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Editorial

Preposition extinction

When I was invited to become a member of the TEXT Advisory Board, I thought the editors had made a mistake. I wondered what they saw, why they were inviting me. I asked myself, what had I done, what was my contribution to the field, how could I give. The language of invitation surprised me, genuinely so. Perhaps the timing too, the absurdity of it.

As I explained in response, I am in the process of retiring from academia, or as I like to put it, rearranging and reinventing myself anew. I am bursting at the seams, beside myself. I'm leaving. Nobody prepares you for this, holds your hand. There is no rehearsal but lots of warnings about what's on the other side; that soon, very soon, sooner than you think, people will stop being interested in you, they'll stop asking what do you do. As if you are dead. To mark this moment in all its fullness, a moment we will all face, allows me to return to a younger self, to my roots to reflect on being a creative researcher, how we are employed in the academy in creative arts *because* we are creative but how much of this gets eroded when attending to the bureaucratic and political and how that burns a hole.

As I pulled my office apart it gave me such joy coming across notes on meeting Anne Carson, various pictures of Queensland Pineapple Girls, a recipe for how to dress beef tongues, quotes from Ray Bradbury on overhead transparencies (do you remember using OHPs?) about books leaping and dancing like roasted birds, their wings ablaze with red and yellow feathers, gorgeous pictures of Hélène Cixous and notes on desire to live oneself within, wanting the belly, the tongue, the blood. Jeanette Winterson, also, on protecting art, and pictures of Joh Bjelke Petersen in dark sunglasses looking like Joe Biden, notebooks from creative writing tutorials dating back 26 years, photocopies of dictionary definitions with arrows pointing: unbitted not bitted or bridled uncontrolled.

I made some of the transparencies and dictionary definitions I found (trill, chant, sing song, croon, warbler) into oversized Burlesque pink rosettes to give to my non/fictionLab friends and colleagues singing me out at my farewell as the Hot Hollers, the official non/fictionLab research group choir. To say a very queer quire pink thank you.

My creativecritical scholarly life, such as it is, is built on ‘not knowing’, *unknowing* (pulling thinking apart), vulnerability, trying things out, disobedience and refusals. It is built on the idea of looking at things with ‘loose thinking’, eisegetically (rather than exegetically), where you take risks, transgress or go against the grain, ‘unexplain’ things and engage in ‘faulty interpretation’, disappear down fissures, fool around. This current repositioning – if I take my own advice and think prepositionally around, beneath, beyond this moment – allows me to reflect and reassess. Because I have always been experimenting with what it means to do eisegesis ([‘Loose thinking’](#)), the question of creativecritical form as in how the how ([‘How the how’](#)), a kind of queer with/ness a la Peta Murray ([‘Kin-as-ethics’](#)), prepositional thinking ([‘Preposition as method’](#)), and the pleasure/necessity/faith/treasure of/in collaborative, community-minded *communitastic* practices ([‘Finding communitas’](#)). How to open minds and hearts. And to later work, the creativecritical thinking and writing that is changing me, again, unexpectedly, but not too late. For example, how to think with others through verbatim theatre as ‘in-conversation’ (‘With/nessing cultural exchange via “verbatim theatre”’), making and stitching with Quinn Eades and many others by reimagining 30 years of experimental feminist writing in Australia through and with the materiality of Ania Walwicz’s *boat* (‘We are making a boat, love’), and singing and dancing and writing with music duo SHOUSE in a collective *communitas* musicking as choral essay (‘PeachPeachPineapple’). And then, coming to the pointy bit, offering a mixed media work for *Rabbit: Extinction* for its 40th edition on grief, loss and failure and learning to breathe (‘Love at the crack’). Beneath – beyond – difficult love, love.

An inevitable question follows in this age of ‘extinction’: how do we live (from the Old English *libban* and *lifian*, also to life and to leave), how do we love? What does it take to breathe, keep going?

To distract myself, perhaps (it’s a long story), I’ve been diving into Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, unlearning biases and misreadings as well as forging new shapes from scratch (playing with Lacan’s prepositional desire *for, of, as other*, for example), reading up on ‘the drive’, desire and breathing and what Jamieson Webster and Patricia Gherovici call ‘this involuntary rhythm of exchange, shared with other living human beings’ (2024: 166). In this chapter Webster and Gherovici consider the respiratory drive and its relation to speech, eating and *singing* (they italicise this word), and anxiety, our lungs being one of the last organs to develop in utero, the baby’s struggle to breathe when being born, ‘having to take something foreign into the body’ for the first time (166), the dependence we have on air. Inhale and exhale of breath. Continuous and involuntary.

