

Editorial

Money, money, money

The relationship between academic publication and fair recompense has suffered significantly since *TEXT* was first published in 1997. Back then, copyright was a revered institution. Significant new work, whether by creative writer or academic, was valued in the marketplace. Writers expected to receive appropriate recompense for their writing, particularly when published on paper. Royalties from writing an academic book were not considered all that differently from those related to authoring other sorts of books. In terms of the contract one signed with the publisher, a fair recompense for writing *per se* – based on sales – was negotiated. The writer, academic or not, was considered to be a writer.

But things changed.

First, the value of all writing changed. The internet made publication available without reference to, or involvement with, traditional publishers and contracts. The web made it harder for publishers to survive, seemingly, and made them more inclined to play hard-ball with writers. Within a context where writing was argued to be a ‘free commodity’, and something which could happen in a ‘commons’, its value diminished.

Second, the value of academic writing changed. Previously, academic publishing was indeed something of a backwater, rarely producing a title to excite publishers financially. The publishing of academic monographs was ‘bread and butter’ stuff, dependent mainly on calculable sales to the worldwide network of libraries. But libraries – the significant channel between academics and their readership – started to please their clients (readers) at the expense of looking after their suppliers (authors). Academic libraries were the first to challenge copyright and push the idea that the copy made of the purchased monograph was the monograph itself.[1] Additionally, libraries pulled back on shelving paper books and opted for ebooks, which paid authors less.

Third, the market for academic articles changed. Universities began seriously to interrogate academics’ research performance, particularly their publishing of refereed journal articles. Academic journals had never been able to pay their authors – publishing in them (and editing them) was a sort of cottage industry. With the accelerated focus on journal article publication as an indicator of workplace performance necessary for gaining, retaining and promotion in an academic job, academic journals changed in status. They became hot properties. Global publishers bought them up or, more significantly, corralled them for no payment whatsoever. It was a no-brainer for publishers because they acquired rights over past and subsequent writing in these journals for free. Driven by the ‘Publish or perish’ mentality, academics allowed global publishers to help themselves to a smorgasbord of writing they never pay for. Publishers know that writing has monetary value; academics seem to ignore it.

Fourth, the market for book chapters changed. In the system where libraries around the world bought copies of edited academic monographs, there was

often money to pay the contributors – not much, but it was recompense just the same. The text book market operated by paying academics for contributing their work; and sadly, many universities refused to recognize contributions to text books as research. Academics who now write book chapters of any kind are lucky to get in recompense more than one or two copies of the book. Admittedly, this kind of ‘payment’ for a contribution extends into creative writing publishing too. The writer is ‘paid’ by not having to purchase a copy of the book s/he is included in.

Fifth, the internet developed the concept of paywalls. Global publishers saw that research knowledge can be locked up and made expensive to retrieve. University libraries will pay exorbitant fees for their academics to access the material which allows them to compete with other universities’ academics. The academics themselves, so focused on their research endeavours, are easily seduced into publishing contracts with recompense so low they are detrimental to personal advantage and to the valuing of writing.

And there are other rorts (as Donna Lee Brien reminds me in a recent email). Some academic publishers even demand subsidies to publish. Quite commonly now, academics and/or their universities pay the publishers to publish the work, or else they pay extra for inclusion of images, tables, etc. From their own pockets academics now pay the permission rights for using quotes and images, not to mention the work they do in seeking and negotiating the permissions, writing or paying for their own indexing, proofreading, etc.

Academic publishing now exploits the academic writer. This cipher, the writer, does all the work for a book or an article, gets little recompense for writing it, and watches as libraries, academics and HDR students pay through the nose to own or reference the work. Academic publishing is monopolized by a few global publishers who think not about the writer of the work, nor the value of their contribution to the advancement of knowledge, nor the state of knowledge itself, but rather about how much money they can make from the research industry. And I haven’t heard any of our employers making a fuss about this.

TEXT, however, remains free to all.

– *Nigel Krauth*

In this issue

Several of the articles in this issue of *TEXT* explore the nature of narrative and storytelling: in various genres (memoir, diaries, experimental fiction) through the work of particular writers (Janet Frame, Jonathan Safran Foer and works in progress by the article authors) with a focus on various elements of narrative itself (time, point of view, language). These articles engage with questions of craft and of theory, and with the political and aesthetic questions that arise for writers as they ‘make’ narrative.

In 1998, in his book, *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of the Memoir*, William Zinsser wrote: ‘This is the age of the memoir. Never have personal narratives gushed so profusely from the American soil as in the closing decade of the twentieth century. Everyone has a story to tell, and everyone is telling it’ (Zinsser 1998: 3). Arguably, almost a decade later, the interest in the memoir by both writers and readers has not waned. In their article, ‘Writer-as-narrator: Engaging the debate around the (un)reliable narrator in memoir and the personal essay,’ Robin Freeman and Karen Le Rossignol explore one of the central challenges of memoir writing: the crafting of the voice and personae of

the narrator who is both the writer and not the writer. They posit the ‘gap’ between the writer and the narrator/protagonist in memoir is an ‘empowered creative space’ in which the facts and the lived experience are used by the writer to compose the narrative.

