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Introduction: Queer writing – setting the scene

Abstract:

This act of writing produces something of a genealogy of the various notions of writing and text that have circulated within the critical or scholarly domain. It also discusses the convergence of notions of writing with certain ideas from Queer Theory, such as performativity (Butler 1990), that resulted in the emergence of what might be called Queer Writing. The article also acts as an introduction to the works contained in *Beyond Australia Queer*, a special Queer issue of *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*.

Biographical notes:

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Introduction

This special issue of *TEXT* reflects, and builds, on *Australia Queer* (1996), a special edition of the journal *Meanjin* and a pioneering collection of queer Australian writing. *Australia Queer* was published during a time (the 1990s) that saw the rise of queer theory and politics. Annamarie Jagose (one of the editors of that special edition) has described queer as ‘an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications and ... a nascent theoretical model which has developed out of more traditional lesbian and gay studies’ (1996: 1). In Australia, the arrival of queer was heralded by: the work of writers such as Christos Tsiolkas, Dean Kiley and Fiona McGregor; the activism of groups such as the Australian chapter of ActUp; and scholarship that includes journals such as *Critical InQueeries* (1995–98), as well as the work of theorists such as Jagose.

This Special issue of *TEXT* includes fiction, scholarly non-fiction and essays that address the question of what ‘Australia queer’ might mean in the current historical moment and/or engage with the twin domains of writing (either creative or critical or both) and Queer Theory. Is ‘queer’ still viable, twenty years after its inception, or has it been superseded? What does it mean, in the early twenty-first century, to be ‘Australian’ and ‘queer’? What might ‘Australia queer’ mean? These questions and others are addressed directly or indirectly by the works collected here.

Before giving an outline of these assembled works, it is worth setting the scene by: describing the basics of Queer Theory for those unfamiliar with it; Producing something of a genealogy of the various notions of writing that have circulated within the critical or scholarly domain; and discussing the convergence of these two domains in what might be called Queer Writing.

Queer Theory: rewriting identity

As Roz Ivanič (1998) notes, writing is not only a means or technique for communicating content but also about the representation of self, about identity. Writing, Ivanič (1998) argues, is an act of identity in and through which individuals align themselves with socio-culturally shaped subject positions. In the act of writing individuals participate in reproducing or resisting dominant practices and discourses; and the values, beliefs and norms that they embody (Ivanič 1998). This centrality of identity to the act of writing means that theories about identity and subjectivity are pertinent to the practice and research of creative writing. Queer Theory is, at its heart, a set of ideas or theories aimed at assisting individuals to rethink notions of identity, and, significantly, to challenge and re-make their own identities. As one of the editors of this Special Issue has noted elsewhere, that re-making of identity can be undertaken through the practice of writing itself (Baker 2013). It is therefore pertinent to outline queer theories about identity and subjectivity in some detail.

It is hard to argue that there are two more significant influences on Queer Theory than the notable work of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault. The most potent ideas from these theorists have been reconceptualisations of subjectivity and gender. Butler’s notion of subjectivity as a practice (1990) and her conception of gender as a

performative act (1993) are central to Queer Theory, but so too is the idea of *gender insubordination* (1993). Michel Foucault (1997) also theorised the subject as a kind of practice (or perhaps discipline) and his enunciation of this idea is also central to early enunciations of Queer Theory. Foucault's development of an 'ethics of the self' (1978) has been influential for some queer theorists and queer writers (Baker 2011). A Foucauldian ethics is not a moral code but an ethics which constitutes the self and which can be seen as a kind of self-making (Foucault 1978). The idea of self-making, and how that might be applied in the context of a creative and critical practice, is one that is emerging as a significant thread of queer writing (Baker 2011).

The following description of Queer Theory is intended to give a general understanding of how Queer Theory is understood in the context of the domain of writing (both creative and critical) and specifically for queer writers, for whom identity and sexual or gender subjectivity are most often core themes of their creative practice.

