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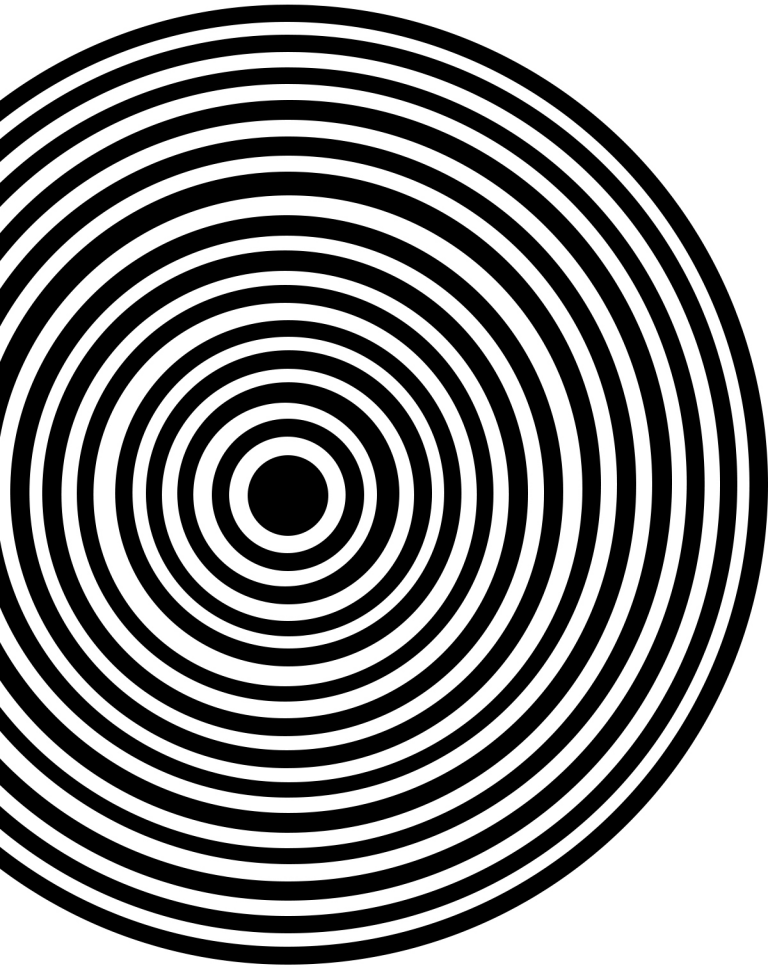

AMONG THE NEIGHBORS

Reading Piglets

Westerly Magazine, metadata, and the play of digital access to literary publication

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AMONG THE NEIGHBORS
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Prologue[1]

The Cape Range National Park is approximately 1,100 kms north of Perth, Western Australia. It is one of the most biodiverse areas in the state, and a World Heritage Listed site. The park covers most of the North West Cape Peninsula, and runs along the Ningaloo Reef. The Reef forms a lagoon parallel to the shore, filled with coral and sea-life—dolphins, sharks, turtles, seabirds, myriad species of fish, crabs, starfish, right down to krill and plankton. I recently spent two weeks holiday with my partner camping in the Park. We spent our time travelling up and down the coastline, stopping and snorkelling wherever we could. This prompted a kind of game, informed in part by the need to distinguish between and identify different places and snorkelling experiences in chatting about them afterwards. "The place with the large school of yellow fish" ceased to be a functional identifier by mid-afternoon on the second day. The game was quite simple: who could find the best name for the snorkel site? Really, there was another question at play: how do you classify or define a coral reef?

This article is intended to think through a slightly different scene of play and conversation. *Westerly* Magazine is an international creative writing and literary studies journal, published from within the University of Western Australia (UWA). It is connected to the Westerly Centre, an academic research group, and the English and Literary Studies discipline (which includes creative writing as a subject area). It collects new writing in multiple forms: from within the state, across Australia, and internationally. It has a specific remit for publishing the work of Indigenous peoples (minimum 5% in every issue) and for connecting with Western Australia's geographic

[1] I would like to acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people, the traditional owners of the land on which the University of Western Australia is seated, and where *Westerly* is based. I pay my respects to their elders past, present, and future. This research has been supported by the University of Western Australia.

neighbours, the nations of Asia and the Indian Ocean. *Westerly* has been in continuous annual publication since 1956, when it emerged from the student magazine *The Winthrop Review* (1953-56). It is recognised nationally as "a 'forum' publication, promoting Western Australian writers such as Tom Hungerford, Fay Zwicky and Dorothy Hewett to a national audience, while at the same time keeping an eye out for new writing from other states." (Edmonds 2015: 53) Its position thus, publishing from beyond the major sector hubs of Sydney and Melbourne, and away from the east coast in general, allows the magazine to speak back to the cultural centre and advocate for alternate perspectives in national discourse. Given the distance and isolation of Perth from the other major cities in Australia, Philip Edmonds points to the importance of *Westerly*'s inception, as "it was [and can still be] often a case of 'out of sight, out of mind' for writers in the west" (2015: 53).

