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Challenge & Change
Contemporary Literacy &
English Teaching

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DARWIN JULY 2022

Hearts Minds Stories
Landscapes of Learning

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English in Australia

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The Journal of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English

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English in Australia

2022

Guidelines for Contributors

English in Australia is the peer-reviewed national journal of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE).

The journal is committed to publishing material that is of importance to English educators. We welcome high quality teacher-oriented and scholarly submissions in any relevant field of English education, including literature and literacy education.

We are interested in submissions that reflect dilemmas, debates and concerns facing current contemporary English educators in Australia and elsewhere. Submissions may take the form of:

- A report on empirical research conducted with or by English teachers or students in classrooms
- A theorised discussion of English curriculum, or of the effects of policy on English teaching, or
- Practitioner inquiries, including reflective writing that takes a scholarly and methodical approach, that elaborates or illuminates aspects of the practices of English teachers.

Submissions should be explicitly linked to issues of English teaching, pedagogy or curriculum and demonstrate familiarity with current and pertinent scholarly literature.

Articles will be considered from any context where the learning and teaching of English is framed in ways that would engage and interest a secondary English teacher. Writers should take care to relate, early in their submission, the research context for the benefit of both Australian and international readers. The journal welcomes contributions that challenge traditional ways of thinking about English and that prompt readers to entertain new ways of conceptualising English curriculum and pedagogy

Contributors are encouraged to read previous issues of *English in Australia* to get a sense of the existing and ongoing scholarly conversations in our journal. Articles that share Higher Degree Research conducted by English teachers (e.g. Ph.D. and Ed.D. research findings) are welcome.

All articles are subject to double blind peer review by at least two reviewers. This means that the identity of the author is not divulged to the reviewers, nor are the reviewers' names revealed to the author.

Please refer to the following guidelines:

1. All articles should be submitted via Scholastica: https://english-in-australia.scholasticahq.com/
2. Recommended length of articles for publication is between 5000 and 7000 words (including references).
3. Ensure your name is removed from the article, including from the document properties.
4. All submissions should be typed with double spacing in an easy to read font (e.g. Times New Roman or Calibri, 11–12 point) with a 2.5 cm margin on all sides.
5. Your submission should begin with an abstract of 100–150 words that succinctly summarises the research: context; design or methodology; and findings.
6. All references should conform to the American Psychological Association (APA) style. Please consult the *APA Publication Manual*, 7th edition, or any guide to APA referencing available through university library websites.
7. Submissions are expected to have a high standard of written English. Please ensure that you have carefully edited and proofread your submission. Articles submitted with a poor standard of written English, style problems or inaccurate/missing references will be returned to the author for revision before being considered for blind review.
8. Where possible, avoid footnotes. Usually it is possible to incorporate them into the text. Where they cannot be avoided, they should be numbered with a superscript and listed at the end of the article (endnotes).
9. It is the responsibility of authors to seek copyright clearance for any materials quoted, as required.
10. It is the responsibility of authors to ensure that all required ethics approvals and relevant permissions have been received prior to the submission of an article for review. Please ensure that a statement about ethical issues appears in articles that include data collected from or about humans, including any pertinent information about approvals or permissions.
11. It is expected that a clear statement about the implications of the research for English education policy and/or practice appears in either the Introduction or Conclusion section of your article.
12. Please include in Scholastica a separate file with your full name and institutional affiliation for publication, and a 50-word biographical description.
13. You retain copyright of materials published in the journal; *English in Australia* holds first publication rights only. Authors retain the right to self-archive the final draft of their articles in their institution's eprint repository.

You can expect feedback from the reviewers and editor to help you shape your work effectively. Please feel free to contact the Editor or members of the Editorial team to discuss any contribution which you may be considering.

Although *English in Australia* is predominantly a curriculum research and practice journal, occasionally poems and short texts of other genres relevant to the themes and readership of the journal are also published. Such pieces should be relevant to the lives and work of English teachers and students and be accompanied by a short (300–800 word) abstract or reflection. Please email the Editor regarding submissions of this type.

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Editorial

NATIONAL CONFERENCE SPECIAL ISSUE

Kelli McGraw
QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Lindsay Williams
ENGLISH TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND

This issue brings together papers from two AATE/ALEA national conferences: the online Brisbane conference in 2021 and the face-to-face Darwin conference in 2022.

The theme of the Brisbane conference was 'Challenge and change: Contemporary literacy and English teaching'. Presenters were invited to consider the changing nature of our practices as English teachers; bring a critical eye to our work; and think creatively about how to build a future for literacy and English teaching that creates a better world for our students – a world in which they are active critical and creatively literate citizens. Of course, what constitutes a better world and for whom are essential questions – especially if our teaching is driven by equitable outcomes.

As we write this editorial, debate around the Voice to parliament has started. Whatever the outcome of the referendum, Melitta Hogarth's Garth Boomer address asks us to reflect on the colonialism at the core of subject English. In particular, Hogarth provokes us to consider the implications of Standard Australian English (SAE) as the monolingual foundation of subject English, and the use of SAE as a vehicle for sorting and classifying students. One effect is that some students, those for whom SAE is not their first language or dialect, are set up to fail tasks even before they put pen to paper – or finger to keyboard. To demonstrate that SAE is not required for clear communication, Hogarth subverts the typical conventions of an academic paper, challenging English teachers about what we value and don't value in our classrooms. It raises questions about how committed we truly are to the aim of the Australian Curriculum English to support students to 'appreciate, enjoy, analyse, evaluate, adapt and use the richness and power of the English language *in all its variations*…' (ACARA, 2010–present; emphasis added).

Hogarth concludes by asking us: What are we going to change? Should the subject itself be renamed? However, as she demonstrates in the preamble to the print version of her address, even daring to challenge the status quo is fraught with dangers, especially if you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or a woman. Two months after the address, Australia's conservative media launched unwarranted attacks on Hogarth, using the undemocratic, unethical tactics they have used to try to silence many other, especially progressive, voices.

Given Hogarth's provocations, it is not without a sense of irony that the works of Shakespeare have a special place in the hearts of most English teachers – and Shakespeare, of course, is an iconic author for white conservatives. This is despite the fact that Shakespeare is hardly a good model for communicating in any kind of 'standard' English, let alone SAE, with Shakespeare's name famously known to have been spelt a variety of ways depending on whether it was printed or handwritten.

Nevertheless, the works of Shakespeare are valued for a range of reasons and it the responsibility of English teachers to ensure equitable access to his works. In this context, Laurie Johnson, an esteemed Shakespeare scholar, challenges readers to consider how Shakespeare makes us change the way we teach. He begins by addressing his canonical status as a 'key pillar in the evolution of the modern education system'. Johnson provides a sense of the scope and history of debates about the teaching of Shakespeare, and he questions assumed wisdom about how to tackle Shakespeare's works and ensure accessibility for students. For example, he questions the use of comprehension-oriented activities (such as cloze) which eventually lead to student writing.

Instead, Johnson suggests we flip how we tackle Shakespeare by starting with students writing their own adaptations of the same source stories that Shakespeare used. Then, students can compare their choices with

those made by Shakespeare. In doing this, students (and teachers) challenge the idea of Shakespeare's works as containers of true meaning.

Different equity considerations arise for other students, including those with dysgraphia, a disorder of writing. In her article, Elvira Kalenjuk outlines the struggle of dysgraphic students to engage with the English curriculum, overcome internal and external barriers, and the effects of this struggle on their self-esteem and confidence. She challenges English teachers by drawing an analogy between the struggle of these students and the acrobatics of parkour-style athletes. Without quality, strength-based interventions, this is an exhausting way to navigate a school day. A range of practical strategies and tips are offered by Kalenjuk, for use in all learning areas and subjects where dysgraphic students are required to demonstrate knowledge and skills through writing.

The final paper in this volume from the Brisbane conference returns to the challenge of using texts in English, especially those by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and illustrators. The use of literature by 'First Nations Australians' is now explicitly foregrounded in the literature strand content of every year level of the Australian Curriculum English version 9.0, so it is timely for Cara Shipp and Phil Page to report on the outcomes of a workshop which explored the opportunities and potential barriers to embedding these voices in English classroom. Shipp and Page summarise common questions, misapprehensions and fears raised by non-Indigenous teachers, and then propose possible responses, as well as practical approaches and resources. We look forward to their forthcoming AATE publication, *Listening from the heart: Rewriting the teaching of English with First Nations voices*.

In 2022, the theme of the AATE/ALEA conference in Darwin was 'Landscapes of learning: Hearts, minds, stories'. Participants were invited to consider how, 'in times of rapid change, we are faced with honouring what has come before, being mindful of the present and how to prepare for future possibilities. With expanding landscapes of literature, language and literacy, educators are tasked with adapting and contextualising teaching and learning to connect with the diverse minds and hearts of our learners'.

Paul Sommer considers how we might examine the literal landscape of films. However, he challenges the idea that the meaning can be examined by studying a film as if it consists of isolated, static images – that is, treating the film as painting. However, much is lost in this strategy. Instead, Sommer's outlines an approach based on chunking the film, with an emphasis on the movement of the images and the accompanying soundscape. His proposed model for flexible analysis has multiple entry points that can be used by teachers. Sommers, however, is aware that this is analysis takes place in classrooms, and he asks provocatively: who is the classroom?

Rounding out the academic papers in this volume is a rich, story-laden article by Tanya Davies and Scott Bulfin which considers schooling as a mechanism for nation-building and cultural reproduction. They explore how stories of place – or placestories – can produce versions of what it means to be an Australian. Converging with themes in Hogarth's paper, they discuss the complicity of subject English in the historical work of imperialism – but also how English might be re-oriented towards post-colonial futures, and how teachers might consider this in terms of their own status, their own place-stories.

Taken together, these papers provide several challenges and opportunities for contemporary English teachers. In our selection for the Perspectives from the Past section, we sought to locate a perspective from the early days of the journal with which to compare the concerns of the conference papers collected from 2021 and 2022. We have shared A.D. Hope's AATE Presidential Address, published in the fifth issue of the journal in 1967.

Hope covers many points of interest, from the need for research to interrogate the nature and relevance of the subject, to ideas about the knowledge and skills required for close study of English literature. To bring this conference special issue full circle, we refer to the historical context of Hope's address in contrast to that of Hogarth's in the 2021 Garth Boomer address. Hope recognised English teachers in the late 60s were at a historical point of having to grapple with English literary studies encompassing more than literature from England, expanding to encompass literature from all the English-speaking world. Hogarth asks us to go further, to recognise a present need to grapple with the politics and logistics of respecting multiple Englishes other than a 'standard' one. As the country faces a constitutional referendum about an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice to parliament, it is timely for us as English teachers to also consider with relation to our professional work and research: to whose voices must we ensure we attend?

Smoke and Mirrors: 2021 Garth Boomer Address and Reflection

Melitta Hogarth, University of Melbourne

The power of the coloniser within colonial Australia is clear when we consider how central to the teaching and learning and schooling in Australia is the privileging of Standard Australian English. Prior to 1788, the peoples and the lands of this country were abound with languages. That was until the coloniser exerted their power and insisted on a supposedly monolingual society despite being an amalgamation of various Englishes. Quintessential to maintaining the status quo and assumed power of the coloniser is subject English. I want to query the privileged positioning of subject English and its role in privileging the dominant norm. The subject content, the privileging of the coloniser's language, the silencing of Indigenous voices, even the naming of the subject – all work to maintain the status quo. In a world where technology auto-corrects and predicts our writings, where 'new' ways of communicating such as emojis are becoming prevalent, where the written word is reduced to memos, text messages and emails, where the evolution of language is studied and yet, the consistent message is that you must excel in Standard Australian English. There has never been a 'pure' English nor a standard Australian English in colonial Australia. Our curriculum makes this explicit when we ask students to explore the evolution of language. In this paper, I share the script from my Garth Boomer address provided in 2021 where I wanted to extend the provocation, I raised in 2019 – why is Standard Australian English the only means of communication privileged in the Australian Curriculum? And be so bold to ask: could (or should) subject English be renamed? Why not Languages, literacy and communication as found in the Welsh Curriculum or how about, simply, Language Arts?

Keywords: Standard Australian English, Garth Boomer, critical thinking, subject English, colonisation

On the first day of the NSW statewide lockdown in response to increasing COVID cases and vaccinations still being slowly released, a conference keynote given almost two months prior was deemed front page news by *The Courier Mail*. In an attempt to distract Australia from the desperate state of affairs in our fight against the pandemic, sensational headlines screamed *Day common sense died* (Bennett, 2021) with the sub-heading, 'Crime against Humanities: Academic demands schools drop English as a subject name because it shows "privilege"'. But the front page wasn't enough, continuing on page 2 with the headline, 'Scrap English from schools: academic'. The fact that there was no demand and no call for scrapping English from schools nor in more recent media discourses, the call for changing the name of the language, was not important. Every NewsCorp media platform – newspapers, radio and television all locked on the report and outrage, albeit misconstrued and ill-informed, abounded.

On 8 July, I presented a Keynote Address for the Australian Association for Teachers of English and the Australian Literacy Educators Association. The theme for the conference was *Challenge and Change: Contemporary Literacy and English Teaching* where participants were asked to consider the changing nature of our practices; bring a critical eye to our work; and think creatively about how to build a future for literacy and English teaching that creates a better world for our students – a world in which they are active, critical and creatively literate citizens.

The keynote was a named Key Address – meaning it was named after an individual, Garth Boomer, who had significantly contributed to subject English.

In *Metaphors and Meanings* an edited book by Emeritus Professor Bill Green (1998) bringing the works of Boomer together, Garth Boomer began his teaching career in the 60s as a teacher of subject English, Latin and Mathematics; later completing his Master of Arts at the London Institute of Education. Throughout his career, Boomer played a significant role in the approaches to education such as the chairman of the Commonwealth Schools Commission and later, the chairman of the Schools Council. By 1988, he had become the South Australian Associate Director-General of Education. He passed away far too early in 1993 succumbing to brain cancer.

Throughout his life's work, Boomer consistently critiqued the education system theorising about learning; how language relates to thinking; and, queried the essence of teaching subject English (Green, 1998). When it came to conference presentations, he saw these social interactions as a performance where his role was to engage the audience through provocation; to bring forward controversial ideas and observations of subject English to encourage dialogue and conversation. So when asked to provide the Address, it seemed appropriate to ensure that what was shared would indeed provoke the audience to reconsider current circumstances through a different lens.

In his later work, he lamented his focus on the individual student rather than examining the broader lens of how power is enacted through discriminatory practices and differential treatment; how in subject English, teachers had used texts simply as a way to introduce social issues rather than as a cultural artefact. The keynote called for a provocation – to critique a component of subject English to continue the work of Boomer and bring forward a controversial idea for consideration and to encourage dialogue. Much like Boomer, I looked at the critical theorists like Giroux (1985, 2022; Giroux & McLaren, 1989) and Apple (1996, 2013; Apple & Au, 2009) but I also looked at the Indigenous scholars from both here and afar such as Bunda (Phillips & Bunda, 2018), Moreton-Robinson (2021), Rigney (2018) and Cole (2006) to consider an approach that would honour Boomer and his work.

To ensure there was no confusion about the presentation, the title of the Keynote stated that it was a provocation. I acknowledged my uncomfortability of bringing forward what may be considered controversial ideas to a space filled with English teachers and academics but asked the audience to come with me as I renegotiated and reconstrued how we look at education.

So let's make it clear – my provocation was about subject English not the English language. The many keyboard critics since *The Courier Mail* article would benefit in understanding this distinction.

The call for considering the changing of the naming of subject English to Language Arts or Languages, Literacy and Communication, for example, is not a progressive or radical idea. Historically, subject English has been known as many names including as many of the public critics have noted, Language Arts; however, this is more in the Primary levels of education and not Secondary (Green, 1988). A quarter of a century ago, esteemed academics Green and Beavis (1996) investigated the historical and social context of the Australian education system to gain a broader understanding of English curriculum history (how the subject evolved in a historical and political context); the cluster of subjects that illustrate the plurality of subject English rather than the singular (that in subject English, the focus is not simply on learning the language but includes Literature and Literacy and Communication); and the 'Englishness' of subject English (critique about how the English language further articulates the position of the British Empire).

Subject English is broad in nature. Unlike learning a language where focus is set on building vocabulary, learning grammar and so forth; subject English involves looking at Language, Literature *and* Literacy – see the Australian Curriculum for example (ACARA, 2022). It involves looking at the evolution of language, identifying how texts reflect social and cultural viewpoints, building critical literacy skills to analyse and evaluate texts; just to name a few.

With this contextualisation, I share my speaking notes for the Garth Boomer address provided at the joint Australian Association for the Teaching of English and the Australian Literacy Educators' Association in July 2021 titled '~~subject English~~: a provocation'.

I begin with the sharing of story, and in this case as with many, **this story is not a piece of fiction but fact!** A lived experience as a classroom teacher. An exchange between teacher and student. It could very well be a conversation you too have had. *Or maybe not!* But is moreover part of the unsaid. But – critical

conversations that should be happening.

For me, it was founded in the years leading into the shift from the classroom to higher education. I was the classroom teacher of a Year 10 class on what was an old Aboriginal mission. The school cohort was 100% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

I remember this conversation as clear as day.

I had been reminding students that assessments were due and one learned, *street wise* student turned to me and said '*Why should I bother? I have failed before I start. **I am a D student***'. My heart ached for this student. And indeed, all my students **because** *what he had said was true*. If he was to be judged against his same age cohort, he would indeed fail. He, *like his peers*, **would not** be able to demonstrate understanding of grammar, vary vocabulary choices for impact, and accurately use spelling and punctuation when creating and editing texts (ACARA, 2022). *Each one of the students **could** however* contribute actively to class and group discussion, build on others' ideas, solving problems, justifying opinions and develop and expand arguments **BUT** it was the written expression **and** the written component of the task *which would push them into the D category*. It was **these students**; those that struggled with the written component that I am still seeking to find ways in which we can give them success and ***shift this self-conception of the D student***.

This notion of failure; of disengagement from schooling was something I also heard yesterday in the presentation panel with Rob Tierney, Uncle Bob Morgan, Irabinna Rigney, Peter Freebody, Tammy Anderson, James Ladwig and Nerida Blair (2021) where Irabinna shared that almost 40% of all students have been found to be disengaged in class. That the data would be further pronounced if looking specifically at First Nations students was also mentioned. In yesterday's panel with myself, Amy and Fenice and chaired by Stewart Riddle (2021), the notion of culturally sustaining pedagogies in Australia as non-existent was countered by the fact that **actually there is a definitive culturally sustaining pedagogical approach in colonial Australia** – that is the privileging of the **colonisers' culture**! This hegemonic positioning and narrowly focused and defined purpose of schooling ensures: ***there is no place for the funds of knowledge held by the Indigenous child*** which merely re-emphasises the negative *impacts on self-esteem and self-belief* of the D student.

And so while contemplating and theorising my own positionality as

an Aboriginal woman,
an educator, and
a subject English teacher,
I look to the writings of others.

It was encouraging to read the words of Garth Boomer as he too looked to critique subject English, the role of the English teacher, what made up a teacher and so forth (Green, 1988). It was also great to see him being critical of the education system as a whole and reviewing and re-interpreting the works of Giroux, Apple, Connell and Foucault to his own theory about learning and **how language relates to thinking**, to 'understand a little more clearly the ways in which, unwittingly, schools and their curricula are often loaded dice' (Green, 1988, p. 4). Boomer, as it appeared as I read through his essays in *Metaphors and Meanings* edited by Bill Green, **was consistently asking and critiquing the essence of English teaching and schooling**.

It was also exciting to see that Boomer often referenced his role in the performance of providing addresses as the quasi-antagonist of the story; that in his role as the conference speaker he wished to estrange his audience, citing,

'it is more important for you to be a little tense, geared up for dialogue and constructive contradiction' (Green, 1998, p. 151; Boomer, 1981)

as an active member in this exchange.

The title of this presentation, *subject English: a provocation*, is cryptic in nature but with subject English intentionally crossed out, suggests that in this presentation,

I too
am beholden
to the notion of uncomfortability,
of bringing forward what may be considered controversial ideas to a space
filled with English teachers and academics.
My intent is to disrupt and
to scrutinise the role subject English plays in maintaining the status quo,
of maintaining power and privilege and
asserting the perceived sovereignty of the colonial state.
In doing so, I am asking you to **be a little tense**,
sit and listen in the uncomfortability
and
perhaps
anger or outrage
to what I have to say
BUT

be open to the possibilities as I re-negotiate and re-construe the ways in which subject English and

its obsession with Standard Australian English (*whatever that is*)

maintains the superiority of the coloniser and that perhaps, *just perhaps*, the negotiating of the curriculum and the theme of this very conference –

Challenge and Change

can be the impetus for true change in the ways we look at education and in this instance, subject English.

In the first paper of Metaphors and Meanings, *Dancing lessons: An introduction*, Boomer pondered on the lethargical nature of change in schooling and shared his problematising of 'the ways in which innovative action is contained or diverted' (Green, 1988, p. 4).

He also lamented at his focus, when in the classroom and in his early research, on the individual student rather than examining the broader lens of how power is enacted through discriminatory practices and differential treatment according to one's ethnic, gender or class status.

He recognised that **one of the flaws** of the shift within subject English and its iterations,

its ebbs and troughs,

was that the 'theme' approach saw teachers

failing to recognise 'text' as a cultural artefact

reflecting and representing aspects of society

AND

only used it at a surface level;

as a tool to introduce social issues.

What was lacking was the critical thinking; *the analysis of the socio-cultural lens on how the past informs the present and shapes and maintains the future* **IF** we do not begin to ask the critical questions of

Who?

What?

Why?

As a critical discourse analyst, I would like to include

'How?'

to these, as in:

How are stereotypes maintained? Or

How did we become like this?

The impact and influence of the historical, political, cultural and social contextual factors on the everyday cannot be and should not be ignored. The state of play we have in schools today, the *privileging of Western Knowledges* and *the silencing and ignorance of Indigenous Knowledges* **is the result of the past that informs and shapes the present**.

BUT

this needs to change and be challenged if we are ever to see a truly inclusive classroom.

And much like Boomer, *I too look at the critical pedagogies as I theorise my positioning* but then, I also look beyond the White male and look to Indigenous scholars from both here and elsewhere.

I find refuge in their words, *strength in their unbridled desire for change* and motivations in their resilience and persistence.

I draw on the work of giants – my mentor and friend, Professor Tracey Bunda, and other sovereign intellectual warriors such as Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Bronwyn Fredericks, Martin Nakata, Irabinna Rigney and Nerida Blair who seek to critique, articulate and detangle the privilege and power of Western Knowledges within society and in this particular space, education.

I also look beyond the shores of my ancestors to the knowledges of our brothers and sisters on other lands and their experiences, struggles and achievements against colonial oppression. I have been particularly drawn to the work of Peter Cole and moreover, his glorious book, *Coyote and Raven go canoeing* (2006).

And it was by chance – NO!!

By the way of the Old People that I was invited to speak at that conference where I met an Indigenous Canadian PhD student after just completing my own PhD and we took the time away from the events to speak to our experiences as neophyte researchers trying to find our place in the academy.

And those few short minutes together would evolve to two papers being written together, celebrating our indigeneity and our worldviews and seeking new ways to share our stories.

It was Kori that introduced me to Cole's work and **I was spellbound in the power of his words and his means of expression**.

