

Reviews contents

- Josie Arnold, *Practice Led Research*
review by Sandra Burr and Penny Hanley page 2
- Murray Bail, *The Pages*; Helen Garner, *The Spare Room*
review by Moya Costello page 7
- Lucy Neave, James Connor & Amanda Crawford (eds) *Arts of Publication: Scholarly Publishing in Australia and Beyond*
review by Stephanie Green page 11
- Elizabeth Campbell, *Letters to the Tremulous Hand*
review by Sandra Burr page 14
- LK Holt, *Man Wolf Man*
review by Kathryn Hind page 16
- Claire Gaskin, *A Bud*
review by Gregory A Gould page 18
- Petra White, *The Incoming Tide*
review by Sean Harverson page 20

TEXT review

Josie Arnold, *Practice Led Research*

review by Sandra Burr and Penny Hanley

Josie Arnold

Practice Led Research: A dynamic way to knowledge

Rockview Press, Camberwell, Victoria, 2007

ISBN 0-9750240-6-X

148pp. AUD \$12 plus postage

(Available from Swinburne Bookshop, Lilydale Campus, Locked bag 218, Lilydale, Victoria 3140)

Josie Arnold is currently Professor of Postgraduate Writing at Swinburne University of Technology, and supervises both PhD candidates and Master of Arts (Writing) students. She brings an academic lifetime of knowledge and experience to this book. That said, it is a most peculiar book both in content and arrangement. While the author's voice is clearly evident throughout, the contents are something of a jumble. It brings to mind clothes shopping at St Vinnie's; you find a quality designer jacket and an equally fabulous skirt but they come from two different outfits and don't quite match. Can you wear stripes with spots? As reviewers we found ourselves morphing into an academic version of the British celebrity fashionista duo, Trinny and Susannah, in our desire to effect a makeover, or at the very least give this book a better fitting bra and a pair of matching underpants.

Something about *Practice Led Research: A dynamic way to knowledge* is not quite right. It might be assumed from the title that here is yet another worthy polemic defending the rightful place of the practice-led research paradigm in the academy. Instead, it is at heart a nuts-and-bolts manual that explains how to do a creative PhD, with an assortment of other bits thrown in for good measure.

While Arnold acknowledges that the style and structure of the chapters in the two sections differ, the lack of unity is disappointing, given the expectation generated by the title that appears to promise a treatise on practice-led research. This book, however, is weirdly pear-shaped. Part I, modelled on Swinburne University of Technology's research by higher degrees requirements, demonstrates the creative PhD by artefact and exegesis. It addresses graduate students and has fewer than fifty pages, while Part II has three times that number of pages - in other words, the book has the body shape of a size 12 top attached to a size 16 bottom. While Part I is brief and simply stated, the reader suddenly slips into different territory in Part II which has a more complex, sophisticated, philosophical tone.

This second part is made up of papers originally delivered as lectures or academic presentations reflecting the author's developing thoughts about practice-led research, as well as salient critical and cultural theories that have influenced academia in the post-World War II years. This structure recalls the old B movie and main feature arrangement from the early days

of cinema. B movies were intentionally shorter, more accessible, low budget films lacking the big stars or meatier themes of the main feature, yet they often displayed a high degree of craftsmanship and startling originality. Both had different things to offer and one was not necessarily superior to the other. So it is with this book.

It has a great deal to offer, particularly to beginning creative PhD students. At the 2007 Association of Australian Writers' Programs conference, the number of postgraduate papers preoccupied with process rather than content attracted some negative comments. Instead of talking about theories of writing and research, several postgraduate presenters described the obstacles and diversions encountered during their research journeys. While this phenomenon is hardly new, it is obviously an issue of considerable concern, particularly to creative postgraduate candidates, and perhaps indicates that it is time to turn our attention as teachers of writing towards assisting students by demystifying the creative PhD process. Josie Arnold clearly recognises this, and in practical fashion addresses the subject in this book which she tellingly dedicates to 'my students past, present and future.'

In Part I Arnold, using the Swinburne PhD by artefact and exegesis as her model, explains the structure of the creative PhD. In language that is friendly, forthright and sympathetic she examines and explains every step in minute detail, from the formulation of the research question to final submission. 'Surely,' she writes, 'establishing a research question, adding something new to knowledge in the area, reading widely and deeply in the academic literature, collecting data, and writing up is a large enough task in itself without also having to discover elements of the structure of the PhD' (11). Already we imagine creative PhD candidates everywhere exhaling with relief. They might greet with particular joy the chapter, 'Planning the PhD' - not necessarily to follow this prescription to the letter, but to see other ways of dealing with the challenges of this still relatively new research method, and to look at alternative methods of accomplishing the different stages of the doctoral journey.