I commenced as editor in 2015, and the magazine currently produces two issues a year in print (with digital formats available), as well as two exclusively digital-born Online Special Issues (OSIs). In the broad scope of *Westerly*'s publication interests, the geographic spread of submissions, the array of cultural contexts it engages with, and in the multiplicity of formats in which it is published, *Westerly* is inherently a complex ecosystem. A similar question to that of our holiday might be asked: how do you classify a literary magazine? How do you define a creative work in publication?

I am deliberately asking these two questions in parallel, as Julienne Van Loon has argued for play as an underrated component of academic research, and a natural process in systems of thought and knowledge-production:

> The routinisation of human experience that has accompanied the rise of modernity is very much a given. It is here to stay, and the university as a modern institution has established, and will go on proliferating, rules and regulations and guidelines and frameworks that seek to police or at least to influence the kinds of research that might be considered as 'useful' or having an 'impact' at a given cultural moment. […] But the disposition of playfulness, and the sense of permeability and restlessness so crucial to creative practice, has much to offer everyone implicated in the game of research in the modern institution. For it is through creative practice that innovation, in the true sense of that word, is first glimpsed. (np)

Van Loon, in arguing for play within creative writing, makes a case for what creative writing might teach other academic disciplines within the modern university. But playfulness as an epistemological method can be drawn from the creative process and applied more broadly within the discipline as well. *Westerly*, with its connections to creative writing as a subject area at UWA, has strong ties to creative writing as an academic discipline. Scholarly material in the magazine is peer-reviewed, and the magazine is listed in the Arts and Humanities Citation Index. This consciousness of the discipline is embedded both in the magazine's function (producing scholarly writing) and in our approach to its production.

Since mid-2016, *Westerly* has been engaged in a project of digital development. The production of the digital format of the print magazine and the OSIs has been a central aspect of this, extending *Westerly*'s scope in publication, opening it to the discipline in enabling greater research access, and opening new spaces for work from emerging authors and guest editors. More lately, digital development has been focused specifically on extending the function and capabilities of our digital archive, a

complete digital backset of the magazine's sixty-three years of publication. This development has required playful thinking in several domains, the input of several people, and some innovation. The "disposition of playfulness" and a "sense of permeability" are both qualities which have been fostered within the editorial team as a means of supporting the work involved and enhancing the publishing outcomes. Also, indeterminacy—both in play and as play—has become integral to our thinking: both within this process, especially in the development of the digital archive; and in understanding the function of the magazine in itself, as a live ecology of writing, reading, and thinking.

Part One: Textual Play

In 2016, *Westerly* released an issue (61.1) themed on Indigenous writing and culture, guided by guest editor and Noongar scholar Stephen Kinnane. The issue introduced our current remit to support the inclusion of Indigenous-authored writing, and led to the introduction of an Editorship for Indigenous Writing (currently held by Dr. Elfie Shiosaki). In editing, Kinnane was keen for the issue to function as a site of cultural engagement. He wanted it to do more than represent Indigenous voices—he wanted it to create a space of conversation, connection, and inclusion, and he saw the textual vehicle of a multi-authored issue as offering this capacity. Kinnane explored this concept in his launch speech, later published on our website:

> Within these pages are stories of the enduring vibrancy and resonance of country, history and culture. There are stories of loss, and in confronting this pain, "the yield" of the accumulation of love and belonging, as our older generations begin to fall away, leaving us to carry on. There are examinations and reflections on the creative power, but also

> the often initial intercultural terror of crossing boundaries unknown until acts of respect and shared making create something fresh, revealing and challenging. (np)

While this issue was—in these stories and in the context of Australia as a (post)colonial society—doing very serious cultural, social, and political work, the language of play is replete within the emphasis on creativity in the approach.

This feature of *Westerly*'s textual capacity is not limited to engagement with Indigenous thinking and writing, and the same argument might be made of the publication of all voices and cultures in the magazine. In 2017, issue 62.2 was themed around the cultural networks existing between Australia (especially Western Australia), the Indian Ocean, and Asia. The issue included work from over sixty authors, representing connections with twenty-one countries. It published translations from several languages, and included the bilingual publication of works in Chinese and Japanese as well as English. While the connections enacted in the issue were very different from those enacted in issue 61.1, there was a similar sense of energy in intercultural engagement—and discussions of both the tension and the possibility in crossing cultural boundaries revealed sympathies between the two collections. These two issues represent examples of the flexibility of the space a literary magazine offers, and the possibilities it provides in engaging with diverse voices in writing. A specific form of playfulness can be felt in the capacity of this textual space as a site of cultural exchange representing geographic spaces. There is, in the archive of the magazine, the possibility of reading across culture, space, and time.

