Research Statement

Title: Queen’s Cross, published in the Award Winning Australian Writing 2014
Creator: Sarah Kanake
Year: 2014

Research Background

‘Queen’s Cross’ is a short story about a homophobic Vietnam Veteran visiting King’s Cross in Sydney after losing a friend and fellow soldier who lived in the Cross before conscription. ‘Queen’s Cross’ emerges from a research interest in peripheral/non-conflict experiences of Vietnam and seeks to reposition ideas of gayness around the Vietnam soldier. As an artistic output it emerges from the author’s interest in the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy and is intended for publication in a collection called, ‘The Hacienda Arms of Saigon’ alongside recently published short stories, ‘Le Mai Huong’ (2016) and ‘Soldier Crabs’ (2017).

Research Contribution

“Queen’s Cross is a delicately handled exploration of loss, trauma and repression. It follows a night in the life of a recently returned Vietnam War veteran meandering around the pubs and backstreets of Kings Cross. It’s laden with stark honesty, yet only reveals itself in the final sentences”. Veronica Sullivan, ‘The Lifted Brow’

As a queer story ‘Queen’s Cross’ unpacks themes of gayness and homophobia within common military images, particularly as they relate to the battlefield hero. In stories about war the battlefield hero is generally patriotic, white, heterosexual and a man. In ‘Queen’s Cross’ the unnamed protagonist returns home a “hero” having carried the body of another Australian soldier from behind enemy lines to “safety”. He is famous and is recognised by American sailors who congratulate him on his bravery but their encomiums do not sit right with the soldier although it is not until the final paragraph that the reader begins to understand why. In addition to changing the parameters around the culturally acceptable battlefield hero, ‘Queen’s Cross’ also seeks to examine grief, PTSD, self-loathing and homosexuality through a unique blend of first and second person narration.

Research Significance

‘Queen’s Cross’ won the 2013 QUT Postgraduate Writing Award and was subsequently published in ‘The Lifted Brow’. In 2014 it was selected for inclusion in Award Winning Australian Writing by Melbourne Books and is used as an exemplar in an undergraduate short story course at QUT. Sarah Kanake has a significant publication history with measurable esteem from industry – Her debut novel, ‘Sing Fox to Me’ was published in 2016 after being longlisted for The Australian/Vogel’s award. In 2014 she won the QUT postgraduate writing prize and shortlisted for the Overland writing prize. She work has been published in ‘The Southerly’, ‘The Lifted Brow’, ‘Kill Your Darlings’, ‘Award Winning Australian Writing’, ‘The Conversation’, and the ‘Review of Australian Fiction’.