Cole writes

'the land and our people are not archeological sites anthropological opportunities objects to be gazed at disinterred carbon dated rediscovered or historiographically reframed not objects of otherness accusatives of grammatical extra-territoriality we are our stories our land is its story. We are guardians and children of the land not its genitive agents my community is my sentence my phrase my word my ambience' (Cole, 2006, p. xiv)

It was the lyrical measures within his words, *the*

theorising of the English language which truly piqued my interest and began my contemplation of the privileging of Standard Australian English and how I could push the boundaries further.

It was his writing that he stated, 'the idea of paragraph is meaningless to my sense of oral contiguousness with the land with community with acting in the world it is a denunciation of the geography of my relationship with place where are the plateau the escarpments the end moraines the ridges and slopes' (Cole, 2006, p. 21) This made sense to me.

The act of writing even in English need not be hindered by the rules of what constitutes a paragraph.

It does not ground our thinking,

it is simply a rule that can be broken.

He continued,

'The practice of academically certified punctuation distances me from my sense of space time and natural speech patterns including translated ones separating me from my connection with the earth and its natural sounds and rhythms' (Cole, 2006, p. 21).

I found myself questioning my practices as a classroom English teacher.

Nothing made me happier than grabbing my red pen and correcting the errors evident in my students' work.

But to whose benefit?

The natural sounds and rhythms of language were being disrupted by the rules of written English.

And then, this nugget like a throwaway comment from a bitter tongue –

'the a priori presumption being that the written word is of paramount worth the assumption being that the mechanisms of codification and transliteration of our rhythms periods commas semicolons have anything (whatsoever) to do with our paralinguistic choreographies to thus delegate the orality of my nation and its transcription to a para place removed from equal symbolic even orthographic consideration is to put us in our place illiterates illegitimates iterate' (Cole, 2006, p. 21).

I began to think about my students
and the ways in which they
interacted,
communicated,
made meaning and
shared their thoughts,
their stories,
themselves.
And then finally,

'The idea of capital versus small letters as being reflection of the world is a way of 'class'ifying words casteing them and those who use them differentially it is a way of playing with value and with naming' (Cole, 2006, p. 21).

I would hope given the audience **of this here performance**

the consistent and undeviating use of lower case I for Indigenous in *The Australian* newspaper is used to specifically caste and classify;

to debase and degrade –

to differentiate and dehumanise the Indigenous person.

For we as English teachers know,

a proper noun,

a naming word should be capitalised and yet,

every single mention of Indigenous in The Australian is lower case

on purpose.

SO TELL ME ABOUT STANDARD AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH.

Tell me about **these rules that aren't rules that cannot be broken but be broken on the daily**.

And yet, our kids, *but not just our kids*, Australia is consistently told that First Nations kids are not achieving the National Minimum Standard in Reading and Writing.

Every year in the Closing the Gap reports we are told and told again – the words of failure.

It was interesting to hear Peter Freebody (2021) speak yesterday to the deficits of NAPLAN testing and the Indigenous child and ask the question: **just who is in the red? Who is failing?**

The use of the term, **Standard**, is politically motivated;

it acts as a mode of gatekeeping that enables some to be considered to *as speaking the standard* and others to be deemed as *speaking non-standard*.

And it is always interesting to consider that English and more specifically **Standard Australian English is not the official language of Australia**; but is considered the common language.

That ACARA, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, who develops and produces the Australian Curriculum,

the guiding three-dimensional curriculum

for **ALL** Australians states that

Standard Australian English is 'the variety of spoken and written English language in Australia used in more formal settings such as for official or public

purposes, and recorded in dictionaries, style guides and grammars' (ACARA, 2022).

Cynical Melitta looks at this definition and asks –

What about those that don't readily engage on the daily in more formal settings?

What about those who are not readily engaging in official or public purposes?

The definition truly highlights the neoliberal ideology held within government. I have written elsewhere about the issues I have with the notion of government clearly stating that targets and goals are set to gain a return in investment and that the primary goal of schooling is to be an active and contributing member of society in the workplace (Hogarth, 2020).

What a White, stale, able bodied and male view of the world.

It already dismisses a significant number of the Australian population based on gender and we haven't even begun to look at the issues of race or class.

And yet,

the little i

used in *The Australian*

when it brings out the yearly reports continues the narrative of lacking to the extent that we are not even the name of a collective group.

It illustrates there is power in language.

The power of the coloniser within colonial Australia is clear **when we consider how central to the teaching and learning and schooling in Australia is the privileging of Standard Australian English**.

Prior to 1788,

the peoples and the lands of this country were abound with languages.

That was until the coloniser exerted their power and *insisted on a supposedly monolingual society* ***despite being an amalgamation of various Englishes***.

Quintessential to maintaining the status quo and assumed power of the coloniser is English.

The contradiction is that **every day on the daily, the wider Australian community are breaking the rules.**

THERE IS NO STANDARD AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH.

In my paper in 2019, I questioned why Standard Australian English was the only means of communication? (Hogarth, 2019).

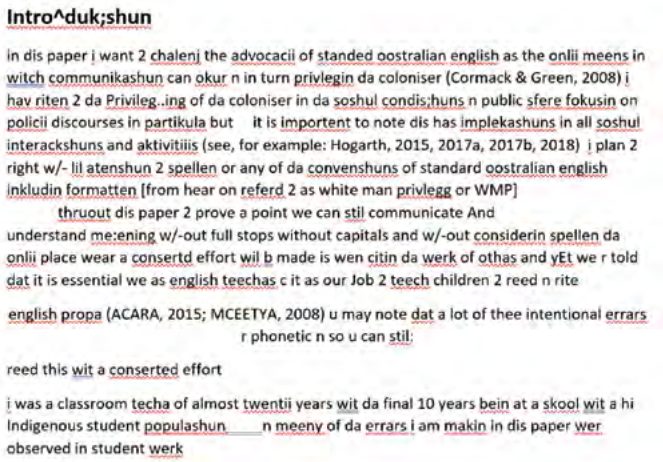
Inspired by the work of Cole (2006), in this paper, I looked to push the boundaries –

I ignored punctuation,

I played with formatting,

I spelt phonetically and tried to replicate the very errors I had seen throughout my 20 years as a classroom teacher.

WORD had a heart attack as you can see (Figure 1).



Intro^duk;shun

in dis paper i want 2 chalenj the advocacii of standed oostralian english as the onlii meens in witch communikashun can okur n in turn privlegin da coloniser (Cormack & Green, 2008) i hav riten 2 da Privileg..ing of da coloniser in da soshul condis;huns n public sfere fokusin on policii discourses in partikula but it is importent to note dis has implekashuns in all soshul interackshuns and aktivitiiis (see, for example: Hogarth, 2015, 2017a, 2017b, 2018) i plan 2 right w/- lil atenshun 2 spellen or any of da convenshuns of standard oostralian english inkludin formatten [from hear on referd 2 as white man privlegg or WMP]

thruout dis paper 2 prove a point we can stil communicate And understand me:ening w/-out full stops without capitals and w/-out considerin spellen da onlii place wear a consertd effort wil b made is wen citin da werk of othas and yEt we r told dat it is essential we as english teechas c it as our Job 2 teech children 2 reed n rite

english propa (ACARA, 2015; MCEETYA, 2008) u may note dat a lot of thee intentional errars r phonetic n so u can stil:

reed this wit a conserted effort

i was a classroom techa of almost twentii years wit da final 10 years bein at a skool wit a hi Indigenous student populashun n meeny of da errars i am makin in dis paper wer observed in student werk

Figure 1. Screenshot of Word demonstrating the identification of errors

It tried to correct my errors and I would be forced to stop and go back and reassert the error and I questioned just what is it we are actually assessing when we ask our students to submit their assessment using Word?

It is obvious there are errors – it is like we are asking and assessing the students as copyeditors of their own work rather than writers or dare I say it, their ability to use word processing software as opposed to their mastery of the English language.

My point is **U CAN STiL READ DIS**.

When I wrote this paper, I looked for inspiration from my lived experience as a classroom teacher and popular culture being readily used by our young people as a means of communication.

We need only think of the memes we consistently see on social media where we are told we have a strong mind if we can decode a simple message that substitutes letters for numbers or an affirmation that we are indeed in the correct career!

What this proves is that there is still the opportunity for making meaning, it is not simply a decoding exercise when we don't use Standard Australian English.

We are still able to read these types of texts because we are still able to engage with and activate prior knowledge to make sense of the text.

AND YES,

as an English classroom teacher,

I know this is because we hold a basic foundation in the English language

BUT

that is not my argument here,

in this presentation,

my focus is on the D student whose use of Standard Australian English delegates them to a fail before they even start.

My argument is seeking ways in which we can shift that deficit mindset and provide opportunity for students to believe in themselves.

My argument is to change the name of the very subject because we can!

I also looked at the social context and wondered how if we are seeking for students to be able to spell correctly, how do we as English teachers feel when advertisers decide to play with words as illustrated in the Qukes ad.

Playing on the consonant digraph, the advertisement plays with words and demonstrates to our young people how not to spell!

How do we respond if one of our students writes

quekumba

like so if the phonetic spelling of such a word is being advocated for on television?

What kinds of conflicting information are we giving our students?

And going back to Cole's work (2006) and the lyrical dimensions of his writing, I could not go pass Slam Poetry and how it illustrates the power of the spoken word.

How do you write this?

DO you focus on punctuation or spelling or is the power in the presentation in the pauses, the flow, the message within the text?

Do we focus on their use of Standard Australian English?

Do we focus on her correct use of grammatically appropriate sentences?

Or is it her use of language?

Or is it Her ability to transmit and communicate her story, our story?

And so I must admit I was surprised when Reviewer 2 of my paper (2019) stated that my use of free verse throughout the paper 'simply becomes annoying' and later asserted in their feedback that,

'while it is true that SAE is a colonizing language/ dialect that supports power dominance of white peoples over Indigenous peoples in Australia, for the current Australian system, the dominance of SAE is not going to be shifted any time soon'.

THIS WAS IT!!

– no truer words of power and privilege have I heard before,

that while SAE supports power dominance of white peoples over Indigenous peoples in Australia,

it was not leaving;

they are not leaving and so why are you speaking?

Your argument is void

because

THIS WILL NOT CHANGE.

And yet, as evident today

I still speak;

I am still here.

I am still questioning

and

I am still challenging

the notion of a Standard Australian English as opposed to Englishes and furthermore, advocate for change within subject English.

The coloniser may very well wish to assert their power through the belief of a monolingual society but colonial Australia **has never been monolingual**.

Indeed, in my ponderings and disruption and critique, I have begun really problematising the name of the subject.

A couple of years ago I went to Twitter to ask – what is the name of subject English in your education system?

You see, to me as I was trying to theorise my positioning, that I began really quizzing – the name.

It wasn't enough that First Nations peoples had been dispossessed of their lands, their children stolen BUT also, their languages were silenced and it was dictated within the government controlled missions that English should be spoken; a supposedly superior language; the language of the oppressor and just to make sure you didn't know who the oppressor was – let's call that subject English!

There has never been a 'pure' English nor a standard Australian English in colonial Australia.

Our curriculum makes this explicit when we ask students to explore the evolution of the language.

And so, I am left asking – is subject English just another act of assimilation?

Can it be another name?

In my abstract I proffer some alternative names that remove the oppressor's stance of superiority such as Languages, literacy and communication as found in the Welsh Curriculum or how about, simply, Language Arts? As Juliet asks, 'What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet' and so, by simply changing the name – **it does not change the situation** but it is a small step to change.

Our challenge as classroom teachers and academics is to consistently reflect on the world as it is and ask – why is this so?

It is about ensuring us ***on the periphery and margins*** can begin to actively engage in and with those in the centre.

And so to conclude, You didn't think you got to be the inactive participant in this exchange, did you?! The theme of this conference is Challenge and Change.

By the end of today, the Australian Curriculum Review concludes but when completing your submissions, how many of you looked at the title of subject English and felt uncomfortable in the virtue signalling?

How many of you looked and responded to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures component of subject English?

Or better still responded to the Cross Curriculum section explicitly?

Or how many of you didn't even think it was part of your role as a classroom teacher?

This is the challenge – there are less than 2% of the Australian teaching workforce that is Indigenous.

In Initial Teacher Education, there is less than 15 of us working in the space nationally. The Indigenous population may be 3% of the total Australian population but almost 50% of our population are under the age of 25 and Indigenous kids make up more than 6% of the total student population. With this in mind, my challenge to you is this:

What are you going to change; in your teaching practice; in your daily ways; in your lives to help shift that D student mindset, to re-engage the disengaged and to acknowledge, recognise and celebrate the amazing bounty of funds of knowledge our children and young people bring into your classrooms, schools and educational spaces?

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Change and Challenge

Why Shakespeare Should Change as Well as Challenge

Laurie Johnson, University of Southern Queensland

Abstract: There is a persistent view that reading Shakespeare's writings is automatically 'good' for student learning, and its persistence can be traced back to the beginnings of the modern education system as a tool of British imperialism. This article argues that his plays challenge audiences and readers in ways that can represent barriers to learning. In overcoming these barriers, the students can complete valuable lessons on how to learn. One way to do this, it is suggested, is by developing preliminary exercises based on developing plays as adaptations of existing stories and formats rather than as self-contained pieces of spontaneous artistic creation. Students can then compare their own products with Shakespeare's adaptations of the same stories, with the goal being to discover Shakespeare's writing in the process of change.

Keywords: Shakespeare, literature, learning

Introduction

This paper stems from one that I had the privilege of presenting as a keynote address to the combined conference of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) and the Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA) in 2021. It is now customary to note that having the conference in 2021 of course means it was virtual and the presentations were delivered via Zoom or pre-recorded and streamed online. Presciently, the organisers ran with the theme of 'Challenge and Change', with the virtual format presenting plenty of challenges for speakers and audiences alike, mirroring the experiences of educators at all levels over the last two years. As these new demands for fully online or at least digitally integrated modes of delivery and engagement confront all aspects of our working lives, many educators feel that it is necessary to radically change the way they plan, prepare, and deliver content, as well as to meet and collaborate with colleagues. My argument here is that English teachers have long been accustomed to changing their methods when confronted with that which seems fixed or unchanging, since this is how the works of William Shakespeare have traditionally been seen for nearly two centuries, since the beginnings of the modern education system.

In other words, teaching Shakespeare tends to make us change the way we teach. This tendency can be also recognised in the way we respond to other challenges, such as the need to move to teaching and working online. At moments of widespread transition and challenge like our own present moment, we tend to lose sight of the role of digital tools as tools. Rather than changing our tools to fit our teaching, we have rather quickly accepted that it is our role to change our teaching to fit these tools. Technological determinism has become a model for working practice rather than a theory of social change (Selwyn, 2016, pp. 37–39). The same has been true, I argue, of the use of Shakespeare in English curricula. The plays can seem as foreign to the modes of reading we apply to novels and other kinds of text as do new digital platforms to classroom practice. Faced with these challenges, teachers are often compelled to change their own approach to teaching the texts or, simply, to change the text itself, swapping out the play for an adaptation or 'translation' of the play. My goal here is to suggest how and why educators can embrace the challenge of teaching Shakespeare by enabling the students to see the text as a change process and not a fixed set of Shakespeare's 'true' meanings.

Having initially trained as a secondary English teacher, I have long been interested in feeding back what I've learned from researching Shakespeare and the early modern theatre into lessons that I think may be of value to teachers in both the University sector and the school system.

These suggestions are not intended to supplant an old set of truths with a new one; rather, they are offered in the spirit of knowledge exchange with readers who I presume share my sense of the fundamental reasons for pursuing the various approaches we explore in our own practice. I hope the following will serve as an outline of some common ground for those of us who continue to adapt Shakespeare to and in learning situations. With this, I also spell out two key terms: 'adapting' and 'learning'. I suspect readers will broadly agree with me on wanting to promote the second term, learning, by creating situations and modes of engagement with the Shakespeare text that enable students to learn rather than those in which students are simply force fed on a diet of Shakespeare facts, definitions, or truisms. Perhaps however not everybody will be as familiar with the idea that what we all do when we use Shakespeare in these various learning situations could be called 'adaptation'. I contend that when we adapt ourselves and our students to suit 'the play', it ceases to be a tool with which learning can take place, but if we treat the play as adaptation, we create active engagement for students not only with the text but with the change process itself.

ShakesFear and the imperial Bard

I referred above to students being 'force fed' on Shakespeare facts. While educators may want to avoid creating the impression that this is what they are doing to their students, it is nevertheless a recognised and widespread phenomenon that many students and indeed many teachers experience the feeling that Shakespeare is forced upon them, and that the plays have universal truths in them that it is the responsibility of the teacher to convey. A name has even been given to the apprehension such sentiments can evoke: 'ShakesFear' (Cohen, 2007). In the book that names this phenomenon, Cohen (2007) draws on many years of experience as an acclaimed Shakespeare educator and trainer, to propose strategies for curing ShakesFear for student and teacher alike. His goal is ultimately to show that studying Shakespeare need not be boring, which is a great start toward learning with Shakespeare. Yet I want to sound a note of caution about the justifications Cohen uses to prepare the reader for acknowledging and then overcoming the perception that Shakespeare is boring.

Cohen begins by addressing what he calls 'the seven deadly preconceptions' that obstruct rather than promote the teaching of Shakespeare's plays. The first of these, which underscores the rest, is the assumption that 'Shakespeare's works are long poems' (p. 3). To correct this notion, Cohen asserts that in teaching Shakespeare's plays as poetry we ignore the fact that 'he was a playwright first, a poet second'. The remaining preconceptions, such as Shakespeare's works having definitive interpretations, or really being deep philosophical treatises, or simply being difficult to understand are all ultimately expressions of this notion that the plays are really poetry. By correcting the idea that Shakespeare was mainly a poet, Cohen does away with any hang-ups about treating Shakespeare as a great writer, to allow students and performers free rein to focus on putting the 'play' back into playwright, and therefore to treat the texts as cues to performance rather than literary masterpieces.

My goal is not to reinstate Shakespeare the poet. I share Cohen's frustration with this figure, but then I do not believe we can dispense with the poet so easily either. It is important to keep in mind that the iconic figure of Shakespeare as 'the Bard' has its roots in attempts by early editors of Shakespeare's works to detach the playwright from the player. Ever since Nicholas Rowe published *Some Account of the Life &c. of Mr William Shakespear* (1709), to accompany an edition of the plays, biographies of Shakespeare have been written with a view to supporting a particularly literary version of his life.

Samuel Johnson followed Rowe's lead in linking criticism to biography with a book on the *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets* (1781), presenting the life stories of 52 major English poets to cement the notion that some knowledge about an author's life is essential to understanding their art. Shakespeare was not in fact included among the poets that Johnson covered in this book, not because Johnson thought Shakespeare to be unworthy of inclusion among the eminent English poets but because he felt Shakespeare to be *pre-eminent*. Johnson had previously released his own edition of Shakespeare's plays in 1765 and he explained in the 'Preface' to this edition that Shakespeare had by that time begun 'to assume the dignity of an ancient' who had 'long outlived his century' (Johnson, 1765, f. A2r). In *Lives*, then, it was clear that he measured the eminence of each poet against Shakespeare's standards.

By the end of the eighteenth century, a great poet and scholar in his own right, Samuel Taylor Coleridge moved to lay claim to Shakespeare's plays being principally the domain of the literary scholar, stating in one of his famous lectures that the plays of

Shakespeare should never be sullied with the stage since they were most perfectly brought to life when read in private by the astute-minded reader, 'to find his proper place in the heart and in the closet' (Coleridge, 1969, p. 563). Johnson set out to establish the versions of the plays that were the most authoritative, and now Coleridge was confirming once and for all that this was a task for literary criticism.

To some extent, the arguments of Rowe, Johnson, Coleridge, and others like them were strengthened by the simple fact that ever since playing had been allowed again on the public stage, after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Shakespeare's plays had been thoroughly rewritten by William Davenant and other stage entrepreneurs. In the hands of Davenant, for example, *Macbeth* was transformed into a spectacular operatic production that John Downes described in 1673 as 'being dressed in all its Finery, as now Cloath's, new Scenes, Machines, as flyings for the Witches; with all the Singing and Dancing in it' (qtd. in Johnson, 2016, p. 8; Wilders, 2004, p. 11). Even the great actor David Garrick's attempt to produce the play in 1744 'as written by Shakespeare' relied on a somewhat amended version suited to his own acting style and diminutive stature – for example, he deleted the whole of the scene in which the King is critiqued as being a 'dwarfish thief' (Prescott, 2013, p. 38). Indeed, it was in response to Garrick's version that his good friend Samuel Johnson had initially determined that it would be finally up to those trained in the art of poetry and not those who bellowed on the stage to restore Shakespeare's true words to publication.

This may sound like debates over Shakespeare's status as writer for page or for stage are a thing of the past. On the contrary, I mention the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century iterations of these debates as a reminder that they are not new, and not easily resolved. When Cohen writes, then, that Shakesfear can be cured by first correcting the misconception that Shakespeare wrote plays as poetry, he is attempting to overturn three centuries of dominant literary criticism of Shakespeare, some versions of which have indeed gone so far as to say that Shakespeare's words were not meant to be ruined by actors. Yet I do feel that Cohen's solution involves overcorrection by trying to reinstate the priority of the stage. This seems to me a worthy strategy if the primary goal is simply to overcome obstacles that prevent many people from even wanting to read, teach, or study any Shakespeare text. By insisting that Shakespeare was 'first a playwright', however, we might not return to the literary merits of the plays. Should this even matter? From the perspective of somebody who teaches English Literature, I want to say 'of course, yes, it matters', but not because I want to protect the claim literary critics have had over Shakespeare's identity for several hundred years. In part it matters, I think, because it is justified by an appeal to an alternative biography, a different version of who and what Shakespeare was *really*. We are learning much about Shakespeare's life and that of his contemporaries, and simply reversing the polarity of poet and playwright does not, I think, help set the story straight.

In part, it also matters because the rise of Shakespeare's canonical status for English Literature is a key pillar in the evolution of the modern education system. Matthew Arnold, one of the founding figures behind the development of the modern state-run school system, was also Professor of Poetry at Oxford University, and was fundamentally committed to the proposition that poetry contained intrinsic educational value. In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Arnold wrote about the importance of staving off the decline into anarchy, such as had been seen in revolutionary France a century earlier. He felt civilization could be saved by exposing ordinary citizens to the culture of what he called 'sweetness and light', a phrase that Jonathan Swift coined, incidentally, around the same time that Rowe was claiming Shakespeare for the literati (Arnold, 1869, p. 23). 'Sweetness and light' refers to writing that contains in equal parts both beauty and intelligence, and it will be no surprise to find that Arnold considered Shakespeare to be a prime example of this power of poetry to please the senses and improve the mind. Now, it is true that the education system has changed much since Arnold's vision of compelling the masses to read poetry in order to prevent the decline of civilization, but I argue that there remains to this day some vestiges of Arnold's initial beliefs, especially when it comes to questions about the continued value of Shakespeare's plays in English curricula. There is a widespread and persistent view that Shakespeare's plays are inherently educative and that reading them will automatically be good for students (for a recent version of this, see Gibson, 2016, p. 4; and for an account of the centrality of this argument in modern education policy, see Olive, 2013, pp. 21–48). Even if the educators and policy-makers who express this view may not use Arnold's exact words, the view is nevertheless the same one.