Randolph Stow, a seminal Western Australian author and twice winner of the Miles Franklin, Australia's largest literary prize,

was for instance both an editor of *Westerly*'s precursor and a contributor to *Westerly* in the early years of its publication (something which never ceases to thrill me). Approaching his listing within the back catalogue with something of this sense of play and energy in mind leads to a series of questions, in effect considering the publication as a distinct textual form. How might one read Stow's contribution to *Westerly* as distinct from and yet connected to his wider oeuvre in publication? How might it be read as part of a wider cultural moment, demonstrated in the context of the issues in which it is published? And how could it be read in the contemporary, beside the work of, for instance, contemporary emerging Chinese poets?

The aim of such questions is not only to develop a context through which one might approach the works of the authors published within *Westerly*, but also to consider how such writing is implicated in the history and current activity of the magazine, and how the literary magazine as a genre might be negotiated in critical literary and cultural studies. At the same time, I am conscious that both *Westerly*'s history and its geographic location in Western Australia make it unique as a publication in the Australian literary scene. There is a danger in extrapolating too far in the consideration of a single publication, especially when the context of its production might well be completely alien to the editorial experiences of other editors and publishing networks. But as *Westerly* continues to develop and evolve, particularly in the context of our current digital development, this reflection feels a necessary effort. And understanding what *Westerly* is as a literary magazine might potentially speak to broader questions of the genre.

The moniker "literary magazine," as opposed to a journal, does signal a distinct cultural activity in the Australian literary sector.

Westerly (like several others, cf. Edmonds 2004) includes creative writing in several forms, side by side with double-blind peer-reviewed scholarly essays. There are a range of publications under this banner of publication in Australia, and all of them, to different degrees, can claim to demonstrate this variety of content. These different works interact both in the reading, and in the logistics of the publication—the combination creating a broad demographic of readers as an audience, similarly spread across academic and generalist backgrounds. Phillip Edmonds has offered a comprehensive response to and theorisation of Australian literary magazines in his *Tilting at Windmills: the literary magazine in Australia from 1968-2012* (2015), which acts as a history of production in the genre, a consideration of the role of this publication, and a contemplation of its future. His definition, "a publication that devotes a significant proportion of its pages to original fiction, poetry, essays, creative non-fiction, interviews and reviews, and is a periodical that publishes up to six times a year" (2015: 13) is based in part on the publication's "self-consciousness" of its own literary qualities (Edmonds 2004: np).

Edmonds recognises the genre of the lit mag as a site of potentially radical social and cultural expression, and reads the movements of publications in his chosen decades as "a social and cultural history in microcosm" (Edmonds 2015: 4). Given the public funding many of these magazines receive, and the manner in which this funding shapes the conditions of publication, Edmonds suggests this history as reflecting broad-scale social attitudes: "The little magazine is often constructed as a high cultural manifestation, but it has significance as cultural evidence through its contradictory characteristics and precursive capabilities." (2015: 5) The term 'little magazine' is not pejorative, but recognises a specific context of small-audience cultural production, offering writing which can

negotiate both centre and periphery, engage with "radical experimental, non-linear narratives" (2004: np) as easily as the literary mainstream, and which historically has offered "writers the chance to think on the page and, in some cases, experiment with form and content" (2004: np).

Edmonds's discussion works through Fredric Jameson's concept of cognitive mapping in considering the different magazines and their cultural engagement, as, in Edmonds's words, this is:

> in effect what the literary magazine sets out to achieve: a way of thinking through contemporary discontinuity and a stance that strikes "a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole." (Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism*, 1991, in Edmonds 2015: 51)

Put another way, "literary magazines are complex and detailed evidence of the social and cultural changes in any society." (6) Understanding the genre in this way helps to contextualise the textual specificities of *Westerly*, in multiple playful ways. This construction of literary magazines sees them as simultaneously reflecting social change and offering writers the scope to experiment and develop. It points, for example, to the writers' emergence in production. Edmonds cites the popular impression of literary magazines as "hatcheries" (2015: 2), the scene of rehearsal and recognition for new and developing writers, gaining critical attention. *Westerly* offers a point of publication which is doubly a scene of emergence in this sense—it not only seeks to support writing careers, but it also seeks to represent current trends in the responding critical scholarship. Here, too, it is a space for testing ideas in the preparation of a larger body of work—pieces which are

extracted from wider, ongoing research within creative writing as an academic discipline, as a way of propagating or seeking feedback on a broader project.

Emergence in these terms is not only a process of professional and/or career development, but might also be thought of in terms of the coming into being of the work of art. Much of the work published within *Westerly* negotiates with its own nature as artistic. As with all literary writing, the creative work holds inherent a quality of artistic effort—it exists as something different to standard communication, in that it is the product of a process of labour which is intended to offer simultaneously an aesthetic engagement. More tangibly, and as an example, the submissions received for each issue inevitably include a large proportion of metafictional or meta-poetic work, actively exploring the nature and impact of writing as both act and text—the best of which we regularly publish, often as an opening to the issue produced. This work encourages readers to consider not only *what* is being said in each piece, but *how and why* literary creative writing has been employed as the medium. It asks the reader to reflect on the value of writing-as-art.

