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English in Australia

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Editorial

ANITA JETNIKOFF

This issue focuses largely on the teaching of literature and identity: covering class, culture, personal multiple identities as writers/ researchers/ teachers and critical thinking. The issue opens with Wayne Sawyer's Garth Boomer address on the important concerns of low SES students in English and the importance of teacher-researcher programs. This paper was delivered at the 2017, Cutting Edge, AATE conference in Hobart and if you did not attend that conference and hear Professor Sawyer speak, I urge you to read this opening paper as it affects most of us concerned with equity in education. This paper reports on research which covers how to intellectually engage low SES students in literature study via mentoring and teacher-researcher collaborative professional learning programs.

Larissa McLean Davies delivered part of the next paper as a keynote in 2016 in the AATE conference in Adelaide and concerns literature and our approaches to teaching it. This topic is always under contestation with debates in the media still claiming that we are not teaching literature. We know as educators of English that this is simply not true- and Larissa and her colleagues show why this continues to be an important issue in the terrain of English teaching. Larissa McLean Davies, Susan K. Martin and Lucy Buzacott's paper examines current and future uses of Australian literature in both the globalised world and in the Australian secondary English classroom.

The next two papers concern the teaching of creative writing by teachers who are also creative writers. Lena Pasqua explores the importance of creative writing in English against a background of high-stakes testing; which rewards formulaic writing and accurate grammar and textual features of language. In her article, 'Aiden's world: exploring freedoms in writing' she reflects on her own experience as new teacher/ student and writer and the effects these identities have on her role as a creative writing facilitator.

The next paper provides the transcript of an AATE, Cutting Edge Plenary, delivered in Hobart, July, 2017, by novelist and creative writing, Fiona Woods. This article reflects on the changing landscape of teaching creative writing in universities. Those of us who have worked in this environment will find the article's content and sentiments disconcertingly familiar.

Luke Bartolo's paper investigates the teaching of

film literacy; film grammar and filmic languages. This paper provides some practical suggestions for approaching film study beyond exposition and written responses and instead explores the concept of 'produsage', where students respond to film by making media. Although this is not new, it does break the approach down into strategies for English teachers; such as the use of the mini lesson to teach film grammar to students explicitly and then practically applying conceptual knowledge using tablet technologies.

Reconciliation agendas in the Australian Curriculum English: Using postcolonial theory to enter the fray, by Megan Wood Queensland University of Technology, Beryl Exley Griffith University, Linda Knight, examines implications for non-Indigenous teachers and teacher educators working within an agenda of reconciliation in subject English. This paper uses a post-colonial lens to explore the important topic of cultural identities, given the remit of Australian Curriculum: English to contribute to this nation's reconciliation agenda through one of the three cross curriculum priorities.

The next paper explores critical thinking in subject English. We seldom use the psychological term 'metacognition' in English circles, preferring often to think of critical thinking as part of critical literacy skills, although the two concepts should not be conflated as shown in previous discussions in this journal. Metacognition in the English classroom: Reflections of middle years' teachers navigating the Australian Curriculum: English by Michelle Bannister-Tyrrell and Deidre Clary, however, invites us to think about thinking in English classrooms.

Phil Page's AATE lifetime membership acceptance speech into the hall of fame has been published here to recognise Phil's contribution to AATE as treasurer and other educational and literary curatorial roles he has undertaken over the years.

This is my last issue as editor in chief. I have enjoyed my role as editor and thank all the people who have helped each time an issue emerges from the press and arrives in an envelope at your desk. I wish the next Editor-in-Chief, Larissa Mc Lean-Davies, all the best in managing a stella new editorial team and hope she enjoys the role as much as I have done over the past two years.

Anita Jetnikoff



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NATIONAL CONFERENCE
PERTH 8-11 July 2018

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Australian Association
for the **Teaching** of **English**

AUSTRALIAN LITERACY
EDUCATORS' ASSOCIATION

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

President's Report

In December last year I represented AATE at the Teen Reading Roundtable at Deakin University. As well as advocating for the status of literature in the curriculum, I explained about school reading programs and the place of literary texts, as well as how teachers incorporate literature into their programs.