Queer Theory has its origins in Poststructuralism (Jagose 1996) and employs a number of Poststructuralism's key ideas (Spargo 1999). As Spargo argues, Queer Theory employs: 'Lacan's psychoanalytic models of decentred, unstable identity, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of binary conceptual and linguistic structures, and... Foucault's model of discourse, knowledge and power' (1999: 41). At the most basic level, Queer Theory is a set of theories based on the central idea that identities are not fixed and closed off from outside influences but rather fluid and permeable (Baker 2011). Queer Theory is also based on the idea that our gender and sexual identities are not determined by biological sex (Jagose 1996). Queer Theory proposes that it is meaningless to try to understand gender and sexuality (or indeed race or class) through limiting identity categories such as 'man' or 'woman', 'heterosexual' or 'homosexual' (Jagose 1996). This is because subjectivity and identity are not simplistic but complex and consist of numerous elements, many of them in contradiction to each other. This complexity and in-built fragmentation of subjectivity and identity mean that it is reductive to assume that individuals can be understood collectively on the basis of a shared characteristic such as gender or sexuality (Jagose 1996).

The logical extension of this critique of sexual and gender categories or identities is a deconstruction of, and challenge to, all notions of subjectivity and identity categories as fixed, lasting and unified (or without ambivalence). In this way, the boundaries between other categories such as race and class, can also be interrogated. Rather than fixed identities or categories, Queer theorists such as Butler suggest instead a subjectivity that is fluid, ephemeral, complex and ambivalent.

The quote below from Jagose comprehensively describes the core concerns of Queer Theory:

Broadly speaking, queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire. Resisting that model of stability – which claims heterosexuality as its origin, when it is more properly its effect – queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. Institutionally, queer has been associated most prominently with

lesbian and gay subjects, but its analytic framework also includes such topics as cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery. Whether as transvestite performance or academic deconstruction, queer locates and exploits the incoherencies in those three terms which stabilise heterosexuality. Demonstrating the impossibility of any “natural” sexuality, it calls into question even such apparently unproblematic terms as “man” and “woman” (1996: 3).

Thus, Queer Theory’s principal focus is the denaturalisation of categories/norms (Sullivan 2003, Jagose 1996, de Lauretis 1991, Butler 1990) and a practice of abrading the borders between such binaries as male/female, natural/unnatural, normal/abnormal, heterosexual/homosexual, white/black and self/other (Baker 2010). It is worth noting that Jagose’s (1996) book and the works by de Lauretis, Judith Butler and other queer theorists are themselves acts of denaturalisation that abrade the boundaries between terms. These resistant acts are, obviously, acts of writing. Writing, in this case theoretical or critical writing, has been at the centre of the queer challenge to identity categories from the outset and continues to be so today.

The work of Queer Theory is also one of deconstruction (Spargo 1999, Jagose 1996); to dissect and alter how we think about and *live* core aspects of human subjectivity such as identity, sex/gender, race and sexuality. This work is undertaken in the context of a culture steeped in heteronormativity – the discourse and practice of presumed and privileged heterosexuality (Butler 1990: 106). Queer Theory works to undermine the privileged position of heteronormativity by exposing the ways in which sexualities and genders are produced in/by discourse and the ways in which non-normative genders and sexualities resist, transcend and trouble normative notions of sex, gender and sexuality categories that would otherwise be widely (mis)understood as somehow natural, essential or incontestable. From a Queer Theory perspective, genders and sexualities (and subjectivities) are fluid, permeable, mutable and largely the result of repeatedly performed utterances, rituals and behaviours; or performativity, a concept that will be outlined below (Butler 1993). Many of these utterances, rituals and behaviours are either acts of writing or reflected in acts of writing, making the practice of writing a core site of the constitution of subjectivity and any acts of resistance or remaking of identity.