My reason for providing this brief history lesson is

to demonstrate that the very thing keeping Shakespeare ensconced in the curriculum is also the very thing that Cohen describes as a root cause of ShakesFear – the assumption that his plays are the pinnacle of great poetry and should be read as such. The key issue here, from an educational perspective, is that the purpose of having Shakespeare on the curriculum, *pace* sweetness and light, is thus to expose the masses to his words, not to let them question or even, heaven forfend, play around with them. Thus, there is a long standing tradition in the teaching of Shakespeare that positions the teacher as little more than a subject supposed to know what Shakespeare's words mean, that is to say, to validate what literary critics (aligned with their particular biographical version of Shakespeare) have claimed that Shakespeare meant. I agree with Cohen, then, that the preconception of Shakespeare as poet can be an obstacle to any active engagement with the texts, but for me the problem is not Shakespeare being a poet; rather, it is Shakespeare being offered up as an essential pathway to cultural competency, a rite of passage through which all school students must pass on the road to citizenship. Let us not forget that the citizenship dreamed of in Arnold's roadmap for universal education was not at all universal: it was a map he placed squarely over the top of the British class system and went hand in glove with the planting of the English language in all the far-flung corners of the Empire. The student who is simply taught to *comprehend* the plays in terms of what Shakespeare meant is learning only to echo the residual vestiges of that same agenda.

Shakespeare's meaning as a barrier to learning

Allow me to demonstrate that teaching with this focus on Shakespeare's meaning need not take the form of authority-based, teacher-centred direct lecturing and yet it could still lead to a barrier to genuine learning. There are many teaching strategies that might be developed as student-focused or activity-based learning experiences, but where the focus on Shakespeare's meaning will still represent more of an obstacle to student learning compared to any text that students are free to interpret openly. To illustrate this point, I turn to a standard suite of lessons drawn from the 'reading in the content area' teaching methods in which I was trained in the 1980s and which are still included in resource guides for teachers to this day (Morris and Stewart-Dore, 1984). The "content area" approach focuses on learning with authentic texts rather than relying on extended instruction, which in English and Literature lesson design involves creating student-focused activities that allow students to engage at increasingly sophisticated levels with complex texts, for example:

1. students read a text or part of a text (independently, or in class readings, but the approach presumes the students have attempted to read the text prior to undertaking the engagement activities);
2. basic comprehension or recall of key elements of the text is tested (such as through a cloze exercise in which a passage of text is presented with selected key words blanked out and students need to attempt to fill in the blank spaces to demonstrate understanding of or memory of the original);
3. students then complete worksheets involving three-level questions to achieve a higher cognitive engagement with the text;
4. finally, students attempt a writing exercise to demonstrate understanding of the text (such as by writing a missing scene).

In the case of even a particularly challenging novel like *Turn of the Screw* by Henry James, for example, students can be expected to work through these activities and then be prepared in the final stage to demonstrate their understanding of the text while exercising the free play of their imagination in an activity that involves writing an extra short chapter that follows the death of Miles. Each student will need to decide whether the extra scene would provide an answer to the novel's final puzzle: did Miles die at the hands of the Governess? Or was his fragile heart stopped by the menacing spirit of Quint? Will the students feel the need to provide closure by completing the frame narrative, and therefore present a definitive answer to these questions, or will they prefer to leave this puzzle unresolved and thus show technical understanding of the reasons why James opted for an open-ended twist? In the case of the more advanced and creatively-minded students, will they propose an alternative ending altogether, inventing a new twist of their own?

I have taught *Turn of the Screw* using this same progression in English Literature courses at University of Southern Queensland and before that at University of Queensland, and I do think that the students transition quickly from basic comprehension to imaginative engagement using these activities, reaching a point at which I am confident they can show they are learning

by the end of the sequence. Yet when attempting a similar lesson sequence with Shakespeare's plays, only a select few students have managed to reach the final stage and demonstrate both understanding of the text and a willingness to apply that knowledge creatively. For the vast majority, the text posed far too many obstacles to allow them to be guided by such activities to progress beyond explicit comprehension, while some students will at least attempt to develop interpretations based on aspects of the text that might appear to be delving beneath the surface of the text but which are ultimately only explanations of plot elements, as for example when they use claims about character motivation to describe why certain events happen in the narrative.

To some extent the difficulties faced by students is indeed a consequence of the age of these plays. English as a language has changed a great deal in the last 400 years. To reinforce this point, consider this cloze exercise for one of the most famous speeches not only in all of Shakespeare but in the history of English literature:

> To be, or not to be, that is the [(1)],
> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The [(2)] and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them. To die, to [(3)] –
> No more – and by a sleep to say we end
> The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
> That [(4)] is heir to? 'Tis a consummation
> Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep;
> To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the [(5)],
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
> When we have shuffled off this mortal [(6)]
> Must give us pause. There's the respect
> That makes calamity of so long life.
> For who would [(7)] the whips and scorns of time,
> The oppressor's wrong, the poor man's [(8)],
> The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,
> The insolence of office, and the spurns
> That patient merit of the [(9)] takes,
> When he himself might his quietus make
> With a bare [(10)]? Who would these fardels bear,
> To grunt and sweat under a weary life?

The passage is, of course, from *Hamlet* (3.1.262-83). Yet I should ask, is it really 'of course'? I suspect that many of us in academia have rather become a little too familiar with the assumption that everybody in the English-speaking world – and indeed as I have heard many people claim, even everybody beyond the Anglophone world – will know the opening line of this speech and that it comes from *Hamlet*. There is nothing 'of course' at all about assumed knowledge and we put our students in an invidious position when we design class instruments on the basis that all of them have the same inherited cultural baggage.

Suppose, then, we assume even after the students have read through this passage that we may still need to use the objective version of the cloze exercise by supplying the missing words in a list:

Bear	Question
Bodkin	Rub
Coil	Sleep
Contumely	Slings
Flesh	Unworthy

The first answer might seem relatively easy, since the first clause is posed as a 'question', after all. The second should be easy enough given that it pairs with a plural and is the only obviously plural term on the list, so 'slings' can also be crossed off. Applying the strategies demanded of the student by a cloze exercise, to recall or at least formulate answers based on semantic context and sentence structure, the task is so far enabling the student to ease their way into a confident reading position with a Shakespearean text. The third word can also be figured out based on the context, since the same word is repeated for emphasis in the next clause following the parenthetic dash, and indeed the whole phrase is repeated a few lines further below as well, so 'sleep'. By locking in 'sleep', the student also manages to remove the only other word that might seem reasonable as a potential answer other than 'flesh' for the fourth word, so they figure out the answer for that one as well.

What about the fifth word? From the position in the sentence, it should be evident that this needs to be a noun, but which of the remaining words are nouns? Each of 'bear', 'coil', and 'rub' could qualify as nouns with which most students will be familiar. Most should also know 'unworthy' as an adjective, shall we suppose, and so this word can be disqualified. Yet I will also ask, what of 'bodkin' and 'contumely'? Students would at this point be required to consult a historical dictionary like the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which will give them the definitions of these words in Shakespeare's time as 'knife' (OED, 'bodkin, n'.) and 'insult' (OED, 'contumely, n'.) so that adds two more nouns to the list of possible answers. In fact, one of these nouns may still justifiably be missed since it does appear to have the form of an adverb ('contumely' ends, that is,

in –ly). Even if we discount these two nouns from the students' thinking on the basis that they will not be familiar words and so may not fit within the assumed knowledge of semantic context on which the cloze exercise operates, there is also the complication that the three simplest words likely to fit this slot are also potentially verbs (OED, 'bear, v.1', 'coil, v.1–v.6', 'rub, v.1–v.3'.). Looking ahead to the remaining slots in the exercise, any of these verb forms could also feasibly fit where the one obvious verb is positioned, ahead of 'whips and scorns of time' (a whip, after all, needs to be carried, to be coiled before it is unleashed, and rubbed to stay aged and weathered).

Another complication is that 'bodkin' and 'contumely' are not the only words with a peculiarly early modern meaning in this list. Anybody who has ever tried to explain 'shuffle off this mortal coil' by using the image of a spiral or spring misses the point that the word did not acquire this meaning until after Shakespeare's death, so far as we know. There is instead a great deal of written evidence that 'coil' in Shakespeare's lifetime meant a noisy business, so it may be that in this soliloquy death is being imagined as the departure from a noisy place such as, shall I suggest, a performance in a theatre (OED, 'coil, n.2')? This would certainly not be the only example of life or death being described by Shakespeare using the analogy of the stage; the men and women are merely players, after all. 'Rub' also has a specific meaning derived from the sport of bowls, very popular in Shakespeare's time but played on not always reliably flat surfaces like the modern manicured lawn bowling greens: the rub was the term for the unevenness of a surface causing a bowl to follow a path despite its own inherent bias (OED, 'rub, n.1.2a'.). There remains an echo of this meaning in the metaphorical 'rub of the green'. If students did not know to look for old meanings for these more common words, then, they would miss these important senses of the terms that make up key elements of this speech.

There is thus a difficulty that the age of the plays presents to even this crucial first level of comprehension. Yet as I hope this one example has demonstrated, the difficulty of the language is partly that even in their historical sense, the words are rich with metaphorical double-meanings as well. I will go even further, to point out that in addition to the historical meanings of these terms, through which much of this added figurative complexity can be made known to the students, there are a range of topical readings that could also be revealed through examination of contextual information. To take but one small example: the 'to be or not to be' speech contains a curious reference to 'the law's delay', curious since at no point prior to this in the play is there any concern expressed over a delay in law. Hamlet has been more concerned with the haste of his mother's remarriage and the speed with which his uncle has been made both his stepfather and King, through a swift re-election. The reference can be explained using additional relevant contextual information, as the Elizabethan judge named Sir Julius Caesar was a target for many jokes in Shakespeare's plays (Johnson, 2013, p. 251). Caesar was the most likely target for a reference here to the 'poor man's contumely' since he was the lead judge of the Court of Requests, also known as 'the Poor Man's Court' due to his complaints about delays forced on him by being overruled in the Court of Common Pleas and at the Queen's Bench a year before Hamlet was performed at the Globe. While I think this is an important added dimension to the text, what chance any student being able to make these same connections, though, unless they are provided in a lecture, reading, or fact sheet? Such contextual material can inform comprehension but further diminishes the students' ability to learn by bringing their own reading into play.

Participating in adaptation along with Shakespeare

Shakespeare thus *challenges* students in ways that exceed the ability of the student-focused exercises to lead them to more liberating learning experiences. In effect, the more we try to unlock the secrets of the text, and the more the texts challenge, the more we create barriers to genuine learning experiences and are forced to take on an educational strategy based on the teacher as authority rather than as facilitator or guide. What I am going to propose here is that the problem begins not with the preconception that the plays are poetry. I am a firm believer that they are indeed highly literary texts that also happen to have been written for the popular theatre. I do not believe that we need to decide one way or the other, that Shakespeare was a playwright first or a poet first. The problem begins, I suggest, when we decide to start with *the text* and try to move the students *toward* learning, only subsequently trying to step the students from comprehension to learning. The challenge of the texts will inevitably bog the students down at comprehension and perhaps they will progress to interpretation but only insofar as they will remain focused on what Shakespeare meant.

What if we flip the equation? Might we instead start with a learning experience that positions students as generators of new knowledge from which they can then be introduced to the Shakespeare text? One way to do this, I propose, is to consider a Shakespeare play as an adaptation of a scenario or story that poses far fewer challenges to begin with. This approach is valid in relation to the plays because this is in fact how plays originated in the early modern period. Almost all plays written at this time were based on popular historical stories, ballads, news stories, or poems (Bullough, 1975; Britton and Walter, 2018). Queensland students normally complete a module on adaptation prior to commencing the Shakespeare module and so they would be familiar with activities such as writing a fictional story based on a news story and will have covered analysis of adaptations of novels to film (see 'Unit 2. Intertextuality', Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority, General Senior Syllabus, *Literature, 2019*, v.1.4, pp. 21–24). As a caveat, then, I suggest a similar provision be put in place for students likely to be undertaking the learning exercise I propose here. Rather than start with the Shakespeare play, then, let the students first work to adapt a source text into a play with no contact yet with Shakespeare's version of the same story.

Take *Hamlet* again, for example, which was Shakespeare's retelling of the *Historie of Amleth*, a chronicle story of an ancient Danish prince whose uncle killed the King, married the Queen, and became King (Johnson, 2013, pp. 29–33). The prince pretends to be mad so the uncle would not see him as a threat, but eventually Amleth goes to England then returns and in an extreme act of violent revenge burns down the court, killing everybody in it. The story could be read in any of its early versions or could simply be distilled into a short plot summary from which the students could be tasked with developing the core elements of an Elizabethan revenge tragedy. In my experience, students generally cope well with defining a genre based on a description of core elements, and in this case they need not be expected to have already studied the form in any depth.

A worksheet may suffice, listing some core elements of Elizabethan revenge tragedy: there should be a ghost that compels the protagonist to pursue revenge; there should be plot twists that cause complications; there should be at least one, but preferably more than one, murder; there should be madness; there should be a tragic fall experienced by the protagonist; and the protagonist should be killed trying to gain revenge. There could be some information provided about dramatic five-act structure, but not essential. Alternatively, some information on Elizabethan playhouses might go well in helping students imagine not just story elements but formal features of plays, such as the size of playing companies, limits on stage effects, and so on. There is no specific suggested form these activities nor the background text should take, so long as the students are not yet tasked with reading the Shakespeare text.

Only after students have first produced their own adaptation or at least developed the core elements of one should they then be exposed to reading Shakespeare's play. The goal in reading the play will then be to allow the students to compare *their own* decisions with those Shakespeare appears to have made in adapting the same story for his play. What additional characters have the students introduced to the story in order to make it viable for the stage? Presumably they will immediately recognise the need to add a ghost, and this will mean when they read Shakespeare's play the early mention of the ghost will spark recognition. The ghost of old Hamlet will bear some resemblance to whatever ghost the students introduced in their version in order to meet the first generic convention. What other aspects of the source story will the students have changed in ways that enable direct comparison? For one thing, Amleth does travel to England and stays there long enough to mature physically and mentally, while sharpening his resolve to avenge his father's death, whereas Shakespeare collapses time for dramatic effect by having Hamlet secure passage back to Denmark on a pirate ship and sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern onto England without him. Will the students have recognised the need for a play to collapse historical action in this way? This possibility could be given to them in the initial information about the elements and structure of the drama.

In the source tale, there is no Ophelia, but Amleth's sanity is tested by an unnamed maiden. How will students adapt such an episode for their play, in which characters would need to be given a name? Will they perhaps recognise that stronger drama can be created by giving the maiden more than just a name? With the protagonist abandoning the woman, what may become of her in the students' adaptations of the tale? Moreover, adaptation to revenge tragedy will demand a different ending since Amleth survives and goes on to rule Denmark but the form used by the students will

require that the protagonist dies; how did the students have him killed off?

Compare the students' ideas on how to have the protagonist killed with Shakespeare's solution to the same generic requirement. I expect that the students will by this stage be able to recognise for themselves that the addition of Laertes to the character list is a change that Shakespeare makes in order to create a mirror revenge plot that will lead to the protagonist's death. There is an old spy in the source story, who is killed by Amleth while he is spying on the prince and his mother in her bedchamber, just like Polonius in Shakespeare's version, but by giving the old man a son (Laertes) Shakespeare creates a parallel revenge plot in which another man has a reason to avenge *his* father's death at the hands of the protagonist. This sets in motion the chain of events that culminates in the tragic death of the avenging central character, Hamlet. Importantly, students will be able to acknowledge that their solution is not the wrong one; rather, it is simply that Shakespeare came up with one answer to this generic requirement for his adaptation and the students came up with their own answers to addressing the same requirement.

Conclusion: using source studies in the curriculum

I have not sought to be too prescriptive about the strategy proposed here. Rather than develop a fully-formed package of specific resources and lesson plans, I hope instead to have put the basic template in place from which others will be able to work with the plays on their current text list to generate their own versions of this exercise without additional expense. The main sources of Shakespeare's plays are relatively well-known. Thanks to the extensive work of scholars like Geoffrey Bullough we have detailed lists of the stories and chronicles on which Shakespeare's plays are based. As Bullough (1975, vol. 8, p. 346) claimed, source studies can allow us to:

> glimpse the creative process in action as he took over, remade, rejected, adapted, or added to chosen or given materials. Indeed, I would claim that this is the best, and often the only, way open to us of watching Shakespeare the craftsman in his workshop.

Moreover, in the digital age, there is a new focus on source studies as a way of accessing early modern textuality with a depth and breadth hitherto impossible to achieve in the world of hard copy scholarship inhabited by Bullough. By the same token, the digital archive has become a rich resource for educators and students, with many sources readily available on the intenet. Thus, teachers should find few obstacles to obtaining open access versions of the stories that could form the basis of the exercise I propose here. Among the most popular Shakespeare plays used in the secondary curriculum, *Macbeth* can be read as an adaptation of the *Chronicles* of Raphael Holinshed (1577) and *Romeo and Juliet* can be compared with Arthur Brooke's poem (1562), *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet*, which is itself a verse translation of a story by Matteo Bandello.

Importantly, I wanted first of all to provide a sense of the scope and the history of the debates framing current approaches to the teaching of Shakespeare in English Literature. I am a strong believer in getting students to work with the plays *as plays* but also acknowledge that this need not be achieved by expecting English students to know how to be actors, a skill that requires extensive training in its own right. By thinking about what problems need to be solved by a playwright in adapting an existing story for the Elizabethan stage, students can participate in the process of change in which Shakespeare also participated more than four hundred years ago. Rather than position Shakespeare's plays as fixed containers of 'true' meaning, source studies enable readers to identify the writing process of the craftsman and by adapting the same sources before attempting to read the plays, students can position their own knowledge as a viable and valid point of comparison with the play. Taking ownership of their engagement with the play will in this way promote active learning alongside the Shakespeare text, with no fear of ShakesFear rearing its head.

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ENGLISH IN AUSTRALIA

The journal of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English

Call for Papers: *English in Australia* 58.2 (2023)

'Literary Studies & Literary Education'

'Due date for full manuscripts EXTENDED to May 31, 2023'

In issue 55.2 of *English in Australia*, Kuttainen and Hansen (2020) discussed the complex connections between the worlds of secondary English and university English, acknowledging that "the two systems generally do not talk to each other" (p. 43), and emphasized the importance of structural support for the local, idiosyncratic interactions that take place across the 'secondary-tertiary nexus'. In volume 58 we take up this call, offering the journal as a space for English educators in both secondary school and higher education contexts to speak to each other through research and scholarship.

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Writing with Dysgraphia

The Parkour of Writing with Dysgraphia

Elvira Kalenjuk, Monash University

Abstract: Teachers are obligated to support students with developmental writing disorders, referred to as dysgraphia, in line with policy and legislation related to disability. Dysgraphia is a relatively unknown writing disorder within English classrooms, with an estimated 3–5% of school-aged students bearing this hidden disability. Within the field of education, research on dysgraphia has always been limited, contributing to insufficient awareness within the teaching community. Consequently, students with dysgraphia may be required to morph into parkour-style athletes to keep pace with the writing demands of the classroom, navigating a range of obstacles. These include a lack of awareness about dysgraphia, or inadequate skills in handwriting, spelling or composition to keep pace with expectations. Students' writing productivity may also seem at odds with their appearance of academic potential and good intellect. However, increased awareness, coupled with the implementation of reasonable adjustments, can better support students with dysgraphia to make learning gains in the classroom.

Keywords: dysgraphia, reasonable adjustments, SLDs.

Introduction

Recently, there has been increased attention directed towards identifying, understanding and supporting students with specific learning disorders (SLDs) in Australia (AITSL, 2017, 2020; Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2019a, 2020b; Uebergang, 2020). This has included increased attention to dyslexia, a reading disorder, and dyscalculia, a mathematics disorder (APA, 2013). A lesser known SLD is dysgraphia, which is a disorder of writing that might present, for example, as difficulty with spelling, handwriting, or expressing ideas through written communication (Ashraf & Najam, 2020; AUSPELD, 2021; Berninger et al., 2019; Dyslexia-SPELD Foundation, 2020; SPELD, 2021). Teachers are required by the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for School Students with Disabilities (NCCD) (NCCD, 2021) and Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2017) to respond appropriately to students with SLDs. For example, the NCCD (2020) mandates that teachers address writing inequities within their classrooms by providing reasonable adjustments in consultation with carers (NCCD, 2021). These measures have been enacted to ensure that students with a range of learning disorders, also referred to as specific learning *disabilitie*s, have rightful access to education through adequate funding and intervention in line with relevant jurisprudence (cf. ACARA, 2022; Australian Government, 1992, 2005; Commonwealth of Australia, 2016; Department of Education Skills and Employment, 2021; Education Council, 2019; UNESCO, 1994).

Graham (2019) emphasises the importance of learning to write, which is a central feature of schooling. Writing proficiency enhances a student's performance in the English classroom and across other essential school subjects, enables participation in written communication, and equips the student for future success (Graham, 2019). Furthermore, writing fosters learning, expression, and critical thinking skills (Vue et al., 2016). Developing a positive identity as a writer is also important for enhancing self-esteem and confidence (Graham, 2019). However, students with dysgraphia may struggle with written tasks within the English classroom, hindering their sense of self as a writer and impacting self-efficacy (Berninger et al., 2019). According to the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental*

Disorders (DSM-5), a diagnosis of a

> specific learning disorder can have negative functional consequences across the lifespan, including lower academic attainment, higher rates of high school dropout, lower rates of postsecondary education, high levels of psychological distress and poorer overall mental health, higher rates of unemployment and under-employment, and lower incomes. School dropout and co-occurring depressive symptoms increase the risk for poor mental health outcomes, including suicidality, whereas high levels of social or emotional support predict better mental health outcomes. (APA, 2013, p. 73)

Accordingly, students with dysgraphia can attain improved academic, health and life outcomes with the right support. Nevertheless, a student's difficulties may be exacerbated in cases where dysgraphia remains hidden or undiagnosed (Craig et al., 2016; Rosenblum, 2018). Moreover, it is often assumed that students graduate primary school with a basic suite of writing skills. However, this is not necessarily the case, which may confuse some English teachers who might expect a higher level of writing competency among students in secondary schooling (Berninger et al., 2019). Therefore, students with significant writing difficulties face a range of barriers within the English classroom and may be required to perform akin to parkour-style athletes to keep up with the demands of secondary school writing expectations.

Parkour

Parkour is an underground extreme sport also known as *free running*, in which athletes traverse terrain through a combination of vaulting, dropping, and rolling (Ameel & Tani, 2012). This is often combined with tricks such as backflips or kicking (Ameel & Tani, 2012). Students with dysgraphia face a range of academic and psychological barriers and may become skilled at jumping, ducking, and weaving their way through the classroom as they attempt to keep pace with its writing demands (Gargot et al., 2020). Consequently, this paper will use the term parkour as a metaphor for both the hidden nature of dysgraphia and the degree of difficulty involved in tackling written tasks for students with dysgraphia.

Parkour, or *free running*, is an activity that originated in France as an underground movement to challenge and flex physical and mental stamina (Ameel & Tani, 2012; Clegg & Butryn, 2012). The French word *parcours* (journey) is a derivative of the word *parcourir* (to browse), which translates more accurately in English as *to go through* (Clegg & Butryn, 2012). Parkour was used as 'a system of training the mind and body to be agile and adaptive in any situation' (Clegg & Butryn, 2012, p. 38). To get a sense of what parkour entails, one might imagine obtaining a map of the local neighbourhood and drawing a line straight through the middle of it, with Point A as the starting place and Point B as the endpoint (Saville, 2008). The goal of parkour is to free run through this urban or rural setting, beginning at Point A and finishing at Point B in the fastest, most economical way imaginable (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011; Saville, 2008). Along the path, there will be obstacles that the free runner or *traceur* (tracer) will have to overcome, such as buildings, fences, waterways, playgrounds, or trees (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011). The parkour athlete must scale these buildings, jump fences, or climb trees (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011) to go through (*parcourir*) the environment. They must navigate their way through the territory by hurdling all the barriers along the marked path until they reach Point B (Saville, 2008). Intriguingly, there are no formal rules to parkour, which invites individual expression and enables athletes to find their own way through by problem-solving and risk-taking (Clegg & Butryn, 2012).