In late October I chaired the AATE Annual General Meeting in Melbourne, where we met with the Chief Executive Officer of AITSL, Lisa Rodgers, and Acting Manager of Quality Teaching, Clinton Millroy. One of the focuses of our very fruitful discussion was the AITSL professional learning survey, while another was early career teachers. A third focus was the Australian Government Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools. AATE looks forward to future collaboration with AITSL in providing support for English educators.

AATE Council is a highly collaborative group and at the AGM we discussed several important issues. A major concern is NAPLAN and its move to online marking of the writing assessment by computers rather than by humans. Another issue is the proportion of teachers teaching English without having been trained to teach it. This is a problem especially in states with distant regions, such as Western Australia and Queensland and is sometimes the case when a new graduate is posted in a regional school and is the only English teacher. Support for people in these circumstances is vital.

In July I attended the wonderful AATE/ALEA conference in Hobart, after which VATE delegate Tim Nolan and I attended the NZATE national conference in Waitangi, New Zealand, as their special guests. Tim and I were both impressed by the ceremony of the whole occasion. The opening and welcome ceremony in the actual Waitangi Treaty House were awe-inspiring. We I concluded that Australia has a long way to go in Indigenous and Non-Indigenous relations. New Zealand gave us both a lot to think about.

Wendy Cody, AATE President

Tasmania

'My mind,' he said, 'rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere ... But I abhor the dull routine

of existence. I crave for mental exaltation. That is why I have chosen my own particular profession...'

Arthur Conan Doyle, The Sign of Four

Just like Sherlock Holmes, the TATE executive has been working feverishly in 2017 to provide the most relevant, interesting, engaging and thoughtful professional learning opportunities for our members – to inspire that analysis and that mental exaltation that we know teaching can bring!

And what a year it has been! The jewel in our crown was, of course, this year's AATE/ALEA National Conference, *Margin to Mainstream* held in glorious Hobart. After years of planning and preparation, the Cutting Edge Committee, with support from our able e-Team, was proud to finally bring you three days of inspiring, innovative and absolutely creative sessions, workshops, keynotes and plenaries to assist you in your classrooms. We know that over 1000 of you enjoyed hearing from world class authors and presenters and hope that you have been able to share these findings with your colleagues and find ways to integrate these ideas into your classroom. We trust that you enjoyed your stay in Hobart and commend you to make room in your schools' budgets for the 2018 National Conference to be held in Perth!

Hoping to engage our pre-service and graduate teachers, TATE will be running its highly successful *Portraits of Practice* workshop in Hobart in November. Members of the TATE executive will again run sessions with practical, engaging and tested strategies for a range of areas, complementing the release of the AATE publication, *The Artful English Teacher*. We hope to commence running our English masterclasses for University of Tasmania pre-service teachers from next year seeking to answer their pleas for 'fool-proof' ideas for teaching the basics of the English classroom – poetry, novel studies, essay writing, spelling and more. In addition, our critical literacy network hopes to meet later in term four to celebrate and discuss literary theory and how it impacts on practice in the English classroom. These TATE initiatives have been instrumental in allowing teachers from across Tasmania network with each other and in connecting teachers from various stages of their careers together to share ideas and wisdom.

Excitingly, plans are in place to partner with the Tasmania History Teachers' Association for a state

conference in 2018 with the hopes to secure a venue in Launceston for the event. The aim of conference will be to bring educators from the two disciplines together to integrate, cross-pollinate and infect each other with not only content but interdisciplinary skills, concepts and practice. With several of our executive passionate about History, coupled with Tasmania's rich history and the scope of the *Australian Curriculum: History*, we are confident the event will be a success for members of both associations.

We are looking forward to helping our TATE members have a successful and rebellious term and new year in their English classrooms.

Emma Jenkins

Queensland

The dust is settling on ETAQ's fiftieth birthday bash. Our state conference in August proved very successful, attracting 441 registrations, a record for ETAQ. Addressing the theme, *50 and Fabulous: A narrative of English teaching in Queensland*, keynote Dr Larissa McLean-Davies brought a fresh eye to ETAQ's long and vibrant history and was insightful in her ability to point us to the future whilst Markus Zusak used his narrative skills to enrapture the audience. What was most moving, though, was to see young teachers inspired by the past luminaries of ETAQ – past presidents, past Peter Botsman Award winners, patrons and life members. It was fitting, indeed, to spend time recognising those who have contributed so much.