An early critical thread of Queer Theory connected the queer to the abject or monstrous (Case 1997). As Sue-Ellen Case articulates: ‘The queer is the taboo-breaker, the monstrous, the uncanny’ (1997: 383). Case outlines the connections between the monstrous and queer desire even further when she writes ‘queer desire punctures the life/death and generative/destructive bipolarities that enclose the heterosexist notion of being’ (1997: 384). Other theorists have connected discourses of the abject, the horrific monster, with actual individuals, most notably the gay male with HIV/AIDS (Hanson 1991). Ellis Hanson writes that gay men with HIV are represented as ‘the embodiment of evil sexuality’ (1991: 325). Hanson also argues that essentialist heteronormative discourses represent gay men as:

sexually exotic, alien, unnatural, oral, anal, compulsive, violent, protean, polymorphic, polyvocal, polysemous, invisible, soulless, transient, superhumanly mobile, infectious, murderous, suicidal, and a threat to wife, children, home, and phallus (1991: 325).

These notions of the queer as a monstrous threat to heterosexual culture draw out the abject connotations of the word queer and foreground the source of the queer figure's abjection, their gender and sexual non-conformity; which is, in heteronormative discourse, its own kind of monstrosity. The thread of Queer Theory that encourages engagement with notions of abjection and the monstrous can be seen as an act of resistance against processes of normalization or normativity (or more precisely heteronormativity). Heteronormativity is one of those dominant practices or discourses that Ivanič (1998) argued are reproduced or resisted through acts of writing.

Performativity

Judith Butler's theory of performativity is one of the most influential ideas associated with Queer Theory (Jagose 1996: 83). Certainly, Butler's notion of the performativity of genders and sexualities has had a wide-reaching impact on both the creative and critical application of Queer Theory in a range of domains, including creative writing (Baker 2011). Performativity is central to how writers and academics use Queer Theory to explore sexual and gender difference through, and in, practice and how knowledge garnered from that exploration is then expressed (or disseminated) in creative and critical forms. Therefore, a summary of the theory of performativity is pertinent here, including how this is relevant for writers.

Butler frames the notion of performativity in relation to gender and norms of heterosexuality (1990, 1993) and further argues that gender is a performance without ontological status when she writes: 'There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender ... identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (1990: 25). For Butler, performativity describes how what might be assumed to be an internal essence to something such as gender or subjectivity is 'manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body' (2004: 94). Therefore, it can be argued that genders, sexualities, subjectivities and identities are all equally performative; manufactured through a sustained set of acts (some of them cognitive, many of them textual) enacted through the racial, gendered and sexual stylization of bodies. Queer theories of performativity draw on and align with Poststructuralist conceptions of identity in which identity/subjectivity is seen as multiple, changing and fragmented (Sarup 1996). In this way, queer performativity re-conceives gendered identities and sexualities as plural, varying, fragmented and produced in, by, and through, discourse.

For Butler, performativity is not entirely voluntaristic (2004). We do not freely choose how to enact gender or sexuality without constraint (Butler 2004). Our genders, sexualities and subjectivities are rather 'compelled and sanctioned by the norms of compulsory heterosexuality (*heteronormativity*), and the subject has no choice but to exist within... norms and conventions of nature' such as binary sex difference (Pratt 2009b). Performative subjectivities are also socio-culturally and historically embedded; they are 'citational chains' and their effects depend on social conventions (Pratt 2009). According to Butler, gender and sexual norms and subjectivities are produced, disseminated and reinforced through repetitions of an ideal such as the ideal

of ‘woman’ or ‘man’ (Pratt 2009b). As the heteronormative ideal is a fiction, and thereby unachievable or ‘uninhabitable’, there is room for disidentification (or counter identification) and human agency and resistance (Pratt 2009b).

Moreover, it can be said that performativity is an analytical tool and a process of enactment; it is a way of thinking about something and a way of doing something. Such a framework is appropriate for application to the reflective practice of writing. In other words, creative writing practice can be seen as performative (Baker 2011). If we accept that the act of writing itself is performative – in that it produces discourse and is a process through which subjectivities are constructed and disseminated – then writing can be seen to be a highly appropriate methodology for exploring genders, sexualities, identities and performativity itself. This is evidenced by the common themes of much queer writing, which often explores gender, sexuality and the fluidity of categories.

