hecq grew up in the French-speaking part of Belgium. She is the author of a novel (The Book of Elsa), three collections of short fiction (Magic, Mythfits and Noisy Blood), and three books of poetry (The Gaze of Silence, Good Grief and Couchgrass). Two of her one-act plays were performed in Australia, Belgium and Germany (One Eye Too Many and Cakes & Pains). Dominique’s awards for poetry include The New England Review Prize for Poetry (2005) and The Martha Richardson Medal for Poetry (2006). She was also short-listed for the inaugural Blake Prize for Poetry (2008) and highly commended in its second year. She currently lives in Melbourne.
OUT OF BOUNDS

Dominique Hecq
In the beginning was the word,
but was it followed by a question mark?

—Phyllis Webb
Acknowledgements

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For Russell Grigg
Also by Dominique Hecq

Fiction—

The Book of Elsa
Mythfits
Magic & other stories
Noisy Blood

Poetry—

Good Grief
Couchgrass

Short Drama—

One Eye Too Many
Cakes and Pains
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The Gaze of Silence

Any Thought utters a Dice Throw
—Stéphane Mallarmé
Incarnadine Sun

The skin of day bursts
A wild goat leaps off the page
Word *parola* *Wort* *mot woord*—
a dice throw cast in jest—
a tongue in free fall—
images adjust to words:
things said
things utterly written

Where do words come from?
From behind an eyelid
the world slows down
silence swaps
the living with the dead
the mother with the child
the dead for the living dead.

Is language the world?
Washed out Moon
  Milk letters spilled
  in mid air song
High up in the mountains she drops and falls in a mirror you call a lake. Her eyes are split and so is her face. Her skin is inside out. Burning. Freezing. She swims in air solid as glass, glimmering as silver. She wheels herself back through a field of rocks to what you would call home. She is all shivers and sweat. Her voice booms in her chest. Her head. Husks. Her heartbeat is strong. Is weak. Is no more. *How long must I wait for this death to come, she asks—for this death to go? In a foreign tongue she hears that she is not prepared.*
Hollowed out sky
Hooves crash
through the face of the world
In the mountains the sun is in need of light. Mountain peaks flip back to river beds. She is out of time. Out of space. Out of it. In it. In silence she steps from silence to cadence. She feels for the beat. She grabs words as though these are air bubbles she needs to breathe. She says things like words to speak death off. She is now. She was then. She will be never. She is in jail. In a birth centre. In bedlam. Lamb of Hades. A crowd gathers around her as sirens toll for her tongue. Defaced bodies flicker past her. Colours clash. Colours crash. She closes her eyes with her own hand.
Sinking stars

Iceberg shadows

Diamonds of dew
She is and is not—counting faces at the back of the lake where she wants to jump. Where she wants to dream words that are not splinters under the skin but just grains of sand pressed into the paper. *Don’t make a sound*, she tells him, *for your sounds swallow up my words, my only anchors in the world.* He sighs. He is a hawk-like man. He is a hawk. Red-eyed hawk. Red. He is aflame. Phoenix. *Son and father of himself.*
Rock clouds
A clutter of tongues
The gaze of silence
She is in limbo where blue is green is yellow is white, where sweet is bland is bitter and bites, and where silence is an incessant excess of violence. *For something to come about something must go away,* she hears. She wants to go. She wants to stay. As in *bleiben* blubbering *blancheur des mots* blackness of things blurring of boundaries bewitching soundaries in Babel instead of that blundering *babbelchose* to be—is a belle. She hangs on to the word word.
Air baubles
Bell bubbles
What’s in a name?
Isabelle. Belle Is A French Sound meaning appealing to the eye—the I of the *belleholder*—in English belle for a beautiful woman or *the* reigning beauty of his place. Each language in its place. The romance language of fear and the true language of romance. Keep them separate for somewhere in between is the spirit child, mother of poetry who will play the viola d’armour with a ball of words to practice the viola d’amore at the ball of worlds falling into words.
A crack in the night
Wild goat Ink
Sand life
She is in the sun, the one you call god. It is a cold and quiet place. She is alone awaiting her punishment for she made up the world when she unveiled the word. Now all she knows is that it is in silence and through silence only that one will ever see the hidden one, that one will ever hear the magic word and see it in the flesh. She wants to back up, but she can’t—not for all the copies of words of love she has. She will try something new. He makes a sound. There is no guilt. There are only words—which is worse? She scratches her head and hears in the future in her own voice—not her tongue; *It took many years for me to realize I was not forgiven but given up for being.*
Break of Light
A hand on a cheek
Paper love
From a dry lake she looks up. Her index finger uncrosses her lips. She tells silence off—orders it to squeeze its eyes shut. She tells tales of wild mountain goats swimming, floating, wheeling across rock waves, going up in smoke like the breath of sand making mirrors, like the souls of sounds in between words, like the souls of children sounding in between homes not made of sandstone, like words sounding, unsounding, resounding the world.
The secret of the wild

