

This is an edited version of the introduction to *Australian Gay and Lesbian Plays*, Edited by Bruce Parr.

keep on dreaming

keep on believing

This anthology is a celebration of homosexuality and its diversity in the Australian theatre. It is a tribute to the countless men and women with same-sex desires who have contributed their skills as actors, directors, writers, designers, technicians and in many other ways to Australia's achievements in theatre for close on two hundred years. Whereas homosexuals have worked in inestimable numbers in Australian theatre both before and behind the scenes, it is only comparatively recently, since the 1970s, that Australian playwrights have been able explicitly to explore homosexual themes and represent openly homosexual characters.

Even then, two decades ago, such audacity exacted a toll. Common critical responses to the mere mention of homosexuality on stage included anxiety, denial, avoidance and hostility. It is arguable that homophobia was in part responsible for the poor critical reception of Peter Kenna's *The Cassidy Album* trilogy in Adelaide in 1978. The silent message resounding about Kenna's supposed decline in the late 1970s is that he had gone too far, he had trespassed the bounds of discretion and tact. In a long overdue gesture, Kenna is honoured in this volume for his courage, insight and skill as a playwright, and not least for introducing Australian male homosexual characters onto the mainstream stage.

It would be an understatement to say that the pioneers of homosexual content in Australian theatre, with the notable exception of Steve J. Spears's *The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin* (1976) for Gordon Chater's bravura performance, were never greeted with much enthusiasm. Stephen Dunne records that Martin Smith, the author of the 'first Australian gay play', *Love Has Many Faces*, was sacked from his position as a journalist three days after the play opened in Sydney in 1970.

If Australian plays with male homosexual characters had mixed receptions, it has been difficult for plays with affirmative lesbian characters to even reach production. It is doubtful whether Alison Lyssa's *Pinball*, described by Dennis Altman in 1984 as the 'only case I know where an established theatre has presented an Australian play with a positive view of homosexuality', would have been staged in a mainstream theatre were it not for the Women and Theatre Project at the Nimrod Theatre in 1981. Something of the positive and negative critical responses to it is outlined below. Even today, while it has become a commonplace for male homosexuality to be featured on main stages, serious dramatic studies of women's sexuality, and particularly lesbianism, continue to be relegated to the margins. If, as a recent survey has indicated, the greater focus on contemporary Australian work by major theatre companies has not benefited women writers in general, lesbian feminist content has fared much worse. Hence the importance of radical performance groups and alternative theatre companies and spaces for the expression of lesbian theatre, 'a cultural form', according to Jai Greenaway in 1990, 'which is succeeding as never before'. Success cannot be equated with visibility.

Greenaway defines lesbian theatre as that 'which utilizes the language, lifestyle, themes and concerns of wimmin-oriented-wimmin for the process of creation and which reflects these in a product *which is targeted towards a lesbian audience* (p.33 my italics). All the plays in this volume target general (or straight) audiences as well as their gay constituencies, and therein lies the dilemma for playwrights employing same-sex themes: balancing integrity as a writer with marketability. While homosexuality has become widely accepted as a legitimate, marketable and important subject for literature generally, acceptance of 'lesbian' theatre in the mainstream cannot be separated from the question of the

acceptance of women's theatre which is also bound up with the politics of sexuality. It is hoped the publication of this anthology will further the responsibility of 'theatre', in particular, major theatre companies, as an agent for social change in respect of *both* lesbian and gay male issues.

The coupling of 'gay' and 'lesbian' in the title should not be taken to occlude the important differences between the characteristics and reception of plays which can be termed respectively 'gay male' and 'lesbian'. We eagerly await the arrival of that landmark Australian play which encompasses both gay male and lesbian concerns. Meanwhile, in recognising the many different types of homosexualities, we need to be aware of the differences *between* as well as *within* 'gay' and *within* 'lesbian'. This volume seeks to suggest both common-ground – homosexuality – and the vastness of the range of those differences.