We celebrated Peter Botsman Award winners at a very pleasant Friday evening event, with Nick Earls speaking. The weekend finished with the Conference dinner, the first for many years. Past presidents and patrons were treated to after-dinner speeches from local journalist, Frances Whiting, and past patron, Glyn Davies. Glyn has had a long history of sharing his charm and wit at conference dinners in his hey-day and it was very fitting for him to share his passion for all things ETAQ and English at this event. It was a great sadness to be informed that Glyn Davies passed away early in October after a long illness. We like to think it very fitting that Glyn's generous contributions to ETAQ were remembered and celebrated in his final months. His words will live on in the upcoming publication of ETAQ's history which is being finalised by one of his colleagues, Dr Lenore Ferguson. This volume is due to be published in 2018.

ETAQ has just completed its very successful campaign on its Facebook page celebrating 50 English

teachers (to match our 50 year birthday), finalised at the time of the state conference. The reach of these posts were impressive indeed, ranging from 1245 to 9138.

2017 has been a year that has seen the continuation of ETAQ's burgeoning relationship with the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA), with ETAQ having positions on the Learning Area Reference Group and the Text Selection Committee as well as plans for QCAA players to be significantly involved in upcoming PD options. In preparation for the new syllabuses, there is a very exciting professional development suite in train for 2018.

Fiona Laing, ETAQ President

South Australia

Terms 3 and 4 are always somewhat frenetic in the world of SAETA. We held our annual *English Literary Studies External Assessment Preparation Evening* on August 1, a bit earlier this year to suit the new syllabus with its new external assessment component of the Comparative Study which most teachers and students tackled in Term 3. We also got great advice on the new 90-minute Critical Reading exam. This was a really valuable evening and we thank Wilderness School for hosting, as well as our experienced and entertaining speakers. The 650 places sold out quickly, but luckily we recorded the evening and the slides and audio are all available for members on the SAETA website. Just a few weeks later Wilderness also hosted the presentation of the *Young Writers Award*, a wonderful annual celebration of both poetry and prose writing from students ranging from Years 1 to 12. Our chief judge, children's author Kylie Mansfield was very impressed with the many entries.

We held our AGM on September 18 at the Edinburgh Hotel and are very pleased to have got some new members of Council, which ensures SAETA's ongoing life and connection with the needs of all our fellow English teachers. On 28 October another celebration of student writing was launched in the annual *Spring Poetry Festival*, held at Pulteney Grammar School. This year's anthology is full of beautiful poems, whittled down from the over 700 entries. It is a great resource for the classroom, as well as being a delight to read. On November 1, we held our first *Twilight Workshop*, a new SAETA initiative and we thank Temple Christian College for hosting Danielle Cioffi's workshop on teaching gifted and talented students. December 9 will see us meeting for our annual SAETA Planning Day, where

we will organise who is doing what in 2018. I look forward to seeing many of our members at these future events, and in the interim wish you all restful and refreshing summer holidays.

Alison Robertson, SAETA President

Western Australia

As 2017 draws to a close ETAWA is looking toward 2018, the year of the Perth AATE/ALEA conference. Our conference, focused around 'The Art of English: Language, Literature, Literacy' promises to be an interesting exploration of subject English, as well as ways to inject creativity into the classroom and the research agenda. The program is developing with invited speakers including: double-Miles Franklin winning novelist and professor of creative writing, Kim Scott; researcher of writing and influential teacher educator, Professor Debra Myhill; innovative reading and Writing researcher; specialist in transnational literacies and adviser to urban secondary teacher programs, Associate Professor Alison Skerrett; Australian literature researcher and English teacher educator, Dr Larissa McLean-Davies; Western Australian YA writers Ambelin Kwaymullina and Dianne Wolfer and educational writer and secondary English teaching specialist, Rod Quin. With this collection of speakers the conference will be framed by important questions and develop interesting lines of inquiry.

It is now time for all classroom teachers and educational researchers to consider their contribution. The Call for Presenters has been released and we invite speakers from across the country and around the world to submit their ideas and engagement with the theme, 'The Art of English'. Please visit the conference website www.englishliteracyconference.com.au and submit your abstract for a workshop, paper or short presentation. There is also a specific Literature festival stream, sponsored by Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund, to foster a detailed conversation about ways of incorporate literary texts in classroom practice – both reading and writing these texts. For this conference we also invite papers that explore the many aspects of Teacher Education which will be part of a special interest group exploring this aspect of English education.

