

*Editorial***‘Without TEXT, the practice, research, and pedagogy of creative writing at the university level would be in dire straits’**

Considering the fact that *TEXT* is quoted extensively at international conferences, in doctoral submissions and in academic publications generally, we humbly approached our international Editorial Advisory Board for their views on how the journal is tracking. Gail Pittaway, of Waikato Institute of Technology, provided a New Zealand perspective:

...it is an invaluable source for reading current theory and practice in the discipline of Creative Writing. I find the variety and range of papers to be inspiring and challenging, while the Special Issues have a unique place in scholarship, offering new opportunities and insights on themes and areas of writing that can often be overlooked in traditional journal models.

Gail also noted *TEXT*'s 'philosophy of inclusion' which

encouraged international writers to contribute as writers, editors and reviewers. This has been particularly beneficial to those of us not fortunate enough to be working within th[e] collegial and supportive network in the academy in Australia. As an online journal *TEXT* has the flexibility to reach across distance and connect participants, both writers and readers as colleagues, peers and co-conspirators despite the systems that attempt to divide and make us compete with each other.

The ground-breaking nature and international significance of *TEXT*'s work was recognised by Kurt Heinzelman, Professor of Poetry and Poetics, University of Texas at Austin and Editor-in-Chief, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*:

I know of no other journal in this hemisphere that does what *TEXT* does. So, your journal is indispensable, quite literally... Without *TEXT*, the practice, research, and pedagogy of creative writing at the university level would be in dire straits.

Kurt compared *TEXT* with Creative Writing discipline publications in North America:

there is never any research published ... that I know of in the U.S., on creative writing pedagogy. In fact, there is virtually no scholarly discussion of how creative writing might be taught better; there is little critical thinking along the lines suggested

by [the] fruitful research which often appears in the pages of *TEXT*. North America has no “creative writing studies,” and obviously, then, no journal to support such an endeavor.

Professor Jeri Kroll, Dean of Graduate Research at Flinders University, said:

The journal covers a diverse range of subjects that impact on creative research and yet maintains rigorous standards... My students and I use *TEXT* constantly as a resource. There is simply no other journal like it in the world.

And that’s why Emeritus Professor Jack Hodgins, of the University of Victoria, British Columbia, relays *TEXT* links to ‘thriving writing departments across Canada... (With a note to the effect that “you may want to subscribe”).’

Two themes persist in these testimonials: *TEXT*’s uniqueness and its high academic standards. We acknowledge that we record here our own Board members speaking, but their role is to tell us when things are going wrong. Instead they say: ‘There is simply no other journal like it in the world’!

And key to this is the role played by our referees. For this issue of *TEXT* (which includes 3 Special Issues) almost 100 referees were involved. We want to thank again the referees who have worked so hard to read, think about and respond to the articles submitted for this issue. There is almost never an academic who says no to refereeing requests, and for this generosity from a whole community we are grateful.

Behind and beyond the referees are all those academics who mentor their younger colleagues and recent PhD graduates to prepare and shape articles for submission (as Jeri Kroll and Katrina Finlayson remind us in this issue). We want to acknowledge as well all those who submitted articles which for one reason or another have not made it into this issue. Behind each issue there is a flood of other articles, evidence of a wide and deep river of work going on in Creative Writing.

Enza Gandolfo, Rosemary Williamson and Donna Lee Brien are also to be thanked for their significant role in bringing this issue to publication. Their tireless and well organized dedication has been crucial to making this issue happen.

TEXT 16, 2 opens with *Special Issue Number 14: Beyond practice-led research*, edited by Scott Brook and Paul Magee. This provocative look at practice-led research (P-LR) analyses the consensus the theory has achieved in the academy and beyond, and problematises it in the spirit of critical clarification and renewal. This Special Issue is of key interest because P-LR was the theory which provided the cornerstone for the ERA acceptance of Creative Writing as a recognized research area in 2009.

Speaking of which, *Special Issue Number 15: Creative Writing as Research II*, edited by Nigel Krauth and Donna Lee Brien, is a follow-up to *Special Issue Number 7: The ERA era: creative writing as research* (2010). Back in 2010 academics published their first creative works with ERA Research Statements attached in that pioneering special issue. This time, they were invited to contribute again with the benefit of knowing how the ERA process has affected their work as academic creative writers. Results of a survey, attempting to capture a snapshot of thinking about ERA issues at this point in time, are included.