The plays in this anthology comprise the tip of an iceberg, albeit a representative tip. They convey something of the complex factors which shape gay and lesbian identities and the mediating forces through which these identities are negotiated. Their presence does not of itself imply that they sit comfortably together; rather they as a family of sorts are intended to provoke discussion and inquiry on many issues, apart from their individual subject matter, which can be merely touched on in this introduction. In recent times it has been argued, most notably by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, that homosexuality (and its ubiquitous *bete noire*, homophobia) has been of vital importance in the construction of modern sexual identities. Gay and lesbian studies are now firmly established, if not fully accepted, as legitimate areas of academic and scholarly inquiry. Before long courses on gay and lesbian theatre will appear in university curricula. Such courses will find no shortage of plays and theatre to examine. Each and every play and theatre performance which deals to any extent, even allusively, with gayness and lesbianism will qualify for consideration. In the process of examining the way homosexuality is explored in each theatre piece, the framing question will be: what elements constitute a theatre which we may wish to term 'gay' or 'lesbian'? Many other questions will incidentally arise. What if the representations are hostile to gay/lesbian lifestyles? What if a play is written by a self-identified gay/lesbian but is only peripherally gay/lesbian in content? Should a playwright's sexuality even matter? (Not all the playwrights represented here identify as gay. Peter Kenna even disliked the word and preferred to call himself a poofter.) Can plays be 'not gay enough' to qualify? What if a play is considered to be overwhelmingly 'politically incorrect' yet avowedly gay/lesbian in style? *Is* there a gay or lesbian form or style? Are gay/lesbian characters necessary for theatre to be gay/lesbian in tone? And so on.

The answers will most often lack definitiveness, and this is as it should be. Each theatre piece should be judged on its merits rather than being seen as qualifying as a member of a clique. What the process will often achieve is the foregrounding of gay/lesbian content and issues in plays and performances where formerly they (or the plays themselves) were dismissed, denied or ignored. To be achieved also are early steps towards the recording of gay and lesbian theatre history (including the styles of theatre that have been popular with homosexual men and women throughout the twentieth century) and simultaneously some connection with the future of gay and lesbian theatre, how it can operate towards combating oppression and opening up many different ways of seeing the world and practising sexuality.

Mates was first staged in 1975 as the second half of a double-bill with Ron Blair's *The Christian Brothers* in a program entitled *Mates and Brothers*. Although successful in its own right, *Mates* was somewhat overshadowed by the popularity of Peter Carroll's virtuosic performance as the Christian brother. As a consequence, Kenna's play has suffered critical neglect, and its significance as a pioneer work in examining the intersections of masculinity, mateship and homosexuality has not been fully appreciated. Unlike Kenna's *A Hard God* which premiered two years earlier and controversially for its time examined young Joe Cassidy's discovery of his homosexuality, *Mates* unapologetically thrusts a lively queen who also happens to be a drag performer into the spotlight. Writing in 1984, Dennis Altman found that up to that time, gayness in Australian drama had been 'seen as marginal, furtive and in need of explanation'. None of these restrictions applies to *Mates*. Sylvia is central, 'out' and proud (although the word 'gay' is never spoken in the play), and as his very name suggests, a personification of and a tribute to Camp in which, as

Christopher Isherwood famously described it: 'You're expressing what's basically serious to you in terms of fun and artifice and elegance'.

Sylvia is a richly-drawn character, presented as engaging, clear-sighted and deluded by turns, hysterical and irrepressible, a figure who exemplifies the contemporary notion that identity is dynamic and performative. It can be argued likewise that as surely as Sylvia performs in and out of drag, Perce and Mabel are likewise 'in drag'. As Judith Butler has theorised, prescriptive sexuality results in the repetitive performance of gender-identifying acts, as heterosexuality in a phallogentric economy is at pains to 'elaborate' and define itself against homosexuality. There is but a short step from here to Queer Theory as it has developed in the 1990s, which helps us to appreciate the tension in *Mates* between classical realism which the play superficially purports to be, and the camp 'grotesque' which drag's unruliness and irrepressibility engenders. This disjunction arises partly from Sylvia's frequently performed references to famous 'strong' stage and screen women we might identify as, for example, Bette Davis, Tallulah Bankhead and Blanche Du Bois. Queer theory does not recognise gayness or lesbianism as essences, but rather questions any fixed notion of identity, homosexual or heterosexual. It treats deep subjectivity with suspicion, and delights in performance and performativity, imitation, appropriation and fun. As does *Mates* through Sylvia's role-playing, in female dress and out of it; like the concept of queer, and being mindful of irony, it is advisable not to take the play *too* seriously.