   goat with a sliver of Sun in its eyes—
   Moonstruck Sun

   is what she reads
   as the twilight cracks

   open
   on a twyborn tale
   in the crossed out gaze
   sounding spaces in between
   here & beyond
   inside outside

   worlds:
   splinters under the skin
   grains of sand pressed into paper
   things in between being & non being between
   the apnoea & the breath
   the syncopation & the beat—
   things short of words
   where one feels
   one is not
   enough
   in the world.
High up in the mountains She looks in the mirror you call a lake. Now that she has been in the gaze of silence she looks silence in the eye. As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country, she says, but I have two homes—incarnadine words and incarnate worlds. At that the silence of the gaze resonates with the music of the One, for out of some ill-extinguished hearth, the fear of poetry yields the poetry of fear.

And on earth peace to men and women of good will.
Out of Bounds

The sea has words that fuse and explode
when the earth listens
to her song resounding
in stone, wave after hour.

—José Emilio Pacheco
I seem to have lost the power of speech.

SPEECH: the sounding of a musical instrument; the action or the faculty of speaking.

SPEAKING: the ability to express thoughts or feelings byarticulating sounds; the power to utter sentences—as in sententious, perhaps.

POWER: rule, authority, supremacy.
You seem to have lost the power of speech
says the man with a sneer.
He is smart.
I am dumb.
And so you write, he snarls.
I want to run.
He snorts.
I snap.
And so I run. Run away. From the wrath ringing.
Ringing back. Bringing back the smack. The lack.
I run backwards. Back to the wretch. The wreck
where whosoever raps the wind, runs the runaway,
wring a tongue—

RINGS—
This is Viola. Viola Dali.

(Silence)

*C'est la vie.*

SPEECH: A SNARE
A SNARE WHOSE POWER IS
THE SENTENTIOUS SUPREMACY
SUPERSEDING MY SOLE ABILITY.

I am lost.
Speech lost me.
Out-s’lot-id me.
Me, sneak I’land.
The voice and the eyes and the eyes in the voice.
Devising lenses. Veering words—
devouring rows of vowels
riots of consonants
clicks of the tongue crystal clear.
Devoicing voice.
Vox the fox.
Lost your tongue? asked the man farther back.

(Silence).

Father Victor asking my name with Our Father looking on
as I tripped
tripped in the crumpled hem of my frilly skirt
and ripped the holy picture of the Virgin Mary
and then daddy gripping me, crippling, stripping
giving me the strap
and strapping the child once pretty as a picture to the bunk.

Holy Terror.
IS A BELLE
IS A BELLE
IS A BELLE
IS A BELLE
Perdu ta langue? asked the son of man on the cross. (Silence).

The ways of God are unfathomable. In nomine Patris...
I passed out.

I took to the road.

The way was clear.

I, Viola Délit runawry running for the life of her.
Viola veiling violence evicting the voice running the vile fox on the run.

Time’s running out.

I’ll be writing.

Writing my way out in tongues.
HiER born hear dad HARE dead la did aah LIP lipping away law did ha Ding-gong hand lapWing her.
M’elle borne la deed ah! Vie oh la…la voix ci lah dit ta!
Tullamarine, like aquamarine: *aqua mirabilis* of creamy green passing into crystals of blue and yellow and white, slowly turning solid.