Registrations are now open and we hope to meet as many delegates as possible at the formal sessions of the program, as well in the pre-conference institutes and social events. Before the conference officially opens, an institute is being offered with the author of numerous children's and young adult titles including *The Light*

Horse Boy and *The Lighthouse Girl*, Dianne Wolfer, who will present a session exploring how we teach creative writing. Teacher educators and literary researchers Jo Jones and Claire Jones, will also lead a session considering the many ways of reading regions, with a particular focus on regional Australian literature, and the different ways of responding to local stories and traditions.

To explore the lighter side of the conference come along to the social events that are planned around Perth. Continuing the conference focus, these events highlight the space where the English teaching world and the WA literary scene meet. Not only could you explore the historic port town of Fremantle with local writer and historian Mike Lefroy; but you could also discover the small bars of Perth's alleyways with the 'Bards and Bars' night. This event promises to be a lot of fun with local poets hosting entertaining readings in various bars around the town. Finally, join us in celebrating the conference and our teaching community at our cocktail party with the guest speaker, the author of *Jasper Jones* and *Rhubarb*, Craig Silvey.

So mark 8–11 July on the calendar and start planning your visit to Western Australia. We can't wait to welcome you to Perth!

Visit www.englishliteracyconference.com.au to submit your abstract to present a session, or simply to register.

Claire Jones, ETAWA Delegate

Northern Territory

One of the major events for ETANT members in semester two was our participation in the NT Festival of Teaching held at Casuarina Senior College over the last weekend in August. This year there were approximately 11 professional associations involved in the festival and over 250 individual registrations with excellent representation from ETANT. Thanks to the generous support of NT DoE and PTANT we were able to bring many presenters from interstate including our keynote speakers, Mr Mark Collard and Dr Joseph Lo Bianco. Seven ETANT members from out of Darwin (Alice Springs, Katherine and Nhulunbuy) were provided grants to assist with travel and accommodation costs.

Reel Shorts is a short film competition open to all NT senior and middle school students and it will once again be held in term four. Students are required to produce a 2–10 minute film and they are judged according to their appeal to a general audience as well as the incorporation of filmic techniques. In 2016 there were

continued page 30

AATE LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Life membership is the highest honour that AATE can bestow and this award recognises a sustained and outstanding contribution of service to the association and the wider English teaching profession. Recipients join a distinguished group of educators who have had a significant impact on English education in Australia.

RECIPIENT FOR 2017

AATE is pleased to recognise Phil Page as the recipient of life membership for 2017. The award was conferred at the AATE/ALEA National Conference in Hobart in July 2017.



PHIL PAGE CITATION

Phil Page has been a significant contributor to the Australian Association for the Teaching of English since first joining the AATE Council in 2010. Phil's work has been far-reaching, collaborative and impactful. As a highly accomplished English educator and educational leader he has long been involved in a number of key strategies, initiatives and projects on behalf of TATE and AATE. In 2014 Phil was recognised by the Australian Professional Teachers' Association for Outstanding Contribution to the Profession. At the national level, Phil is held in the highest regard for his extensive knowledge, consummate judgement and painstaking attention to detail.

Phil has been an active member of the Tasmanian Association for the Teaching of English (TATE) for more than 35 years. In 2013 Phil was awarded Life Membership of TATE in recognition of his distinguished

service and leadership in the Association. Phil has now been heavily involved in successful co-ordination of five National Conferences held in Tasmania (including the 2017 'Cutting Edge' Conference). Further, he has played a key role in mentoring and guiding other English Teacher Associations in various conferences held throughout Australia. In honour of his service to the professional learning of English teachers, TATE now names its annual scholarship to attend a National Conference 'The Phil Page TATE Scholarship'.

For seven years Phil has served as the AATE Treasurer. In this role he has aptly managed the financial resources of the Association. He has brought precision, detail and foresight to issues of governance, strategic planning, finances and operational structures. Working in a highly collaborative manner with the AATE President, Executive Council and National Office, Phil has been instrumental in updating policies, constitutional amendments and the drafting of important letters, responses, policies and amendments to policy on behalf of the Association. This included ushering in a fair and equitable affiliate membership system to align all state and territory Associations as well as undertaking an AATE staff structural review leading to the increase in AATE office staffing in order to continue to move AATE forward and into new and exciting strategic directions.