Similarly, students with dysgraphia who do not have strong support systems in place are left to find their own way through classroom tasks using these problem-solving and risk-taking skills. As writing, from understanding the task requirements to planning, composing, and editing, is difficult, students use a range of strategies to either avoid or tackle the writing process. Some students may feel worried about experiencing repeated failure or how others in the class perceive their writing, as peer acceptance is an influencing factor (Bonifacci et al., 2020). A focus on engaging students in writing practice can also be a logistical challenge for any teacher when a specific learning disorder is present. This paper therefore aims to support Australian teachers to better understand and support students with dysgraphia.

Definitions of dysgraphia

Dysgraphia is an umbrella term used to describe a range of writing disorders that occur during childhood development (Asselborn et al., 2020; Chung et al., 2020). Most basically, Flower and Hayes (1981) asserted that writing involves several processes, including planning, translating, and reviewing. In

later iterations, these aspects have been described as transcription (handwriting, typing, spelling), text generation (composition), and executive function (planning, goal setting, monitoring, revising, editing), with memory and attention playing important roles (Swanson et al., 2013). Significant writing difficulties can occur when any or all aspects of writing, including associated processes such as memory are impaired. However, identifying dysgraphia can be a contentious endeavour, with varying definitions that are both country- and field-dependent. Currently, there is an absence of an international consensus on the precise definition of dysgraphia (Berninger et al., 2015; Chung & Patel, 2015; Döhla & Heim, 2016; Kalenjuk et al., 2022). Significantly, the DSM-5 does not include the term dysgraphia in its reference to SLD in written expression, compounding the confusion (APA, 2013). Rather, there is a strict adherence to writing impairments confined to:

- spelling accuracy
- grammar accuracy
- punctuation accuracy
- clarity or organisation of written expression (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Australia's peak body for specific learning disorders, the Australian Federation of SPELD Associations (AUSPELD), refers to dysgraphia as SLD in written expression (AUSPELD, 2018). This differs from researchers in the USA, who view dysgraphia as a sub-word-level disorder, for example as a handwriting deficit (e.g., Alstad et al., 2015). In this paper, the term dysgraphia refers to all SLDs in writing, including the transcription skills of handwriting, typing, and spelling. It also refers to significant difficulties with composition, including generating ideas, accurately transferring ideas from head to paper, planning for writing, using correct grammar or punctuation, editing, and other aspects of writing difficulty (Chung et al., 2020; Thielking & Terjesen, 2017).

Dysgraphia is a neurodevelopmental disorder (Büber et al., 2020; Chordia et al., 2019) classified on a spectrum of difficulty from mild or moderate to severe (APA, 2013). In Australia, the rates of SLDs are estimated at 3–5% (Uebergang, 2020). Based on population figures, dysgraphia might therefore affect as many as 1.25 million Australians (ABS, 2021; Kalenjuk et al., 2022). However, the exact rates of national prevalence are unknown (Thielking & Terjesen, 2017; Westwood, 2017).

Internationally, the figures vary. According to the diagnostic nomenclature, SLDs impact 5–15% of the school-aged population across reading, writing, and mathematics (APA, 2013, p. 70). However, with specific reference to writing, research asserts that writing disorders affect 7–15% of the population (Döhla & Heim, 2016; Galli et al., 2019; Hopcan et al., 2019). Other research indicates that the percentages are closer to 10–30% of the school-aged population (Hen-Herbst & Rosenblum, 2019). The higher international rates reflect the probable underestimation of the number of students with a writing disorder in Australian schools (Kalenjuk et al., 2022), although this is difficult to ascertain without a consistent definition of dysgraphia.

Notwithstanding its rates of prevalence, dysgraphia lingers largely undetected within the English classroom and beyond (AUSPELD, 2018). This is partly attributed to students with dysgraphia frequently performing well in many other areas of curriculum, as the condition is unrelated to intelligence (APA, 2013; Westwood, 2017). Furthermore, despite the increased attention given to SLDs, many teachers are yet to become aware of dysgraphia or to understand how to recognise and address this condition in the classroom (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016; Kalenjuk et al., 2022; Nayton, 2015; Squelch, 2015; Uebergang, 2020; Westwood, 2017).

To compound this issue, McCloskey and Rapp (2017) have noted the inadequate international research on dysgraphia, which contributes to the lack of awareness about it across the education community. A recent Australian study has reiterated the limited international research output on dysgraphia (Kalenjuk et al., 2022). Despite locating two Australian papers, the authors found that there had been no Australian studies conducted on dysgraphia related to children, parents or teachers in the field of education within the last five years, as one of the papers located had a tangential focus and the other related to research within a parallel field (Kalenjuk et al., 2022).

A trademark sign of dysgraphia is slow or illegible handwriting (Chung et al., 2020; Eyo & Nkanga, 2020; McGlashan et al., 2017; Prunty & Barnett, 2017). Poor handwriting includes inaccurate letter formation, such as letter reversal, inconsistent letter sizing or slanting, added or missing strokes, or poor spacing resulting in illegibility (Gil et al., 2021). Some students have reported hand pain, hand cramping or fatigue (Biotteau et al., 2019; Šafárová et al., 2020). Hand pain, writing stress and low stamina can lead

to an inability to keep pace with peers or class timing, resulting in difficulty with the quality and/or quantity of writing output. However, some students with dysgraphia produce tidy handwriting, although it is laboured and without automaticity (Alstad et al., 2015). For these students, the cognitive resources required to form letters reduces their capacity to simultaneously tend to the compositional aspects of writing in a timely way (Asselborn et al., 2020; Beers et al., 2017). Consequently, ideas can be lost, or students can struggle to keep pace with the class expectations (Döhla & Heim, 2016).

Furthermore, students with laboured or uncontrolled handwriting are sometimes mislabelled as *sloppy* or *lazy* by their teachers (Chung et al., 2020; Goldstand, 2018; Hopcan et al., 2019; Ibrahim, 2020; Mayes et al., 2018; Ronksley-Pavia & Townend, 2017). However, students with dysgraphia are largely not indolent (Chung et al., 2020). Rather, they tend to work harder than their peers but produce a lesser product in terms of both length and quality of writing (Mayes et al., 2019). There is an additional pressure to complete set tasks within the allocated time frame to avoid having to attend to them outside of class time. A task that has not been started in class, is unfinished, or is late, may result in unfair consequences: for example, as dysgraphia decelerates writing pace, students may need to attend a homework club or spend lunch breaks on writing catch-up, (Dui et al., 2020). Thus students work hard to meet writing expectations within class time to avoid additional homework, which may cause angst, distress, or frustration (Hopcan et al., 2019). Unsurprisingly, young people with dysgraphia often experience writing aversion and may develop a dislike of schooling (Gargot et al., 2021; Goldstand, 2018; Havaei et al., 2021; Matsyuk & Yelagina, 2020; Mayes et al., 2019).

Berninger et al. (2015) have found that handwriting difficulties also interfere with spelling or composing fluency. Researchers have also asserted that spelling difficulties may impede composition more than impaired handwriting does (Beers et al., 2017). Spelling difficulties can be attributed to a range of complex factors, such as difficulty with word retrieval or phoneme-grapheme conversion (Döhla & Heim, 2016; Gil et al., 2021). These challenges further highlight the heterogeneity of the learning profile of students with dysgraphia. They also underscore the need for comprehensive assessment practices to pinpoint the root causes of dysgraphia, as well as areas of strength, so that effective remediation can be offered (Asselborn et al., 2020; Döhla et al., 2018)

Added to the complexity of dysgraphia is its high rate of comorbidity (Chung et al., 2020). Dysgraphia can co-occur with other SLDs such as dyslexia or dyscalculia (Ashraf & Najam, 2020; Bray et al., 2021). Similarly, dysgraphia can present alongside other neurodevelopmental disorders, most commonly with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (Berninger et al., 2017; Cen-Yagiz & Aytac, 2021), Autism Spectrum Disorder (Ibrahim, 2020; Mayes et al., 2018), Developmental Coordination Disorder (Biotteau et al., 2019), or cerebral palsy (Chung et al., 2020). Given the high likelihood of comorbidity, it is apparent that dysgraphia can present as quite a complicated and heterogeneous condition (Ashraf & Najam, 2020; Mayes et al., 2019; McCloskey & Rapp, 2017). Therefore, a diagnosis of dysgraphia will likely precede a tailored set of interventions appropriate to the individual student (Döhla et al., 2018).

Assessment, diagnosis and reports

It is possible to improve circumstances for students with dysgraphia by recognising that it exists, and that it is a true disability (Nayton, 2015; Squelch, 2015). Once teachers can identify a case of dysgraphia, a diagnosis can be sought (AUSPELD, 2018; Thielking & Terjesen, 2017). A formal diagnosis of dysgraphia can be obtained from a range of qualified professionals, usually an educational psychologist (AUSPELD, 2021). However, the evaluation process can be both complex and protracted, as assessments typically involve a six-month period of ineffective, yet targeted, interventions to confirm the diagnosis (APA, 2013). The high rates of comorbidity often result in a further delay, as this added dimension to evaluation involves a comprehensive, team-based assessment approach (Ashraf & Najam, 2020; Barisic et al., 2017; McCloskey & Rapp, 2017).

A written report is provided following a formal diagnosis, and outlines customised interventions for the student (AUSPELD, 2018; Chung et al., 2020). The report contains essential information regarding appropriate and effective intervention, to which teachers and carers *should* refer (AUSPELD, 2018). Early intervention has shown optimistic results, and implementing support as soon as writing difficulties are detected is important given slower rates of writing development (Chordia et al., 2019; Chung et al., 2020; Drotár & Dobeš, 2020; Horbach et al., 2020;

Uebergang, 2020). Waiting for an official diagnosis to put in place quality interventions is unwarranted (NCCD, 2021; Uebergang, 2020).

Recently, teachers have been awarded the power to impute a disability (NCCD, 2021). According to the NCCD (2021), 'an imputed disability is an undiagnosed disability the school team considers a student to have that is having a functional impact on their learning' (NCCD, 2021). To impute a disability, a school-based team must collate a range of convincing evidence, including an individual assessment and an appropriate intervention over a ten-week time frame that shows limited progress (NCCD, 2021). Imputing a disability may accelerate targeted writing support at the school level, but does not replace a formal diagnosis (NCCD, 2021).

Increased awareness of dysgraphia or obtaining a diagnosis can be empowering for students with dysgraphia, who may feel emboldened to speak up for themselves once they can refer to a specific disorder (AUSPELD, 2018; Goldstand, 2018). Thus a formal diagnosis can result in greater self-compassion and self-awareness, as well as more control over their own learning (Goldstand, 2018; Ronksley-Pavia & Townend, 2017). Students with a better understanding of dysgraphia may also learn that a writing disability is not a consequence of their own actions (AUSPELD, 2018; Nayton, 2015).

Parental burden

Learning to write is a core responsibility of schools (Graham, 2019), and parents/carers, henceforth termed *carers*, expect teachers to foster writing development. Thus carers become increasingly concerned when they notice that their children's written work is underdeveloped, and over time become increasingly worried about their children's future (Bonifacci et al., 2016). In turn, students with writing disorders depend on the systems and the adults in their lives to play a proactive role in recognising, naming, and addressing learning difficulties *early* so that targeted support can be instigated (Twaddell, 2005). For example, when teachers recognise dysgraphia, a referral system can be enacted. Early detection within the classroom can also lead to the provision of school-based support (NCCD, 2021). However, without better awareness at the school level, the ability to respond to dysgraphia in effective ways is lost, potentially leaving communication between home and school strained. Consequently, carers may be confused about their children not meeting expected writing levels, or may feel compelled to challenge a teacher's professional judgement as a means of advocating for their children who are not meeting benchmarks (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016). Subsequently, carers may turn to external services to learn more about their children's limited academic progress rather than trusting the school to meet their children's academic and social needs (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016).

Carers have described how finding the right expert who can provide information, conduct an assessment, or generate a diagnosis and report specifically on dysgraphia can be both cumbersome and expensive (Nayton, 2015). For example, it can be time-consuming to locate the services that are able to specifically address dysgraphia, such as neuropsychologists. Likewise, once carers have contacted external services, long waiting lists are commonplace (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016). Furthermore, carers have reported the high cost of private services, such as paying for tutoring or psychology, as they shoulder the financial burden (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016). For some parents, given the expense involved, seeking external support is not an option (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016). However, without a diagnosis, garnering school support can be onerous, leaving the student to navigate the classroom in a way akin to parkour professionals.

Classroom barriers

As mentioned earlier, this paper adopts the metaphor of parkour to draw parallels with the daily experiences of students with dysgraphia who are required to find their own way in the classroom. Students must navigate a path from Point A (the assigned writing task) to Point B (the completion of the task) while negotiating the obstacles on route.

While not an exhaustive list, these barriers include:

- a lack of awareness of dysgraphia,
- pressure to complete set tasks or manage homework tasks,
- teacher, peer, or carer expectations of writing performance and achievement,
- inadequate writing skill or knowledge to undertake classroom tasks,
- physical pain associated with handwriting,
- low stamina for writing, and
- writing distress, writing anxiety or other negative emotions associated with writing.

Students with dysgraphia therefore face a range

of barriers within the classroom environment, both internally and externally. Barriers include inadequate writing skill development, including difficulty with handwriting, typing, spelling, punctuation, grammar and/or composition skills (Chung et al., 2020). This can be difficult for students to manage, especially as research suggests that 30–60% of the school day is spent writing (Chung et al., 2020; Hopcan & Tokel, 2021; Rosenblum, 2018).

Students with dysgraphia often face emotional discomfort as well as academic challenges. For some students with dysgraphia, indecipherable or disorganised writing can be a source of shame, embarrassment, or frustration (Gargot et al., 2021; Hopcan et al., 2019). Slow, painful, unfinished writing often leads to lower levels of literacy and therefore reduced self-efficacy (Berninger et al., 2019; Havaei et al., 2021). Students with dysgraphia may have worked towards acquiring basic writing skills during the primary years, but these skills may yet not be consolidated by the time they embark on their secondary education (Berninger et al., 2019). The increased expectations that students will write with enhanced proficiency, speed, and volume, coupled with writing anxiety and low skills, can be demoralising during this period of critical development (Berninger et al., 2019). This can have a negative impact on a student's sense of identity (Berninger et al., 2019). Inevitably, many young people with dysgraphia, or SLDs more broadly, suffer from anxiety and/or depression due to writing difficulties and other co-morbid factors (APA, 2013; Berninger et al., 2019; Bonifacci et al., 2020; Büber et al., 2020; Curtin et al., 2019; Gargot et al., 2020; Horbach et al., 2020).

Classroom practice

Within the classroom, identification of writing difficulties can be achieved by adopting a response to intervention (RTI) model (Westwood, 2017). RTI is used to catch students at risk of falling below expected levels, and is also a recommended classroom approach for students with dysgraphia (AUSPELD, 2018; Chung et al., 2020; Curtin et al., 2019; Ibrahim, 2020; Iwabuchi et al., 2017; Thielking & Terjesen, 2017; Westwood, 2017). RTI uses a tiered system, with tier one representing *whole class* instruction, tier two small group intervention and tier three increased support for individuals, either in small groups of three to four students, in pairs or as one-to-one support (Chung et al., 2020; Gil et al., 2021; Westwood, 2017). At tier three level, students with dysgraphia may be able to access a higher level of writing support through systematic, repetitive and targeted intervention practices (Gargot et al., 2021; Nayton, 2015).

Further, teachers can implement a strengths-based practice, which acknowledges individuals as empowered and agentic (Kewanian et al., 2021; Thielking & Terjesen, 2017). It is an approach to learning that focuses on fostering respectful relationships and developing areas of learning strength, capacity, interest, or passion (AUSPELD, 2018; Mayes et al., 2018;). Dysgraphia often presents with uneven writing development, meaning that some children may have areas of writing strength such as high knowledge (rich ideas), but low skills (poor handwriting or spelling). Working with students to identify areas of strength rather than focusing on learning deficits can support students to engage in writing tasks with increased self-confidence. Alternatively, inviting students to write about personal interests such as coding, music, dance, sport, or science may be an effective approach to building self-efficacy or improving writing motivation for students who struggle with ideation (Lovejoy et al., 2021). The English classroom can be a rich learning environment for students with SLDs when they are given opportunities to engage with the content in meaningful and participatory ways (Bazerman et al., 2017).

A strengths-based approach marries well with the implementation of a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model (CAST, 2022). UDL draws on inclusion policies and key learning principles to provide for all students in the class, regardless of capacity, by designing flexible spaces for learning (CAST, 2022). This might include educators presenting information in multiple ways, for example by using visual aids including photographs, pictures, three-dimensional models, graphic organisers or videos that can support all learners (CAST, 2022). UDL also incorporates other important lesson features, such as introducing and exploring key vocabulary at the beginning of each class. However, regardless of the approaches that teachers adopt with the whole class, students with SLDs are entitled to reasonable adjustments.

Reasonable adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is a legal mandate used to describe a measure taken to provide students with disability with access to education on equal footing with their peers (AUSPELD, 2018; Australian

Government, 1992, 2005; Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2020a; Squelch, 2015; Thielking & Terjesen, 2017).

There are three types of interventions that can be implemented to support students with dysgraphia (Chung et al., 2020). These include:

(1) accommodation or adjustment,
(2) modification, and
(3) *remediation* (Chung et al., 2020).

An *accommodation* changes how a task is performed (Chung et al., 2020; Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2020a; Westwood, 2017). For example, if a student has indecipherable handwriting, they may be offered a laptop to type their written composition on (Mayes et al., 2019; Understood, 2014–2023). In some cases, inviting a student to demonstrate their learning in an alternative mode such as an oral presentation or dramatic enactment would be ideal. If the student has specific difficulties with spelling as a defining aspect of their dysgraphia diagnosis, an example of an accommodation may be providing voice-to-text recognition software (Chung et al., 2020; Mayes et al., 2018; Understood, 2014–2023). On the other hand, a *modification* strategy changes the task that is offered to students (Chung et al., 2020). Modification is used sparingly, as it is reserved for students performing well below expected levels and can impact a student's future options, for example when planning for their Victorian Certificate of Education, the final years of schooling in Victoria, Australia (Dyslexia-SPELD Foundation, 2021). Finally, *remediation* is corrective training, involving intense and repetitive practice of writing skills or knowledge (Iniesta & Serrano, 2020; McGlashan et al., 2017).

Schools are responsible for providing improvement regarding writing development (cf. ACARA, 2018, 2022). However, a classroom teacher may not be well-positioned to provide remediation for students who require intensive, one-to-one support. In some instances, an occupational therapist, speech pathologist, psychologist, special education teacher, tutor, or other relevant professional may be more equipped to enact remedial intervention. A reasonable classroom intervention is to provide accommodations (Uebergang, 2020). Nonetheless, certain cases of writing difficulties can be largely remediated with intensive instruction (Graham, 2019; Swanson et al., 2013). Researchers have asserted that it is both the intensity (time frame) and frequency (how often) that determines the effectiveness of remedial programs (Biotteau et al., 2019; Bray et al., 2021). An example of a remedial program for spelling difficulties might include systematic phonics training (Beers et al., 2017; Nayton, 2015), or for illegible writing, intensive handwriting training (D'Antrassi et al., 2018; Iniesta & Serrano, 2020; McGlashan et al., 2017). With targeted, customised intervention, students with learning disabilities can make good progress, albeit slowly. When remediation is immediately successful, the writing difficulties might be attributed to other factors, such as long absences from school or financial disadvantage (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2019b). Typically, these cases are not dysgraphia (APA, 2013). Dysgraphia is an underlying neurological weakness that is resistant to rapid improvement despite quality instruction (Asselborn et al., 2020; Döhla et al., 2018; Nayton, 2015).

Assistive technologies

When implementing classroom instruction, assistive technology can play a supplementary role in improving learning for students with dysgraphia (AUSPELD, 2018; Mayes et al., 2019; Squelch, 2015). Examples of assistive technology include electronic spell-checkers, word processing software, electronic graphic organisers, styluses, text-to-speech or dictation software, and other applications (D'Antrassi et al., 2018; Mayes et al., 2018). Technology application within the classroom is not only useful in lifting achievement but has also been proven to boost motivation and engagement, as well as reducing writing anxiety and fatigue (D'Antrassi et al., 2018; Gargot et al., 2021; Hopcan & Tokel, 2021; Hopcan et al., 2019). Nonetheless, clear task instructions with appropriate scaffolding are still required for students with writing difficulties to have writing success, as assistive technology does not replace quality instruction (Chung et al., 2020).

Recent studies have also shown an increase in technological enhancements for dysgraphia assessment, intervention, and diagnosis (Kalenjuk et al., 2022; Matsyuk & Yelagina, 2020). These advancements include the use of robotics, artificial intelligence, gaming, and fMRI scanning and physiological monitoring (Berninger et al., 2015; Berninger et al., 2019; Gargot et al., 2021; Hopcan & Tokel, 2021; Palmis et al., 2021; Richards et al., 2016). Although there are rapid developments in this area, more research is required to learn about the roles that technology might play in best supporting students specifically with writing disorders (Berninger, Nagy et al., 2015).

Writing clubs

Writing is a multifaceted activity that involves a range of complex considerations (cf. Bazerman et al., 2017). However, Graham and Harris (2009) summarised 28 studies involving 7,000 teachers' instructional practices from across the globe to identify four key factors that, when targeted, could improve writing (Graham, 2019; Graham & Harris, 2009; Vue et al., 2016). These factors were:

(1) *skills*, for example handwriting, spelling, typing, grammar,
(2) *knowledge*, of the writing topic, genre, writing process,
(3) *strategies*, for instance planning, targeting an audience, setting/meeting writing goals, and
(4) *motivation*, including self-efficacy and confidence (Graham & Harris, 2009; Vue et al., 2016).

Researchers argue that the factors listed above could be effectively pursued through composition writing rather than other types of writing practice (Graham, 2019; Vue et al., 2016). For example, researchers in the United States noted that although writing activity was required across all subjects, composition, or text generation, was not heavily featured (Gillespie et al., 2014; Ray et al., 2016). Instead, teachers engaged students in note-taking, short answer responses or closed activities, which tended to lead to insufficient or shallow writing skill development (Gillespie et al., 2014). To improve and engage in-depth writing practices, it was recommended that text generation across a variety of genres involving paragraph-level composition could better build writing skills, knowledge, strategies, and motivation (Graham, 2019). Notably, Graham (2019) reiterates the complexity and length of time required to master compositional skills (Bazerman et al., 2017). Thus students with writing difficulties may require additional time and intensive support when targeting composition development (Bazerman et al., 2017; Graham & Harris, 2009). Teachers can offer additional time and space for students to work through set tasks. However, it should be mentioned that for some students with underdeveloped writing skills, additional time may add to their burden (NCCD, 2021).

To further support students with writing difficulties, research has indicated the positive role a *writing club* can play (Chung et al., 2020). Writing clubs can be an appropriate intervention for those with underdeveloped compositional skills (Chung et al., 2020; Gardner, 2018). A writing club may involve regular meetings of a small group of students with dysgraphia who would be willing to share parts of their written work for peer feedback, mediated by a teacher or other adult (Graham, 2019). These clubs can include teacher conferencing, which also supports writing improvement, especially as the instruction and feedback are tailored to the individual (Bazerman et al., 2017; Graham, 2019). Writing clubs recognise writing as a social activity (Bazerman et al., 2017), and writing skills can be embedded using metalanguage, for example by specifying 'adverb, conjugate, or clause' when discussing grammar (Gardner, 2018). Thus writing clubs have the potential to boost both skill development and motivation (Graham, 2019). However, these clubs are usually run outside of the classroom space.