More complex than writing for the purpose of communication, writing-as-art sustains multiple readings. In this, both the issue itself and the work published within seeks a multifaceted response from readers and gives rise to the possibility of continued interaction. It aims to be generative, and it represents something which will not cease, but which continues to emerge through each new reading. In reading, then, each issue is a scene of emergence in the sense of works which are continually coming into being in new ways. This concept of artistic emergence applies similarly to the scholarly work contained. Published within *Westerly*, it represents a different proposition to scholarship in traditional academic journals. It must be

accessible to a general readership, and therefore regularly requires a form of writing which is self-aware, conscious of its own aesthetic qualities, and attempting a dualistic engagement of intellect and aesthetic enjoyment. This isn't to say that scholarship elsewhere doesn't demonstrate the qualities of art in its structure or expression, but simply that this is a constant consideration in the compilation of an issue of our magazine. The writing must be capable of playing out across multiple demographics to support *Westerly*'s broader goals in publication: engaging and cultivating readers for Western Australian literature, increasing reader awareness of new writers and of different forms of writing (including the work of Indigenous writers and writers from diverse backgrounds), and offering our readers rich and dynamic conversations.

Part Two: The Issues

Through both avenues of writing, then—creative and scholarly—I would argue that the issue as a scene represents publication within literary magazines as constantly in emergence, in multifaceted ways. If Edmonds can trace a social and cultural history in mapping the historic shifts in literary magazine publication, then new publishing in the literary magazine genre might equally be seen as demonstrative of sociocultural becoming. The issue in this way mimics or even articulates the constant coming into being of nation (albeit in a restricted and potentially biased way). Understanding the textual play of *Westerly* as a magazine could involve reading this *becoming* in temporal and spatial terms, and in the interplay between individual issues and the back catalogue as a whole. Each issue of *Westerly* is identified as emerging from a regular publication—the ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) category codifies this as a distinct form within the publishing sector. Any

one specific issue is inherently collecting its own archive, marking itself *as* serial, thus component to a larger project of issuing both past and future. Likewise, each issue as a textual space collects work from diverse authorial origins, encapsulating broad swathes of literary, geographic (and paginated) space.

Fig. 1

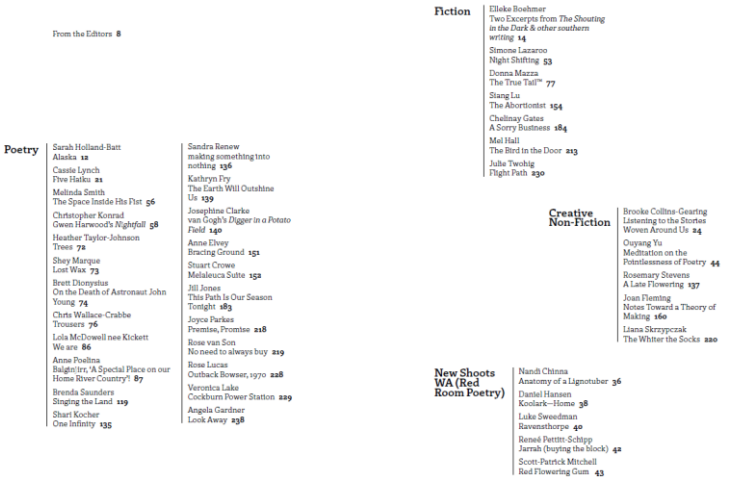

Fig. 2

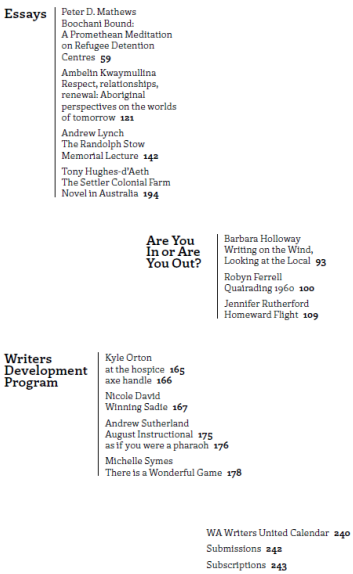

Fig. 3

Figs 1-3: The contents pages of Westerly *64.1, published June/July 2019. Alongside original creative work from across WA and Australia, the issue included an essay from international academic Peter D. Mathews on Australia's human rights record in approaching the claims of asylum seekers, as depicted in literature; an essay from Palyku academic Ambelin Kwaymullina (WA) on Aboriginal literary futurisms; the* Randolph Stow Memorial Lecture *from Andrew Lynch (WA); creative work from local emerging writers in our Writers' Development Program; and "New Shoots"—poetry from a project dedicated to engaging with WA flora, in partnership with* Red Room, *a NSW-based poetry organization. All of this work could be read as negotiating and representing the coming-into-being of nation. The full table of contents can be found at:* https://westerly mag.com.au/digital_archives/westerly-64-1/