Autobiographical writing is also the focus of ‘Diaries are “better than novels, more accurate than histories, and even at times more dramatic than plays”’: Revisiting the diary for creative writers’. The authors, June Alexander, Donna Lee Brien and Margaret McAllister, found that while diaries have been and continue to be an important primary resource for writers and researchers, there has been very little research and scholarship on the form itself. Their article gives an historical overview and explores the many uses that the form has been put to: archive for information, a place for reflection, recollection and confession, as well as a space for developing ideas and writing skills.

Janet Frame is arguably best known for her three volume autobiography (*To the Is-land, An Angel at My Table* and *The Envoy from Mirror City*) but she also published some 13 novels as well as short stories and poetry. In her article ‘Parodic manoeuvres and differentials in Janet Frame’s *The Carpathians*’, Dominique Hecq explores Frame’s creative process through a close reading of Frame’s novel *The Carpathians* and with a specific focus on ‘parody as creative practice’.

The creative process is also the focal point of Ross Watkins’ article. Written in the second person, ‘Remarkable analogue constructions of the author/illustrator: Re-imagining textual spaces of the book as object’ is a scholarly fictocritical exploration of the practices involved in authoring and illustrating. It investigates the writing process in the context of experimental fiction – the author’s own work and also the work of other writer/illustrators including Jonathan Safran Foer.

In ‘Narrate or Describe?’ Aashish Kaul takes both a theoretical and personal approach to questions of narrative construction. There is a specific focus on ‘free indirect discourse’, on the challenges of writing in a second language and on the way that particular narrative techniques and styles might assist the writer to meet those challenges.

The inspiration for Julia Prendergast’s short story ‘Everything that matters is silvery white’ comes from hearing a friend tell a story which ends ‘I have no memory of ever being cuddled or kissed by my mother. Not ever’. Using the writing of this story as an example, Prendergast, in her article ‘Giving solidity to pure wind: Temporising as transformation’ argues that for writers, the temporising space is a metaphorical playground, an alternate way of asking questions – of seeing, being, knowing – and a crucial aspect of ‘making’ narrative.

The final two articles address questions about the discipline of creative writing and its relationship to other disciplines, in the first Literary Studies and in the second Medical Humanities. At the beginning of her article ‘Not all gumnuts and outback’: Exploring the attitudes of creative writing students towards Australian literature’, Brigid Magner quotes from Stephanie Johnson’s novel *The Writing Class*, and takes on one of the central questions in Johnson’s narrative: whether the rise of creative writing might have detrimental effects on the practices of traditional literary studies. Magner’s survey of her own students, while a small sample, allows her to investigate student attitudes to writing and reading – especially Australian literature.

In 'Royal ambitions: Creative Writing and the Secret Rules of Courtship in the Medical Humanities', James Bradley and Susan Bradley Smith use two case studies where writing and literature have been utilised with the aim of 'humanising' medicine – the 'Creative Writing and GP Wellbeing' project and a literature workshop that used canonical literary texts to provide insights into the nature of medicine, illness and medical practice – to explore and critique the relationship between the humanities and medicine as manifested in the emerging discipline of medical humanities.

– *Enza Gandolfo*

Two Special Issues focus on different forms of creative writing research. Special Issue 28, Fictional histories and historical fictions: writing history in the twenty-first century, edited by Camilla Nelson and Christine de Matos, focuses on writing history, and the still often vexed – but clearly productive – issue of where fiction and the fictionalising process intersect with (and/or intrude into) this process. Featuring work from well qualified and high profile historians/scholars/writers, this issue complements and expands the discussions around this area in TEXT over the past two decades, bringing to the fore current and, sometimes, contentious debates and questions.

Special Issue 29, Scriptwriting as Research II, edited by Dallas John Baker, Craig Batty, Debra Beattie and Susan Davis, was commissioned due to the high level of interest in the first Special Issue positing scriptwriting as a specialist area of creative writing research, published in TEXT in 2013. TEXT has taken the leadership in publishing research in this area and is proud to present this issue, which extends this fruitful area of research.

The introductions from both these special issues make significant contributions to these areas of writing research, and we envisage that these issues will be not only thought-provoking informative and pleasurable reading, but will become – as have many of the articles in TEXT and entire TEXT Special Issues – rich research and teaching resources.

– *Donna Lee Brien*

Notes

1. In this editorial I draw on information from Robert Darnton's 2009 publication, *The Case for Books: Past, Present, and Future* (New York: PublicAffairs). return to text

Works cited

Zinsser, W (ed) 1998 *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, Houghton Mifflin, New York return to text

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General Editor: Nigel Krauth.

Editors: Enza Gandolfo & Linda Weste.

Special Issues Editor: Donna Lee Brien

text@textjournal.com.au