It is always instructive to compare one's own creative practice with that of others. We disagreed, for example, on the value of maintaining a reflective journal, which is a central tenet of the Swinburne model. Without having heard the term 'reflective journal' before, Penny was already writing one. Her initial explorations of ideas - both for the creative component of the PhD, which is a novel, and for the exegesis - were formulated as private scribbles in notebooks; they were her way of teasing out ideas, exploring problems and working out her position on a whole range of confounding issues. She asks: *How do I know what I think until I see what I have written?* Sandra's reflective approach is entirely different. Keeping a journal was a stifling experience, abandoned after many diligent attempts, to be replaced by the more immediate practice of writing and reworking material for publication or conferences and for the exegesis itself. Both methods sit within the practice-led research paradigm, and no doubt there are many as yet undocumented paths to creativity being trodden by creative postgraduate candidates elsewhere.

Arnold's description of Swinburne's as a directive and supportive yet non-didactic program might be a little puzzling to those academic communities whose creative PhD requirements are less proscribed. There is a range of creative PhD requirements in existence in this country and one model does not represent them all. While Arnold is careful to make this point, perhaps

the book should come with a more visible warning on the cover advising readers that it is intended as a guide only.

Part I will find an enthusiastic audience not only among postgraduate readers but also with their supervisors, who should find it both insightful and informative. The book will make them more aware of their responsibilities, and, without being in the least patronising, enlarge their horizons. As Arnold points out about her own experience supervising some inmates of the Dame Phyllis Frost Correctional Facility, 'In supervision pedagogy, as in any teaching, we are always learning from/about/through our students. As the PhD candidates take themselves further forward to be experts in their areas having made substantial contributions to knowledge, we too are taken forward in our own professional and personal lives' (50). She insists that supervisors need to be flexible because, 'As candidates' work matures, so their goals may change. It is an important aspect of the PhD pedagogy to recognise and support this' (29). Interestingly, Arnold explores the benefits of psychotherapy in this pedagogy and quotes that most engaging psychoanalytic writer, Irvin Yalom, to demonstrate the benefits of this innovative therapeutic alliance. Arnold's discussion of Freud's 'talking cure' when writing about the value of conversation between students, supervisors, colleagues - everyone - working or studying in universities brought to mind AS Byatt, who stated in her book, *Imagining Characters*: 'If you don't discuss, you don't understand' (Byatt & Sodre 1995: 254).

Most would agree that it is not enough that having survived a PhD themselves, postgraduates entering academic life will have automatically acquired the necessary skills and understanding to supervise the next generation of creative research candidates. Arnold, recognising that this is not always the case, offers detailed and thoughtful advice about supervision at this level. It might come as a surprise to some who see their responsibilities defined by the walls of their institution, for example, to learn that supervisors should act to enable marketing the candidate (29).

Part II is both dense (in the best sense of the word, being crammed with stimulating ideas) and substantial, although it lacks cohesion. Arnold does warn her readers about this:

The style and structure of the chapters in this section differ. Some are the basis for lectures and/or academic papers. Others are collections of my thinking in the area, which continues to evolve. A number of chapters use a narrative methodology and a discursive mode of discussion rather than a traditional academic discourse so as to exemplify some of the ideas that I am working within. (ii)

Even though the author signposts these problems in her introduction, the disjointed nature of this section is jarring. Each part, while on similar territory, comes across as separate and distinct. Chapters are transferred from their original source with only a cosmetic gesture to their new location in the form of brief introductions or closing statements. Having been told that many of these chapters were originally published elsewhere it would have been nice to have the publications details at hand, if only to trace their journey and the evolution in the author's thinking.

Arnold uses this second section to showcase her own interesting theories and philosophies on such topics as the relationship between readers and writers (the writerly reader); feminist poetics; practice-led research; and a

range of cultural and critical theories pertinent to creative writing. It is evident that dilemmas for many new researchers, particularly mature age candidates or those with limited academic experience, arise from their lack of knowledge of research practices and critical and cultural theory. They constantly reinvent the wheel, frittering valuable time on blind alleys and wrong directions until they find their right path. This book is an invaluable atlas for contextualising thinking and research at this level.

Arnold notes, in her dual roles as a creative writer and a teacher of literature, her interest in the theories of Roland Barthes and the territory explored as fictional truth. Spanish novelist Carlos Ruiz Zafon writes a narrative of truth in *The Shadow of the Wind* that evokes Barthes' idea about the power of the readers over the life of the book: 'Every time a book changes hands, every time someone runs his eyes down its pages, its spirit grows and strengthens' (Zafon 2004: 3). In a similar vein, American memoirist Patricia Hampl in her book *I Could Tell You Stories: Sojourns in the land of memory* writes 'An unreviewed book is a struck bell that gives no resonance. Without reviews, literature would be oddly mute in spite of all those words on all those pages. Reviewing makes of reading a participant sport, not a spectator sport' (Hampl 1999: 185).