What keeps us kicking.

Present.

Extant.

Which brings me face-to-face with extinction. What to do. Now. How to parse it. Because. Maybe, just maybe, at this point *before* dying out, betwixt disappearing, there is a fresh way to think of, to dream, to hope for. ‘Bear the intimacy of scrutiny, and to flourish within it’, as Audre Lorde put it in 1977. Do some of that loose thinking again, take risks, transgress. Step out of line. Practise ‘eisetinction’. Practise love. Peel away biases, unlearn prejudices, sit with difficulty. Learn to give what you/I/we don’t have, what is missing, offering that there at the crack.

– Francesca Rendle-Short

In this issue

We welcome new scholarly work by Rebecca Harkins-Cross (RMIT University), whose article “An unmethodical method: Contextualising the critical essay” draws on Marxist and Feminist schools of literary studies to chart a theoretical and literary genealogy for the critical essay form. This article marks a debut for Harkins-Cross at TEXT: we hope it’s the first of many.

Yue Shi (University of Melbourne) also publishes scholarly work with us for the first time in this issue. A writer of creative non fiction, fiction and poetry, her article “英glish 影fluence: Ouyang Yu’s bilingual and self-translated poetry” draws on her interests and expertise in English-Chinese bilingual poetry and translation.

“If the task at hand is to refigure the social imaginary towards interconnection with all forms of life, is the novel an inadequate means of social engagement?” asks Belinda Castles (University of Sydney) in her article, “When the World Gets Worse: form and feeling in Australian climate fiction.” Castle’s central question is complex and important and she answers it, in part, through close readings of recent work by Michelle de Kretser and Sophie Cunningham.

Recent Australian climate fiction is also the focus of a co-authored contribution from Rohan Wilson and Christopher Holdsworth (Queensland University of Technology). Their work explores the connections between neoliberal capitalism and climate change in fiction by Briohny Doyle and Sally Abott. Their article introduces and makes an argument for the concept of ecological consciousness, building on the Marxist notion of class consciousness.

In a publishing studies oriented article, Imogen Smith (Queensland University of Technology) looks at present situation for literary journals in Australia and, in particular, their relation with print and digital media. Her study finds that “federal project funding is unsuited to the type of work that literary journals do”, that print publication remains important in this field, and that the community-building capacity of the literary journal is too often overlooked.

Additional contributors to this edition include Laura Fulton (Independent Scholar) on finding her voice, Elizabeth Chappell (University of New England) on the role of the archive in the development of creative biography, and co-authors Pierce Wilcox and Helen Marshall

(University of Queensland) on the relationship between creative writers and the fictional characters they invent. We hope you enjoy the edition.

– Julianne van Loon, Ross Watkins, Shady Cosgrove, Antonia Pont

Welcome

The editorial team at TEXT welcomes Francesca Rendle-Short (RMIT University) to our Advisory Board and Antonia Pont (Deakin University) to our team of general issues editors with this edition. As outlined in the above editorial, Francesca Rendle-Short, has been a regular contributor of high quality articles to TEXT over the years and we value highly her expertise as a scholar and writer, as well as her extensive experience in academic leadership. Antonia Pont will be well known to AAWP members as a former president of the Association. She joins us after many years of service as founding Editor at [Cinder](#), an AAWP affiliated journal aimed at supporting scholarly writing by higher-degree students and early-career researchers. Antonia joins Julianne, Ross and Shady in managing the increasingly busy scholarly peer-review process for general issues at TEXT, and brings her characteristic warmth and wisdom, alongside valued experience as a scholar and editor. We also welcome Verity Oswin as Assitant Editor, Reviews.

– Julianne van Loon and Ross Watkins

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Thank you, as always, to the many anonymous peer reviewers who contribute to the quality and integrity of our double-blind peer review process at TEXT. Your work is integral to the journal, and continues to be instrumental the development of many scholarly writing careers. Put simply, this publication would not be possible without your commitment and generosity.

– Julianne van Loon and Ross Watkins

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