A brief genealogy of writing

Having outlined the major tenets of Queer Theory, it is important to provide a brief genealogy of how the term ‘writing’ has been understood within Critical Theory before introducing the works of Queer Writing contained in this Special issue, *Beyond Australia Queer*.

Queer Theory employs a number of Poststructuralism’s key ideas, including the idea of a decentred, fluid identity (from Lacan), a deconstruction of binary conceptual and linguistic structures (from Derrida) and a more complex model of discourse, knowledge and power (from Foucault). Apart from these ideas, Poststructuralist theories concerning writing (text/discourse) connect Queer Theory and creative writing. Most significant of these Poststructuralist ideas are Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous’ conceptualisations of writing as *Différance* and *Écriture Feminine* respectively. Julia Kristeva’s (1982) notion of writing as a proscriptive discourse or *scripture* has also been influential.

Jacques Derrida and Différance

In Derrida’s ground breaking text, *Writing and Difference* (1967), an argument is made for recognising forms of discourse that foreground the contingent and constructed nature of meaning. Elsewhere, Derrida referred to these kinds of discourses as *differànce*, a language of difference; a discourse that speaks at the periphery or margin (1971, 1973, 1982). The term *differànce* signals a feature that underpins the discursive production of meaning – namely, *deferral* – which is the notion that language (words and signs) are unable to precisely reflect what they mean and even then can only reach some semblance of precise meaning by association/relation to additional words/signs, from which they already differ (1982). For example, the word ‘sweet’ cannot transmit the experience of sweetness but can be more precisely understood by reference to other words like sugar, saccharine and honey. In this way, the ultimate meaning of texts is deferred or postponed by an endless process of signification.

Différance also signals the difference which distinguishes one word/sign or object from another and, through a process of identification with or against the self/subject, produces hierarchical binary oppositions which in turn organize meaning (1982). In this way, the self assigns value to itself and devalues its other, creating a profusion of binary opposites which place terms associated with the self on the side of normal or natural and opposite terms on the side of abnormal and unnatural.

To put it simply, *différance* is a reflective discourse that foregrounds the contingent, inter-penetrated, shifting and constructed nature of meaning and of the self. Crucially, *différance* can be written as well as read. This means that *différance* is not merely an aspect of reading into texts/discourse (or interpretation) but can be actively undertaken as a practice; a writing practice.

Hélène Cixous and Écriture Féminine

Building on Derrida's notion of *différance*, Hélène Cixous – in her landmark essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976) – argued for a turn away from writing that reproduces, disseminates and reinforces uneven power relations between men and women and heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals. Cixous argued against 'writing as dissemination', or writing as heteronormative proscriptive discourse, that she argues has typified much literature produced in 'phallogocentric culture' (Moi 1985: 100). Cixous advocated instead a kind of writing that she described as *Écriture Féminine*, which is a discourse – or form of writing – that is not limited to a set, and usually binary, number of terms or categories (of genders, sexualities and identities) but rather a discourse which features more open categories, more fluid genders and identities, and contains more open rather than closed endings (Moi 1985).

This form of writing entails the inscription of (female) difference in both language and text (Showalter 1981). We have already noted that Cixous postulates this sort of writing as 'Other bisexual' or 'feminine' and that she sets it up in opposition to traditional (heterosexual male) or heteronormative discourses (Moi 1985). Toril Moi describes this:

For Cixous, feminine texts are texts that 'work on the difference'... strive in the direction of difference, struggle to undermine the dominant phallogocentric logic, split open the closure of the binary opposition and revel in the pleasures of open-ended textuality (1985: 106).

