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Literature, materiality, technology: Australian literary journals on the edge.  
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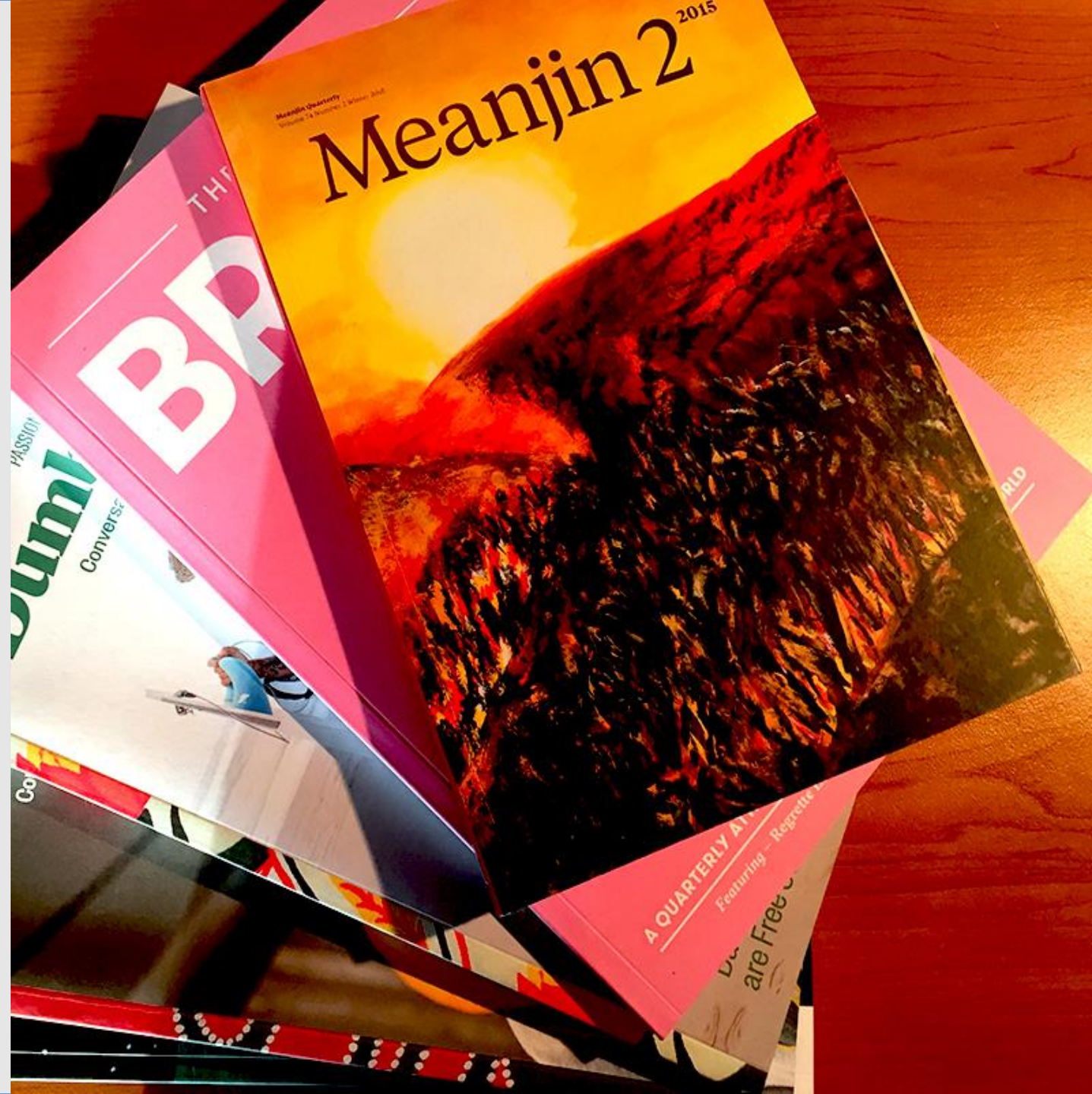
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Literature,  
materiality,  
technology:

Australian literary  
journals on the edge

Imogen Smith, PhD candidate  
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A 'work as assemblage': 'a cluster of related texts that quote, comment upon, amplify, and otherwise intermedialize one another' (Hayles, 2005)