Donna Lee Brien, says of *Special Issue Number 16: Strengthening learning and teaching leadership in the creative arts*, which she co-edited with Barbara de la Harpe and Thembi Mason:

In the creative arts, as in other disciplines in the contemporary Australian university, the leadership of learning and teaching continues to be ambiguous and highly charged. Some argue that it is the academics who are actively engaged in teaching students who are, or should be, leading learning and teaching in our universities today. Others suggest it is the disciplines those academics work in, or the Associate Deans and other figures who are specifically charged with this leadership including those in higher-level management roles such as Pro- and Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic). Others question the ways in, and extent to, which individuals, disciplines or even entire divisions can improve the quality, standard and relevance of learning and teaching in universities – and how this can be measured. In the light of these issues and debates, this Special Issue of *TEXT*, No 16, developed as part of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council funded ‘CreateEd’ project, seeks to tease out some of the intricacies involved in these discussions. It also profiles a series of examples of academics, disciplines and some institutions and professions outside the academy leading innovation in quality learning and teaching.

The regular issue of *TEXT* brings you an intense series of articles focusing on the paradoxes, ethics, psychology, terror, and states of mind associated with the composition of creative writing.

Jeri Kroll and Katrina Finlayson (‘Transforming Creative Writing postgraduate and supervisor identities: Ways of becoming professional’) open the issue by reminding us that it is no longer enough for academics to simply supervise students through a PhD. Professional development, pedagogical education, career planning, broad research experience become important, especially in an emerging discipline such as Creative Writing where research concepts and research practices are still under discussion and open to debate. This paper shows how the multiple roles of supervisor and mentor are emerging as a norm, explores how they might overlap, and where they are distinct roles with different aims. How does mentoring work? Does it go through phases? What opportunities are opened at the completion of a PhD? Are there new opportunities for a relationship on a different basis once the student-apprentice surpasses the supervisor-mentor in knowledge and expertise? This article is replete with information about the student experience of the PhD (in a climate where the PhD itself is rapidly changing, with, for instance, a rash of universities in the past twelve months introducing coursework to their PhD programs), and with advice to students on how to make the most of their opportunities at this early stage of a possible academic career, and what it might mean to be introduced to the particular discipline of Creative Writing, to the emergence of its signature focus on practice as research.

Continuing this focus on practice and profession, can Creative Writing in the academy survive the increasingly massive and sophisticated moves towards online teaching (see Stanford University’s Coursera phenomenon), especially with economic imperatives driving education in this direction? This raises further questions of the motivations for studying creative writing, the meanings and possibilities for workshops, and the communities that form and connect with creative writing. Martin Andrew’s article (‘Forewarned is forearmed: The brave new world of (Creative) Writing online’) continues a discussion opened

in previous issues of *TEXT* by Freiman and Bell, Cooper and Worthing. It is a discussion that will not go away.

Sean Sturm writes with superb clarity an essay on the ways of the essay. He argues that the essay is not as monolithic a form as some seem to think it is. The essay in the academy might be a form that mostly puts its point first and last, displaying its knowledge in an expository performance. The essay, though, might at times work more truly with the meaning of the word, exposing, testing, surveying, weighing and measuring ideas as it goes without a clear idea of where it might end up. Both forms can convey the excitement of discovery, both can work organically if handled with skill and knowledge. A must-read essay.

There is another co-authored essay (a growing trend?), this time from Grant Caldwell and Kevin Brophy ('The poet-paradox: A model of the psychological moment of composition in lyric poetry') which offers a model for understanding the psyche of the lyric poet as composition takes place. A poem by Frank O'Hara, one that he wrote on his nerves, on the wing, is taken as a case study. This, again, is an essay that takes up one of the central concerns of creative writing theory, the question of the process and experience of writing creatively.

