

EDITORIAL ISSUE 4 2023

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The question of what *exactly* we're doing when we are writing remains an ever open one. I am heartened and provoked by reading the grappings of artists and thinkers when they state, manifesto-like, just what they consider themselves up to... or even what the writing itself is up to, with its own kind of agency, surprises, and non-compliance. How we approach the writing-activity (its thought, para-doings, community of practice, representation of it to ourselves, and ambivalences regarding it) can alter chameleon-like, across the course of our reading and making lives. What entertains us, worries, or preoccupies us, in our writing, what gets our *attention* in other words, is never really predictable. As Phillips writes (2019:96), regarding our wandering attentions, it may have everything to do with our desire. A writer is writing, at some level of themselves, even when they are not-writing. We are never really as distracted as we declare (or fear) we are. (And why this allergy to distraction, anyway?) Desire takes things where it wants, *including* us in the process. It prevents us making the *smaller* lives we might consciously set out to make.

This issue ushers us through various practice-topologies where desire gets or doesn't get its way: a thinking through the body with Barrett; winding trajectories of writing's desire in Elliott-Ryan; astute logocentric demands tracked by Davis; being subject to the (unwanted) desires of others and the legacies of this in Tennakoon's article; and finally Cholewa's exposition of balancing the desire of emergent forms and practices with the desire for scholarship.

This issue, our first since the loudest (or quietest?) moments of the pandemic, is full of thinking, research, reflection and brilliant considerations of writing practice and its methodologies by authors who are very much active, engaged writers, reporting live on what their practice reveals and complicates. Writing about writing is *very difficult*. The work of articulating what one is doing in the space of creative practising, to track its intersection with, and roots in, existing conversations, one's conscious and unconscious embeddedness in multiple fields, cross-disciplinary, inter-subjective, is a bold and bracing effort. Authors in this issue have worked and are working concertedly to share lucidly what has transpired for them *as thought* in the swarm of engagement we might call creative writing, and all it involves (since its tendrils touch our broader lives profoundly and stealthily).

In Barrett's work, we encounter a committed approach to generating written work using a theoretically derived practice constraint, applied over time and *in* time. This article stems from work on a manuscript about the life of an Australian nun just prior to the advent of Vatican II. The protagonist of this work thinks with their body, works through questions at the level of flesh itself, and Barrett offers an account of deliberate ways of inflecting writing practice to do justice to this narrative theme, set against the patriarchal backdrop of the Catholic church at that time.

Following this description of a deliberate and curated creative process, Elliot-Ryan opens up a sibling question: How might the contents of our writing preoccupations inform our approach as we grapple with the perennial question of *how-to-proceed* in a specific work? Continuing with intimations of psychoanalytic sensibility, and via engagements with Agnès Varda, Pierre Klossowski and Anne Carson, Elliott-Ryan brings desire's relationship to the writing process to the fore. Launching from Carson's claim of eros as always bittersweet, she accounts for the erotics of writing as process (not as content), with its relation to loss, excess, waste and libidinal trajectories. She asks hard questions about the traces of ourselves that we leave in work, and our squeamishness about this. Our trouble with waste, with what is not able to be made tidy, with the excess that is desire and also our very selves, is her focus, which culminates in wonderful practical and applicable elucidations for active writers.

In terms of writing within the "academy", or the scholarship of creative writing (*c i n d e r*'s focus and interest), Davis picks up a burning conceptual thread for our audience. He tracks, via Derridean framings, what can happen when we navigate within the binaries that saturate our field (practice/theory, for example...) in an unacknowledged way, sliding towards logocentric inertias and sedimented bias. I won't put a spoiler here since the article merits a close read. It is one that supervisors, students and readers may want to consult (and consult again) in order to prevent a kind of mediocre relation to/framing of a hierarchy that doesn't at all stand up to close scrutiny.

Alongside Davis, in Tennakoon's article 'Haunting secrets: the phantom of shame, legacies that keep on giving', we see the influence of poststructural thought and of Derrida's contributions to care and astute *seeing/reading*. Derrida, as always, interrupts us gently when our thinking habits stray towards binaristic satisfactions that reveal nothing and keep us repeating. This veering towards resolution comes to seem itself a canny concealment, and Tennakoon takes up this thread, stepping her reader generously through affective and psychoanalytic lenses relevant to trauma and shame. Via the dual

notions of the transgenerational phantom and hauntology, and with the example of a recent MA thesis artefact, she offers tangible ways for writers to conjure the affect of shame in their writing, to explore and better understand how this atmosphere persists trans-generationally, and how literature might offer a unique angle on and space for re-seeing this phenomenon.

Cholewa's dive into the question of the balance and co-generation of practice and theory resonates with Davis's query. In 'Examining the value of fictocriticism: the meandering narratives of a creative writing PhD student', Cholewa takes up the tensions facing a scholar and practitioner in fictocriticism. How much is fictocritical engagement a free-flowing, practice-led undertaking and to what extent can any innovations in its field feed back into the academy and be generatively constrained by its lineage — the maxim that it is consistently a *double-voicing*? We read: 'The form does need to be able to ensnare some of the bias and anecdote mentioned, but it should also put pressure on itself to *be* scholarship too' (Cholewa, p.5, this issue). This dual attending, which Davis advocates, and which Cholewa explores as question and extended task for the doctoral candidate, is the field in which authors for *cinder* (and their readers) likewise play, operate and ruminate.

Finally, we are delighted to share with *cinder* readers our creative feature for this issue: work from poet-artist Sholto Buck. Buck's suite of poems, excerpted generously from his forthcoming collection *In the Printed Version of Heaven* — thanks to Rabbit Poets Series, and Jessica Wilkinson — describes itself as deploying *poetic techniques [of] juxtaposition, such as collage, ekphrasis, self-address, and negation, with a lyric voice ... present[ing] simultaneously as: gentle-delusional-philosophical-threatening-gay*. Reading Buck's poems is indeed at once gentle, slightly divine and humbling; the poems grapple with the poles that structure perception, cognition, and emotion and, for this reader — via flourishing humour — open something up, giving creative possibility a little more room on the dancefloor.

At *cinder*, we acknowledge that we work on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We offer respect to Elders past, present and in perpetuity. We thank the AAWP and our colleagues at *TEXT*, for continued support of the journal and our vision for slow, supportive and non-violent scholarship and rigour. We are grateful to Deakin University's SCCA and to tireless library staff who help and encourage what we're doing. We also couldn't do any of this work without the anonymous contributions — kindness, brain-efforts and stealth mentoring — that our reviewers offer to

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authors. Thanks for helping to make scholarship a civil, more astute and insightful space for exchange and invention.

Work cited: Phillips A (2019) *Attention Seeking*, Penguin, London.