

# WRITING-BETWEEN: AUSTRALIAN AND CANADIAN FICTO-CRITICISM

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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# ABSTRACT

The current cultural climate, theoretical developments, the changing state of the tertiary institution, and the increasing presence of voices from the margin have contributed to the critical re-evaluation of academic writing as a way of knowing and representing the world. At the same time, hybrid forms of writing, those that exist in the interstices of established generic codes, are experiencing increased critical attention. Yet, despite the fact that genre has become an inadequate notion to describe boundary-crossing writing, little appears to have shifted in the way these forms are understood. Dominant methodologies tend to render what is between less visible or valid, and they define this space only in terms of its relation to set borders. Located at the boundaries of what is familiar and unfamiliar, “writing-between” is a contentious space where elements are combined without clear rules to aid identification. In this thesis the term “ficto-criticism” is used broadly to describe generically transgressive writing that blurs the defining lines between creative and critical texts. The thesis explores the political and theoretical implications of writing-between through a discussion of Australian and Canadian work in English (or English translation), which display the characteristics of the ficto-critical form. This thesis argues for a critical understanding of ficto-criticism that conceptualises it as a highly political strategy of literary intervention, rather than as a mere trend toward cross-genre writing. Indeed, rather than understanding it as surface play, the thesis argues that ficto-critical practice is deeply troubled by the oppressive role of academic writing and that, significantly, its emergence was highly influenced by postcolonial and feminist theory. Thus, ficto-critical practice interrogates the violence of representation and explores what is left out and or misrepresented through that process. The thesis applies Deleuze and Guattari’s concept-tools to articulate a methodology by virtue of which desire and ficto-criticism are understood as productive forms that are liberated from an equation of lack. The tension between ficto-criticism as an open practice and the tradition of scholarly writing, which requires a clear fixed proposition and outcomes, mirrors the project of ficto-criticism, which seeks to unlearn one’s authority and privilege as the beginning of a process towards developing an ethical relationship with the other.

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<sup>1</sup> For a critique of the conventions of the “Acknowledgements” in academic texts, see Terry Caesar’s book *Conspiring with Forms: Life in Academic Texts*. In his hands the acknowledgements become a text to deconstruct. Caesar dedicates a whole chapter to exploring the conventions of the form noting that the acknowledgements have been increasing in length over the years. Caesar also notes that it was relatively recently that the acknowledgements were split off from the preface and introduction (1991: 28-49).

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Joy George and Tom.  
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