Mates balances 'sacred' classicism with 'profane' outrageousness. Important issues like gay bashing and suicide are weighed against an elaborate camp joke which has the sexual pairing of a drag queen/effeminate man with a famous football star. It is revealing to read the play in the context of the brouhaha surrounding the 'coming out' in 1995 of Manly football player and gay icon, Ian Roberts, which brings to mind Jean Cocteau's aphorism: *camp is a lie that tells the truth*. Throughout that year, concealment and revelation intertwined tantalisingly around the figure of Roberts.

Kenna has us laughing at the apparent incongruity of Sylvia's and Gary's partnership, but the last laugh has always been Kenna's: masculinity and homosexuality have never been strangers. *Mates* advocates honesty as an ideal in sexual matters while clearly suggesting the cultural opposition to such utopian sentiments. What is left for sexual revolutionaries like Sylvia but the expression of camp? In camping it up, he challenges the audience to question its assumptions about gender roles and behaviour, and also about the 'gender' of the theatre being witnessed, veering between 'straight' and 'queer'.

The onset of AIDS seems to have permanently marked our readings and constructions of male homosexual relationships. An audience of twenty years ago would fail to find the double meaning in Chris's line in *Furious*: 'We're careful, we do all the right things.' The allusion to safe sex would then have been unnecessary. Although written in that pre-AIDS era, *Mates* today provides a startling reference to HIV transmission in Sylvia's bleeding wrist, with added poignancy in the partners' departure for the hospital. Gary's unwillingness to be seen publicly with Sylvia mirrors the sometime desertion of those with HIV/AIDS by partners, friends and families. The drag queen stigma, for drag has not always enjoyed its current vogue, can also be metaphorised in the discrimination against those people with AIDS. One of the play's final images however, where Gary places his arm around Sylvia's shoulder before taking him to the hospital, is powerful in its simple depiction of support, caring and love. Far from being a 'slight piece', *Mates* can be recruited to that growing list of plays, such as Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, which employ camp and effeminacy within a new discourse of empowerment and agency. When it was revived at Cafe De Lane in Sydney in 1994, Stephen Dunne found that 'this chestnut of Australian queer theatre scrubs up very well'; he concluded that 'its interrogation of sexuality and masculinity remains potent 20 years on'. *Mates* may be destined to be an Australian classic.

Part of the Report presented to the Theatre Board of the Australia Council on the completion of the Women and Theatre Project in 1981 reads:

As directors and actors, we have seldom had the chance to portray women as we know them to be;

concerned with values that are directly opposed to the patriarchal, heterosexist, materialist ideology which dominates our culture. In working with scripts written and directed by men, we have been asked to deny female friendship, the physical strength of women, our mechanical aptitude and manual dexterity, the fact that we also laugh and shout, the physical contact we have with other women, the woman-healers and midwives, masseurs, herbalists, the real images of our dreams and fears, male violence against women, lesbianism, single mothers and women who live successfully by choice outside any socially defined pattern. These areas of women's lives have been denied expression by language itself, as well as by the censored images and false testimonies of male history.

One script which redresses this imbalance in representation is *Pinball* which, as part of the Women and Theatre Project, played at the Nimrod Theatre in Sydney in September, 1981. As Chris Westwood has outlined, the Project proceeded in a general atmosphere within the theatre industry 'relatively hostile to feminism', and the majority of mainstream theatre critics reflected this antagonism. It is hardly surprising therefore that a play such as *Pinball*, strongly pro-lesbian/feminist, did not then receive the honours and attention it deserves.

Like Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Pinball* draws on the biblical story of the wisdom of Solomon who resolved the dispute between two women fighting for custody of the one son. The Solomon of *Pinball* is however anything but wise, representing in his various incarnations patriarchal oppressiveness. The mother here fighting for custody of her son is Theenie who is, like the pinball, tossed hither and thither while trying to balance the conflicting demands of maintaining her relationships with her lover, the ardent feminist, Axis, and her conservative, middle class parents whom she also loves deeply. While the play has its archetypes in Solomon (who also metamorphoses into Theenie's despicable brother, Kurt), and 'anarcho-lesbian', Vandelope, most characters are complex creations. There are four couples whose relationships we can compare, one lesbian and three heterosexual; we are invited to witness the effects of issues of class and economics, gender and sexuality on each of them. Early in the play for example we see Theenie's ex-husband, Sylvester, and his new wife, Louise, dining in an expensive up-market restaurant; this is immediately followed by Theenie and Axis in a cheap Lebanese restaurant. Each pair is separated by an enormous ideological gulf. Particularly revealing are the lives of Theenie's parents; Archibald, narrow-minded and pompous, though essentially decent, has unknowingly driven the long-suffering Violet to breaking point. Theenie's distress over her mother's condition is especially moving. We are constantly reminded of the cruel price Theenie pays for her enduring love of Axis. The play does not balk at presenting the pains and pleasures of the partnership they must strive hard to maintain.