I do not see that the green is grimy, that the blue is grey and the yellow sallow, that the white is warm ash like the powdery matter peeling off a dream put to the test—ashes I do not toast but tuck away in haste with other private refuse.

And past the portal I had pictured grand and gleaming to mark the arrival of some new Viola to this new is-land, I turn my eyes inward the other Dali, for the sky whose colour matches the tacky asphalt and concrete all around is too ominous for me to face.
And so I run and hail a taxi.

The cab shoots through a makeshift landscape—not the land, the lush island, the harsh inland I had fathomed in my thoughts, but a dull and wayward sea of concrete and concreted paddocks. Padded land. And from this side of the contraflow lane, a padlocked land.

I do have all my faculties: there’s been a crash and the taxi-driver read me not as a runaway with no luggage, but as a busy paying customer playing at being international.
Leaving as the luxury to abridge.
I left not because things were bad, but bland.
Blending and branding the breath of effigies in a grand cavernous silence: the lap of devious masters of sentences lisping holier than thou things with sounds on the brink of the unsound.
I flew away.

I thought the sun would light a sea of fire between here and there, would burn all of my letters, my clothes, my books, my paintings, all that was left of my music.

I could hear my crestfallen past crackle and sigh, echo and die, in the waves ablaze.

I could see the clean sear of fire, the black flakes and inky tongues torn free float upward, twist, turn and gone.

Dramatic bonfire lit in mock *herernity*. *Veritas rei.* Viola rites. Utter delirium *très* sense.
Perdu ta langue?
Cut off. Tucked away. Not lost.

M’elle born i am hell était itch threw litl’He & Id. Here
i’m ream make ink Vie Oh la blind to U glib nests end I
uptune to yore vowel-o-links.
I've got my new tongue tucked under my skin.
It won't scar.
I'm elated.

There are things I can’t name yet, but I’ll borrow your words, your rules, your pens.

I'll perfect myself, my new pet self for you to pat.
Borrowed self on borrowed time.

Time raining words aﬂame gone ashtray s'mothering me into double speak.
I meet my other half.
My better half.
It doesn’t hurt: I’ve *penfected* myself.
One is ‘ailing smoothly in aquamarine waters.

The better half asks my hand.
Half way through the sentence I sense a *flew* bumps.
I put my hand to the lump in my throat.

I can now hear the thump of things unsaid, the
rumple and grumble of sounds echoing. I can feel
a rush of prickly things under my skin, like crystal
slivers all ruffled up and gushing through.

I expect to see a rash running all over that skin.
There is not the faintest blush. I laugh all things
sounding and resounding off my humpty half. I
laugh my hand off to Charles. With a no. With a yes.
I keep the write one.
Time burrows my soul raw.
Buries my raw soul as I borrow vowels and consonants and silences to seal off the holes between double speak and double entendre aboard the *Holy Tamermony* my spouse translates as *je t’aime*.

I am abreast of the times on the Folly Road, scattered abroad for ever and ever, *aman*. 
Self-write E oust dit rage sore row fou lines Mund s’trap’y rêves wych qweep ring-in.
The sun runs the show here.
One protects one’s body from head to toe.
I sheet mine in black.
One seeks the shade of the bush and shelters on the beach.
I try the shadows of the city.
I am with my better half of ten years, Charles Moore, and what’s left of our brood.
Swanston Walk.

Swans of stone walking, not talking.
Who was Swanston? I ask.
(Silence).

Stillness soundly defeating us.
Urban energy bashed awash on hot stone in stony air ringing with silent notes.
Human energy bashed out. Washed away. Sunday.

Where are the people?
(Silence)
I look up.
I'm sure I can make the rugged writing in the sky speak.
*Aletheia*, it says in rune-like script with the voice of Our Father who cannot possibly be in hell spelling out *Lethe* just for me.
I can feel the towering heat and towering noise and towering stone twisting me upward, closing in.
I want to jump.
I turn my eyes away.
I jolt inside.
I am a ghost.

Ghostly jumpy mummy hosting chaotic echoes.