To maximise the ease and clarity of the reading experience the parts of an instructive nonfiction book should cohere into a logically ordered, satisfying whole. While that doesn't occur with this book, it could be argued that Arnold has deliberately chosen not to follow this traditional model. Instead she has gathered together her considerable expertise in the area of practice-led research, not into a seamless coherence but into a gluey mosaic of separate pieces. She thereby reinforces her content by demonstrating some of the same points in her style. Perhaps a more positive interpretation of the 'not quite rightness' and 'pear-shaped' character of this book is that readers will get value for money: two books for the price of one, and a real bargain at that, considering the miniscule \$12 price tag.

Practice-led research is fast becoming a field of research in itself. To this end, a broader review of the relevant literature would have been both useful and appropriate. There are telltale sign of papers being quickly gathered together with insufficient editing. There is repetition, for example, such as identical expositions of Gregory Ulmer's theoretical 'mystory' in chapters 4, 11 and 12 - that disrupts the reading experience. There are also numerous mistakes, misspellings and inconsistencies throughout the book, for example, artifact/artefact, idealogy/ideology, Delueze/Deleuze and 'Guantonomo' instead of 'Guantanamo' to name just a few. There are also some careless slips that detract from the work of a scholar. The misspelling of Barbara Milech's surname, while consistent, points to a certain lack of attention to detail, as do errors in the list of references e.g., 'Gibb' and 'Gibbs' and 'Irigaray' and 'Irigary'. The lack of an index is a serious omission. The production values, while understandable for such a low cost book, are disappointing. The binding will never stand up to the amount of use this book so richly deserves.

It is to be hoped that one day, when the ground has stopped shifting, when we have a better understanding of and confidence about articulating creative practice within the academy, an enterprising person might undertake some comparative research on the creative doctoral degree requirements across Australia's academic institutions. In the meantime, Josie Arnold's book is an excellent beginning. In its next edition Trinny and Susannah advise some new foundation garments in the form of a

stronger binding to support its rich contents and a smaller, more conventional, user-friendly size. And a new jacket to better reflect the cornucopia within would certainly not go astray.

Work cited

Byatt, AS & Ignes Sodre 1995 *Imagining Characters: Six Conversations About Women Writers*, London: Chatto & Windus return to text

Hampl, P 1999 *I Could Tell You Stories: Sojourns in the land of memory*, New York, WW

Norton return to text

Zafon, C Ruiz 2004 *The Shadow of the Wind*, tr L.Graves, London: Phoenix return to text

Sandra Burr and Penny Hanley are both postgraduate writing candidates in the Faculty of Design and Creative Practice at the University of Canberra.

TEXT

Vol 12 No 2 October 2008

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

Editors: Nigel Krauth & Jen Webb

Text@griffith.edu.au

TEXT review

Murray Bail, *The Pages*; Helen Garner, *The Spare Room*

review by Moya Costello

Murray Bail
The Pages
Text, Melbourne, 2008
ISBN 9781921351464
Hb, 199 pp, \$34.95

Helen Garner
The Spare Room
Text, Melbourne, 2008
ISBN 9781921351396
Hb, 195 pp, \$29.95

Murray Bail and Helen Garner are two of Australia's great stylists.

Bail is the more inaccessible of the two: idiosyncratic, an acquired taste. A clue to his tone might be his citing of Torgny Lindgren as a writer he favours. You could try Lindgren's *Sweetness*. In a review of *The Pages* in *The Australian Literary Review*, Delia Falconer described Bail's writing as characterised by 'pebbly precision and surprising syntax'; in his essay 'Photography, Finitude, Fatigue, Fatality: The Unimportance of Being Murray Bail', Andrew Johns/John Attridge describes it as 'jerky, photographic writing' and 'effete theorising'.

Effete would not be a word you'd use for Garner. In *The Spare Room*, for example, one of the most visceral episodes is Helen's pragmatic fight alongside government departments against the charlatanism of The Theodore Institute as a shonky form of alternative medicine.

These two new novels from Bail and Garner are short, a consistent Garner form, and are part of a gathering of Australian authors of the short novel that includes Gerald Murnane and Kate Jennings, and now Amanda Lohrey.

Bail's novels are always about representation and art and the fictiveness of fiction. His writing demonstrates tone, Garner's perhaps mood. In relation to the pedagogy of style in creative writing, Bail can be used to demonstrate hyperrealism and foregrounding narrative process, and Garner sustained metaphor.

Moments of hyperrealism in *The Pages* include the obstacles for two women driving along Parramatta Road: 'nouns, adjectives and flags'; and the edge of a sandstone window in a university philosophy department that is 'weathered and worn smooth by the never-ending revision of ideas'.

Bail opens *The Pages* with 'At dawn - what a word: the beginning of the world all over again ... ', in much the same way he wrote 'Once upon a

time there was a man - what's wrong with that? Not the most original way to begin ...' in *Eucalyptus*. Singularity and originality are hedged about by iteration and finitude.