Pinball has in effect two endings: the first, the 'real' one, has Theenie losing her son; the second, 'optimistic' one, with references to Shakespearean comedy, is necessarily fantastical. Lyssa's strategy here reflects her attention to the balance of ideas and tone throughout the play. The ideal world of the play's *denouement* is directed by the wondrous Vandelope, like Portia, disguised of course as a *male* lawyer, whose hard-edged cynicism cannot cloud her hopefulness:

But you never know what
we could change
if we risk it.

Vandelope (note the combination of 'vandal' and 'hope') is one of the great joys of *Pinball*, perhaps deserving of lesbian icon status. Initially she argues strongly that Theenie give up her son; but once having resolved to support Theenie's cause, her loyalty is unwavering. In one of the great moments of lesbian/feminist solidarity, she leads the demonstration chant outside the court in which the term 'lesbian' is tantamount to an automatic declaration of guilt:

You're in there for us

We're out here for you.

With her passionate commitment to social change, Vandelope personifies Lyssa's political voice.

For the most part eschewing naturalism, *Pinball* defies categorisation as it constantly changes style from, among other things, heightened realism to biblical quotation to free verse to vaudeville. It is a work that entertains, stimulates, and moves its audience both to laughter and tears. *Pinball* might be deeply disturbing to those expecting and desiring a play which fulfils the stereotypes of 'lesbian theatre' defined by those prejudiced against it. If it were man-hating, narrow in its perception, espousing separatism, humourless, and overrun with resentment and rage, it would be much easier for conservative critics to dismiss. That *Pinball* has none of these qualities, but rather directs itself to general audiences while being uncompromising and explicit in its attack on patriarchy, makes it a difficult target for anti-feminists. Refusing to be judged by the standards of mainstream bourgeois theatre, and 'community' or ghettoised theatre, *Pinball* necessitates a re-thinking of critical approaches to theatre which defies simple categorisation or obvious location. When anxious critics refused such reconceptualisation, *Pinball* was placed in a no-win situation.

The success of the first production can be gauged from the equivocal tone of critics who would clearly have much rather condemned it outright. The *Bulletin* reviewer, its harshest critic, was even moved to remark: 'Ms Lyssa does, however, have a nice turn of phrase from time to time'. H.G. Kippax, who believed that a 'serious play' was 'struggling to get out', ended his hostile and patronising review: 'I must add, to be fair, that numbers of the audience clearly enjoyed themselves'. We might ask if a male writer would be subjected to comments as condescending as the following: 'Say not [Lyssa's] struggle nought availeth.' (Kippax) or '... but overall, methinks, the ladies do protest too much!' (*Theatre Australia*).

In the anti-feminist climate of the times, *Pinball* could hardly expect a wholly positive reception. It would be remarkable if these critics had attributed to the play a Brechtian energy, Shakespearean resonances, reminders of the anti-naturalism of Patrick White or Dorothy Hewett, and theatrical inventiveness and passion, qualities which it has. The most frequently appearing adjective to describe Lyssa's literary allusions is 'pretentious'. As *Pinball* is not written from a male, middle-class, heterosexual position, such critics seem compelled to deny its achievements and construct for it the qualities they would hope to condemn. What they saw, however, may not even then have done the play full justice. Lyssa herself has said that Nimrod's production lacked 'heart', while in Adelaide in 1983, Troupe Theatre's 'over-serious' performances lacked humour. It may be that we await a production which elicits both its comedy and its political punch. A key objective of this volume is to encourage fresh readings and productions of neglected, but landmark plays. It is now time to re-evaluate *Pinball* in performance and assess how social change in the last fifteen years has affected its relevance today. From continuing public discussion on the need for judges to be educated in changing community values, the likes of Mr Justice Solomon may not yet be an extinct species.