Approximately 45% of the writing in a contemporary issue is from Western Australian authors, 45% from Australian authors (outside of Western Australia), 5% international, and 5% authored by Indigenous writers from across Australia, mapping places and perspectives across one another with each new authorial intervention, yet centring on the idea of itself as an Australian, and specifically Western Australian, volume. In this context, the magazine's publication speaks to an understanding of literature which is fluid in both time and space while engrained within a place and moment, and related to a broader act of writing. It is possible to argue then that engaging with a literary magazine potentially allows us to read our sociocultural moment in a more fluid and dynamic way than any one self-contained and single-authored text can. As a text which is overtly structured as representative—*Westerly*'s motto is, after all, "the best in new Australian writing"—each issue articulates plurality of voice and cultural authorship. It demonstrates multiple points of connection, contradiction, and opposition, and opens the possibility of border crossing, both in inviting international contribution and in diminishing internal borders through undifferentiated national publication. (This "internal crossing" is particularly important in the sense Edmonds (53) noted in reference to *Westerly*'s inception, coming from and representing the "other side" of the country rather than the cultural and publishing centres of the east coast.) The version of nation which comes to be represented within is neither stable nor predetermined, but open to these conversations and contradictions—it is constantly up for grabs.

An example of this border crossing can be observed in reading Chinese writing in *Westerly*, one instance of the capacity of each issue to create a fluid space. *Westerly* has a set remit to engage with the geographic spaces of Asia and the Indian Ocean, something which was established early in the magazine's

history, and can be traced throughout the back catalogue. One example is a recent special issue (62.2), published November 2017. Alongside work from the region as a whole, it features a collection of pieces from Curtin University's China-Australia Writing Centre, seven works in total. Three of these were from Australian authors, and three from Chinese, with the final work coming from a Chinese author and translator, Iris Fan Xing, who completed her PhD in creative writing in Australia. Fan Xing's piece offered a selection of poetry in translation from Chinese women authors, published in both languages, representing in microcosm the connections and interactions of the issue as a whole, reduplicated by Fan Xing's position between and across cultures. The issue in this sense becomes a vessel for the fluidity of cultural representation—the container for writing which defines our geographic connection to Asia as a space.

It also speaks to the manner in which these connections are not static, but active—they have a history and a future within *Westerly*. Looking further back, another special issue, 38.4 (1993), entitled "Crossing the Water, Asia and Australia," likewise holds writing from Western Australian, Australian, migrant, and international authors. The definition or representtation of Australian nation offered is one which is overtly conscious of our ocean setting, where cultural interrelation from the outset is symbolised by fluidity. Beverley Hooper, guest editor for the issue, explores this concept in her editorial:

> The Australia-Asia dichotomy—and the symbolism of "crossing the waters," "the sea wall" (as Christopher Koch wrote), or the bridge to Asia—remains a powerful concept. As this collection illustrates, there are many different "Asias" (and "Australias") and many types of bridges as well as crossings and cross fertilisations. The major theme of these essays and poems is that of personal encounters: the minutiae of social and cultural interaction that challenges, but also

> sometimes confirms, the common stereotypes of the "other." (4)

Three pieces in that issue engage specifically with China and Chinese literature: Ouyang Yu's article "Charles Cooper and representations of the Chinese in Australian fiction" (65-73); Sang Ye's fictocritical work "Golddiggers," written with Sue Trevaskes and Nicholas Jose (102-7); and Fay Zwicky's poem "On the Acquisition of Four Famous Chinese Novels for the Senior Library & Related Matters" (44-5).

Each of these works enact the same fluidity of cultural connection that Fan Xing's translation embodies. Focusing on Australian literature, Ouyang's piece examines stereotypes of China in fiction, and specifically in the novels of Charles Cooper. Chinese characters are, in the Australian setting, read as "the ultimate image of the Other" (Ouyang 65), and the article maps general social shifts in characterising Chinese culture from the late nineteenth century onwards. Ouyang's examination of Cooper's writing shows a point of cultural contact which is echoed and reciprocated by his own interest in the Australian novelist and scene as a Chinese scholar and poet himself. Ouyang's reading points to the tensions and anxieties of cultural representations of Chinese characters in Australia, but demonstrates likewise a desire and interest on the part of the Australian writer. Zwicky's poem, in relation, effectively draws this same discussion into the present, responding to a specific instance of cultural exchange with an irony that picks at the politics and bureaucratic strategy behind a seemingly simple purchase of texts. Zwicky attended the first Australian Studies conference in China, and her response in the final image of the poem pushes through cynicism to simultaneously find a beautiful possibility in the space:

> There's more to culture than a useful acquisition

as any dancer in the margin tells you,
gentle hands mysteriously raised
against the tides of vanished dynasties,
no margin left for error.
(Zwicky 45)