Broadening the focus to the state of Australian literature Candice Fox ('The poetry of survival: The shifting landscape of poetry in the Australian publishing industry') asks if the publishing of poetry can survive in Australia. Poetry remains a small fishing dinghy in a world of sea trawlers. No laws will protect poetry. Fox characterises poetry's situation as 'tenacious survival'. This article includes a fascinating graph of poetry's sales against novels in Australia over the past 150 years. While direct access to readers via internet presence, digital opportunities to package even single poems commercially, and ebook sales might keep poetry publishing alive, its role as a marginal, resistant and critical art form might in fact be its most viable mode of survival. Larger questions are raised, of whether this new online activity is re-shaping the art form and the role of the reader.

Stephen Abblitt ('Missiles and missives: Toward a Nuclear Criticism, or How I learned to stop worrying and love this dangerous writing') asks, from his Moonee Ponds couch, what is nuclear criticism and could he be writing it now? Taking his cue from Derrida's 'The Time of a Thesis' (1983), Abblitt offers a series of sallies, missives or missiles that might or might not have an apocalyptic target. The endlessness of literary texts, and their apparent 'permission' to say anything present us with paradoxes, with confounding potential, and with a nuclear crisis: what might it mean to write something 'acceptable'? What might you make of this strange textual composition as you sit on your own couch watching re-runs of *Dr Strangelove*?

Sue Joseph ('Secrets and "eloquent episodes": The power of telling the buried story') also delves into matters of composition when she explores the nexus between the aims of journalism and narrative inquiry. Stories frame and give meaning to individual lives and in complex relation to this to society as well. Joseph takes up Australian writer Arnold Zable's phrase, 'the eloquent episode', in her desire to identify that 'micro moment' when a narrative of a traumatic event begins to provide vision, insight and integration – a shift of perception. The people whose stories Joseph analyses are each survivors of abuse, neglect, rape, or traumatic origins. The account of the most telling moments in her interview with Russel Sykes, son of Australian indigenous activist Roberta Sykes, conceived as a result of a race-based gang rape by white men, is deeply difficult to read, but as you read, you can see how these

moments, for what they are worth to the teller, emerge powerfully for the listener. Listening in this way to these stories is a discipline hard won. To read these accounts without voyeurism, giving them full respect, is another form of discipline.

The article by Brooke Davis ('Catching the light: Finding words for grief with Lewis, Didion and Woolf') resonates with Sue Joseph's inquiry, delineating a 'new wave' of grief theory. Davis shows how writers Woolf, Didion and Lewis can show her the way here. She opens a cultural and social space for grieving writers who might not want to obey the textbooks on their condition.

While blood doping and hormone enhancement are a crime in world cycling, it is still permissible to produce literature under the influence of a range of drugs. Nigel Krauth ('Alcohol and the writing process') brings the question of alcohol-enhanced writing to the fore in an article that might not be cautionary enough for some, might be affirming for others, and might be provocative enough to generate further debate and research among yet others.

Catherine McKinnon ('Writing white, writing black, and events at Canoe Rivulet') on historical fiction takes up the story of William Martin, servant boy to Matthew Flinders and George Bass on their sea journey along the coast of New South Wales in the boat *Tom Thumb* in 1796. Through a review of hoaxes and appropriations of indigenous experience, McKinnon asks how a non-indigenous writer might compose an account of the indigenous groups near Wollongong who came in contact with this party of eighteenth century white men. Interviews with local indigenous Wadi Wadi (or Five Islands Tribe) elders became one important element, as well as the embedding of unreliable narration in the telling of William Martin's story. McKinnon has also given Flinders' two accounts of the journey her close and creative attention. What becomes clear is that the local natives met with men who felt outnumbered, who were filled with stories of savagery from these people, who mistrusted them, and who had the power to kill with a single, fearful shot. This is an account of writing early colonial 'contact' history as fiction worthy of putting alongside Kate Grenville's *Secret River* (2005) and her *Searching for the Secret River* (2006).

'Music, writing, driving', these are the key words attached to Zoe Fraser's discussion of the ways Bruce Springsteen has been for her a starting point, a muse, a foil and a companion. She follows John Cusack and Elizabeth Wurtzel down this path in one of those articles that celebrates *TEXT*'s vision of publishing writing that looks critically, lyrically and exactly at the processes and experiences of writing. And it is not just Springsteen and music she draws upon, as she uncovers some of the ways influence can work.

Kevin Brophy
Nigel Krauth

<http://www.textjournal.com.au>

Editors: Nigel Krauth, Kevin Brophy & Enza Gandolfo
text@textjournal.com.au