Anger, regret, sorrow, sadness and incomprehension stalk the pages of *The Spare Room*. Death is not new to Garner as subject matter. I have kept re-reading 'The Recording Angel' (*Cosmo Cosmolino*), partly in simple fascination with its awful truth; and this particular moment from *Cosmo Cosmolino* stays with me:

We had not learnt the words with which to speak of death.
 "Poor Chips," whispered the last of the household children
 ... "he died of *loneliness*." They sat in a pew ... listening to
 the ramblings of a ... contemporary ... who knew of no
 comfort to offer ...

The Spare Room sustains a metaphor of death, whether it be a shattering wall mirror, dark gardens and drooping roses, the looming presence of a deadline (the requirement 'to find something new' and, presumably, fill a blank page), a dried-out pumpkin, something small crackling mulch while grooming itself, or a whole young family down with colds.

The Spare Room is also an exercise in the hybrid. As with WG Sebald, one's unspoken question while silently reading is: is this fiction? In *The Fourth Estate*, James Wood said of Sebald that it was, because of the care and patterning of narration, the interiority, and the mixing of fact and invention to produce a fictional truth beyond verification. Garner discussed *The Spare Room*'s autobiographical basis in publicity interviews in the media. Wood's comment could be made of *The Spare Room*. But I do find myself agreeing with Peter Rose in *Australian Book Review*, that this may have been more 'convincing' as a long essay. See, for example, 'Woman in a Green Mantle' and 'Tower Diary' in *The Feel of Steel*, where the anguish and inconsolable sadness displayed on the pages over the break-up of a marriage are akin to that of a death.

'Hybrid creations are not singular' says Bail's philosopher in *The Pages*. I take this as a negative comment on hybridity, since, generally, singularity is seen as original and unique. Yet Bail's own works build, in part, via intertextual referencing.

Garner's fans say *The Spare Room* is fabulously spare, and 'Helen' is prepared to courageously reveal her horrid crabbiness. And while I myself am obsessed with linen and thence aesthetics, neither carries much weight at the time of death's own singular appearance. The Helen of the novel copes for only one week as a carer of her dying friend. A grueling week though it is, I am inclined to think of carers who conduct that grueling program for years. Moreover, the novel scrambles over the dying friend's stay at Melbourne's Windsor Hotel for extended medical treatment, with more friends for support. This seemed to me to have the potential for fiction, but I assume it's left out because it would not be from Helen's point of view. Among the most resonant fictional moments, because they are so poetic, are those that Helen shares with her granddaughter, Bessie:

She pointed out that many people in the world were very
 poor. Then, tucking into the bowl of yoghurt and nuts ...
 she observed that days differ from one another.
 "Some are happy," she said, "but others are bad. I don't know
 why ..."

Garner possibly acquires fans, Bail aficionados. Aficionados will recognise familiar Bail patterns in *The Pages*. It is set in the same anonymous west of the Blue Mountains in *Eucalyptus*. I barely remember my pre-Bail perception of the bush, so dominated is it now by Bail's representations, which may as well be Baudrillard's simulacra, except that Bail is usually classified as a modernist. For example, he has a commitment to originality and authorial status; he doesn't usually engage with critical approaches to gender or ethnicity; and he is concerned with representation.

Death is probably looming over *The Pages* too. In 1988 in *Liars*, Helen Daniel said of *Holden's Performance* that it was 'a poignant mediation on', among other things, 'being and becoming'. A list finishes off *Homesickness*, *Holden's Performance* and *The Pages*, and the latter's list is of the aphoristic thoughts of the self-styled dead philosopher, Wesley Anthill, which include 'We end up becoming' and '... we can't help being'. Anthill's aphorisms echo Holland's in *Eucalyptus*: '[there is] something rather than nothing' (Anthill); 'nothing is one' (Holland). Philosophy attempts to fathom existence, but Anthill's reader, Erica Hazelhurst, a professional philosopher, asked did he know how to live. Though there is an incipient romance between Erica and Wesley's brother, Roger, Roger is another in a long trail of Bail's stolid, inarticulate Anglo-Australian males. Wesley's not much better; he reads, thinks and writes, at least; but he's a bit of a womaniser - although why women find him attractive is utterly unfathomable - and, coming from a wealthy squattocracy, is indulged, never required to seriously earn a living. Still, he is engaged with the unsayable which, according to *The Pages*' narrator, composes much of the world.

Zoellner, a cast member in Bail's short stories and *Homesickness*, and who is also mentioned in *Eucalyptus*, makes another appearance in *The Pages*. Wesley meets Carl and George Kybybolite in Zoellner's bookshop, but in another city. As if locked in some time warp, or eternally trapped in some maze, I pulled out *Homesickness* to see if Anthill and the Kybybolites were hidden in its pages. (Until I checked, I thought at one point that Anthill's last written thoughts had come directly from Bail's *Notebooks*.) One of the sources of the Kybybolite brothers' surname is related to optics, and one brother has the authorship of *The Science of Appearances* by the painter, Max Meldrum, ascribed to him. Naming has always been a place for riddles in Bail's fiction, and so one necessarily thinks about Erica's surname, Hazelhurst: Bail's drover's wife is Hazel, and Erica is on the verge of coupling with the grazier, Roger Anthill. Anthill: obsessive construction in the dry bush? And the somewhat air-headed Sophie: sophistry? (This is another opportunity for pedagogy: the creation of character and Rimmon-Kenan's specification of the flat character as caricature, allegorical figure or type which can, still, have depth and complexity.)