Art, as represented by the dancer in this image, effectively holds back the onslaught of time and cultural loss. Sang Ye's ficto-critical work subsequently takes up this challenge, a playful and energetic piece which offers two opposing travel stories from the same narrator—one in China, one in Australia—each marked by a constant shifting of focus, the inclusion of secondary narratives, and seemingly unrelated material. These slippages draw the two countries into association with each other. The first section, for instance, opens with a set of adverts, the last of which magically offers: "A way to change local goat wool into Australian wool. With a mark of authenticity from the Australian Wool Corporation. Please send 200 yuan to Siyang" (102-3). Read alone, this piece is a site of personal imagining, often deliberately obtuse in the associations it makes. But in the context of both Ouyang's and Zwicky's writing, Sang's piece can be understood as enacting a moment of cultural exchange which extends from social politics to uphold human contact and experience as opening significant possibilities in the conceptualisation of nation and national boundaries. The moments when the two scenes bleed into each other help think through such cultural opposition, offering both Zwicky's hope and Ouyang's sociopolitical awareness.

This broad-scale fluidity of cultural connection within the magazine has been extended by the digitalisation of the archive. While reading through the print tradition means dealing with a physical archive of the journal's sixty-three years, and generally presents these conversations in linear and chronological arrangement (on library shelves), the process of digitisation has

liberated different aspects of the journal in the incorporation of easy movement between issues and themes through a search function. The interface is deliberately arranged in a grid, visually enhancing this effect. (Find it here: https://westerlymag .com.au/digital-archive/) Online, the archive operates in a kind of digital "deep time" which layers the various conversations over each other and offers a different movement in reading, a different play.

Part Three: Digital Development of the Archive

Julienne Van Loon invokes the digital in her discussion of play, pointing to digital and online gaming as opening new avenues of thinking in studies of ludology, and "plenty of new scholarly attention, not just to games as a cultural practice, but also to the nature of play in the contemporary adult world." (np) Play is, she suggests, not restricted to childhood but a crucial component of adult engagement with the world, experimentation, and creativity, supporting ontological self-realisation. Computer gaming has highlighted a context wherein such play takes place within a formalised structure, with set conditions and rules. Van Loon relates this to creative writing: "there is an intriguing relationship, when we look at playful adults, between the perceptions of play as pleasurable because it involves freedom, and the comfort and necessity of rules and limitations in order to enable play. Again, this is an issue that seems particularly pertinent to Creative Writing, where form, genre and sub-genre might be thought of as loosely containing the set of rules or limitations that work to enable new invention." (np) Van Loon argues thus that play and playfulness are underrated as qualities within the serious work of critical research. Her interest is in formalising and articulating the "play" of unguided research, the double consciousness of involved experimentation. Her think-

ing highlights simultaneously the value of the arts in Australian culture as an imaginative space, with the capacity to both challenge and (more importantly) invent or produce.

A similar concept of playfulness might be invoked as a tool in a critical approach, as applied to reading in the magazine's digital space. *Westerly*'s digital archive, with its grid format, offers two trajectories in scrolling, complicating the linearity of temporal arrangement. It is also arranged with cover images for aesthetic appeal (as opposed to the arrangement of spines in a library bookshelf), offering a second point of impulse, a visual play. The reasoning behind this arrangement is to make the archive as interesting and engaging as possible—it is deliberately trying to stimulate impulsive engagement. So play is invited and actively offered as a possibility in the digital archive's construction.

This is a very simple example of the manner in which a consciousness of play has been central in the process of *Westerly*'s online development, undertaken across the last four years. As a human instinct, play is universal. It holds the capacity to speak to the casual engagement of the general reader just as much as the instinctive investigation of academic research. In this, as a foundation for our process in designing digital engagement, play became the common denominator across *Westerly*'s broad demographics. Impulsive reading can also be generative of new contrasts and textual combinations, and thus playful reading has the capacity to become self-perpetuating in encouraging readers to further explore the archive, skipping across various elements of the textual world that the magazine offers. In multiple ways, then, encouraging such reading habits is a means of encouraging an engagement with the fluidity of the magazine and its generic capacity for speaking to the complex becoming of nation.

When I commenced at *Westerly*, the magazine was exclusively print-based. The existing website had been built in 2012 by Paul Clifford, then Web Editor. Paul put a huge amount of work into the site, and fought simply to get it up online, as a separate domain from UWA's institutional site. This was an important aspect of the digital inheritance, as it allowed the magazine a manifestation separate from the University, gave it some specificity in the public domain. But beyond the listing of the back catalogue on the site (digitised in full-issue pdfs) and a hard-copy backset, there was no extant detailed catalogue of *Westerly*'s publication. The original site was also limited in its capacity to offer audience engagement and promotion. Given this, in 2016, we launched *Westerly*'s current site, which offers significantly more interaction for readers and much greater capacity in online publication. Print publication has continued as an important aspect of *Westerly*'s heritage, but it has been supplemented by the new OSIs and by the introduction of a blog, "The Editor's Desk," which collects new writing from *Westerly* authors as well as news from the magazine. Last year, we began stage two of this project of web development, focused on activating the digital archive. The aim was to improve the functionality of this as a resource for both academic and general use. Ultimately, this effort aims to contribute to long-term audience cultivation, better negotiating between the print and the online versions of the magazine.

