

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Last year was our fortieth anniversary issue of LiNQ and a timely reason to revisit the past, take stock, and look to the future, to our changing world where new media has morphed into our lives. It seemed to us time to supplement our paper-based issues, on the world wide web. "Pop Goes the Region" is the theme that best suited this stocktaking moment. As one of Australia's longest running regional literary journals, we felt it was important to establish an online presence that remained local in focus but global in scope; regional in our commitments but not parochial in perspective; broad-based in our appeal but not pedestrian in approach; literary but not rarified; and expert but not specialised. Pop Goes the Region emerged in consideration of these priorities. Regional writing sometimes gets stamped with the stereotype of "parochial" just as other times it comes into vogue, and is taken up in a sort of precious way by expert critic-curators. Sometimes the fact that the local has a long history of engaging with the popular imagination is forgotten. Certainly with the advent of the internet, the confluence of the regional and the popular must no longer be overlooked. The ways in which popular and metropolitan ideas dominate internet communication can also challenge, and indeed sometimes threaten, ideas about the local and local production. In this global village where we live, technology unites and exposes our regional differences. Yu Xiao's image "Never Grow Up" on the cover of this year's edition of LiNQ transcends the local and global, connecting us with an emerging regional artist in China, whose image speaks of the synchronicities between pop and the region.

In our call for papers, we asked how the region connects with the popular. The answers we received delighted and surprised us. Cheryl Taylor's article reminds us that North Queensland has a long history of popular literature, and takes us on a nature trail retracing the romance writers of the what she calls the "flower" tradition in regional writing. D.C. Elliott's article discusses how one of the first global culture jamming movements came into being, and considers the various ways it nuances and challenges issues of the global and the local. Christopher Kelen considers the unique region of Macao — between the old Portugese empire — once a major player in the part of the world — and the rising Tiger empire that is present day China. What is the place of the poet in such a society, particularly in a culture in which history is quickly being eviscerated by the overnight construction of a casino megalopolis? Victoria Kuttainen's article takes us back to the 1930s, an era that is a mirror image of our own: beset by a global financial crisis, perched between popular culture and high-brow aspiration, teetering between another set of empires — American and British — to read the popular short fiction published in Australia's first and highly successful gentleman's magazine, *Man*. Allison Craven considers the future of the book in the age of Google.

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While cyberspace more broadly allows us to make strange, sometimes funny, hybrid-mixes of the local, the global, and the popular, the kind of research we now conduct through online archives and repositories is not confined to the “stacks of great literature” as the London Library uses as its byline. At our fingertips, we have access to other cultural archives, and other registers of writing and reading such as the popular domain, once kept distinctly separate from academic concerns about preserving and cataloguing fine literature.

Some of the creative work in this issue muses upon concerns of how this globalised world takes up and alters our experience and understanding of the local. In embracing the decision to profile creative nonfiction, we offer a regional voice which blends veracity with literary techniques to explore issues often taboo in our mainstream nonfiction diet. Kristen Weiss’s “Wind in My Compass” visits the nexus between the foreign visitor and the Indigenous as she seeks spiritual meaning in her encounters with the people and the land. Kate Osborne documents conversations with the former Mayor of Palm Island, an exclave from white settlement, about the torment of the island’s past. David J. Delaney remembers the iconic mango from his childhood and the terror of stealing from a Greek migrant and a friend to his family. Sam Hall’s moving account of loss in “Shotgun Not” skillfully uses dialogue to build the endearing friendship between two mates as they flirt with death; Brian Edwards’ poetic “Wintering” speaks of a mad poet who “writes to keep a few ideas warm” while Nikesh Murali ponders a tweet from the Northern Territory about Federal government intervention.

For an exclusive feature of our online edition, and with a grant generously provided by the RADF scheme at Townsville Council, we sought our own regional voices, journeying around Far North Queensland and regional Queensland to find local storytellers willing to share their stories online with the world. We were accompanied by Victoria’s newborn baby as we ventured into territory far from the office and engaged in personal and intimate encounters with the tellers of stories we so often keep at a distance in academia. We found some delightful stories that might ordinarily escape the pages of a literary journal — from coral trout fisherman gazing out to sea watchful of the weather; to lay-philosophers yarning under the mangos of the Tree of Knowledge in Cooktown and an Indigenous German who painted portraits from her own grief into personal stories of white occupation. In Mt Isa, we heard from a volunteer at the underground hospital who brought us stories of courage and audacity during World War II. These stories will appear in online LiNQ.

We hope you enjoy what you read here.

Victoria Kuttainen & Lindsay Simpson