Cixous (1976) defines much writing as trapped in *patriarchal binary thought* and, in the vein of Derrida, argues that terms, such as 'man', only acquire meaning in relationship to other terms such as 'woman', or in the absence of other terms (Cixous & Sellers 1994). Within this system, the terms that are more intimately related to the heterocentric term 'man' subordinate all other terms. More to the point, in patriarchal binary thought, for one term to acquire meaning it must destroy the other (Moi 1985). The other term, more simply the Other, must be destroyed for the dominant system to come into meaning, to find purpose, to have a sense of itself and its boundaries. To put it more directly, Cixous 'sets multiple, heterogeneous *différance*' against 'any binary scheme of thought' (Moi 1985: 106). *Écriture Féminine*, then, is a style of

writing or writing process that foregrounds plurality, openness and gender difference with regards terms or categories and also with regards subjectivities or reading and writing positions.

The work of Derrida and Cixous with regards writing can be applied to both creative writing pedagogy and practice. In terms of pedagogy, the notions of *Écriture Féminine* and *Différance* are useful in the context of critical and reflective reading of literary texts and in the writing workshop in the reading and critiquing of students' work by fellow students and writing academics. In terms of creative writing practice, the application of *Écriture Féminine* and *Différance* as writing process or practice can be significant.

It is also important to see these two notions as intersecting processes in terms of writing practice. One (*Différance*) scrutinizes and alters how we understand and attempt to produce meaning itself. The other (*Écriture Féminine*) scrutinizes and inscribes/writes gender and sexual difference and non-heteronormative subjectivities into language and text. The bodies of knowledge and diversification of writing styles and themes that are the outputs of these complimentary processes or modes can be seen to enrich not only the texts produced themselves but the writing experience of queer writers and the discipline of creative writing as a whole.

Julia Kristeva and Writing as Scripture

[T]he frequency of defilement rites in societies without writing leads one to think that such cathartic rites function like a “writing of the real”. They parcel out, demarcate, delineate an order, a framework, a sociality without having any other signification than the one inhering in that very parcelling and the order thus concatenated. One might ask, proceeding in reverse, if all writing is not a second level rite, at the level of language, that is, which causes one to be reminded, through the linguistic signs themselves, of the demarcations that precondition them and go beyond them. Indeed writing causes the subject who ventures in it to confront an archaic authority (1982: 75).

In the excerpt above, Julia Kristeva implies that writing describes and disseminates an order, a framework, which could be called a writing of the ‘real’; or a systematic discourse that positions borders between what is real and tolerable and what is unreal and intolerable and establishes and reinforces taboos. Of course, what is real in heteronormative discourse is what is intelligible (Butler 1990), that is, what can be understood and apprehended within heteronormative logic. Kristeva is arguing above that writing is akin to defilement rites (ceremonies) that clearly articulate the abject, how the abject is to be viewed, and how transgressions – movements into abjection – can be purified or managed. Kristeva infers that writing, as a second level defilement rite, acts as a normalising discourse that marginalises difference and insists on conformity to socio-cultural rules, to norms. She indicates that this kind of writing also guards against defilement, or transgression – meaning transgression of the perceived ‘order’ or authority – by prohibiting certain behaviours (Kristeva 1982).

Having described writing as a process that disseminates and reinforces boundaries, laws and taboos, Kristeva has nominated writing as a discourse which is explicitly

concerned with the abject, with the specific characteristics and shape of the abject and the processes that expel or destroy it. As has already been established, the abject can be more than just that which must be expelled from the corporeal body. The abject is also that which must be expelled from the social body, and from normative discourse. In this sense, writing is a practice that defines the limits of the subject, which constitutes subjectivity through a process of excluding or expelling what is undesirable. The embodied abject that survives this expulsion from the heteronormative social body, or indeed thrives, is to heteronormative discourse an unintelligible body (Butler 1990). The real, the intelligible, is the opposite of that which is abject. The abject embodied in the queer figure is clearly an unintelligible body and thus is outside of the real; it is a spectral figure, a phantom.