Practical tips for teachers

To support students with dysgraphia in navigating the classroom with more ease and access, so that they are not performing akin to parkour athletes, teachers can:

- engage with students with dysgraphia and their families to discuss tailored options,
- research and implement best practice,
- refer to psychology and other professional reports to locate personalised recommendations,
- provide structure, scaffold writing tasks, and use explicit instruction, for example:
- word level (glossary, vocabulary),
- sentence level (key phrases, sentence starters),
- paragraph level (topic sentence),
- genre level (templates),
- supply handouts to save note-taking or copying from the board/screen,
- distribute PowerPoint/slide presentations with class content or task descriptions,
- provide alternative ways for students to demonstrate knowledge (for example, videos or oral presentations),
- consider that for some students a scribe or support staff may be required,
- take advantage of assistive technology, including dictate functions,
- offer additional time or extensions to complete writing tasks,
- capitalise on students' strength or interests, and
- use planning templates and visual prompts (NCCD, 2021).

Conclusion

Dysgraphia affects at least 3% of the population, yet remains largely undetected within the English classroom despite legal mandates for schools to address SLDs and the rise of equity funding through the NCCD. The free running discipline of parkour has been used as a metaphor to help depict the ways in which students with undiagnosed and hidden writing disabilities navigate the barriers that exist within classrooms. These obstacles range from a lack of awareness about dysgraphia to having inadequate transcription skills required for a set task. This may result in students with dysgraphia performing akin to parkour-style athletes to keep pace with the expectations of the English classroom.

Parkour athletes demonstrate risk-taking and resilience, metaphorically depicting the strengths and potential of students with dysgraphia. Nonetheless, within a classroom context, free running symbolises an exhausting method for managing the school day. By lowering the barriers to enable a more positive writing experience, students with dysgraphia may be able to get from Point A (the writing task) to Point B (the completion of that task) in a more equitable and manageable way. Providing quality interventions that are tailored to the individual, including using assistive technologies, can support students with dysgraphia to better cope with writing classwork.

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From the Heart

Listening from the Heart:

Rewriting the Teaching of English with First Nations Voices

Cara Shipp, Silkwood School, Gold Coast

Phil Page, Reading Australia

Abstract: This workshop was presented as an introduction to the forthcoming AATE text: *Listening from the Heart: Rewriting the Teaching of English with First Nations Voices*. Its purpose was to engage non-Indigenous teachers who have doubts about their capacities to teach First Nations topics and literature, to ascertain what their main concerns are and to provide some introductory approaches and resources for them to use.

Keywords: First Nations voices; text selection

The Burning Questions: What do English teachers want to know about embedding Indigenous perspectives in their classrooms?

The following article contains the speaking notes used in a workshop at the AATE/ALEA 2021 national conference. The conference was hosted in Queensland and held online.

Acknowledgement of Country

'As a Wiradjuri woman from Dubbo, NSW, I thank the Kombumerri people of the Yugambeh language group, for their continuing custodianship of the land on which I now live and work. I pay my respects to the elders past and present who educate us everyday in order to grow future leaders and sustain our cultures. I acknowledge and thank any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the audience today.' – Cara Shipp

'As the descendant of transported convicts to Van Diemen's Land, I thank and acknowledge the Mumirimina and Palawa peoples of lutruwita for their continuing custodianship of the unceded lands on which I live, work and prosper. I pay my respects to Elders, past, present and emerging, and thank those First Nations people with us today.' – Phil Page

Introduction

This session is about collecting questions, not about providing answers. However, some answers may be found in our following presentation and more answers will be found in our upcoming AATE Publication on embedding Indigenous perspectives in the English classroom, *Listening from the Heart: Rewriting the Teaching of English with First Nations Voices.*

The session is designed to draw out some of the key questions educators have that can be used to shape our publication.

Engoori, Uncle Steve Mam, Mithaka people, QLD, highlights:

courage
patience

challenge
honour
presence.

These qualities ground us in our purpose: we are all here with good intentions. It will take courage to share your thoughts and questions in this space. Thank you for your courage. Please honour each other's contributions, showing patience for those who are at a different point in the learning journey to you. Be present, be open, and don't be afraid to challenge in kind and thoughtful ways. Move away from polarising arguments and an adversarial approach.

Common questions, misapprehensions and fears

Take a moment to think about these questions and statements:

- 'There are no Aboriginal students in my class so I don't need to include those perspectives.'
- 'The Aboriginal children we have don't connect with their heritage, they are urbanised, so including Aboriginal perspectives isn't relevant.'
- 'I don't teach Aboriginal perspectives because I don't understand anything about Aboriginal culture. I've never met an Aboriginal person.'
- 'What if I give misinformation about Aboriginal issues?'
- It's not my place to teach about Aboriginal culture."
- 'What if I expose something sacred or taboo?'
- 'What if an Indigenous person comes in angry and questions me?'

Maybe you're a leader who is *au fait* with Aboriginal perspectives, but you have staff who come up with these barriers. Maybe these are issues that resonate for you. Maybe you have grappled with these in the past, but you have found some solutions.

Open forum for posing the burning questions

Create a mind map of your fears and questions, linking them to one of these four categories:

- my 'place' as an educator – where I think my cultural identity positions me.
- my confusion about Aboriginal cultures and protocols–fear of causing offence or damage.
- my perceptions of my students' needs – how classes or the school community will react.
- my fear of getting it wrong.

Participants to spend a couple of minutes silently reflecting and mapping, then adding their thoughts into the column on the padlet.

Note that participants were given the following link to padlet: https://padlet.com/page_pp52/telu27vkccbra8uc. The padlet includes responses provided on the day.

A summary of the burning questions for which suggested answers are posed in the forthcoming AATE text is listed below.

What does the syllabus mandate is to be included within the Australian Curriculum framework? How do we move from this to being more inclusive and incorporative?

Is it acceptable to write from the perspective of an Aboriginal person in creative writing? In particular, consider the task of: 'write a journal entry from the perspective of an Eora woman seeing a convict for the first time'?

What does a culturally competent classroom look, feel, and sound like?

What is the future of the secondary English classroom with regards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives?

How do schools with particular faith-based values work with aspects of Aboriginal spirituality and culture that may be in conflict in the school?

Where can I develop a checklist or check the cultural validity of the resources I teach?

Can I please have one text type of an Indigenous text for inclusion for each year group?

I have contacted my local Aboriginal Land Council to reach out to, but have not heard back? What is my next step?

Is it problematic to have an Aboriginal person talking about another person's country, i.e. Wiradjuri talking about Kamilaroi nation?

What do you do when you see an Aboriginal Language word used/written and you are not sure how to pronounce, engage with it, understand it?

I want to go beyond Oodgeroo Noonuccal's work, but I don't know where to start.

I received a parent complaint about the First Nations text I am teaching. I have been told it's too political? What do I do?

Where can I see an example of best practice for teaching First Nations literature?

What anticipated learning outcomes can we expect to see once a culturally inclusive and competent classroom environment is created?

Challenging barriers, changing the landscape: Bringing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices into the English classroom

Time and space

We cannot do this complex topic justice in a 25-minute time slot.

This is part of the ongoing challenge in this space: time is not devoted to deep exploration. Time is not devoted to learning how to be a culturally inclusive school or workplace. The general approach to this topic is reductionist and tokenistic, and because First Nations communities don't fit easily into these timetables and timeframes, we continue to be excluded.

What are 'authentic' resources?

Teachers are always on the lookout for 'new', exciting resources for classroom use. Sometimes ease of access overrules discerning choice, with cultural appropriation and thoughtless use of inauthentic material an unintended end result.

Guiding questions should include:

- Who or what organisation has created this resource?
- For whom does it speak? Does that person/organisation speak with cultural authority? What are its cultural connections? How do I check?
- Do I have permission to use this material?
- How do I acknowledge this resource?

Be very wary of sources/sites which purport to represent Indigenous perspectives or which appear to speak with authority. Always check before using and if in doubt, don't. Further guidance can be found at: (https://missshipp.wordpress.com/2020/07/09/howdo-i-verify-authentic-resources-when-planning-units-of-work-with-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-perspectives/)

An indicative selection of useful, authentic resources

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies:
https://aiatsis.gov.au/

Map of Indigenous Australia:
https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia

Australian Human Rights Commission:
https://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/education-resources

The Gambay First Languages Map:
https://gambay.com.au/

AATE Indigenous Literature Resources:
https://www.aate.org.au/aate-digital/indigenous-literature-resources/

Our Ways: Effective Practice in Indigenous Education:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EYWU8ocpGI

Colonial frontier massacres map:
https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php

Virtual Songlines (Bilbie Labs):
https://www.virtualsonglines.org/

SBS Learn:
https://www.sbs.com.au/learn/

Auslit–Discover BlackWords:
https://www.austlit.edu.au/blackwords

No excuses

Teachers are learners, researchers, active citizens, and generally socially capable communicators.

Some starter approaches to common question and concerns

I can't teach this, I don't know about the culture, and I've never met an Aboriginal person.

Learn. Read, go to community NAIDOC events and local Indigenous businesses. Do an Indigenous tour on your next Aussie holiday.

What if I give misinformation?

This could apply to any topic we teach. Check your sources, ask local Indigenous people, reference your sources on class materials.

It's not my place to teach culture.

No, but you can share resources by Indigenous people who are putting their culture into the public domain for this purpose. Can you teach a novel about Japan if you're not Japanese? Can you teach about the Holocaust if you're not German or Jewish?

What if an Indigenous person comes in angry and questions me?

Listen, learn, provide your rationale, show your sources, apologise, ask for guidance to fix the problem. Schools deal with complaints frequently; you can handle it!

Challenging barriers, changing the landscape: Questions

Subsequently, the workshop dealt with several teacher questions and concerns ranging widely from lack of school community connection with local First Nations groups, to expressions of hesitancy and nervousness about the use of resources and materials which might cause offence to students, their families and communities. These concerns and possible approaches to ameliorate them were all discussed and for later detailing in the forthcoming text.

Cara Shipp is currently Head of Senior School at Silkwood School, Gold Coast. Her experience includes: running alternative educational programs for ATSI students; holding Head Teacher English/HASS/Languages positions; and serving as President, Vice President and Editor with the ACT Association for the Teaching of English. Focusing on Aboriginal literacy, Cara regularly presents cultural competence training at local and national conferences, particularly within the context of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the English curriculum.

Phil Page is the editor/secondary project manager for Copyright Agency's Reading Australia program. Additionally, he has co-ordinated a significant number of secondary English curriculum resourcing programs for AATE and has participated in the publication of all its recent publications. A retired English teacher and high school principal, he was the AATE Treasurer from 2010 to 2022.

Language and literature are transformative. They uplift, inspire, provoke, and connect. Or not.

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Voices enable all to be heard. They create and uplift communities to make the world a more inclusive place, where diversity is celebrated and pedagogies of possibility abound.

Visuals & Viewpoints

Visuals provoke, challenge and inspire viewpoints. They speak across and between cultures and empower learners to expand their connection and contribution to the world.

Our voices have power, our stories have power, and our pedagogies have a powerful impact. How do you make an impact on your learners and our profession?

Invited speakers and authors include Dr Eeqbal Hassim, Jane Caro AM, Tim Ferguson, Wayne Sawyer, Kirli Saunders, Professor Jacqueline Manuel, Dr Duncan Driver, Fiona Hamilton, Professor Christine Edwards-Groves and Debra Myhill. ***See more*** on the conference website.

Registrations now open at: **www.englishliteracyconference.com.au**

Place in Film

Place in Film: Landscapes as More Than Setting

Paul Sommer, Curtin University

Abstract: *Landscapes of Learning*, in the conference title, prompts a literal reading of landscape and its place in film analysis. This article considers landscape's mental and emotional dimensions and the discovery of landscape as a malleable analytical concept. A critique of film as a visual text is invited. Particular analytical approaches to film follow, through notions of soundscape and, using Gilles Deleuze's work on cinema, through orientations such as 'the tectonics of sensation' (percept and affect) and 'the mise-en-scène of the brain' (landscape as a mental construct). These concerns and their implications put us in a position to approach the rest of the conference title's focus on hearts, minds and stories, both in terms of film study in the English classroom and in the light of questions and approaches that open up a film for students.

Keywords: Film analysis, Landscape, Deleuze, Cinematic Movement

The phrase *Landscapes of Learning* in the conference title provides an opportunity to consider aspects of the cinematic image that might be overlooked in analysis. Of course, we are taking landscape more literally than was intended, but to the same end – of promoting the rest of the title, i.e., learning as the concern of *hearts, minds and stories*. The focus on landscape might begin simplistically with what is going on in the background, but it has the potential to enrich film studies and to develop a profound sense of place and space. More, because the *image* of landscape in film is either itself moving or essentially in relation to movement, any engagement with landscape is also a fundamental engagement with movement and with the expression of ideas.

It is worth exploring these concerns in the light of a question asked in a Facebook post by a teacher new to English teaching. She asked for advice on how to teach a film without analysis always resulting in the description of visuals. This is not a question arising simply from inexperience; it makes sense in terms of the largely uncontested idea that we study film as a *visual text*. This approach to film has been very useful – probably essential – in cementing a place for film in the English curriculum. But then comes the assumption that all visual texts can be approached in the same way. Film studies becomes a determination to account for composition, lighting, camera angles, colours and other technical concerns. We are not wrong to be working in this way; we only need to be clear about why we might so predominantly be interested in visual elements and where they are leading us.

Two things should give pause. The first is that film is equally about sound. There is an interplay between visuals and sound in its various forms (e.g., dialogue, music, ambient sound and effects) that is worthy of analysis. Sound cannot be frozen for analysis; it is a medium of movement. Secondly, the visuals of a film move, and the movement has various dimensions: images and sequences move through editing; the camera moves in a way that is both mechanical and subjective; the significance of what is depicted in one shot is translated or redirected in the next shot; and, of course, physical things (including human bodies) are shown to move in significant ways. If film is a visual text, the rationale for pursuing the notion needs to be that visuals describe paths of movement. Images become conduits for emerging significance and meaning.

Given the terms *movies* and *motion pictures*, it is uncontroversial to state that movement is what defines film and distinguishes it from other visual texts. Nevertheless, we often want to freeze a film in order to analyse it: either actually freezing it to consider the composition of a frame, or conceptually isolating units, for example by approaching a scene in general terms (e.g., 'The scene in *Run Lola Run* where Lola robs the bank'). Movement is lost in both. It is postponed in the first and assumed in the second. In analysis, take movement out of the equation and the visual description that our novice teacher of film wants to avoid will be nearly inevitable.

Tracking movement

Strategies for tracking movement become important precisely because movement is fleeting and does not offer itself easily for analysis. What is required is the kind of disruption that Brian Massumi (2002) argued is essential if we are to engage with movement. 'The eyes do not register movement without also registering its arrest, in other words *form* … It is because vision interrupts movement with formed images that it must interrupt itself to see movement as such' (p. 59). If landscape is taken to be the exception in a discussion of cinematic movement, as a stable and largely static background – the monumental desert in Westerns or undulating greenery set with castles in establishing shots in historical romances – it is a notion that is ripe for correction. We can work back from the 'form' of landscape to envisage or expose movement. In Massumi's terms, the very act of singling out landscape can work as an interruption to expose movement.

Take the case of a stagecoach in a Western moving through a vast desert wasteland with craggy outcrops. The geographical dimension is not the only interest. There is a to-ing and fro-ing of attention, a kind of dialogue, between foreground and background. There is the human dimension of those in the coach – characters thrust together in a tight space for the duration of the journey, often providing the pretext for some tense dialogue (e.g., *Stagecoach*, *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs*, *The Hateful Eight*) – and the timeless and silently hostile dimension of the desert. As well as providing a scale to physical dimensions, landscape sets up a limit to movement, abstractions, circuits of thought, and emotional responses. It becomes a way of both projecting and containing a character's action, reactions, and world-view. The interruption that exposes movement (and other concerns) starts with the understanding that the landscape is purposefully constructed as part of a shot and not an inevitable background to movement. Massumi, then, invites us first to register movement by describing the forms (and so our skills in visual decoding are never wasted), and then to interrupt our meditation on form in order to ask how things are moving and why they are moving in a particular way. Landscape provides limits without which purposeful movement would not be intelligible.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of *landscape* lists four relevant considerations: 'a picture representing a view of natural inland scenery'; 'the art of depicting such scenery'; 'the landforms of a region in the aggregate'; 'a portion of territory that can be viewed at one time from one place' (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Consequently, landscape is a matter of place limited and mediated through depiction, selection and aggregation.

David Malouf (2015) reminds us that 'landscape' began as a term that applied *only* to painting, as a technical term in art: 'That is, its reference to a way of organising and objectifying what we see, of ordering space with a framed view, preceded its use as a descriptive term for something out there in nature that a painting might represent' (p. 106). Landscape in painting and film is purposeful. Processes of organising, objectifying, and ordering space caution against regarding place in film as given, and so as able to be ignored or glossed over in a hurry to account for action. Malouf extends his discussions of landscape to Patrick White's invention of a new dimension of the intellectual landscape in Australian literature, and to his own libretto for the opera *Voss*, a portrait of a man hungry to engage with and (re)define the harsh landscape of colonial Australia in which he found himself. With *Voss*, Malouf provided emotional dimensions of landscape through close reference to a physical landscape or its evocation. It can never really be *just* background; landscape is part of an experience that in one way or another is constantly shifting.

The classroom as learning landscape

The conference title, *Landscapes of Learning,* can be used to extend definitional elements of landscape (above) to the classroom in terms of organising learning, objectifying learning, and ordering both mental and physical dimensions of learning spaces. If the term 'objectifying' causes concern, however, it should be understood as 'physicalising': for example, how is a teaching-learning practice physicalised in a setting?

In a very simple example, how does organising a classroom around table settings rather than rows physicalise (objectify) pedagogical values and set a particular learning landscape? How does the choice of texts set an intellectual landscape? The notion of *landscapes of learning* evokes a setting based on the relation between the objects of teaching/learning – routines, curriculums, classrooms, lesson plans, prescribed roles of participants, test scores – and the 'moving' and unpredictable physical, mental, and emotional dimensions. The contention is that cinema uses landscape in a similar way.

Indeed, questions of pedagogical landscapes in a broader sense feed back into cinematic landscapes. A character in a film very often learns things by progressing through landscapes, most evidently in road movies as diverse as *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Easy Rider*, *Nebraska*, *O Brother Where art Thou?*, *Thelma and Louise*, and *This Must be the Place*. The films' landscapes are experienced through characters' encounters with them. We, the spectators, learn with them as we see events and images take on significance for a character. In fact, narrative movement in a film can be tracked summarily in terms of what is significant and how it changes.

The plot of *Little Miss Sunshine*, for example, is motivated exactly by radically different (and changing) senses of what each character finds significant. The film's narrative landscape works through works through an interplay of spaces: the depiction of private spaces in which a character has some kind of control and public spaces in which they are forced to interact beyond their comfort zones. We are taking space and place to be part of a set that includes landscape. It is not that characters exist in a landscape or in defined spaces contained in a landscape, as if landscape was stage dressing. Rather, in film there exists an interrelationship – a symbiosis – between character and landscape, either as vista or as composite spaces.

It is one thing to recognise landscape as more or less figurative, but another to get a sense of its dynamic function. Let's return to painting (as Art). Perhaps counterintuitively for a static work, painting provides concepts that help film analysis to grasp movement, returning us directly to the notion of hearts and minds in both the conference title and Malouf's use of landscape. With notions of *percept* (perception as disregarding all but that which is of interest) and *affect* (the processing of what is perceived, often emotionally) developed by Gilles Deleuze, visual elements do not *represent* an external world, but create coherent images of feeling and thought that, in cinema, feed and motivate action. Through the purposeful interrelation of moving images, the sense of a new world is created.

A Deleuzian landscape

Arguably, no philosopher/cinephile has done more to establish the idea of cinema as movement than Deleuze did as he transposed concepts from his earlier work on art and philosophy to cinema. This is not the place to go into his analysis in detail, but we can take from Deleuze the idea of a bank of *image types*, each one of which is a different way of channelling cinematic movement in precise ways. His two books on cinema, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1986) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1989), elaborate a taxonomy of image types.

Image types have certain functions in providing flow (and disrupting it) in a film. What Deleuze identifies as *affect* in painting finds a place in cinema's image types as affection-image (archetypally, but not exclusively, in close-ups) and *percept* finds a place as perception-images (as, for example, in establishing shots). Deleuze understands percept and affect as *sensation*. Percept is not simply what you see; it is not simply the *fact* of perception. Affect is not simply what you feel. The concepts draw particular elements of a film together to create an encounter and evoke a response from the viewer. So the visual elements that we might identify by freezing the film are given purpose to the extent that they work with other elements, to the extent that they create sensations (perceptual and affective) for the viewer and to the extent that they are part of a film's flow.

Far from the idea, in conventional film analysis, that the visual elements of a film expose meaning, here they conspire with each other to create an impression: 'a film is not thought of as offering or producing sensations for the viewer, but as "materializing them", achieving a tectonics of sensation' (Deleuze, 1989, p. 326). 'Tectonics' evokes notions of shifts, change, formation, and process. The changing impression, not the extracted visuals, becomes the appropriate object of attention for students in film analysis. Sensation describes actual states that do not rely on idiosyncratic subjective responses. Emotion and perception are recognised in ways that make them part of a work, which is to say that they are purposefully constructed. The attitude is not 'I feel this when I see a work of art', but 'not to feel this is to misunderstand the work'. It is a

subtle shift, but one that side-steps subjective response where analysis might move if describing visuals is downplayed.

Contrary to the impression created by many textbooks, the privileged visual image does not provide meaning (though it certainly provides specificity). We already know what a film means before we start analysis. We don't need frame analysis to go deeper into an image. Analysis can help us to explore, confirm, contradict or engage with meaning, but a single, static, or frozen image tells us very little until it moves and is seen in relation to other images. For film, in order to mean, it has to move.

Visual analysis and movement

There is a photographically gorgeous image in Clint Eastwood's *Mystic River* (2003) in which Sean Penn's character, Jimmy, is surrounded by a mob of policemen (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Warner Bros. Entertainment. (2003). *Mystic River.*

Jimmy is distressed and rising out of the mass of blue uniforms that encircle him. It is an affect (or affective image), and every element of the picture helps to describe the emotional sensation and situation that begs processing. Importantly, the affect is not a simple representation of anger/rage. Everything in the frame conspires to a unique expression: the containment, the darkness and the pictorial beauty as well as facial expressions. There is a masterful control of light with a dark, almost black, base and strong key lighting on the face supported (and justified) by the light mass in the top left corner. The shallow depth of field keeps attention on the character and increases his sense of containment. Composition, with the encircling of the centrally placed character and the lowered and slanted head of the officer in the front providing the necessary uninterrupted visual focus on Jimmy, is effective. Jimmy's rage could hardly be more focused or better situated in the frame, and this without the need for a close-up which would probably have made the rage too overstated. What is important here is the recognition of elements brought into collusion, in this case for the purpose of communicating a particular emotional state.

