



Tony Tuckson, Ultra Marine, 1973

Paul Magee

Suddenness: On the Speed of Poetic Composition

My paper offers some preliminary conclusions from a three year ARC-funded discovery project on the topic of poetic judgement. The project involved in-depth interviews with 80 celebrated Anglophone poets from a range of countries north and south. In the paper I reflect on responses to a question that split that field into two opposing and even quite emotional camps. It concerned the function of spontaneity in poetic composition. Is it true that 'we do not know exactly what we are going to say until we have said it and we say and hear something new that has never been said or heard before' (Auden 1967)? Do poets know what they are doing?

Paul Magee has published widely across a number of scholarly fields, including creative writing scholarship, psychoanalysis, postcolonial studies and Marxian thought. A Visiting Fellow in SLSSS, Paul teaches poetry and criticism at the University of Canberra, where he is Associate Professor.