Here, we would like to update Kristeva's notion of writing as scripture by connecting it to Butler's (1990) notion of a rule-bound discourse as there are poignant resonances between these two ideas. Both suggest that discourse acts to proscribe and prohibit certain acts and behaviours, indeed certain types of bodies and individuals. Kristeva's conception of writing as scripture has a decidedly anthropological bent, whereas Butler's rule-bound discourse is purely discursive. Both, however, foreground the power relations embedded in discourse and add nuance and depth to the ways in which writing can be understood. Kristeva applies the notion of writing as scripture primarily to the novel, however, this theory of writing as scripture, as a rule-bound discourse, can be transposed, or transferred, to any narrative discourse. The blurred boundaries between the narrativity of the novel, the short story, the television or film script and the stage play – indeed all discourse based on writing – enables this transposition. The abject figure seems itself to be a transposition; a position that cuts across boundaries, exists in many (narrative) realms. Thus, Kristevan theory, appropriated in a quite transcribed way, can facilitate a re-reading (and then *rewriting*) of figures marked as abject in narrative discourse.

Queer writing

Queer Writing, like the term itself, takes many forms and is practised in a diverse set of ways. Queer Writing practice in the academy might draw directly on Cixous', Derrida's and/or Kristeva's conceptualizations of writing. It might also blend these ideas with Foucault's and Butler's notions of gender and subjectivity as performative practices. Queer Writing might also do this indirectly or not at all. One thing about Queer Writing is universal, though: it is a textual practice that foregrounds the shifting nature of gender and sexuality.

Queer Writing is most often a writing practice that foregrounds the performativity of subjectivities (especially in regard to genders and sexualities) and that produces texts which express performative subjectivities whilst simultaneously denaturalizing categories or norms and abrading the borders between binary terms. Queer writing often works to undermine heteronormativity by exposing the ways in which sexualities and genders are produced in/by discourse and the ways in which non-normative genders and sexualities resist, transcend and trouble normative notions of sex, gender and sexuality. Queer Writing also refigures the abject not as that which

must be expelled or destroyed but as that which can be engaged with and even embraced.

Significantly, Queer Writing does not frame the creative text as an expression of the internal identity of the author (Baker 2011; Stephens 2009). Instead, the queer (or homoerotic) content of a creative text is seen as a discursive sexual non-normativity mobilized within the text to disrupt heteronormativity rather than as the (autobiographical) reflection of the author's sexuality or identity/subjectivity (Stephens 2009). Elizabeth Stephens makes this point clearly in her analysis of the queer writing practices of Jean Genet, when she posits that queer writing:

reframes its homoeroticism so that this is no longer seen as the expression of a queer exteriority – of a perverse author whose intentions determine the meaning of the text – but rather as a dynamic mobilised within that text (2009: 19).

Stephens goes on to state that queer writing 'provides a way to maintain the centrality of sex and eroticism to the narrative without positioning these as the coherent expression of a stable sexual identity' (2009: 19) and that 'queer writing need neither naturalize nor negate the role (or queerness) of the writer' (20). Baker makes the same point when he argues that

the writing of queer subjectivities into literature is not seen as a reflection of a writer's identity, a representation of some imagined 'internal' self, but rather as a deliberate inscription and dissemination of non-normative discursive subjectivities (2011: 8).

Thus, Queer Writing disrupts the possibility that 'discursive subjectivities appearing within literary texts are representations of the internal, stable identity of the creator' (Baker 2011: 8). Instead, Queer Writing foregrounds the appearance of subjectivities within texts as a deployment or intervention into discourse for a critical or creative purpose (Baker 2011).

All of the above points make it quite clear that Queer Writing is a 'discipline' that, to paraphrase Foucault (cited in Martin et al 1988: 27) is concerned with the self and that the self is a core object and subject of Queer Writing practice. It is not a stretch to state that the subject or self is *written*; that is, that subjectivity is constituted or constructed (written) in ways that are, in many senses, not unlike how a text is written. This resonance between the practices of text-making and self-making is one of the things that Queer Writing can and does explore in-depth and with some potency.