As much as we consider its details, we can hardly grasp even fundamental information from the isolated frame alone: is Jimmy a good guy or a bad guy, to attract such police interest? Of course we know, from the rest of the film, that this exact question is a key point of it. But if descriptive analysis requires the experience of the entire film and a detailed awareness of contexts, it begs the question of what we hope to achieve from visual frame analysis, beyond confirmation. Nevertheless, the illustrations in important textbooks on film promote a close analysis of the frame as if it were a painting and the frame was offering up its secrets.

The troubling complexity lies in the fact that the extracted static image of a film, as opposed to a painting, has a directly relevant past and future that description of the image usually takes for granted. The problem of directly addressing the movement of images is again sidestepped. The methodology seems to be this: if we stop a film we can think about the image as we do a painting, and we will, as with a painting, find new insights. However, it ignores the fact that if a filmmaker wanted to 'stop' a film, they have the means to do so via freeze frames, slow editing, sustained shots, and motionless characters. If those techniques are not used, we need to understand that the filmmaker (and the editor) did not regard it as important to grasp a shot as more than fleeting or as existing for any more than the duration in which it appears. Percepts and affects are still created in a film no less than in a painting, but the creation is according to the rigours of the medium. That is, in film, movement (time, relation, change) is an essential dimension of affects, percepts, and action, and not an inconvenience.

Rather than arguing that a film is like a painting, it is productive to consider that a painting moves, like a film. To return directly to landscape, Pieter Bruegel's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* is a persuasive example of the fact that a (static) painting contains movement. You can't look at the painting and take it all in. The eyes move and stories are evoked, only one of which – in the irony that is the point of the painting – is that of Icarus, as a clumsy leg in an unnoticed splash in the corner of the painting. The eyes also move upwards through different formal concerns: from stylised detail in the foreground as the farmer, dressed in something

Figure 2. Bruegel the Elder, Pieter. (c. 1558) *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus.*

approaching modest courtly garb, almost dances over a well-ordered field to a Turneresque abstraction of light in the background (or at least in the top of the frame). To view the painting is to set the eyes on a series of encounters. Because of this inherent movement, one might be tempted to consider the painting as 'cinematic'. But it is not, precisely because in cinema, the movement of the eye does not have the freedom and leisurely contemplation that a painting offers.

At best, cinematic contemplation is on the run: pausing at times to take things in, rushing at other times so that attention can only be with the foregrounded action. It is guided, controlled. As Gale MacLachlan and Ian Reid (1994) put it, citing Walter Benjamin, 'a painting invites contemplation … while a film prevents it' (p. 35). With a film, we literally do not have the time – we are not *given* the time – to evaluate elements of the frame. Images, or more accurately their *image types*, channel movement, and inevitably change as they morph and connect with other images at 24 frames per second.

Each edit point connects one shot to another as a series of images whose content might seem inevitable retrospectively but is actually radically open (content can connect to *any* other content). The only sense of inevitability in a film comes through its repeatability (its re-viewing) and the limitations of narrative and convention that it accepts. A film is essentially a series of encounters: of one image and the next; of filmic elements; of characters and their spaces; and of the viewer and a series of images. How is landscape (to return directly to our topic) such an encounter of images, a composition of spaces, and a trigger for the viewer's grasp of what is significant? The job of analysis can be to articulate and explore these concerns rather than to seek certainties of meaning.

What are we doing when we analyse?

Incidental to film but relevant to this sense of exploration, a recent article in the *New York Review of Books* assessed the work of art critic Dave Hickey following his death. Comments by Hickey help to authorise *encounter* not only in the experience of a work, but also in the analysis of it:

> Criticism is not about art, it is only thinking in the neighbourhood of art. We don't really need to know the aesthetic or moral parameters of a work to love it – only to know that they are there. (Hickey as cited in Earnest, 2022)

The job of criticism – and I am taking our job and that of our students to be at least related to criticism – is not to set or maintain boundaries, but to engage with a work. What Hickey refers to as 'aesthetic or moral parameters' are no less true of narrative dimensions or of a film's literal or consensual meanings. We know they are there; they don't need analysis for justification. When we study a film, we are in the neighbourhood of, say, *Blade Runner* or *Run Lola Run*, and why would anyone roam the streets of a neighbourhood only to describe its limits or to point to features already there in any guidebook or map? Analysis becomes an excursion (or perhaps, with Hickey, an incursion) through the streets of the neighbourhood. The idea of a neighbourhood of art values the discovery of seemingly casual and incidental experiences of a work, as much as conventional analysis values validation.

How to encourage a sense of exploration committed to encounter and discovery will be considered presently. Before that, and before returning directly to landscape, it will be useful to take stock and to make some observations about the practice of film study in the English classroom. In our discussion so far, a productive tension has been emerging between the expansiveness of a work (neighbourhood, landscape, milieu, sense of a whole) and the specific circumstances (shot, room or enclosed space, event, and the character – and spectator – caught up in it all). On one hand, the specificity is contained by a landscape's expansiveness, but on the other, for film, it is only through specificity that expansive qualities can be appreciated. A battle, tension or collusion (a dialectic) between expansive spaces and limited spaces *is* something worth describing.

The defining and attractive thing about a neighbourhood is that it is an inhabited space. Assuming that a narrative film's interest will be, to a greater or lesser

degree, in characters, the broad question is the extent to which the characters are the product of their circumstance and inhabit their landscape. And to what extent do characters create the less physical dimensions of their landscape? These are not questions that can be directly posed and simply left for the student to grapple with; they need scaffolding. And I am going to suggest that this is better done with chunks of the film than with the whole film.

Back to the classroom

From this point in our discussion, we will seek approaches that can be used in the classroom.

The intention is not to offer lesson plans, but to pose questions that expose movement and turn analytical attention to the landscape as the broadest context within which meaningful movement occurs. *Blade Runner*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, and *Run Lola Run* will ground the discussion. I have chosen them because teachers are likely to be familiar with them and they are complex enough to reward rigorous analysis.

One of the most important roles for teachers contemplating a film study is to structure the viewing experience of students in ways that allow them to recognise, sustain and challenge (or confirm) their insights. Ultimately, they might be producing individual summative tasks, but sharing experiences in the formative phases will encourage confidence and focus. To that end, the *shared* experience of watching a film is very important. And there is no need to rush. A feature film study should be programmed to take as much time as the study of a novel. I like that a feature film needs to be viewed over a number of lessons. It allows natural points of interruption to take stock ('Remember what happened … ') and to predict or direct attention ('Watch the way a character … '). Viewing journals or small group discussions become a good way for students to keep track of responses. But at times, simply the raw experience of being absorbed in the film, especially in the first viewing is important and will pay dividends in analysis, if teachers' viewing strategies are clear (to themselves). This is certainly the case in *Run Lola Run*, which depends on attention that, in the first viewing, should not be distracted too prematurely by analytical concerns.

It is not necessary to watch the whole film a second time. Instead, *chunking* of the film in various ways in order to steer or focus analysis is advisable. Close viewing of the first ten minutes is always rewarding, because all of the concerns of the film are established in that chunk: the introduction of characters, the look of the film, sound, themes, plot concerns, tone, etc. In the analysis phase (taking viewing/ gaining access/ analysis/ presentation of summative outcomes to be phases), different sections of the film (other ten-minute sections) can be analysed in small groups before feedback to the whole class. In other words, there is no need to *teach* the whole film, as opposed to contextualising and guiding the experience of it. Identifying chunks and having students closely analyse them (again, ideally in small groups) shifts the role of the teacher from that of film expert to that of knowledgeable and informed organiser of student learning and sharing. The teaching of the whole film, which some teachers find daunting and time-consuming, emerges from the manageable class activities that, when shared, result in a sense that the film has been comprehensively 'done'.

While not a chunk as much as a collection or composition of chunks, the theatrical trailer is very useful in considering questions of the landscape-background-whole of a film. And it is readily available, often in different versions, on YouTube. Its job is to survey the film without spoiling the experience, and so the trailer can be useful for gaining access to the film and establishing its broad contexts. Its scope is the entire film, so it works like an overture in orchestral music. If our concern is with landscape, the trailer offers a preliminary grasp of the landscape including its sounds.

In fact, the trailer is a good way to increase awareness of sound. It makes available musical themes, moods, fragments of dialogue, and voice-overs, drawing attention to sound's role in the film. The trailer is short enough to listen productively to sound in isolation. Turn off the visuals and listen, and ask how the experience of the film is different with and without sound. It is also useful to consider the trailer as a text in its own right, and to consider the impression it presents of the film (and how it does so) in order to sell it. Hypotheses can be set on the basis of the trailer and then tested in the viewing of the whole film.

After the first viewing, with its raw responses, unsystematic observations about techniques, and general ideas about what is going on – all grist to the analytical mill – a 'committed viewing' is advocated in which students re-watch and analyse sections of it with questions in mind. The questions might be generated by the teacher or by groups, but they should be designed to avoid description of the image or

simplistic responses. And they should include sound and movement as matters of course, even when these are not mentioned directly. The following questions are committed to identifying some broad concerns of landscape and the depiction of spaces (and they can work as Massumi's disruptions to expose movement):

- What is happening in the background?
- How do limited spaces, such as rooms, work in the film? For example, are connections between spaces clear and articulated: if not, why? In *Blade Runner*, defined spaces (such as Deckard's apartment and the police station) are not clearly described or accurately positioned in terms of other spaces. A sense of social clutter is reinforced and a sense of intrusion of one space into another is created. In *Little Miss Sunshine*, characterisation can be broadly defined in terms of ownership of spaces and the contesting and defending of those spaces until the road trip that forces the family into the tight and dysfunctional space of the van.
- How would you describe the overall look and feel of the spaces, and how do the aesthetics further the film's themes and ideas?
- What about sound? How does sound facilitate themes and patterns in its own right and in relation to visuals? In *Blade Runner*, what is the effect of juxtaposing synthesised music with a 1940s *film noir* aesthetic? In *Run Lola Run*, how is the techno soundtrack appropriate in setting up thematic concerns of the film?
- What kind of world is this? Would you like to live in it?

Soundscape

Since conventional analysis is so thoroughly directed to the visuals, methodical approaches to sound might be less familiar, and so the concept of *soundscape* becomes useful. As *Blade Runner* and *Run Lola Run* demonstrate, there is no need for the soundscape to aim for naturalistic sound except with dialogue, and even there, the strictly realistic reproduction of dialogue – that is, faithfulness to conditions of a given space and distance from the camera (sound perspective) – is, in contemporary cinema, routinely sacrificed for clarity and an important sense of aural intimacy.

Giuliana Bruno (2018) discusses soundscape in terms of the 'picturesque of sound' (p. 164) and presents French director and comic genius Jacques Tati as 'directing with sound more than sight' (p. 302). This suggests, firstly, an expanded notion of *image* to include sound so that we can sensibly discuss a *sound image*. Secondly, it suggests that if sound is understood as image, it becomes possible to edit sound to provide narrative (and other) flows that the visuals complete, as opposed to the reverse. Incidentally, this is done all the time when dialogue is foregrounded, but Bruno (2018) is suggesting a more extensive use of sound:

> [Roberto] Rossellini's *Voyage in Italy* 'pictured' the Neapolitan cityscape through its sound … Here, then, the orgy of human sounds becomes even more pronounced and is an essential element of the filmic voyage. Sound is everywhere in the film: from the credit sequence on, it is a continuous presence that has an existence of its own, even outside of narrative motivations … This nondiegetic soundtrack is not at all a musical accompaniment, secondary to the picture. It is the picture – the very portrait of the city. (p. 383)

In visual terms, the entire frame is important, and foreground and background are in a relation, so there is a simultaneous awareness of the object of attention and its broadest visual context (landscape as the film's material whole). Sound makes things more interesting because it is not limited to the cinematic frame as that rectangle through which we see the world of the film. It has the ability to include things outside of the frame and so to invite a further, less specifiable, dimension of the whole. Deleuze (1989) observed that modern cinema employed sound's creative potential to the point that a schism developed between sound and visuals. In the hands of some directors, a film becomes approachable as two films – one of the sound and one of the visuals. Sound found a certain independence. Stanley Kubrick used music to counterpoint visuals (even to the extent of undercutting visuals or setting up irony). Andrei Tarkovsky's disjunctions (dislocation or mismatch) between sound and visuals create states that challenge conventions of realism. Andrea Truppin (1992) argues that it is this disjunction that allows Tarkovsky to unsettle realism and, in doing so, provide the basis for his spiritualism.

The Big Picture: Towards a diagram of film analysis

Two of our list of questions invite attention on the 'look' and 'sound' of the film (its aesthetics) with the idea that visual and sound patterns work together to create impressions. But impressions change and shift in a film and the deliberate linking of impressions becomes a useful approximate definition of a flow of thought in film. Other questions follow. How does the film channel

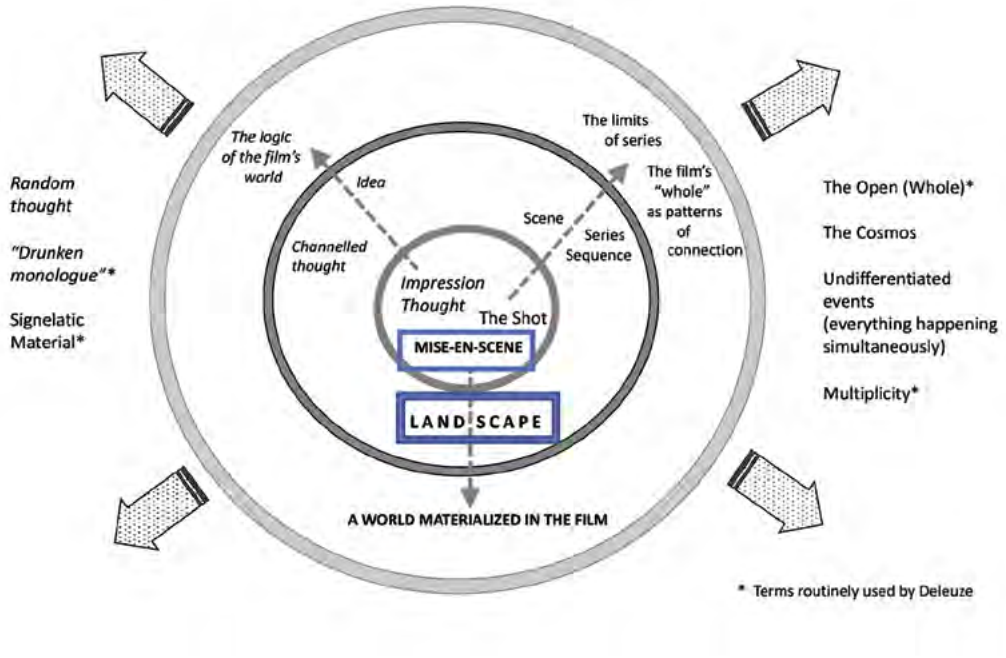

Figure 3. Diagram of film analysis

images? How do images channel ideas? And how do ways of channelling ultimately conspire to create a sense of a world? Another question from our list – what kind of world is this and would you like to live in it? – invites discussion of how the world of the film differs from the natural world. It reinforces the notion that the film's job is not to represent (re-present) a world that exists, but to construct an alternative world.

Collusion between visuals and sound, especially in the way they are edited together, helps to create *states* expressed by and experienced in landscapes. The percept is such a state that is based on a particular and purposeful organisation of sensory material. It is a state of awareness that is not easily contained in shot, frame, image or sequences, but emerges from any or all of them. The affect is an emotional or reflective state organised in the cinematic elements, and not as a response to them. The notion of states recognises a mental activity and an interface between the viewer and the image. Deleuze claims 'Landscapes are mental states' (1989, p. 213), and in his discussion of Kubrick, he observes of Kubrick's work that 'we see the degree to which it is the brain which is *mise-en-scene*' (1989, p. 205). Elements find unity in the brain. In this sense, thinking is not subjective response but part of the creative experience of the film.

There are complex dynamics suggested in these observations, and in others underpinning our bullet-pointed set of questions. They can be expressed in a diagram (above) with paths through concentric circles. The core of the diagram is not labelled as the *image* but presents as an interplay of thought, elements in the mise-en-scène (informally, the way elements are put together or staged), and the shot. If there is a reluctance to use the term 'image', it is because it is routinely understood as visual and made problematic by movement. 'Image' is better used in a general sense than a technical one. Deleuze resolves the difficulty by adjectival qualification in his image types: movement-image, time-image, action-image, crystal-image and so on. However, the hyphenation provides more than qualification: it is not a moving image but an image of movement, not a temporal image but an image of time. There are ten major image types that, with corresponding signs and subcategories, account for around 44 terms in his glossaries, and no reason to assume that the list is exhaustive or that new ones will not arise.

The purpose of the diagram in Figure 3 is to indicate relations. Analysis can begin from any point (any term on the chart) and progress to any other point as one way of tracking of a path of analysis for a particular film. Questions can be developed to problematise the connection between the points and so to seed analysis. The points might cut across circles, as the dashed arrows suggest, or stay within them. With the former, for example, *How does mise-en-scène propose a logic of the film's world*? With the latter (within the circle), for

example, *How does landscape work to channel thought*?

The dashed arrows are not preferred paths but a tracking of direct concerns from concrete concepts at the centre to abstractions in the outer circles: for example, material images (or images of materiality) progress from mise-en-scène through landscape to notions of the 'physical world' of the film. This clear, almost linear, development is also grouped typographically in the diagram by upper case-bold. Thoughts and impression channelled into ideas that describe patterns of logic are italicised. The shot linked to other shots, creating series and progressing to a totalised whole, is a path indicated by Roman text. The arrows move from the concrete to the abstract, as we would probably want to work in classroom film analysis, but there is nothing to prevent movement in the opposite direction or in any direction at all. In this way, the diagram is more a device for brainstorming analytical questions than a chart of ontological categories.

The two boxed terms are crucial because they manifest – that is, they give form to – thought and ideas in the film. The identified technique: the term in the inner circle (in our case, *mise-en-scène*) is situated in relation to the shot and impressions; the other term in the middle ring (for us, *landscape*) is related to a sustaining and linking ideas. Terms can be replaced by other techniques such as costuming, lighting, music, colour and so on. So, music might show a progression from song to musical themes/motifs, to soundscape. Alternatively, the boxes could be simply generalised as micro and macro dimensions of technique. But to do this would take away a practical use of the chart as working from and elaborating material concerns.

Again, the intention is to loosen up analysis. The point of the diagram is to free up thinking about a film and to propose productive questions for analysis. For example, you might randomly identify points and seek connections between them that would drive analysis. 'Thought' and 'sequences of shots' might generate the analytical question *How does the sequencing of shots describe a particular thought process?* Or, given that we are talking about landscape, we might connect it to any other point – say, 'the logic of the film's world'. We would then arrive at the question *How does landscape describe the logic of the film's world?* Which seems a pretty good question.

Beyond the outermost circle in our diagram is the multifaceted whole (multiplicity) that Deleuze capitalises as the Open, following (and interchangeable with) Henri Bergson's Whole. They and other asterisked terms in the diagram are routinely used by Deleuze in the *Cinema* books and in other works. 'Drunken monologue' is improvised (somewhat chaotic) internal monologue. 'Signaletic material' is discussed by Deleuze (1989) in terms of elements and forces out of which purposeful images emerge. In Adrian Parr (2005), concise definitions of 'whole' and 'multiplicity' as understood by Deleuze are provided. Both entries in Parr's 'dictionary' are by Jonathan Roffe and both begin with a resistance to assuming preexisting externals. Deleuze (1989) does not 'reference a prior unity' (p. 181), and 'there are no pre-existent wholes' (p. 304). Rather than *representing* objects in a stable (objective) reality, a film does not describe *the* world, even if (as with a documentary or the rider 'based on a true story') that might be the impression. It creates a world. We don't need to wrestle with the very weighty philosophical argument assumed here to grasp this as an important observation for cinema. At least to begin with, analytical attention must return again and again to the world of the film. Only later (in some ways post-analysis) should we consider what the film means for an external world – for *our* world.

A film exists in, and draws on, a cosmos of purposeful and un-purposeful movement. We probably won't want to go there, but we'll stick with it because it will be useful presently. What arises is a sense of a film in relation to non-film or pre-film phenomena. The Open is a swarming of sensation, objects and forces, pre-linguistic flows of thought; it is a multiplicity out of which images form as their elements (and relations between them) are recognised and employed. It is movement off its leash: to Deleuze, it is a *plane of immanence*, or like sub-atomic particles in a quantum field.

Unusually, *Run Lola Run* begins in the Open, in the pre-syntactic concerns of the film: 'The ball is round, the game is 90 minutes, everything else is pure theory', says a minor character in an open field (literally) in which characters from the film-to-come and unidentified others mingle, some in focus, some not. The opening of the film moves between animation, visual abstraction and realistic detail. 'Everything else' might be pure theory, but once a commitment to a path is made, it ceases to be random. Its logic and sequentiality emerge from movement (Lola's movement, as the title suggests). We are forced to go along with it without exactly knowing where we are going. In effect, *Run Lola Run* reverses the arrows in our diagram.

Landscape and the whole

In our diagram, landscape is positioned as between mise-en-scène (set or stage description) and a widening of interest to describe a materialised world, but *within its circle* landscape is in a triangulation with *ideas* and *sequences of shots*. Each circle is a different expression of the same triangulation – ideas, materialisation and fluid connections – that moves outwards to a sense of something bigger (respectively, logic, world and whole). In effect, it is the point of the diagram to map and explore the interplay between thought, images and the movement towards organisation and patterning. Admittedly, it is a complex way of expressing an attitude to analysis, and one that could do with more elaboration (possibly in a workshop situation), but the point here is to present analysis as open-ended, creative, and purposeful.

As we have considered, landscape is a malleable concept. It has been useful to think about its other expressions: affective landscape containing, expressing, and evoking emotion and internal processes; mental landscape with thought channelled within material limits; narrative landscape as flow – flows of significance (with the attendant question of *significant for whom?*); and soundscape. Also, *Run Lola Run* and *Blade Runner* foreground the notion of streetscape as urban landscape. There are two things to keep in mind, as much with the diagram as with notions of 'scapes. Firstly, in cinema, any sense of a static or stable landscape is purposeful and *created* to seem that way contrary to cinema's innate movement. Secondly, notions of the whole – the unifying properties of landscape – can be multiple within a movie; that is, there can be different 'wholes' at work that drive the narrative.

In *Run Lola Run*, the whole is dependent on particular circumstances; change them even slightly and material outcomes change (in a butterfly effect). In *Blade Runner*, alternative senses of the whole are evident in the off-world, in replicants that have formed their own ethical imperatives, and in Deckard's moving between, or being situated between, worlds. But even conventional films often employ a sense of different or competing wholes. *Saving Private Ryan*, for example, relies on the material world of the war, set against a past world in which Captain Miller is a schoolteacher and other characters have backstories situated in a 'normal', decent (that is, not-war) world.

Consequently, landscape (at least, as a materialisation of a whole) becomes an active part of a film, and its use can be approached technically as furthering the films interests rather than as a given. A clear example from *Hondo* (Farrow, 1953) – chosen not because it is a good film, but because bits of it are useful – demonstrates the complicity of landscape in the construction of images. The start has Hondo (John Wayne) walking out of a landscape. He emerges from it in a series of shots so seamlessly edited as to give the impression of a continuous shot. It is an extraordinary picture of a character walking from a speck in the distance directly into medium close-up. Or it would be, were it not overlayed with screaming red credits (the film was made for 3-D) that prevent it from being a sustained contemplation of the landscape and a very interesting star entrance. After a while, it is intercut with another space (an alternative landscape) of a modest homestead, with green grass and freely available water. This is where Hondo is heading. The spaces are edited to contrast.