Like *Holden's Performance*, *The Pages* is full of these quiet little riddles and jokes - for example, the postcards showing 'wooden boats pulled up on the beach' is bound to be something by Derain or Matisse since Anthill buys it at Collioure; and there are numerous references to famous philosophers texturising the novel's surface. It's what Lee Spinks in 1993, in an article in *Span* on Bail's use of allegory, has described as Bail's engendering of 'supplementary narratives' because of the double play of literal and allegorical meanings. When I read in *The Pages* that Erica wears a cardigan 'the colour of boiled rhubarb' and speckled green slacks, I was sent back to *Holden's Performance*, where I was certain that Harriet

Chandler, who definitely wears pants, also wore a pair of the speckled-green variety (they're 'coarse green').

There's a spectacular passage in *Eucalyptus* where a dying man reviews his life in a kind of fast film; in *The Pages* such moments are speckled throughout: 'Brown lino shining'; 'Many lambs, pale'. It's something about seeing, naming or re-presenting, and understanding. Text's production of *The Pages* has deckled edges. (The design of *The Spare Room* is spare.) The page (even online, albeit symbolically) is the space of writing. It can be defined like a canvas. It is initially empty and usually white. But, like physical space, it isn't neutral. It has edges, shape, size and scale. It has airiness. Potentially, it has depth. And to make marks on it, to begin to name, classify, categorise, to re-present, to attempt to make meaning, to be and become, is a matter of life and death.

Moya Costello teaches at Southern Cross University. She has published two collections of short prose and one novel.

TEXT

Vol 12 No 2 October 2008

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

Editors: Nigel Krauth & Jen Webb

Text@griffith.edu.au

TEXT review

Lucy Neave, James Connor & Amanda Crawford (eds) ***Arts of Publication: Scholarly Publishing in Australia and Beyond***

review by Stephanie Green

Lucy Neave, James Connor & Amanda Crawford (eds)
Arts of Publication: Scholarly Publishing in Australia and Beyond
Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2007
ISBN 1740971353
Pb, 206 pages, AUD \$29.95

Arts of Publication was developed from a one-day symposium on academic publishing, held four years ago at the National Museum of Australia. A handbook for emerging academic authors, it combines words of experience and practical advice from a variety of academics, publishers and writers. Some contributors tell the tricks of the book publishing trade. Some give guidance for graduating doctoral students on publication strategies for career development. Others provide research-based discussion of current Australian publishing trends. Indeed, *Arts of Publication* offers itself as a 'wide-ranging mix of academic inquiry, history and commentary, spiced with unashamedly "self-help" advice' (17). Its advice is certainly valuable. The only risk with advice is, like any debutante conduct-book, how quickly it can go out of fashion.

There is no doubt that this book provides a useful resource for any researcher with ambitions to publish. Many of the golden rules of successful authorship are emphasised by the contributors: such as 'write for an audience', 'use clear, non-specialist language', 'don't take knock-backs personally' and 'keep trying'. Two introductory chapters by Lucy Neave provide some background to the topic, concluding that, although the publishing industry is changing rapidly, for the 'well-informed scholarly author, there is a wealth of opportunity today in Australia and overseas' (49).

Amanda Crawford provides advice on how to translate the doctoral thesis into a marketable book for non-specialist readers. Rhonda Black contributes a practical chapter about preparing an effective book proposal. Adam Shoemaker, then Dean of Arts with the Australian National University, endorses these efforts, pointing out that some of the most exciting opportunities to publish may lie outside the sphere of traditional academic publication. He urges young scholars to embrace the kind of story-telling and active writing that readers and publishers alike will find compelling: '... the lightening bolt of communication: the production of theses that are at one and the same time, authoritative and an absolute joy to read.' (159).

Arts of Publication also contains tips for graduate students seeking to build an academic career. In Chapter 5, for example, James Connor, Alastair

Greig and Roseanne Kennedy observe that journal articles are 'a key method of communication for academics: they are the 'gold standard' when it comes to disseminating your ideas'. They also identify completing the PhD - 'those magical letters', publishing a book, good referees and teaching experience as the other four essential ingredients for establishing academic credibility and securing the all important first job (91). In this respect, little has changed since I completed my own doctorate ten years ago.