Part of this effort, specifically facilitating an academic audience, was the creation of a new form of digital subscription for institutions, via the security feature of whitelisted IP range online. A school's entire network of computers can now be given full online access to the archive and its articles as individual publications. These subscriptions have the advantage of giving greater flexibility in accessing *Westerly*'s backset, while catering to the growing desire for digital rather than physical

assets in library catalogues. But this development has required a significant amount of work in "renovating" the digital archive accordingly. The new archive is fully searchable by title, author, and assigned keywords, with the ability to filter by category; IP responsive, to cater to specific (institutional) end-users; and offers access in specifically reading and downloading individual pieces of writing, set within the context of full issues, years, and the entire backset. The last is something which wasn't possible previously. Accordingly, the majority of the work involved has been in developing a catalogue listing for the sixty-plus years of *Westerly* publication, and filling this listing with the appropriate metadata for each individual publication to support the search function. Secondarily to this, there has been the effort of splitting and cleaning the full-issue scanned files to produce readable copy of each individual article.[2] Supported by our staff as a whole, (and in particularly by our current Web Editor, Chris Arnold), one team member, Miah De Francesch, has been primarily responsible for this aspect of the project—reading, cleaning, and managing the data-entry for each individual article in the backset. The metadata entered deter-mines the initial search function and rankings in search listing. It involves several points of categorisation and classification. For each piece, high-level categorisation (author, form/genre, volume/issue, date of publication, page count, relevant URL) is combined with a more subtle set of classifying keywords across five areas:

1. Form
2. Identifying features (text)

[2] I am grateful to my very wonderful digital project team: our current Web Editor, Chris Arnold, a programmer who is also currently doing a PhD at UWA in digital literature, and who has been contributing to and managing the design work; Miah de Francesch and Clare Testoni, who are contributing metadata assessment and development; Maeve Lander from Enigma Digital, who built the site; and the team at Web Wizards, managing hosting.

3. Identifying features (author)
4. Connections to publisher/publication
5. Subject/themes/focus

Not every text has five clear keywords, and not every text has one from each category. Some texts have no keywords for text, writer, or publisher, but four keywords for subject. But every text's metadata arranges the identified keywords according to this order, a "ladder" by which we navigate its listing. We have come to see this metadata as an unstable paratext, actively produced by a primary author (Miah) and received not only by the site as a system but by the reader as an end-user in their engagement with *Westerly* as a text.

So how do you classify a coral reef?

This question of metadata and its instability brings me back to my initial notion of play: how do you classify a coral reef? What keywords could I use to speak to our holiday as a whole, let alone each experience within the reef? And would my choice make sense to anyone but me? Van Loon investigates parallels which might be drawn between play as a deliberate creative technique and the unexpected discovery of a premeditated scientific experiment. In both instances, she argues, the researcher is simultaneously inside and outside the writing or the experiment, simultaneously immersed and reflective—in the same way a child is both inside and outside an imaginative game. This is not only a quality of conceptualisation but of action, of the trajectory of movement in play.

Van Loon cites the act of fictionalising in play as a crossing of boundaries: "Play is built on oscillation, or to-and-fro movement" (np). Understanding play and playfulness as underrated

qualities within the serious work of critical research allows the creative writer a methodological basis for free-form experimentation. It also highlights the danger of distancing criticism as an activity from the text it acts on, rather than seeing it as imaginatively embedded or immersed in the text and its continued readerly production. Van Loon's play is not only applicable to creative production but to a broader epistemology:

> It [play] is the seed that germinates an idea. Further, it gives birth to the energy and excitement of experimentation that propels and sustains a researcher through a gruelling and often lengthy research process. As a disposition, it also has a role to play in reading or interpreting research. And […] it is essentially an oscillating and self-propelling activity, one without any clear end. (np)

In arguing that play is a universal quality of research, and in tracing a connection between production and reception, Van Loon connects critical practice to the act of creative research, and underlines the engagement of criticism as involved in rather than separate from the play of the text. More broadly, this appreciation of play as a skill or a tool might also be an avenue for articulating the value of the arts and the humanities in the public domain—an idea which would situate literary magazines as a scene of social creativity.