Furious is a complex, cunning work which follows the playwright, Roland, on his quest for the 'dark tower' of enlightenment following the revelation of his father's secret past. The play is as tantalising as Edgar's line in *King Lear* when, disguised as Poor Tom, he utters the intriguingly untraceable fragment, 'Childe Roland to the dark tower came', which inspired the poem of the same name by Robert Browning. Roland's courageous journey in *Furious* is fuelled by a mixture of uncontrollable curiosity, creative compulsion, and compassion. He fails to impose order and meaning on the wasted lives of his newly found relations, but he finally learns the import of his own advice to Chris, his student and subsequent lover: 'Nothing stands for anything. Everything is'. His hopeless heroism takes him 'through the fires of hell' to discover that it is in the action, not only the result, that life finds whatever meaning it has. We can never learn if Roland's play (I suppose it too is *Furious*) is a success, because, like that of the narrator in Browning's poem, Roland's success lies in coming to the brink of action, in acting itself, not in the effect of the action. Gow's *Furious* ends as Roland's play is beginning; we have come full circle and it is success

enough that he, Roland, (and, by extension, Gow) *has* his play, whatever its worth. The rest must be left (often painfully) to others: directors, actors, technicians, audiences, readers and critics, the last of whom have accorded *Gow's Furious* high praise.

Furious operates on an often disconcerting tension between 'being' and 'meaning'. 'Everything is' competes with an urgency to decode and penetrate. Gow satirises a dim-witted, insensitive (and we might vainly hope, improbable) academic, yet he teases audiences and provokes academics into studying his work through the marked use of symbols, literary allusions, structural ploys and dense layers of meaning. Roland rails against school teachers' 'crap', yet *Furious* self-reflexively stages its own labyrinthine perplexity. At the end of Scene One, the Nurse challenges Roland and us: 'This is like a detective show. Good luck'. Gow slyly implies: go and do your best – or worst; but I dare you to place this text on the HSC syllabus.

Among the many ethical issues of human responsibility in *Furious*, the most relevant to the concerns of this volume is the sexual relationship between the sixteen-year-old schoolboy, Chris, and Roland, who is more than twice Chris's age. Roland has been criticised for 'seducing' Chris, but Gow is careful to portray the boy as a more-than-willing, perhaps even equal, partner in the affair. Roland's lifting Chris up and kissing him is a *coup de theatre* of tremendous shock value, but it should not pass unnoticed that, after Roland releases Chris, he 'pulls Roland back and kisses him'. He then leads Roland towards his room. It becomes clear later that Chris has longed for just such an encounter, when he reveals his sexual fantasies: 'It's always been in my head, the stuff we do and not just that, all kinds of stuff I've imagined doing'. Gow refuses to depict Roland as a child molester, and thus instigates a consideration of the question of age of consent, already a controversial component of homosexual law reform in Australia.

In Tasmania, for example, Roland would be doubly at risk; while the archaic State laws forbid sex between men of all ages, the 1994 Federal legislation overturning Tasmania's anti-gay laws permits consenting sexual conduct in private only by people over the age of eighteen. The human rights of gay males aged sixteen and seventeen remain unprotected, not only in Tasmania, but also in New South Wales, Queensland and West Australia. Queensland offers a curious example; the age of consent for everyone is sixteen, except in the case of anal sex where both men and women must be eighteen. Obviously, uniform Australian legislation would be preferable to the current mish-mash of laws which fail to ensure full legal equality for sex between men.

It is noteworthy that the scenes between Roland and Chris are the least 'furious' in the play, providing a respite from the surrounding torment. While the heterosexual unions are destructive and fraught with tension, that between Roland and Chris is warm and loving. Roland recognises that the relationship is 'morally risky', and faces the consequences in a scene as powerful as any battle of the Titans. It ends with the extraordinary strength of homosexual bonding waged against annihilating maternal (and homophobic) fury:

ROLAND: I love your son.

ALISON: If I had a gun, I'd kill you.

The scene containing these lines has driven some audience members from the theatre, shocked by Roland's explicit description of his sex with Chris. To complicate matters further, Chris may also be Roland's father's grandson by his first secret marriage.

In terms of plot, Roland is merely responding as forcefully and defiantly as he can to Alison's threat to expose him to the tabloid press. The passion of the lover is equally matched against the wrath of the mother, a North Shore incarnation of the Eumenides or Furies of classical Greece. But Gow is also engaging in gay politics by refusing to be 'sexually respectable' in contributing to the mainstream invisibility of gay sex. Through Roland, Gow is declaring gay sex a reality and rejecting hegemonic heterosexuality which seeks to deny this crucial aspect of gay (and lesbian) existence. The confrontation between Roland and

Alison reinforces the notion that it may be only through a mainstream reflection on the actuality of alternative sexual practices that dominant culture will begin to address the structures of masculine heterosexuality and patriarchy.