The work put together here by Neave, Connor and Crawford is not only helpful for the embarking research scholar. There is guidance, as well, for academics and independent researchers at any stage of their career who are keen to maintain a publication profile. Relevant arguments about the changing nature of the author/publisher relationship, the rise of the web as an increasingly significant medium for all forms of communication and changes in book consumption patterns are usefully explored. Russell Smith's chapter on web-based publishing is among the most interesting here in its negotiation of these issues. Smith observes that, while academics 'embraced the internet as an informal means of peer exchange, they were slow to invest in online publication as a serious publishing medium' (69) This resistance, Russell argues, is based on traditional cultural practices within academia and perceived issues of managing quality control (72).

Without question, the publishing industry is undergoing phenomenal change. While more books than ever are printed each year, electronic publishing opportunities are rapidly expanding and evolving. Traditional modes of academic publication have been slow to adapt, according to Smith, but the diversity of possibility offered within the online arena, from specialist research websites to academic e-publishing, is gradually forcing the change. Many universities no longer view the cost of the print-based publishing house as essential for fostering and disseminating scholarship, or as an investment in institutional ambassadorship. As Neave points out, some university presses have adapted for survival. Melbourne University Press, UWA Press and UNSW Press, for example, seek to publish material that has broad public appeal, but is also informed by inquiry, knowledge and ideas.

Researchers are gradually taking up e-publishing options in various forms, although this may mean depositing into databases work that was previously published in print. Some of the most innovative research-based web publishing to date has occurred in cultural institutions, such as libraries, galleries and museums. But web publishing offers considerable opportunity for academics. The material pleasures of the book will always have great appeal for many readers: its portability and familiarity, its presence on a bookshelf, apparent solidity and permanence, are widely cherished. But no book is flood or fire-proof. Paper is heavy and tree-consuming. And, the aesthetics of print publication are hardly essential to the effective exchange of academic content. Web publishing can facilitate peer-review processes just as effectively as print publication, and has potential to achieve a wider and more immediate participation in academic discussion. *TEXT* is one example.

In his discussion of these issues, Smith points out that the number of web-initiated journals is growing rapidly (75) and e-publishing repositories are gradually being embraced and improved. He also observes that there are a number of long term challenges, such as strategies for the survival of digital archives, the need for public access and security. We can anticipate,

however, that the future of academic publishing is likely to be increasingly web-based, and that academics will continue to develop online peer research communities within and beyond university frameworks.

Arts of Publication is an essential tool for research graduates, postgraduate supervisors, established scholars and independent researchers. This book offers vital encouragement for all researchers to write well, understand their prospective audience and communicate their ideas - to the interested public as well as to collegial experts.

This is a budget publication, in the sense that the paper quality is not the best and the design elements are limited. My main reservation is that although some kinds of advice will always be relevant, a good deal of its material will date. Given the scope of its discussion, it seems surprising that we have here a print publication to convey the pearls of the original symposium, rather than a web format devoted to the ongoing dynamics of academic publishing. A cross-institutional web-based project on this topic would not only nurture new academics, it could prompt research, present new information, connect scholars across disciplines, and maintain its relevance as a resource for current and future scholars.

Dr Stephanie Green is Lecturer in Public Writing at Griffith University.

TEXT

Vol 12 No 2 October 2008

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

Editors: Nigel Krauth & Jen Webb

Text@griffith.edu.au

TEXT review

Elizabeth Campbell, *Letters to the Tremulous Hand*

review by Sandra Burr

Elizabeth Campbell
Letters to the Tremulous Hand
John Leonard Press, Elwood, Victoria, 2007
ISBN 978-0-9775787-6-4
68pp. AUD \$23.95

This collection is presented as two distinct parts - a suite of poems addressing the Tremulous Hand of the title, preceded by a number of poems examining a broader array of topics. While it is certainly interesting to have the archival figure of a medieval scholar skilfully brought to our attention, his presence is overshadowed by that of the author. In these very personal poems Campbell wrestles with universal questions about life, loss, love and acceptance.

Campbell's poetry is infused with a sombre melancholy. Her meticulous renderings, keenly observed through fearless, unflinching eyes, show how well she knows her subjects and herself. Campbell speaks with weary ambivalence about her personal attributes in 'Proverb':

But Mother Doubt, you early laid on me

your threefold cradle-gifts:
sadness, restlessness,
and foremost of these, a hopeless

passion for reality.

Similarly 'Fetch', perhaps the most beautiful poem in this volume bristles with frustration:

*do you think I want to be
unhappy with the world!*

Two themes run through the collection. The first is a sense of struggle, suffocation, drowning and crushing airlessness attributable perhaps to the strictures of an asthmatic childhood spoken of in 'Asthma' and which is particularly evident in the escalating breathlessness of 'The Song's Bride'.

The other theme is horses. Campbell's horse poems are not just sentimental tributes to beloved horses. There is something much darker, deeper, more confronting and appalling here than conventional horse love. Horses appear to be a locus of loss and longing for Campbell. Her grief at what she sees as the unbridgeable divide between humans and horses is expressed in 'Recurring' when she says of her runaway mare:

she doesn't need that love
and you couldn't take her weight.