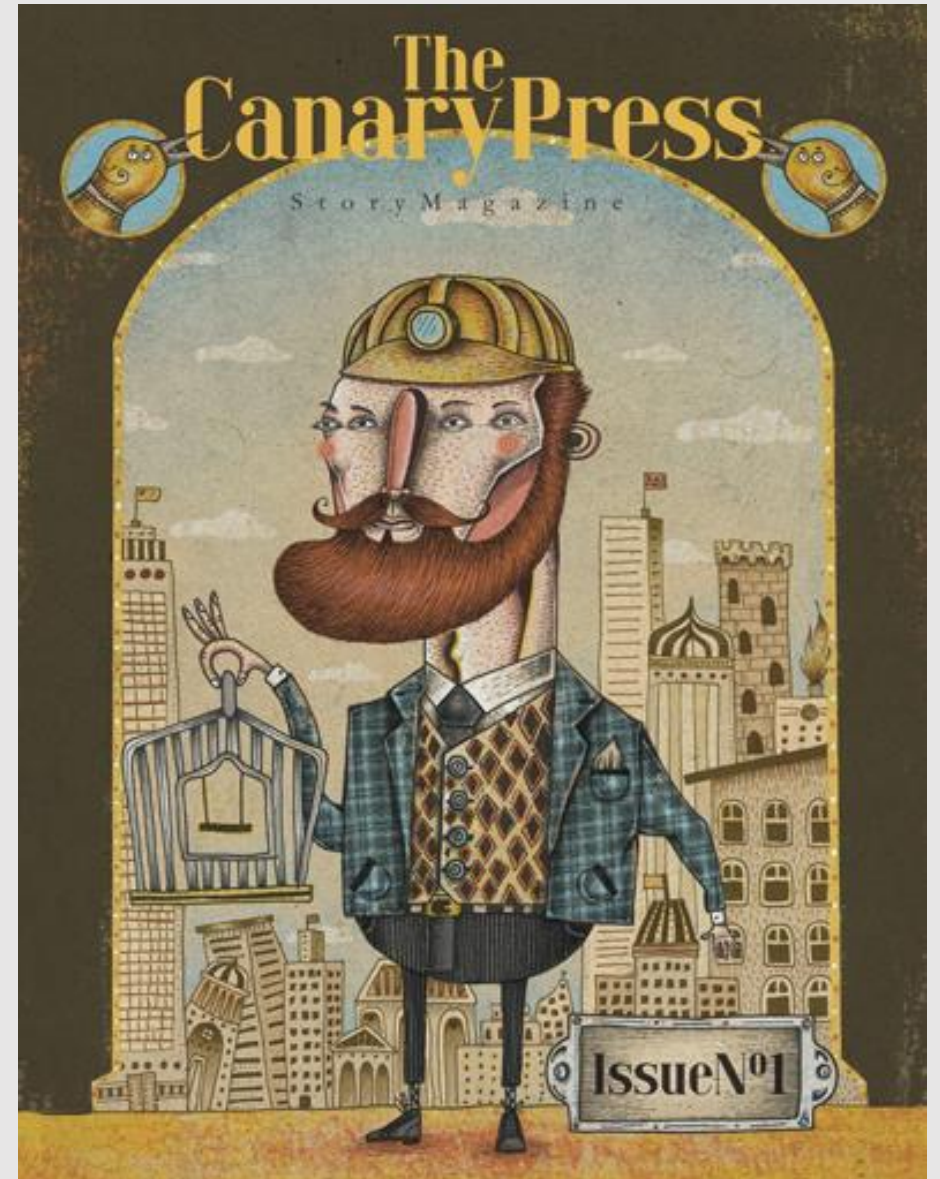
The text itself is called into question, and 'the specificities of media' become 'essential to understanding its morphing configurations' (Hayles, 2005).



Research questions:

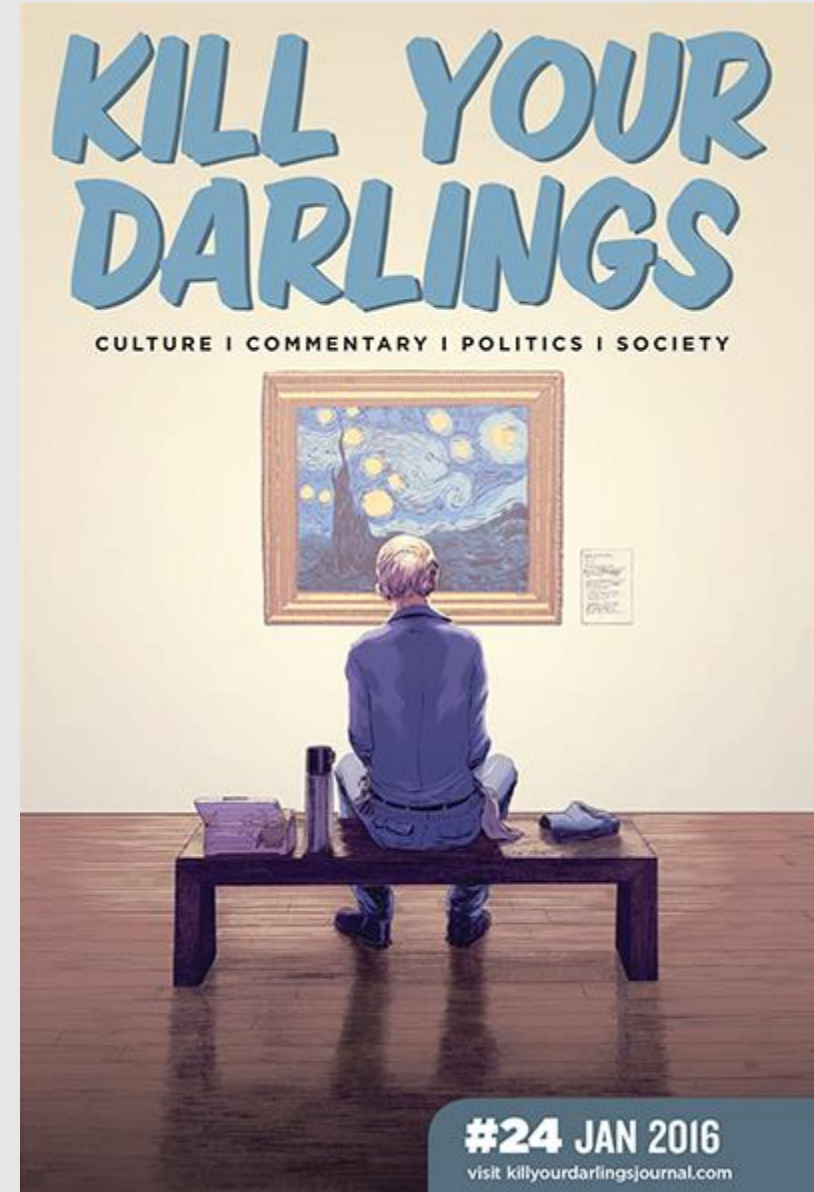
How do print and digital work together within the literary journal as a 'work as assemblage'?

What is the role of print, and is this changing?



# Literary journals:

A small periodical in print, on the web, or across multiple platforms that publishes a miscellany of writing forms from both Australian and international writers. This material generally includes short fiction, essays, creative non-fiction, reviews, poetry, and interviews, and can include multimedia content such as podcasts and recordings.



Semi-structured  
interviews:

11 journals, 9 editors  
3 print-only,  
5 'multi-platform',  
3 web-only

Representative sample  
ranging across spectrum  
of Australian literary  
journals.

**THE  
LIFTED  
BROW**

**ISLAND**

**STILTS**



**I FEEL**

**GOING  
DOWN  
SWINGING**

**REVIEW of  
AUSTRALIAN  
FICTION**

**The  
Canary Press**  
Story Magazine

Sydney  
Review of  
Books



**overland**

**Cordite**  
Poetry Review

# Participating editors and journals

| Journal                             | Editor           | Publication medium |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Cordite</i>                      | Kent MacCarter   | Online             |
| <i>Going Down Swinging</i>          | Geoff Lemon      | Multi-platform     |
| <i>HEAT</i>                         | Ivor Indyk       | Print (folded)     |
| <i>Island</i>                       | Matthew Lamb     | Print              |
| <i>Overland</i>                     | Jacinda Woodhead | Multi-platform     |
| <i>Review of Australian Fiction</i> | Matthew Lamb     | Online             |
| <i>Southerly</i>                    | David Brooks     | Multi-platform     |
| <i>Stilts</i>                       | Bronte Coates    | Multi-platform     |
| <i>Sydney Review of Books</i>       | Ivor Indyk       | Online             |
| <i>The Canary Press</i>             | Robert Skinner   | Print              |
| <i>The Lifted Brow</i>              | Sam Cooney       | Multi-platform     |