Beyond Australia Queer

The works included in this special issue of *TEXT*, *Beyond Australia Queer*, are acts of writing that resist heteronormativity, reimagine identity categories and highlight the diversity of queer writing in Australia today. This edition of *TEXT* is particularly significant given that – while there have been some compilations of Australian queer writing (e.g. Farrell and Jones, 2009), and some journals that publish queer writing (*Polari Journal* and *Writing from Below* are two local examples) – there exists no book-length study of Australian queer writing. There are few Australian university

courses that are specifically devoted to queer (or even ‘gay and lesbian’) prose. And, to the best of our knowledge, there have been few – if any – academic positions in literary studies advertised in Australia that have cited a specialisation in queer writing as a prerequisite.

In his article, Damien Barlow provides a survey of queer fiction published in Australia between 2000 and 2014. Barlow discusses forty works of fiction, which he argues can be classified variously under the labels ‘contemporary realism’, ‘surrealism’, ‘historical novels’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’. One of the editors of this special issue, Dallas J. Baker¹, argues that creative writing is an appropriate site for ‘ethical interventions’ into subjectivity and for explorations into how philosophy, in this case Queer Theory, can be applied as a way of life in which new forms of subjectivity are explored and produced. Baker’s article is particularly indebted to the work of Michel Foucault. In her piece, Karina Quinn revisits Cixous’ theory of *Écriture Feminine*, and suggests that it has distinct limitations. Quinn instead conceptualises what she terms ‘*écriture matière*’, that is, ‘a call for all bodies to write themselves, as they find themselves, in this moment, now.’

In an insightful dialogue that is a queering of the standard or normative book review, Quinn discusses the practice and process of Queer Writing with Dallas Baker, drawing on their own experiences. In another interview, which serves to frame this issue, Annamarie Jagose discusses the emergence of Queer Theory during the 1990s, and reflects on the role it has played in her career. Jagose became one of the best-known so-called queer theorists internationally following the publication of her book *Queer Theory* in 1996, which was, incidentally, the same year that the *Australia Queer* edition of *Meanjin* was published. Both interviews usefully highlight some of the ways in which Queer has shaped (and been shaped by) the writing process. Both interviews also note the ways that, for queer writers of both creative and scholarly work, notions of identity and subjectivity are a large part of queer writing practice.

Other contributions to this issue explore through writing some manifestations of Queer in the present and past. Arjun Rajkhowa and Jay Daniel Thompson provide a fictocritical study of gay male Asian migrants living in Australia. Rajkhowa and Thompson draw on Elspeth Probyn’s *Outside Belongings* (1996) to suggest that the sense of belonging these migrants develop in their adopted homeland is necessarily difficult. Kelly Gardiner provides a wry commentary on the normalisation of Queer in the neoliberal era. This is an era characterised by a ‘tolerance of difference’ – with tolerance being a notoriously fraught notion. Nike Sulway’s work goes back in time to investigate a scandal surrounding lesbianism that unfolded circa the 1950s. That was an era characterised by frighteningly rigid gender roles and heteronormativity.

Most of the above works are scholarly in nature, that is, they are based on research and investigation and report the findings of this process. Some are, however, creative in terms of their form. Rajkhowa and Thompson, for example, locate their piece within the realm of fictocriticism. Gardiner’s contribution reads like an extended, theory-wise newspaper op-ed. Works of poetry by Keri Glastonbury and Nollie Nahrung, as well as short fiction by Arjun Sudhir, are also included.

Conclusion

We have produced here something of a genealogy of the various notions of writing and text that have circulated within the critical or scholarly domain. We have also discussed the convergence of notions of writing with certain ideas from Queer Theory (for example, performativity) that resulted in the emergence of what might be called Queer Writing. In doing so, this special issue, *Beyond Australia Queer*, addresses a gap in the publication of queer creative writing and Queer Writing scholarship. The special issue has not only provided publishing opportunities for queer academics and writers in the creative writing discipline but also added to the body of work of Australian Queer Studies. The issue also addresses the lack of recognition accorded to queer creative writing as a research practice and its products as research outcomes. Hopefully, *Beyond Australia Queer* will also further scholarly and creative discussion around the diverse manifestations of creative writing practice and research.

Endnote

1. Contributing editors to *TEXT* have their works independently peer reviewed and edited by reviewers and senior editors approved by the Commissioning Editor.

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