For all these reasons, we were interested in developing the capacity for playful reading in the digital archive. The most basic version of this was in the visual display of issues, their covers in a grid layout, the two trajectories in scrolling serving to complicate the linearity of temporal arrangement. But in the process, play came to be crucial in the production of metadata as well, and especially in the selection of keywords. Play is navigated in the interaction between the rigid structure of the website's coding and the human interpretation of the literary

text. Reading and responding to the archive led to discussions of "best-fit" keywords and saw the comparison of various playful and contradictory interpretations of each text. Miah, as primary metadata author, has contributed the most to this process, and offered some reflections for the purpose of this paper. In particular, she noted the role of play in subjective interpretation, especially in reading poetry:

> [My] choices for all pieces range between concrete, obvious choices to those that are more abstract […] keywords become quite vague or odd, especially in comparison to the rest of the more serious-sounding keywords in the archive. A few examples of these keywords include "sweet gums," "piglet," "INXS," "maggots," and "trucker." (email, 29/06)

We giggled over "piglet" when discussing the related creative work, a story from Rosie Barter entitled "Not Sweet, Not Sweet at All," from issue 59.2 (2014). The work uses the piglet as a symbolic centre to a subtextual consideration of motherhood and obsession. The choice of keyword might seem arbitrary, but in another way it is true to reading, particularly to the casual reader. It would be unlikely for a search to be phrased in terms of complex metaphoric interpretation—not least because the interpretation of figurative language is inherently unstable. But a reader might remember and go looking for "that piece with the piglet." The other associated keywords do simultaneously cover a thematic approach, with "obsession" and "child" listed alongside "piglet."

In this listing, both the casual reader and the more rigorously thematic or interpretive reader are invited. Miah's reflections on this, however, also led towards a realisation of her own authorship:

> The further I go into the archive, the more popular certain keywords and themes become. […] As a lot of this process is interpretive, I have no doubt that if this project were undertaken by another individual that the outcomes and final keyword choices would be different. (email 29/06)

The creation of the metadata, in this sense, describes the creation-process of any text—a process akin to or imitative of that which produced the works being described. Miah's practice is individual, responsive to its own process, and inherently playful. Her awareness of the tendency to see or create patterns in the reading could be understood through Van Loon's framing of the oscillation of play—she is at once inside the metadata creation, and outside it, recognising the shapes it forms. She responds to a single piece within a single issue, and at the same time is looking at the archive as a whole.

The sense of ownership which has emerged in authorship, however, is not absolute but conscious of its own contingency. The metadata does not necessarily depend on Miah's authorship (it could as easily be written by another), but it is determined by and responsive to it. Johanna Drucker has discussed subjectivity and enunciation in information systems, drawing in her opening from Ronald Day's discussion of "the relations of persons to documents in terms of positionality, and all that this implies" (903). Drucker describes any communicative expression as an act occasioning a positionality, and hence enunciation (906). But the construction of metadata is not entirely communicative, so this positionality is blurred. The paratext is in a sense itself given an enunciative power, to produce readings of the archive through the vehicle of the search function. The outcomes are not authored by Miah alone, but through the interplay of Miah's reading and that of the end-user. Miah's reflections, in this, are reminiscent of a passage in Gail Jones's *Five Bells* (2011), where

Pei Xing describes her father's practice of literary translation between Russian, English, and Chinese as:

> a kind of game, in which tokens shaped like mah-jong tiles were exchanged and switched. Signs moved from one world to another, clacked together, made new sequences.
>
> […] "There are many words for snow," her father announced. And he tilted his head back and chuckled, as if he had just told her a joke. (39-40)

This game of translation and its indeterminacy is sympathetic to the translation at play in the archive's development. There are several points of exchange in language or form implicated: translation between English as a language and the coder's programming language of Python, between the text and the paratext, between the creative piece and the metadata, between the hardcopy and the digital. As Jones suggests, this makes for a noisy practice. There is a sense that signs and meanings clack together, that they are not concrete in their representation but rendered abstract and unstable by the various languages involved. There is a danger in this, that the translation will fail, and the keywords used in the metadata will not hold for some readers, making the archive as a text opaque and inaccessible—a frustrating failure of interpretation. But there is also an energy possible here, and the potentiality in this indeterminacy that "new sequences" of reading will be found. In lining up the various words for snow in the passage—in Russian, English, and Chinese—Jones offers each sign its own iterative potential as a vehicle for meaning. No one word offered is more or less of "snow" than any other, but each points to a different relation with the actual, from different cultural perspectives.

As a team, we have decided to embrace the indeterminacy of the metadata, to see what it creates, and whether it might

contribute to serendipitous new connections within the archive. If a game, it is a form of play without set rules, or a fixed object. It allows several points of interpretation to combine and see where they could end up. Hopefully, it will replicate, and give rise to continued play. Like reading Randolph Stow in China, the digitalisation of the magazine offers up new possibilities and movements of the text as an object, outside its Western Australian context of production. As an Editor, too, this offers me an opportunity to continue producing issues which are invested with the same energy of emergence, the same oscillations, alternating view-points, contradictions and connections in the world they depict. Play in all things, drawing the reader on…

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This consciousness within her
uncurled itself upon the rollers of objective experience
printing impressions
vaguely and variedly
upon Ova
in place of the more formulate education
coming naturally
to the units of a national instigation

—Mina Loy
from "Ova, Among the Neighbors"

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