I am surprised to feel my child snuggle up to me.
I try to say something—I manage a quick hug and a wink.
Charles is way ahead.
Time to catch up.
I make it a rule to look at things through his eyes. He is a photographer, a man of images and distance a man with a trained gaze. I try to position myself at a remove to fix this disturbing migration of sensations I can’t name on a screen I could read—a serial, sequenced, timed, coloured and illuminated projection of images that speak without words. For a split second I am a slide projector shuttling History between apertures and time frames.

Speed skaters racing time around the concreted corner of colonial art bombed in front of the State Library remind me that our runways are really no-through roads and us anachronistic signs on the plane of History

History with a capital H, as in Humanity, not humaneness, the capital letter that shuts out history and herstory and stories about them. H Oz Bomb.
We are creatures bound to letters that thrive on myths and rule out the authority of speech. Lethal links on live listings. Barbed wire litter. There must be a way through. A way within the bounds of possibility. Moore. Now I think of the name a lot. It overrules my story. Moore rhymes with more, the rime of mort.
Mort à Letheia. Morte Dali. La-di-da. La violenca e muerte. Law deed Raah! Viola dead.
My death, the impossible. The impossible beyond the rattle of *maestros*, the necrophilic prattle.

*Chante, alors, Viola! Sing, petit singe, petty sin!* 
I’d have to be a bow afire and singe those strings, those highly strung strings that strap me to the holy instrument I profane across tongues.

We walk and walk rood after rood, not hand in hand, but at arm’s length, for bodies don’t touch in this armchair land of adventure lovers on screen.

As I finger my mooring armband it strikes me that what’s left of my ringed hand is numb.

Pace.

SPEECH-less: TONGUE-TIED INTO RASH RESISTANCE; MY DESISTENCE; OUR SENTENCE.
I must touch.

I must run my fingers on this rueful body, run them on the skirt of scar tissue, uncrumple it, run a tacking thread though it, not tuck it in. I must feel the wind.

I must speak.

Speak lest the crack in the fake hearing aid we stick onto speech acts called communication crackles and kills us through the sheer power of make-believe.
I can hear them now running to and fro, to and fro, at the M.C.G., where Australia hits the mark time after time on the screen. Fifteen Love. Thirty Love.

Anybody home? I hear in the distance of my own din.
(Silence)
Anybody in he-ear? tugs my child at my elbow. She’s lost the power of speech, I hear the man, my man, sneer.
Love. Vole, Viola. Vole!

Look!

Look. Don’t run. Unhaste time.

SPEECH AS SPARE THREAD IN THE BOW WHOSE POWER IS TO TACK IN, TACK THROUGH, THE SET OF STRINGS ANCHORING MY WHOLE ABILITY—TO BE.

The wind wraps around my body.
I clasp my instrument and score:
Sorry, love, what is it?
The Silence of the Gaze

The prolonged wound-consciousness after the bullet’s shot
The love after the look is dead,
the yellow joy after the song of the sun.

—Muriel Rukeyser
Incarnadine Moon
The body of night bleeds
Wild goat woman falls off the Book
Dreams collect images collect words
from the glaze of eyes
that shoot silence through the mouth—
    things not said
    things mute unwritten

Where do thoughts come from?
From behind an eyeball
words gather
the dust of images:
worlds
known to the living in the dead
the mother in the child
the mute in the living dead.