And again in 'Longitude' when the child realises that 'we will never be one person'. To Campbell horses are an enigma, a paradox:

: an intimacy that bullies you

then freaks when you walk out of sight

She understands the inevitably asymmetry at the heart of our relationships with horses and, in poems such as 'Vice' and 'Talent', decries the careless inhumanity to which we too often subject them. She gives us the truth about horses in poems such as the very wonderful 'Structure of the Horse's Eye' and rails against the obtuseness of those who stubbornly refuse to see horses for what they are in 'Horse' and 'Equus'.

Campbell captures and honours the quintessential nature of her subjects in verse that is complex, elegant and tightly controlled. Each word has been carefully selected and placed on the page with infinite care and these are her great strengths as a poet. But there is a bleakness about her steely objectivity and a sense that she does not quite trust herself to write with anything other than detached emotion. Just occasionally she loosens her grip on the reins and reveals a glimpse of her underlying humanity. 'Illuminations' not only stitches the past to the present, it is also full of wry humour; the last stanza of 'Fetch' is abandoned and poignant and in 'Forget' Campbell is touchingly torn between objectivity and compassion for her mare whose foal has died.

In 'ansyn/face' Campbell asks:

What do we do
when we take another's words and say them
again in a different hand?

My hope in writing this review is that I have distilled some of the essence of this very fine poet who writes with clarity and finesse and whose words serve as a constant reminder that, in this world, we should take nothing for granted.

Sandra Burr is a PhD candidate in the School of Creative Writing at the University of Canberra. She is researching the bond between women and horses.

TEXT

Vol 12 No 2 October 2008

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

Editors: Nigel Krauth & Jen Webb

Text@griffith.edu.au

TEXT review

LK Holt, *Man Wolf Man*

review by Kathryn Hind

LK Holt

Man Wolf Man

John Leonard Press, Elwood, 2007

ISBN: 9780977578771

78 pp. pb. AUD23.95

Man Wolf Man is an expedition through point-blank violence, softened by moments of femininity.

Holt's words gain momentum, gain confidence and curve like waves. They can entertain themselves in the big open spaces of women's sexuality; they heave and swell in moments of aloneness. 'Noon Swim' sees the feminine form free of the shaping eye of masculinity, embracing womanly symbolism; flowers, screams, blood. Free of the male look, the women delight in a one-on-one with being, existing alongside the bees and skinks; no dichotomies, just existence.

Unserious Sirens, we swirl
like blood drops in water
then float, flush against sky,
meniscus breasts bobbing
with pelvises, rose-of-bone.

Holt marries this seemingly effortless balance of being, the waves of softness and lightness, with the vessel of men. The waves encounter these relationships as boats, interrupting the current, cutting through the lull. The open space of the water is inhabited by man. Holt deals with the collision in a way that demonstrates passive-aggressive poise, especially in 'Unfinished Confession':

...the vagina-is-quite possibly-
(such lovely eyes he has) a direct inversion of the greater
organ of man.

The friction of masculinity and femininity is dealt with further in 'Unfinished Confession' as Holt delves into an exploration into the physicality and psychology of sexuality.

I try romancing my penis unblooming on the inside-
timid opus of space that will try to mend like a sore
unless I teach the flesh, like a good Believer, what is right.

Holt allows these themes of presence and absence, of filling space, to reverberate through her poems. She helps us escape the tension of sexuality, placing us on the safe platform of simplicity: everyday objects such as gloves, shoes and houses. 'Nine Steps To a Simple Translation'

steps into the idea of space, exploring gaps between people, objects made to be filled, and the zones of words unsaid.

4. This morning I put on my master's shoes.
They slid on easier than I thought.
5. Of course I've got two good shoes of my own;
even my littlest babe is shod before she walks.
6. But the master's shoes were by the door,
loll-tongued dogs waiting to be let out.
7. My feet slid in like dirtiness.
The unspoken the unspoken the unspoken between us.

While investigating these spaces, Holt stays anchored; the voice is never weak, never lost.

The book pulses with an undercurrent of unease, the beats of violent imagery. We recognize Holt's anxiety with the workings of the world through poems such as 'Slaughter House'; descriptions of funeral rites at an abattoir, the smiling wounds of beasts, and the confusion as to whose funeral it actually is.

This open anxiety amounts to a sense of willingness to dissect themes of discomfort. Matched with moments of connectedness and harmony, Holt has created a set of poems that cling to the reader's curiosity. Her words demand a place in the space of the mind, a place writhing with polarity and convergence, navigated with remarkable level-headedness.

Kathryn Hind is completing an honours degree in creative communication at the University of Canberra.