The homestead is technically part of the physical landscape and could very easily have been included in the establishing shot – for example, in the foreground of a long shot that looks out to the desert from which Hondo emerges – but it wasn't. The desert landscape is Hondo's: wild and dangerous. He is walking from it with only his dog and his saddle because his horse was killed. The homestead is Angie's and her son's space. The editing establishes clear oppositions – domesticity versus heroism, stereotypically female values versus stereotypically male values, accommodation versus aggression – all of which are essential to the film. Landscape is *used* to provide a bridge to the ideas and intentions of the film.

Who is the landscape?

Deleuze (2004) was committed to analysis that did not prematurely close itself off:

> It is not certain that the question *what is this?* is a good question for discovering the essence or the Idea … It may be that questions such as who? how much? how? when? where? are better – as much for discovering the essence as for determining something more important about the Idea. (p. 94).

We can take him at his word and consider some questions that might keep analysis open and creative (as discovery more than as confirmation): Who is the landscape? How much is the landscape? How is the landscape? When is the landscape? Where is the landscape?

The questions beg alternative completion. Taken literally, *when is the landscape?* invites considerations of setting. For *Blade Runner*, the *when* is the dystopian future of Los Angeles (produced in 1982, the film projects to 2019). However, the question also invites extension: *when is the landscape essential in the film?* (Is it limited to establishing shots?) When is the landscape helpful in making characterisation more nuanced? When is a landscape problematic? When are we returned to the landscape? For example, after the killing of Tyrell (in *Blade Runner*), a return to landscape presents a cushion, and before the killing it presents a bridge. Landscape's function in this case is to isolate and bracket the killing.

Who is the landscape? With *Run Lola Run*, my first instinct was to answer that the landscape is Lola – Lola's state of mind – but it is not. She runs through the landscape (as streetscape), and images are in muted greys, muddy greens and dull orange tones instead of reds; they always seem to disappoint. There are no lively places such as cafes or shops unless, like the supermarket in the robbery, they feature in the narrative. Lola and Manny stand out in such an environment. Who is the landscape? Perhaps it is more connected to her emotionally absent father? Therein lies an interesting line of inquiry. It is, after all, to her father (at his bank) that she is initially heading when she runs out of her apartment building. On the other hand, the question *Who is the soundscape?* inescapably points to Lola, starting with her songs at the beginning of each of the three narrative sections that underscore her emotional states. In these ways, Deleuze's provocative and partial questions help to unsettle certainties on the way to more creative and productive analysis (again, recalling Massumi's interruptions).

To return to *landscapes of learning*, and without wanting to be too glib, Deleuze's questions can be asked of a frame different from the cinematic: the frame of the classroom. Who is the classroom? How much is the classroom? How is the classroom? When is the classroom? Where is the classroom? Or replace 'classroom' with 'learning'. They unsettle notions that the classroom is fixed and encourage notions of it as dynamic and, like our cinematic landscape, constructed and always emerging: a neighbourhood. The notion of landscapes of learning activates ideas of a space and setting, but it also introduces notions of essential relation and change, and of materialised ideas.

Landscape is a useful notion in that it brings into play expansiveness without losing it to abstraction. As an analytical concept, landscape generates orientations like soundscape, and (with a little more effort) challenging notions like *the tectonics of sensation* and *the mise-en-scène of the brain*. To regard landscape narrowly as setting is to overlook the fact that it is often a film's protagonist, at times its antagonist; that it has accessible mental and emotional dimensions; and that while a sense of landscape provides physical context, it does so in terms of the ideas of the film. What is required is that students think critically as much about form as about context – the more adventurously the better – and that they track purposeful thought through a film's images. No less true of any other kind of text, it is this that makes film familiar turf for English teachers once we have grappled with the fact that film introduces different kinds of images and an insistence on movement.

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Restore(y)ing the Nation

English Education in Australia and Restore(y)ing the Nation: Cultivating Postcolonial Possibilities through Placestory

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Abstract: Schooling has long been identified as a tool for nation-building and cultural reproduction. In early post-Federation Australia, English and literacy education played a significant role in producing colonial subjects. Although Australia today is heralded as a successful multicultural nation with momentum growing for constitutional recognition of First Nations peoples, English education remains haunted by the legacies of colonisation. This paper, based on a workshop given at the 2022 AATE conference in Darwin, proposes placestory as an orientation in subject English aimed at encouraging more historically and culturally nuanced imaginings of being and belonging in Australia. The paper provides an account of the development of English education in Australia as a contextual rationale for reimagining English education as situated within postcolonial possibilities. The paper then discusses three possible orientations for placestory: restore(y)ing place; becoming-with place; and place as being.

Keywords: placestory; subject English; Australia; nationhood; postcolonial English education

Getting oriented in the landscape

Stories of place, or *placestories*, have long constituted the human imaginary. Placestories can help map human belonging and becoming. But stories of place can also help us 'know our place' (Gulson & Symes, 2007) in the complex entanglements of social and cultural orders, and of political and economic hierarchies across time. Stories of place are central to the narrations of our shared, often contested and ambiguously connected histories. It is through placestories that claims and counter-claims of legitimacy, ownership and occupancy are asserted, and where dominant narratives of conquest and possession belie stories of dispossession and decimation amongst the world's Indigenous peoples. And while dominant stories of place have come to constitute hegemonic locations of power, placestories are necessarily more complex. Place is always a site of contestation, rendering placestories a multivoiced ensemble where we humans jostle to write ourselves into the places we often tenuously occupy. Contemporary spatial theorists argue that place is not simply a physical location, but in fact, an entanglement of stories 'so far' (Haraway, 2016; Massey, 2005; Renshaw, 2021), pointing towards the mobility and unfinalisability in productions of space. Our interest in placestory here is in how English teachers might employ placestory as a conceptual orientation and pedagogical tool to help navigate and encourage the lively contestations of identity and belonging that intersect in classrooms of subject English.

In this paper, we explore the question, 'Why placestory?'. We briefly account for the place of English education in the identity formation of young people in post-Federation Australia, and consider how this history is both challenged in and continues to haunt English education today. We then offer a conceptualisation of place and placestory, before elaborating the possibilities of placestory in the English classroom.

As a starting point, Figure 1 attempts to represent some of the relevant entanglements of subject English in relation to concepts of nation, identity and belonging. The figure emphasises subject English as central to understanding ourselves and our place in the world. This paper is an invitation to interrogate the role of both schooling more broadly and English education in particular, in its contribution to a sense of Australian self. The paper is also an invitation to wrestle with the complementary, competing and contradictory discourses of English education policy, curriculum and practice in relation to notions of nationhood. And finally, it is an invitation to once more carefully consider the purpose of subject English in the many educational spaces of contemporary Australia. This paper asks: What role might subject English play in efforts towards reconciliation, and more broadly to the cultivation of postcolonial Australian identities?

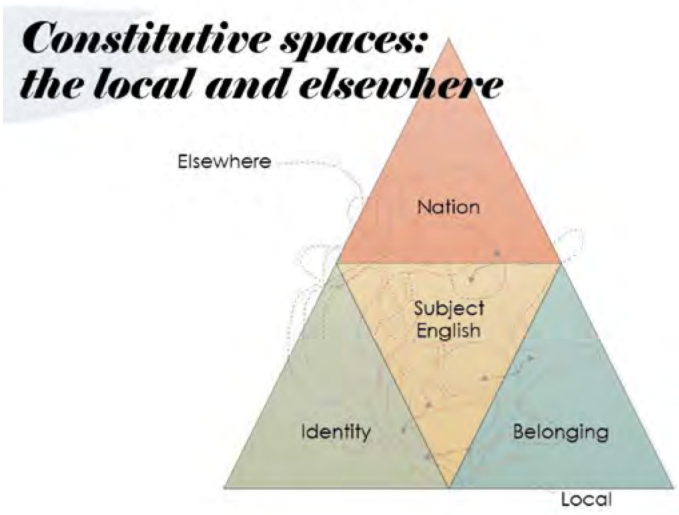

Figure 1. Constitutive spaces of subject English between the local and elsewhere

Situating ourselves

Part of the value in a concept like placestory is in how it accounts for situatedness. Placestory is about capturing the multiple and simultaneous stories that overlap and shape each other in space and time. It is not only about recognising difference of lived experience and the differences in our ambiguously shared histories, but about allowing the multitude of voices to resonate. In the spirit of thinking pedagogically with placestory, we recognise that we too are situated in particular ways by our histories and socio-cultural orientations, that this shapes how we take up the concept and that there are other ways placestory might be understood.

We both come to this work self-conscious and with a sense of unease. *Who are we to speak on questions of English teaching and colonisation? Who are we to reimagine what Australia might yet become? Who are we to imagine what post-colonial possibilities might emerge?*

(Tanya) I am 'white'. I have enjoyed the privileges of growing up white in this country. Yet, growing up, my privilege was taken for granted. It was invisible. And it wasn't until embarking on my PhD that I really confronted the cost of my privilege: in particular the normalised racism that was part of my day-to-day life, and the way race and difference was used to position (non-white culturally and linguistically diverse) others in practices of domination and authority. My recognition of Australia's difficult history and the ongoing operations of colonisation gave rise to some complex emotional responses. And while an ongoing process, this journey has affirmed my resolve that those from the dominant group must contribute to teaching in ways that nurtures social change. On completing my PhD, it became clear to me that English education and English teacher education has a role to play here *because* of the way English-as-language and English-as-being has shaped the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of this nation. And that if the colonial shadows of English education can be dispersed or engaged, therein lies a practical hope to reimagine who 'we' as Australians might yet become.

(Scott) I migrated to Melbourne, Australia from Aotearoa/New Zealand in the late 1980s as a seven-year-old. We left our large extended family scattered around the North Island in Auckland, the Waikato, Whanganui and Hawkes Bay and moved to Burwood in the suburbs of Melbourne. At the time, while I knew a handful of words in *te reo* Māori, I had no real sense of my wider whakapapa or family history, and my ties to hapū and iwi (subtribe and tribal groups). Despite this, I had a comfortable sense of connection to my whānau or extended family – with more cousins, aunties and uncles than I could ever remember, many who even looked 'legit' Māori – that is, who had Māori looking skin and facial features. My father is white Australian so, my siblings and I often felt short changed in the Māori credibility stakes – little scrawny white kids with big burly cousins. As I grew up, this was accompanied by a strange mix of both pride and embarrassment – pride in my sense that I belonged to a community, even if I didn't understand exactly what that meant at the time, and embarrassment at jokes about Māori noses and FOBs, amongst other casual racism. Of course, I have since come to understand more about the history of white colonisation and treaty in NZ and how this has shaped relations between Māori and Pakeha, as well as my own connections to my iwi tribal group, it's history, ancestral lands and waterways. It's an ongoing story, particularly as I consider my place here on Woiworrung and Kulin nation lands.

It is from these particular orientations that we recognise the complex, transient and tenuous connections we have to place and how this positions us in relation to others. We now consider the historical context of English education in Australia to deepen our understanding of the entangled nature of English education and national subjectivity across space and time.

Making national subjects: English teaching and empire

In the time since European invasion and colonisation, Australia has maintained deep ties to Britain, politically, economically and culturally. Green and Cormack's (2008, 2011) extensive work on the history of English curriculum in Australia has shown that in post-Federation Australia, a central preoccupation of English education was 'how to be at once an imperial "subject" – that is, subject to the British Crown – and yet a 'citizen' of Australia as a newly defined distinctive nation' (Green & Cormack, 2008, p. 246). School education in general and subject English in particular, became a central discursive site of this preoccupation, where a national imaginary could be cultivated, one that was at once locally situated and at the same time tied to the imperial empire from elsewhere (cf. Green & Cormack, 2008, 2011; Green & Reid, 2012). English was installed as the cornerstone of primary and secondary school education, with a particular focus on reading, and in turn literature. At the time, this unequivocally functioned to engage young people in 'literary culture', where 'English literature' and 'good literature' were imbued and equated with British sensibilities, morality and aesthetics – or what is commonly known as 'Englishness' (Green & Cormack, 2011).

The installation of English education at the centre of schooling had the dual purpose of instilling the 'mother tongue' as the common language of the colony and British sensibilities, or 'Englishness', as the anchor for cultural identity (Manuel & Carter, 2019). A growing print culture and the distribution of various reading materials proved to be a central technology of acculturation that facilitated a negotiation across 'colonial identity, isolation and geography' (Green & Cormack, 2011, p. 241). That is, English education was a way to inculcate how to 'read and write the nation' for young people spread across a geographically vast landscape. English education, and particularly the focus on language and reading, cemented the relationship between text and citizenship *in response to* the landscape and the disparate and isolated nature of many early communities and settlements. The traditions engrained in post-Federation English education make a compelling reference point for the ways in which contemporary English education, and particularly literature study, remain haunted by notions of 'Englishness'.

Drawing on Atkinson (2002), Green and Cormack (2011) propose that 'both the novel and the newspaper are key cultural technologies of colonial and federal nationalism in Australia, as well as being directly formative in the "real"-ization of the nation' (p. 248). In this situation, 'the idea of the nation itself grew out of writing and reading' (Atkinson, 2002, p. 59). This remains important today because even with moves to engage diverse articulations of being and belonging in the English classroom, entrenched habits of colonial mindset continue to shape subject English today.

Engaging with the historical context that has constituted the rise of English as the cornerstone for contemporary schooling in Australia is important for understanding the production of subject English today. According to Green and Reid (2012) 'understanding our past considerably advances understanding our present, and enables us to look more strategically into our future(s)' (p. 363). Politically, as Australia attempts to officially reconcile its relationship with First Nations people and confront past and ongoing injustices, English teachers are in a position to reassess the role English education plays in reading and writing the nation. Indeed, official curriculum and policy documents claim subject English 'contributes to nation-building and internationalisation' (ACARA, n.d.). As such, we argue that English teachers may champion the contribution made by subject English to nation-building by forging an English education focused on an entanglement of diverse placestories that support a postcolonial imaginary committed to recognition, reconciliation, equity and justice.

Placing subject English between the local and the elsewhere

As we have argued, it is important to understand that the historical position of English as the cornerstone for schooling is not inconsequential today. According to Green and Reid (2012) 'the strong emphasis on *the English language*, as the general medium of instruction and learning' (p. 363) asserted English teaching and English discipline subjects as foundational to schooling. In addition, '"Englishness", and the capacity to speak the Mother tongue "well", was also the register

Figure 2. Intersections of local stories and stories from elsewhere

of culture and class. English in Australia was a complex negotiation of "Nation" and "Empire", language and culture, literacy and identity' (p. 363). This history remains deeply engrained in the imaginary of subject English, where, despite a contemporary socio-cultural context, curriculum and assessment requirements continue to privilege Standard Australian English, and processes for identifying 'good literature' for text study remain haunted by traditions steeped in the colonial history of the subject (McLean Davies et al., 2022).

One important opportunity to intervening in this situation is through text selection. For example, noting the role of English as a means of exporting 'Englishness' as a commodity of culture and class, Bacalja et al. (2021) centre text study as a means to problematise dominant national myths. That is, in senior English (Years 11–12) texts included on official text selection lists, and in junior English (Years 7–10) texts selected by individual teachers or English departments, provide opportunities to engage pedagogically in discursive practices that disrupt popular or dominant myths of the Australian imaginary. In their work, Bacalja et al. (2021) suggest that senior text selection lists have the power to influence the shape of debates and narratives about the nation through the text and identity work young people do in their English classes. Drawing on Bhabha (1990), Bacalja et al. (2021) argue that:

> The ambivalence between naturalized myths of, for instance, Australia's colonial origin and the materiality and divergent perspectives lurking within its mythologization may cause antagonism. But encountered in the space of the classroom, it may also give rise to a productive re-imagining of the various idealized myths on which the nation-state of Australia constitutes itself. (p. 2)

In their conclusion, Bacalja et al. (2021) note that 'national identity is always at stake in the conflicts over the texts of English', and yet 'curriculum which determines what counts as literature worth studying in the senior secondary years has the capacity to govern what is included in the narratives of the nation' (p. 10). Although official text lists and curriculum requirements in senior English exert power in broadly determining texts of value, much is also dependent on local school contexts, the experiences young people bring to classrooms, and the teacher as mediator of text study (McLean Davies et al., 2022). In this way, the local both places and displaces text study and the study of English more generally in a negotiation of identity in relation to the local and the elsewhere.

Figure 2 attempts to visualise some of the ways discourses related to identity, belonging and subject English are situated locally, while simultaneously intersecting with dominant discourses of nationhood and belonging, the colonial traditions of subject English and official constructions of subject English in national and State curriculums.

Cutting across the intersection of local and elsewhere are other discourses: discourses of reconciliation, multiculturalism and multilingualism, and discourses continuing to assert the 'white possessive' of colonisation (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). In addition, discourses of the self – as locally situated individuals, and as and subjects within networks of power mediated by culture, class, race, gender, dis/ability, geography – wrestle and rub up against one another demonstrating how discursive spaces are always contested and alive with ambivalence. Such a view 'problematizes the image of Australia implied by … nationalist narratives'

(Bacalja et al., 2021, p. 2). In this way, along with the realities of teaching writing, reading, speaking and listening, spelling, comprehension and grammar, English classrooms are necessarily sites of cultural contestation (Bacalja et al., 2021). And it is in the many local and situated spaces of English education where an opportunity to restore(y) the nation resides. We propose placestory as a conceptual and pedagogical tool for activating English classrooms as sites alive with ambivalence and reimagining.

Reorienting subject English through place and placestory

> Geography clearly matters in the case of Australian national imaginaries … which might have a significant bearing on how best to engage contemporary discourses of globalization and cosmopolitanism. (Green & Cormack, 2011, p. 249)

The Australian landscape plays an important constitutive role in shaping the Australian imaginary. This is evident in the narration of *place* as enmeshed in the becoming, belonging, exclusion, dis/possession of Australian people. As Bacalja et al.'s (2021) analysis of senior text selection shows, dominant themes in Australian texts for study include: 'colonization and the impact on Indigenous peoples, the rural myth and its homogenization of Australia as white and masculine, and the experience of new migrants in Australia throughout the latter half of the 20th century' (p. 3). Each of these themes can be connected with distinctive imaginaries of place. The prominence of place in the Australian imaginary is perhaps testament, at least in part, to the 'white possessive' and white Australia's deep anxiety about dispossession characterised in contemporary times through national security discourses of border protection and the foreign 'other' (Stratton, 2004) and through First Nations people's ongoing struggle for land rights, Treaty and reconciliation (cf. Gelder & Jacobs, 1998; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). We might take this as a cue to consider the way social relations are always situated within a 'politics of location' (Hall, 1996; Lefebvre, 1991) and how these situated social relations shape negotiations and investigations of self and other in the discursive space of the English classroom.

As an advocate for the application of spatial theories in education, Comber (2016, 2021) has long argued for understanding 'the importance of socio-geographic contexts in how education is negotiated' (2021, p. 19). Amid the everyday routines and messy happenings of teaching and learning, schools and classrooms are places where identities are narrated and re-narrated, asserted and challenged and reimagined over again. Curriculum *stories* the nation. Indeed, according to Sawyer (2010), 'the national curriculum for English K–10 consciously presented itself as an exercise in nation-building' (p. 7). Curriculum privileges particular stories of being and knowing, and particular kinds of knowledge over others (e.g. Apple, 1982; Bernstein, 1996; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2009; Stratton & Ang, 1994). However, what is of interest here is how English teachers and young people might work together to acknowledge and explore dominant discourses of being and knowing present in the English curriculum and classroom in order to dis*place*, reorient and reimagine being and knowing in ways that embrace multivocity and complexity. We posit that spatial theory, and in particular the concept of placestory, offers a language to productively mobilise a multiplicity of stories capable of challenging dominant myths, imaginings and narratives of nation and belonging, while also cultivating new and different postcolonial imaginaries for the future nation.

Gulson and Symes (2007) argue that:

> Spatial terms are part of the geometry of language, the necessary measuring sticks of everyday life … much of our ordinary vocabulary is concerned with specifying the fundamental ordinates of space, with communicating information about position, direction and movement, a sense of belonging and absence, of being home or estranged. (p. 99)

They go on to urge that this language must do more than invoke metaphorical suggestion. Rather, the language of space must be taken up in ways that offers 'complex theorizations of material and symbolic life' (p. 100). In terms of exploring the place of English education, spatial language provides a productive way to theorise the imagined local and elsewhere spaces of English education and how these intersect with dominant narratives of nation and belonging, as well as the diverse trajectories of lived experience (Massey, 2005). Gulson and Symes (2007) go onto argue that: 'the sense of knowing one's place has a powerful sociological resonance; stories and narratives mediate the way space is apprehended and comprehended' (p. 99). Here they point to how narratives of place – particularly those that endure through school subjects and officially endorsed school curriculums – *constitute* the way space is lived.

From this conceptualisation of space as a force that

constitutes relations and lived experience, placestory can be seen as a conceptual and pedagogical tool for a place-centred approach to the identity work of subject English. Massey (2005) articulates the possibilities of place, suggesting that place is 'a simultaneity of stories so far' (p. 9) and highlighting the way place is storied and restoried in a continuous folding and unfolding – a kind of co-authorship implicating many mobile voices and invoking the possibilities of ambivalent entanglements, not only in place but also across time. As Renshaw (2021) has it, 'we are in constant motion with place' (p. 3). It is in this mobile entanglement where the possibility of co-authoring new stories of place, new *placestories*, can emerge. When reflecting on the history of English education in Australia, and the 'trouble' (Haraway, 2016) of English education in relation to colonisation, dispossession, and cultural and linguistic violence, as well as the privileging of white-middle-class ways of being and knowing, placestory offers a rich starting point from which to disrupt dominant narratives. What follows is a description and elaboration of the conference workshop this paper is based on, where English teachers and teacher educators responded to this conceptual provocation to consider how they might restore(y) English education in their place of teaching and learning.

Some pedagogic possibilities for placestory

The workshop opened with several readings in an attempt to create a layering of different voices and places (see Figure 3). The reading was intended to demonstrate how 'reimagining as a tool of political and ethical interpretation is necessarily entwined with those pedagogies that realise the study of literature, it is also connected with the stories themselves' (Bacalja et al., 2021, p. 10).

First was the poem *colonise* by rupi kaur (2017). This was followed by an extract from Nardi Simpson's (2020) novel, *Song of the crocodile* (pp. 133–137). Set in a remote rural community, the scene is about a Year 9 class expecting a visit from the Mayor to talk about town infrastructure. The teacher is priming the class for the visit through a discussion about the kinds of infrastructure important for the town. Milly, an Indigenous young woman who lives in the 'campgrounds' on the outskirts of town, defiantly proposes the 'blue shed' – the laundry and thriving business established by her mother – as essential to the town, igniting tension and derision from the white students in her class. The scene profoundly

Figure 3. Texts used during the workshop

illuminates the 'simultaneity of stories' of place that are both hidden and told. The third text/reading was Mat Huynh's (2015) interactive graphic adaptation of Nam Le's (2008) short story, *The boat*. The sound of waves and wind and the haunting creak of the timber hull filled the conference room. After reading the opening passage we left the audio on and finished with the fourth reading, the poem *boat* by rupi kaur (2017).

Together, the texts evoked a multivoiced story of place: one of colonisation, of white possession and Indigenous dispossession, but also one of defiance and self-determination; of migration, asylum and desperation, but also of renewal and hope. Pedagogically, the readings situated the workshop within the core business of secondary English teachers: working with texts to understand ourselves and our place in the world. The reading and the selection of texts also worked to problematise dominant stories of being and belonging in Australia, and demonstrate the multiplicity of place on a national level, providing a useful reference point for thinking about how stories coexist in place and how we, as English teachers, may co-author new stories of place with the young people we work with.