## Surprising findings

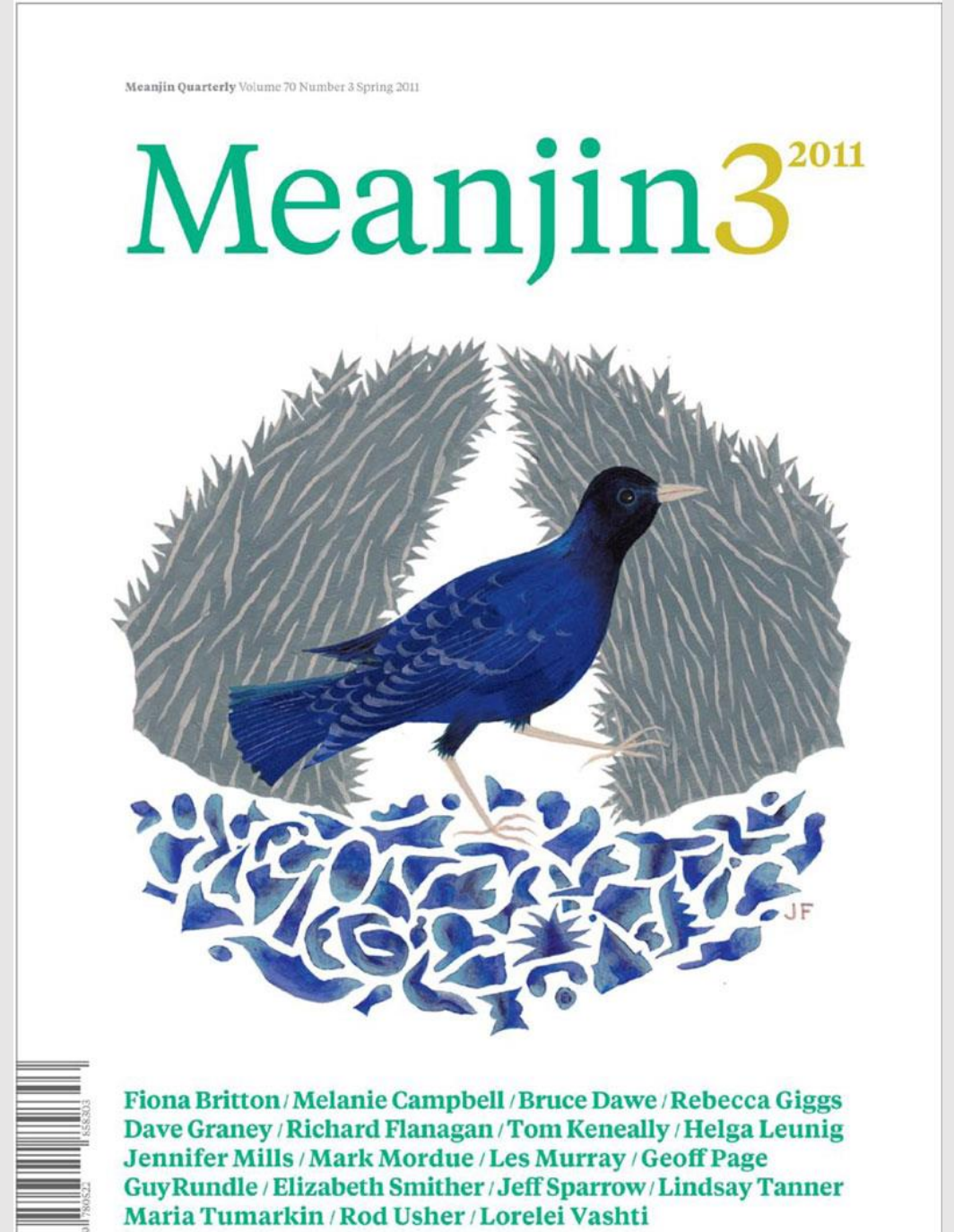
- Assumed that online publication would suit journals' nature as miscellanies, reach more readers, and solve some financial problems
- While print and digital worked together, valued differently
- Choice of digital vs print has drawn attention to or enhanced some of the qualities of print
- A hidden dialogic of value?





# Economics of print and digital publishing:

- Print a more 'workable business model'
- Difficult to sell immaterial digital content
- People 'expect internet to be free'
- 'Why would you bother buying access to a digital edition of a magazine, when you *don't even really understand what it is?*'
- Is something definitive lost online?



## Materiality and literary value

- Benjamin's 'aura' of the original work of art in mechanical age could be transposed to the analogue work in digital age
- New material literacy of print, where books are art objects and are treated as such
- Print, paradoxically, most popular with younger editors
- Different forms suited to different media, with fiction best suited to print
- Material qualities of a text influence readers' mood and engagement.



## Further research

- Literary journals as cultural archive – how to best conserve this in different media?
- Editors – a skewed sample?
- Who do literary journals serve and how does this affect media choice?
- Funding – how to assess journals' success, serve writers and readers, maintain quality and independence?