Phil has worked tirelessly towards raising the profile of the Association through his expert management of a number of projects on behalf of AATE. These projects have seen AATE forge strong partnerships with outside agencies. Phil has overseen the writing and reviewing of secondary units for the critically acclaimed Reading Australia Project, where over 80 units have now been produced for secondary and senior secondary teachers. Prior to this, Phil's project management extended to the English for the Australian Curriculum (E4AC) project. Before this, he managed an Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership project; collating static and dynamic illustrations of practice in the English classroom. These partnerships have helped to make the AATE brand more accessible to online audiences.

Finally, Phil has played a leading role in the reinvigoration of AATE publications through his support of the highly successful and important publication launched in 2016, *The Artful English Teacher*. An electronic book version of the publication is now in the pipeline and the success of this project has enabled AATE to secure new sources of income for the association to support new publication ideas and proposals.

It is in recognition of these services to the Association and to the profession that AATE proudly awards life membership to Phil Page.

AATE LIFE MEMBERS

2017: Phil Page
2016: Rita van Haren
2015: Karen Moni
2014: Mark Howie
2013: Guy Bayly-Jones
2012: Susan Gazis AM
2011: Susan Dennett
2009: Terry Hayes, Wayne Sawyer
2008: Robyn Cations
2005: Wendy Morgan
2004: David Homer
2002: Brenton Doecke, Ken Watson, Claire Woods
1998: Bill Corcoran, Elizabeth Hutchins
1997: John Hutchins, Ernie Tucker
1988: Margaret Gill
1978: Peter McDonald
1977: Garth Boomer
1977: Warwick Goodenough
1977: A.D. Hope
1977: Leonie Kramer
1977: James McAuley

Phil Page responds

Thanks Wendy and all of my colleagues on AATE Council for this remarkable honour for which I feel extraordinarily unworthy.

As the first native born non-Indigenous Tasmanian to receive Life Membership of AATE, I feel a very strong moral imperative to not only formally acknowledge and pay my respects to the Palawa peoples of Trouwunna (Tasmania), and in particular the Muwinina and Mumerimina peoples of this area – on this side of the river and the other, where I live, but also to offer my own personal apology to them.

My great, great grandfather and great, great grandmother came to Van Diemen's Land on assisted passages in 1824 and 1826, and although as convicts, they were both products and victims of the systems and times in which they lived, they were inevitably – whether directly, by association or by their mere presence – involved in some way in the shameful events of the Black War and the progressive and systematic policy of racial genocide carried out in this colony from 1826 onwards. This remains a source of deep regret and sadness for me personally, as well as for many other non-Indigenous Tasmanians.

On a different note though, there is a previous Tasmanian AATE Life Member – indeed the first on the English House list, which begins in 1977 – and he's there along with other luminaries like A.D. Hope, the acerbic and reactionary Leonie Kramer, and the legendary Garth Boomer. A sea-change Tasmanian – NSW born poet and poetic satirist, and the other half of the Ern Malley hoax with Harold Stewart, namely, Professor James McAuley. He, along with other great Tasmanian imports such as Margaret Boddy (later Scott) and the incomparable Gwen Harwood taught me during my time at UTAS in the late 60s and early 70s. And as a telling character sketch – for both of us – Prof McAuley in particular, took a special interest in my work, even though he never exchanged a single word with me.

My essays invariably came back from the Prof with a half to two-thirds of a foolscap page of closely written notes, all in red – but sadly, not about the content of the essay, nor of my inspired insights into the work of John Clare or Percy Shelley – but line upon line of instruction on my handwriting – lines of carefully scribed 'a's, 'f's and capitals – and instruction on how to hold my pen. And whilst I learned much from his lectures and insights into poetry, I continued to fail badly in the handwriting stakes (then and now) and still received at best a mediocre mark, for what was always pretty mediocre work.