Despite its almost absence of stage directions, Scene Nine, the second scene with Roland and Chris, is charged with homoeroticism. There is sexual electricity amid the playfulness of Chris's twisting Roland's nipple. They have made love previous to the scene, and will probably do so again immediately following it. Lest audiences relax too much believing the 'danger' of watching two males being intimate has abated, Gow thus has Roland four scenes later describe the exact nature of that love-making. The invisible is given voice. Gow's subversiveness lies in disallowing his audience the reduction of gay sex to a kiss and a cuddle. He refuses to accept the dominant beneficence that 'tolerates' gay men provided they shut up about their particular kinds of sex. His (homo)sexual hit-and-runs and sniper attacks in *Furious* are object lessons in how to queerly infiltrate mainstream theatre.

This anthology is the first of its kind for Australian plays, carrying with it the complex issues inherent in any body of work which attempts to label itself. The plays here are much more than only 'gay' or 'lesbian', but it is crucial that they be particularly recognised as representative of the vast range of Australian dramatic material which examines desires, practices and theories beyond the merely heterosexual. The mainstream's current interest in matters gay and lesbian offers promise, although work with lesbian content deserves as high a profile as that with gay male characters and themes. Mindful of the history of oppression and the need for vigilance, many in the gay communities regard this interest with suspicion, terming it appropriation and cultural voyeurism. Mainstream theatre demonstrably lacks the work of lesbians with reputations like those of Nick Enright and Michael Gow both of whom are fortunate (and talented) to be recognised as top playwrights first, and only incidentally as playwrights who happen to be gay and occasionally explore gay themes in their plays. Both playwrights stretch boundaries, but one wonders how far they could go in matters homosexual before incurring the wrath of general audiences upon whom major theatre companies depend. Only as opportunities improve for women playwrights generally will lesbians be able to develop comparable reputations with those of Enright and Gow.

While the relation of gay playwrighting to the mainstream is problematical, writers utilising gay characters, ideas and images are undoubtedly now having a marked impact on much Australian theatre. Readers of the gay and lesbian newspaper, the *Sydney Star Observer*, were urged to see Louis Nowra's *The Jungle* (1995), with its strong gay characterisations among the 'so-called detritus of our sick society'. In 1995, the inaugural Philip Parsons Prize for an outstanding student Performance-as-Research Project, offered by the Australasian Drama Studies Association, went to Tim Benzie for his play, *Personal Fictions*. Notably, the play intertwines the relationship of a gay male couple with the investigations of a dyke detective, and indicates the application of queer theory to performance.

Not all subcultural work aspires or would easily transfer to the mainstream. Little known outside the gay male subculture, Barry Lowe's work has been described as, at times, 'almost unintelligible' to a straight audience. Easily the most prolific gay playwright in Australia, Lowe's *The Death of Peter Pan*, first staged in Melbourne in 1989, was one of the highlights and successes of the 1995 Sydney Mardi Gras Festival, as was the revival of Alex Harding's *Only Heaven Knows* (1988) which indeed proved that transfers are possible. Such was its success at the Stables in Kings Cross during Mardi Gras that it later played a second season at the Sydney Opera House Playhouse. As Stephen Dunne wrote of this momentous event: 'Home-grown gay theatre has finally ascended to the temple of culture on Bennelong Point'.

Australian Gay and Lesbian Plays seeks to ask of itself: what qualifies each of these plays to a position under the 'gay and lesbian' rubric? It is to be hoped that readers with preconceptions of clearly defined limits to the constitution of gay/lesbian literature will be surprised, provoked even, to find certain plays represented. We aim thereby to broaden the boundaries of possibility and provide a limitless future for

anthologies of this kind. In his obituary for John Hargreaves to whose memory this anthology is dedicated, Evan Williams wrote of the actor's 'adventurous', even 'dangerous' qualities, of 'a hint of tension, of outrageousness, of unpredictability, of being slightly over the top'. If this volume embodies even some of these qualities, all prized by the concept of queer, it can be deemed to have achieved its purpose.