TEXT

Vol 12 No 2 October 2008

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

Editors: Nigel Krauth & Jen Webb

Text@griffith.edu.au

TEXT review

Claire Gaskin, *A Bud*

review by Gregory A Gould

Claire Gaskin

A Bud

John Leonard Press, Elwood, 2006

ISBN: 0 9775787 0 4

78 pp. Pb. AUD21.95

Claire Gaskin's poems have appeared in many Australian literary journals. *A Bud* is her first full collection.

Written in a sparse yet poignant style, Gaskin's poems do not hide behind language. In fact, they celebrate it. Gaskin's poems breathe. Their lines are packed with space, that wonderful element of the unspoken that a reader can slip into and explore at their leisure.

Leaning on the language of leaving
and the road a line from a song,
the door smiles open

Gaskin's bare-bones approach has the ability to stop time. Meaning can be boiled down to a series of simple, everyday objects that, upon reflection, have always held some sort of secret significance: a screen door, a verandah railing, a fence post, a water meter, a pen, a word.

The flywire cuts the sky into tiny squares.

Family, home, time and the elements are thematic recurrences throughout the collection, though their repetition does not burden the reader with a sense that the poet is seeking to make a point. They do, however, give the impression that *A Bud* stalls about halfway. It is as if Gaskin is reluctant to move beyond the images she creates in her first few pieces, and, as a result, many of the later poems often feel like recreations of earlier ideas - albeit, refreshing and wonderfully worked recreations.

Despite this small criticism *A Bud* is a genuinely engaging read. Gaskin's words are simple but heavy. They never preach nor seek reassurance. Her voice is often playful, yet never frivolous in its expression. These poems seep into the page with a sense of permanency that affords the collection the quality of weight.

The pen on the pain
There is a word
that is chewing at me.

Reading *A Bud*, one can't help but feel that Gaskin has spent a great deal of time shaping her work, the sign of a poet that enjoys spending time with her words. Through her poems Gaskin sinks her teeth into the world, and by extension invites the reader to do the same. But don't read this book

looking for answers, for it doesn't offer any. Instead, read it to find a new way to ask a question.

Gregory A Gould studies creative communication at the University of Canberra. He has had poetry published in First, Block and Page Seventeen. He grew up in far north Queensland.

TEXT

Vol 12 No 2 October 2008

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

Editors: Nigel Krauth & Jen Webb

Text@griffith.edu.au

TEXT review

Petra White, *The Incoming Tide*

review by Sean Harverson

Petra White
The Incoming Tide
John Leonard Press, Elwood, 2007
ISBN: 9780977578740?
60 pp. pb. AUC23.95

Poetry is often lost on me. So when I read Petra White's debut collection, *The Incoming Tide*, I found myself pleasantly surprised. With her unpretentious voice and subject matter, Petra draws the reader to her and absorbs them with tales of her multifaceted life.

There are three key themes that are central to this book: family, work, and leisure. Of these, leisure plays a key role. Her collection within a collection, entitled *Highway*, introduces us to the world of a hippie convoy as it meanders its way across Australia.

The Desert has no centre, is all centre.
The Road, cut straight through it, racing, fierce
as rapids, is all powerful, its god-trucks belting out ks,
animals dying of speed, mallee whirling like dervishes -
but it cannot cut the desert in half, cannot be
its sole vein, heart, pathway. ('Eyre Highway')

Kangaroos, both alive and smashed on the side of the road; the road-trains that smash them mid-bounce; the ravens who gorge themselves on their rotting entrails; the dying towns that seem to rot beside them; all are captured in this very visual guide through Australia's outback.

In contrast to these stark images, White paints the reader a portrait of the travelling hippy. Constraints and inhibitions appear to have no place.

35 descended, with colours and music.
35 of us lit up a small cove with bright-coloured dusty torn
clothes,
with breasts let down like sandbags,
with penises swinging. ('Cactus Beach')

Her largest poem, 'Southbank', captures the equally farcical nature of the workplace upon her return to working life. Within it are twelve snapshots of an inner-Melbourne office that are presented to the reader with a wit that is not altogether derisive.

The thermostat
shudders its seasons
of freeze and sweat;
furry square windows
seal in the boredom (a little man,

I've begin to suspect,
Tweaks the levels each hour). ('Southbank: 1')

Similarly, her poem 'One Wall Painted Yellow for Calm' explores professional life and the comic disinterest of those who have not yet been absorbed by it.

These larger works are not, however, necessarily the highlights of the collection. Smaller poems such as 'Voyage' and 'Ricketts Point' endeavour to teach us that life is full of fleeting wonders.

She passed him as she passed the sun.
He could not tear his eyes away, and prayed
She wouldn't see him; one glimpse of his fear ('Voyage')

The Incoming Tide is a warm and enjoyable read that I strongly recommend.

Sean Harverson is a Creative Honours student at the University of Canberra.

TEXT

Vol 12 No 2 October 2008

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

Editors: Nigel Krauth & Jen Webb

Text@griffith.edu.au