Is thinking sleeptalking?
Sunlit Moon
Dream flesh
Skin of dawn
Down below in the city where wild goats turn into demons she walks. Around the corner from St Francis she meets red-eyed Charles. *Is this the city full of dreams, where the spectre in broad daylight accosts the passer-by? he asks.* She looks into his eyes and hears echoes of words by a Phoenix less sinister than wise. She shrugs her shoulders and slips her hands in her pockets. She makes tracks. She is all ears. She will keep her eyes peeled.
Full bellied Sun
Breeze hush
Blank-eyed world
Down little Lonsdale at noon she bumps into a bearded old man, his spine forming a perfect right angle with his legs. Pauper? Prophet? Patriarch? Poet? He looks into her eyes & she shivers. Behind him six more identical shapes follow. Hellish crescendo of condemning silences. Cacophonous cortège of gazing spectres. She will not freak out. She will not run home and lock the door. She turns a blind eye to this company of cackling spooks. She looks the old man in the eye.
Southerly smack
Glitter sails
Veined city streets
In the old man’s eyes she sees not a gaze, but a monstrous sea ablaze. She sees men with feet of clay clad like priests and patriarchs and prosecutors—not prophets. She sees that she is a woman about to fall into the abyss of one gaze. Her Own Abyss. *This my hand will rather The multidinous seas incarnadine, Making the green one red*, she hears. Now she knows that hers is not a shoreless sea. She turns around. She will follow the veined city street uphill.
Marble clouds
A clatter of tongues
The silence of the gaze
She is in once upon a time where questions are just mortal, not lethal. Where the *AHRrr, haven’t I got you now?* is never followed by *You don’t have a Clear Conscience?* Where each reflection of yourself in the mirror doesn’t force you to revise the whole universe. Where the mind doesn’t poke its head out at every step you take, flinging its ancestral fear in your face, repeating again and again that if you trip One will lock you up in once a pun at a time that gives meaning to your name, for the One is just an excuse for lonesome still-lives.
Bulbous eye of day
Wild goat blood
Rock fear
GET REAL, she reads on the wall of a nightclub or bar, JOIN NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH. She is in the world, of course, where dogs leave their mark on the threshold of churches, where diggers excavate the veined alleys awash with the sweat of women, where prisons are turned into museums and museums into prisons. She is in the world where she can shake the shackles of some mythcarried chance off her shoulders just as she can change the spelling of neighbor—Yes! if she says objectified chance right now, fear becomes just a word. Babel, a world puffed away.
Griffon wings
A claw in the mouth
Scream page
In the distance sirens toll for a life, a black shape merging with the black of Spring street buildings and post-politics, merging with the blood drying in the open mouth of a tongueless child—*dream* *addhimct*, *dipshermaniac*, *dopeher*, *junkhe*, *drug bindher*, *world dealher*, *word leadher*. Post old thing. Ding Dong Bells. Black-lipped spirit child—mother of poetry *Is A Belle*. She is on her way, walk-writing the city with wild goat ink blending the dust in her veins, silencing the gaze.
The secret of the wise

woman with yellow Moons for eyes—

Sunstruck Moons

is what she writes

as the twilight clamps shut

on a twyborn tale

out of the crossed out gaze

fleshing spaces in between here & beyond inside outside

words—

splinters out of the skin

specks of sun squeezed out of paper

things from between being & non being between

the apnoea & the breath

the syncopation & the beat—
things short of worlds

where one feels

One is enough

through the WORLD.
High up in Spring street in the city she stands waiting for the tram. *Certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself,* she tells the man with a golden cross in his lapel and a violin case under his arm who looks her in the eye. The man shrugs his shoulders and moves on. She smiles at a woman who joins her in the queue. *Isn’t silence a raucous thing?* she asks. A glance of acquiescence is all she demands. But the woman has her own tale to tell. It begins with the image of a wild goat leaping off the edge. It ends in song—

*aus tiefen Traum bin ich erwacht:*—

(from a deep dream I have awoken)
‘A fascinating and deeply engrossing philosophical fable... In Out of Bounds Hecq has created a superb personal scripture.’
Ali Alizadeh, author of The New Angel and Eyes in Times of War.

_Out of Bounds_ is a sequence of poems in three parts. It is a double story of dislocation that explores autobiographical fragments drawing on the protagonist’s experience of migration and motherhood. It draws together the two strands to reveal a subject at pains to re-define herself through language in a space circumscribed by sexuality, culture, and post-colonial politics. Succinct and astonishingly vivid, these pieces stretch the boundaries of language and literary form.

**Dominique Hecq** is the author of a novel (_The Book of Elsa_), three collections of short fiction (_Magic, Mythfits and Noisy Blood_), and three books of poetry (_The Gaze of Silence, Good Grief and Couchgrass_). Her plays (_One Eye Too Many_ and _Cakes & Pains_) have been performed in Australia, Belgium and Germany. Dominique’s awards for poetry include The New England Review Prize for Poetry (2005) and The Martha Richardson Medal for Poetry (2006). She currently lives in Melbourne.

Cover image: Noël Skrzypczak, _Aqua_, Acrylic on canvas (168 x 122cm ), 2008.