The layered readings functioned as a springboard into a conceptual framing of placestory and to some provocations for reflection, including:

- How do we make room for stories of the lands on which our classrooms are built? For connections to deep time and deep listening? (Renshaw, 2021)
- How do we make room for the stories of trauma and grief in experience of colonisation and migration?
- How do we make room for new stories of young people finding their way in new places with a new language and a new culture?

- How do we make room for young people's worldviews and how these shape responses to the themes or issues explored?
- How do we encourage multiplicity and simultaneity?

This led to further conceptual elaboration, before posing a set of questions in relation to subject English:

- What narratives and imaginaries of subject English exist in your setting? What are the narratives imposed from elsewhere or taken up locally?
- What space is made for the many Englishes of migration, globalisation and colonisation? How do these sit against the assertion of a 'Standard Australian English'?
- How do we grapple with the tensions between a multilayered national identity and the identity of subject English tied to mechanisms of colonisation in the context of reconciliation and Australia as a celebrated multicultural nation?

Participants in the workshop were invited to reflect on and write in response to these provocations. Participants wrote freely for about 10 minutes, before sharing and talking with others sitting nearby, then contributing to a larger discussion where the group considered, among other things:

- normative stories of nationhood and belonging that circulate and exercise power in school settings
- the intersections of local imaginaries, nationhood and belonging
- the traditions of subject English at work in local settings
- how these align with or resist notions of English presented in official curriculum
- And how English education in various settings engages with questions of Australia as a colony? Of reconciliation and First Nations identities and representation? Of multicultural and multilingual Australia?

While it is impossible to capture the depth of workshop discussions, three themes that emerged are worth elaborating in relation to English teachers' identity work: (1) permission to restore(y) place; (2) becoming-with place; and (3) being place. Each of these is discussed below.

Restore(y)ing place

English teachers are tasked with weaving stories from elsewhere in relation to our local. When we are able to, English teachers exercise judgement to determine which stories they take up, which we challenge or seek to disrupt. Subject English is not about mastering rigid grammar rules or producing predetermined responses to text – although it is often construed this way in dominant narratives from elsewhere. At its heart, it is about meaning-making. It is about creating. It is about language. It is about pooling linguistic and other resources to produce new ideas, new understandings and new texts. At its heart, it is about being and becoming – just as English education in post-Federation Australia was focused on being and becoming a citizen of the nation in the image of the empire. Yet teachers and young people are tasked with negotiating *in place* powerful ideas about identity and belonging in relation to the role of subject English as produced both at local school sites and within the bigger system of education, and further in relation to situated experiences of language, culture and schooling. This negotiation is necessarily contested, filled with complimentary, contradictory and at times antagonistic stories and tellings, constituting – as Bacalja et al. (2021) assert – the English classroom as alive with ambivalence.

In the workshop discussion, one participant, who we call Sandy, talked about her experience growing up poor with a single mum in public housing. She asserted that the often imagined space of public housing assumes experiences of poverty and/or violence and/or deprivation which in turn shape deficit narratives that dominate discourses *about* people and place with lived experience of public housing. Without denying that these experiences exist, she said that the dominant narratives of disadvantage are a far cry from the lively sense of community and love that she felt and lived growing up. As a teacher she wanted her students to be able to storey and restore(y) their experiences of growing up poor – just as she was able to do – but found it difficult to find space to speak back to deficit discourses and to encourage her students to value and storey their experiences beyond dominant narratives.

According to Comber and Kamler (2004):

> Generations of teachers have been inducted into counter-productive discourses that constitute certain students as 'deficit' – the poor, the wilful, the disabled, the non-English speaking, the slow, the bottom 10%. One of the most damning failures of teacher education (both pre-service and in-service), and of educational research more broadly, is that pervasive deficit discourses are still so dominant in classrooms and staffrooms; that they are reproduced in student files, educational journals and conferences, and reported as fact in media coverage of young people and schooling. (p. 293)

Comber and Kamler's work with literacy teachers in schools attended by children living in disadvantage, seeks not only to disrupt the deficit, but to connect with the 'funds of knowledge' (Moll, 2000; Moll et al., 1992) and 'virtual schoolbags' (Thomson, 2002) that all children bring to the classroom. Authentically connecting with the lives of young people promotes a reciprocal environment that helps to value the stories of place that shape their lived experience. These stories constitute the understandings young people bring to classroom studies of text and language and literacy in subject English (and beyond), and are an important resource not only for meaning-making, but for opening up ambivalence and inviting spaces of cultural contestation. Sandy's story is testament to this.

As Green and Cormack (2008, 2011) remind us, English classrooms have historically been framed according to a singular and standard notion of language (Standard Australian English) and culture (white Anglo-Celtic), ignoring many important and productive differences in classrooms. While there has been a rhetorical shift in policy and curriculum that attempts to recognise and to be inclusive of difference and to support learners from diverse backgrounds (ACARA, 2016; Education Council, 2019) this is challenging in the context of high-stakes assessment regimes that measure performance and determine success and achievement against generic and decontextualized 'elsewhere' standards. This clearly disadvantages young people for whom Standard Australian English is not the standard, not only in terms of performance but also in terms of their sense of identity and belonging as being valued. This is equally true for young people from low-SES backgrounds as it is young people from non-English speaking backgrounds, those who are neurodiverse or who have cognitive or physical disabilities, and the many intersecting threads across various signifiers of identity and difference.

What Sandy's restore(y)ing of her experience of public housing offers is an opportunity to imagine how encouraging diverse stories of place can promote a complex co-authoring of lived experience that allows for multiplicity and does not reduce experience to a binary of normative or non-standard.

Becoming-with place

Another workshop participant, Rosie (pseudonym), described her own struggle to reconcile her non-Indigenous heritage, inner-city upbringing, regional teaching experiences and personal connection to First Nations people and community. She described the struggle and journey from being self-conscious and naive in her white skin to understanding that she too has a place in this land alongside the traditional custodians of the land on which she lives and works. That she too has a skin name and a clan identified in her family name, and also in the rituals surrounding her being adopted into Community and on Country.

Rosie's story turned our minds to how we might account for our own routes as fourth generation Australians with ancestry winding back to: (Tanya) Cornwall, Birmingham and Ireland, but also beyond to the migrations of the Norse, and (Scott) back to Scotland, Canada and throughout the islands of Polynesia, a complex entwining of routes (Gilroy, 1994) resonant with many in this great southern land. We also consider our last names 'Davies' (Welsh) and 'Bulfin' (Irish) and how these displace or hide connections to our other family names, Hodkinson (British) and Rota (Maori), and their stories. At dinner the evening before the workshop a colleague lamented how she felt like a mongrel, not really knowing how to navigate the entwining routes that have carried her to 'here'. She is Australian. Rightly so. And this should not be undermined. Guilt and shame will not bring us to reconciliation. But what Rosie's story demonstrates is that in finding ways to trace our own routes we might make room for the trouble of our collective crossings and find ways to restore(y) our ambiguous and multivoiced ways of 'becoming-with' (Haraway, 2016; Renshaw, 2021). In so doing, we may find room for stories that remind us and take us beyond Australia as an ambiguously white nation tethered to the shadow of empire.

One important question for teachers of English is how to draw out and help co-author the stories of being, belonging and becoming of our students that can help reimagine the limits of (never-quite-post) colonial Australia, towards the possibilities of a more complex, entangled postcolonial imaginary within English teaching and learning. Such pedagogies will need to be able to encourage textual work that is mobile and situated and responsive to the entanglement of stories that can be brought to the surface in particular English classrooms.

Being place

It is impossible to adequately explore questions of place and belonging in Australia without confronting the lived experiences of First Nations people. There is much guilt and shame felt by many white Australians

in relation to our colonial past and present. For English teachers, of whom the majority are white and middle class, these feelings can be amplified by knowing there is an ethical, curricular and policy imperative to engage with First Nations knowledge, culture and histories at all levels of education. Yet powerful 'affectual responses' (Zembylas, 2017a, 2017b, 2018) continue to inhibit the confidence and agency many teachers feel in being able to engage issues related to Indigenous Australia in the classroom (Phillips, 2021). This is no different when it comes to teaching texts by First Nations authors and creators about First Nations lived experiences (McLean Davies et al., 2020). One possible point of access for the pedagogic possibilities of placestory and First Nations education might be found in understanding the significance of place for First Nations people – as a connection that spans space and time, where all that has been is understood as an ongoing continuity; a folding and refolding of becoming that lives and speaks in the present through Country (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011).

For First Nations peoples, Country is not only place, but also a manifestation of story in space and across deep time. Country, story and deep time entwine in the Dreaming. This conceptualisation positions Country as *being*, and challenges the narratives of possession and discipline that dominate white Australian conceptualisations of place (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). We propose here that in staying with the trouble (Haraway, 2016) of colonial (and neoliberal) narratives of the possessives of place, the English classroom provides opportunity to find spaces open to experiencing the 'simultaneity of stories so far' (Massey, 2005). This is about exploring our own epistemological and ontological relationships with place and accepting that 'there are gifts in [Indigenous] placestories if we are willing to listen' (Renshaw, 2021, p. 8). This requires a reorientation of dominant epistemologies and ontologies of place in Australia, where it might be possible to co-author new relational spaces of being and becoming through authentically postcolonial imaginaries.

Conclusion

In the context of Australia as a nation that Always Was. Always Will Be. Aboriginal, articulating connection to place is fraught with claims and counter-claims of legitimacy and possession. This land was stolen and colonised. Sovereignty was never ceded. British law was imposed. First Nations were dispossessed under Terra Nullius. White Australia was asserted through law and language, and eventually through policy such as the White Australia policy (National Museum Australia, 2022). Of course now, modern Australia is celebrated as a thriving multicultural nation and the movement towards reconciliation is gaining momentum. But the dominant imaginary of Australia remains connected to the 'white possessive' (Moreton-Robinson, 2015), haunted by a 'fantasy' of white Australia (Hage, 1998).

Over dinner one night during the conference, with colleagues and friends we discussed and debated the various practices that acknowledge our heritage and those of others: practices of positioning ourselves in relation to the places and spaces we occupy, practices of storying our place in space and time. Earlier in the day we had been at a presentation where a colleague introduced himself as an immigrant living on unceded traditional lands. It was an interesting practice which we pondered and discussed over dinner, in a lively debate about what it means to articulate our heritages, what this might look like in contemporary Australia, and how we might do that in ways that recognise the entwining of our many routes to the present (Gilroy, 1994). If we do not identify as First Nations, then we might make the argument that we are all immigrants. In a way, this holds true. However, in the context of Australia, for many people, trajectories of immigrant-settler-convict-coloniser-refugee are not straightforward and where roots have taken hold over generations, identifying as 'immigrant' or 'settler' or 'refugee' glosses over the complexity of our own 'routes' and placestories 'so far'. These meditations point towards the slippery notion of 'origins', illuminating the complex entanglements of histories, our relationships with place, and the mobile 'simultaneity of stories so far' which hold us together however ambiguously.

This kind of examination has led both of us back to how notions of 'Englishness' are tied up in English language education and how the textual work of subject English might be disentangled to make room for multiple ways of being and knowing. The elaboration of these ideas in this paper have been as much about coming to terms with our own routes as it has been a consideration about the possibilities of reorienting subject English towards postcolonial futures. We've come to understand our status as Australian not as an either/or binary in opposition to First Nations people and their connection to Country. Rather, like Rosie, we are learning to stay with the trouble of our simultaneity of routes as Australian where placestories

constituted by 'both-and' (Zembylas, 2014) coexist in lively ambivalence. We argue that placestory in the English classroom can help teachers and young people make some sense of these messy entanglements.

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Perspectives from the Past

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A. D. HOPE

Presidential Address

Professor A. D. Hope is best known as one of Australia's leading poets, and currently holds the chair of English at the Australian National University at Canberra. He has been president of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English since its formation in 1965. Earlier in his career, he taught in secondary schools in New South Wales, and his understanding of teaching has been invaluable in guiding the new association.
The text of his address to the Australian Association in April of this year manifests his concern for the state of English teaching in Australia today.

One of the most striking things about the teaching of English in this country in the last decade has been the growth of a strong professional spirit among the teachers. This strong sense of their profession has been marked by the formation in some cases, in others by the renaissance, of professional associations, and particularly by the foundation two years ago of the federal association, which you have done me the honour to make me president of. The schools are far ahead of the universities in this—for there is still no association of university teachers of English, no journal, and little demand for one.

I need not remind you, however, that the teaching of English is not yet a profession in the fullest sense of the word. You are, it is true, a corporate body whose object is to promote, improve and maintain the standards of the subject and the skill you profess; you have moved a long way from the days when I first entered your ranks, when associations of teachers seemed to many of us to be concerned more with trade union principles and aims than with professional ethics and standards. But even today we lack the main thing that marks out a true professional body as opposed to those which simply *call* themselves professions for reasons of snobbery or self-interest. The chief mark of a profession is that it is responsible, and is recognised as responsible, for itself as the body to which the community entrusts its interests in one particular field. In this sense the law is a corporate body which includes

judges, barristers and solicitors, though each may have its own formal body of association, united in a common tradition of seeing that the law is preserved, studied, improved and kept in respect. Others may make the laws and others may administer them. The legal profession as such is responsible for saying and knowing what the law and the spirit of the law *is*: they are its repository and its guardian and society recognises them as such.

I think we can hardly say that this association, whatever its energy and ideals, whatever the respect it commands, is yet recognised in the community as the body responsible for expert advice and for saying what ought and ought not to be done by those who administer education in this country. We are still a long way from the position in England, where, for example, advice and research on the teaching of English since 1964 has been entrusted to the SCHOOLS COUNCIL, which is largely a body of *teachers* of English. But what happened in England in 1964, and to some extent in the United States in 1962, may happen here in 1968 if this association maintains its standing, vigour and enterprise. That date will have been reached, I believe, on the day when this association becomes the recognised authority on the teaching of English, the day when the Minister for Education approaches it to conduct and plan research or to advise and devise a new syllabus of studies; it will be the day when the control and disciplinary power over qualifications and membership of the profession is in the hands of the profession itself. It will be the day when this association or some other has the standing with the community that is now enjoyed by bodies like the B.M.A., the A.M.A. or the Bar Association.

It is perhaps a paradoxical situation that one part of our profession, the university teachers of English, who have very little professional organisation and practically no corporate sense of themselves as a profession, enjoy full professional status. They have full power to decide what study and research is needed, what shall go into their courses and how they shall teach, who shall be members of their profession and who are not qualified to be so. The other, and larger part of the teachers of English have shown the corporate sense and have the organisation and show the responsible attitude to their subject, but do not enjoy the professional recognition and privileges. It is as though that part of the profession which enjoys authority in the matter of knowledge—whether rightly or not—was paralysed and inert, and that part which had the vision, the energy and skill lacked the power to command recognition which only the authority of knowledge can give. The first step towards amending this is obviously to bring all members of the profession together in one organisation—though this may better be done by affiliating a number of professional bodies, than by dissolv-

ing them all in one organisation. But it is not enough to wake the university members of the profession from their colossal inertia: the teachers in the schools must themselves enter the field of research and critical enquiry, the thing which gives the university teacher his professional autonomy. And the universities must make their facilities available for research into the problems of education in the subject, as well as the subject itself. The Schools Council of England in its Third Working Paper, *A Programme for Research and Development in English Teaching*, published last year, lays emphasis on the fact that its programme is to be carried out in the schools, by teachers of the schools and at the same time points to the massive Office of Education English Program begun in the United States as a project of the Federal government in which twelve major universities co-operated in the research programme for the schools. Australia is behind in both these approaches but it is moving in these directions, and it is, I believe, the English teachers themselves, through their associations, who are helping to give the lead—though so far the amount of research going on is pitiably small.

I do not want simply to congratulate you or to indulge you with a Barmecide feast of good things still in store. I want rather to talk about the dangers to which professionalism is always prone and in particular to speak of the opportunities which may be missed if we fall prey to those dangers. In this I shall speak of our whole profession from the kindergarten teacher to the research professor at a university, whose teaching is limited to supervising the work of advanced specialist scholars. But I shall have in mind chiefly the teachers of the primary and secondary schools.

The main danger that faces a profession that values its standards and its skills, is that the skills themselves, which are only a means to an end, may easily and quite unconsciously become ends in themselves, a vested interest which determines the treatment of the subject and limits the practitioners' view of it. Medicine is a profession particularly liable to this disease and its history is one long record of bitter opposition to new views in medicine and to new methods of treatment. It is not the bad doctors who have usually been responsible for the opposition, but the good ones to whom established practices have become sacred.

Now one of the things I notice in reading the books written about the teaching of English, in reading the articles written in professional journals, and in listening to teachers of English at meetings and conferences, is the large amount we discuss *method*: how to interest fifth grade children in poetry, how to teach grammar, how to teach *Hamlet*, how to organise creative writing, how to plan and run a school theatre,

how to use the school library to the best advantage. These are real and proper professional interests. But I am sometimes struck by the relatively few occasions on which these same books, journals and meetings actually discuss works of literature as such or question the reason for doing these things at all or for doing them in the way we do. Neither do they seem often to be asking some of the fundamental questions which the English and the Americans are asking themselves today. If I may say so the subject English would seem to be accepted. It is mainly the methods which appear to be in question. This is symptomatic (or it may be) of what I call the less satisfactory side of professionalism—the vested interest in method which automatically stops our thinking about problems which might require us to scrap the methods altogether; the vested interest in highly complex skills which makes it unthinkable that we might find these skills unnecessary or obsolete. An amusing instance of this is the way newer and more ingenious methods of teaching formal grammar continue to be put forward in spite of the fact that research has failed to show that teaching formal grammar is much more useful than cat's cradle—having indeed as its main justification of the fact that it can be made a diverting and amusing game played for its own sake. Even so the time might be better spent at chess or scrabble. It is only recently that proper research has suggested an entirely new approach to the topic.

Now among the fundamental questions that the Schools Council is encouraging teachers of English to ask themselves—and which it is providing time and research opportunities to find the answers to—are such things as the following:

Taking the present 'subject' of English in schools as it is:

1. Is English properly speaking a 'subject' at all? If so, what part of it is a 'subject' and how many separate subjects does this odd mass of traditional topics really contain?
2. What don't we teach that we should?
3. What could we do better *by not* teaching?

These are all questions we do not know the answers to, and the real answers, if we knew them, might lead us to give up some of our beautifully elaborated techniques, because the things we have perfected them for are no longer worth doing. We spend a great deal of time doing something that we call 'teaching literature', for example. This means, as it is practised at present, that we discuss and analyse a play, a novel or a poem, in the hope that this will lead our pupils to understand and appreciate better, and this seems a good thing to do. But under the pressure of public examinations and current fashions this process leads on to criticism and what we try to teach is the skill of

literary judgment. Boards of examiners influenced by universities are constantly complaining that our pupils are poorly equipped in critical ability when they leave school. Perhaps they are. But have we asked the fundamental question of whether at that age they are capable of anything but the most rudimentary critical judgment, as the failure of so many devoted and expert teachers might suggest? Are we perhaps driving at something that cannot be done? Are all the articles and discussions on 'How to Teach *Hamlet*' and 'How to Anlayse *The Wind in the Willows*', all the carefully devised techniques not possibly as futile as the carefully elaborated techniques by which medical science at one time tried to cure madness on the assumption that an insane man had a devil in residence, or stomach complaints on the assumption that the body of the patient had an excess of bilious humour? It was with a view to drawing attention to our lack of knowledge on fundamental questions that I once suggested that for all we know English should not be a subject at all. For the purpose of argument it should perhaps be treated like musical appreciation or football—possibly somewhere between the two. Those who wished to read and those who wished to hear music should have time and some guidance for this delight—but not be required to study, to sit for examinations or to use the creations of the poets as chopping blocks for their critical ingenuity. Those who showed a bent and an aptitude for writing should be treated like those who showed an aptitude for football or swimming: be given coaches and encouraged with praise and brought on by expert training. English would then disappear from the curriculums except for teaching the basic skills of reading, speaking and writing—and everybody might be much happier, including the teacher of English, who would then find himself in the interesting and perhaps rewarding position of something between a sports coach and tourist guide to the Earthly Paradise. It is not impossible that accurate knowledge might suggest such a solution. But it is perhaps just possible that investigation of one of these might show that what is wrong is too much cultural activity, too much general reading and too little thorough and organised discipline. The great medieval humanist, historian and philosopher, Étienne Gilson, brought up in the austere, and, some think, the rather pedantic tradition of French scholarship, in late middle life did what few continental, and very few French scholars ever do, he left his native land and settled in North America. He was asked some years ago to give his impressions of American Education. He surprised everybody by picking out College Football as the only sound item in its curriculum. Why? Because it was taken thoroughly seriously. It was competitive. You had to be good to stay in the game, and there was enormous prestige in staying in. So the footballers produced by the system were really good. The teaching

of literature on the contrary was permissive, it was based on the fallacy that taste and culture can be taught directly, instead of being the by-product of hard work, intellectual analysis and a thoroughly competitive struggle to be first in the skills and knowledge on which real taste and appreciation depend. Too much education and too little instruction! was roughly what his criticism came to. I often think of this as I watch my own pupils trying to come to grips with one of the classics of English literature, without the necessary equipment: the knowledge of the language, the knowledge of the Bible, the knowledge, however rudimentary, of the myths and legends of Greece and Rome that their task requires. Just sheer knowledge for a start! And, as for the skills required to respond to demands made by a poem like *Paradise Lost* on the mind and heart, they are like people suddenly put on the stage and asked to dance a classical ballet. At such moments I begin to wonder whether the old, limited, severe, and rather authoritarian *training* and *drill* in elements, now rather out of fashion in the so-called cultural subjects, are not due for a return.

These are two extreme views and I am putting both of them forward quite seriously because either may be true—the practice of our profession, I suggest to you, is not based on investigation, on research and experiment, in a word upon accurate knowledge. All this has still to be done. It is largely based on traditions and fond beliefs, which may be well founded but may be delusions. What seems to justify them is elaborate techniques and skills we have developed. Perhaps these skills are justified, but perhaps—and I sometimes suspect this is the case—investigation would show that we are like the medieval alchemists. Their techniques were infinitely subtle, beautifully precise, elaborately justified by the most profound theory of their subject. There was just one little thing wrong: the facts of the chemistry and physics of material substances had not the faintest connection with their theories about them.

What are the facts about human capacity, about the nature of our subject, about what it is possible to do with it and what it is desirable to do and what it is better to leave alone. These are questions that we ought to be able to answer if we are to justify our claim to be a profession, and not a society for the preservation of 'Ancient Recipes and Old Wives' Tales'.

To take examples: the teaching of English in Australia still largely follows the pattern laid down at a time when English meant the literature and language of the educated classes in England. There were lesser breeds without the law, but they were not part of education. Today we live in a world in which the English-speaking peoples have no single centre of literary culture any more, and there is no longer

a standard form of spoken English. It cannot be said, I think, that the syllabuses of study in any state in Australia reflect or try to come to terms with these facts. We are still thinking in terms of whether we should or should not introduce some Australian or American literature into *English*—ignoring the fact that English is now the literature of the whole English-speaking world, of which not only the United States and Australia, Canada, New Zealand are part, but India, Pakistan, the West Indies and large parts of Africa, where it is the literary language of hundreds of millions. To cope with this situation—just to realise what the new situation is, is perhaps the greatest professional challenge we face. The basic research going on in America and England of which I spoke, cannot be left to England and America, as some people assume. The new English-speaking world and the new English literature and language can only be dealt with if, in each country the part of the problem peculiar to that country is undertaken as part of one investigation of what is one world of English.

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