But skip 45 not uneventful years to the present. When I retired from full time teaching some nine years

ago, I at first had this idea that retirement and indeed Life Membership meant you put the crystal decanter set on the sideboard or, with the carriage clock under your arm, you stood at the back door or the back gate (I live in the country) and looked down to the back pasture with ruminatory thoughts of relaxed and vacant bliss.

But ... after only a couple of short months it became apparent that this was a recipe for curling up your toes, hobbling away and quietly expiring. Thus began a second and much more varied career that continues to this day.

When earlier this year the news of AATE Life Membership was dropped on me like a Donald Trump tweet bomb from an invisible, high-in-the-sky drone during a Council teleconference, I was literally dumb-struck, and have to ashamedly say, instantly paranoid. What are they telling me? Have I reached my use by date? Is this a not-too-subtle hint to pack my things and go?

However, some reflection has prompted great appreciation of the tremendous people I know, have known or have worked with during my 37 years as a member of TATE, and of course, more recently, during my time on AATE Council. All of my colleagues past and present in this great federated organisation continue to work long, hard and with great talent for the good of the English teaching profession, whether they're actively engaged in teaching or in research or nominally retired.

Here at this conference are some marvellous friends and teachers: staunch advocates and tireless workers for the profession – many of whom I have known for a very long time, and whether recognised by awards or not, whether young or ancient, are all true champions for this most honourable of professions.

And to conferences, and there've been a few – no a bloody great swag load of them. My very first as an organiser, was a TATE conference in Launceston in the early 1980s. I had been told what the budget was and being in charge of the venue, unwittingly thought this was just for catering – not the entire budget – and spent the whole lot, and a bit more, on the most magnificent food: scrumptious Tasmanian scallops and abalone all beautifully cooked and served to the delight of the 200 or so delegates. It was my first and only loss on a conference, but that one at Ravenswood High School was a cracker!

And at this event, some 35 years later, are people who were there then and with whom I've worked alongside with since, including at my first ever AATE

National Conference – the 21st held at Rosny College here in 1985. We actually made some money then – around \$5,000, which set TATE up to be the successful professional association it has been since. But what great people; and they're still putting in the hard yards for the association when needed: Jenny and Ian Morgan, Jacqui Frew, Bron Bowman and many, many more – then and now. But very proudly, I am particularly enthused and delighted by the next generation of TATERs coming through, especially Tasmania's first national AATE President Elect, the extraordinarily dynamic and innovative, Erika Boas.

I want to acknowledge all of these great educators and supporters of the English teaching profession, including on the national level people such as my mentors and friends: Susan Dennett, Rita van Haren, Sue Gazis, Guy Bailey Jones, Karen Moni, Mark Howie and many, many more, including Terry Hayes and Wayne Sawyer who received their Life Memberships here in Hobart, the last time around in 2009 and are here now.

This award is indeed a life sentence, but one which I accept humbly and gratefully, acknowledging that my wife Anna is as much or if not more worthy of it than I, as she has staunchly sustained and supported me throughout my career, and continues to do so.

Thank you Wendy and AATE Council and all of our state and territory ETAs; I look forward to continuing to work with you all for some time to come, or more pertinently, until you are much, much less cryptic in directing me to a closer view of the back paddock.

harbour

To arrive in the most Australian of cities
& sit at Martin Place
an hour after the ANZAC march
smoke a cigarette
the absent father
his medals still in the top draw

Pubs tiled to the eves
a clink of a new language
for drinking on the pavement

A street scape hangs
between a sound & light & prayer
in the alfoil hollow of ourselves darkness

Each terrace has a plaque
a history of nursing hedged in & clinging
an edge of wailing on an edge of view

Small bowls long beers & cigarettes
against the gathering crowds

This mad big blustering city
hands on its hips hustling the wind
staring out to sea

Harbour ripples dreams
table cloths, tea towels & boomerangs

High vis & one dollar coffee
building a city out of a city
the wind is all gesture & tamed

To the beaches perched between bush & cliffs
jewellery & ferry spray
a march of limbs against the Pacific of our lives

Waves build & flounder
a suburb of things to do romance rushes
palms around the first beer of the day
post grunge trellising vines to the roof of the world

streets turn themselves inside out
where a post code is a haiku

& there is shopping
the department stores are all new season
& there is not a cloud in the sky

I have been here three days
& already have given others wrong direction twice

A weave of lanes & a spread of sand
tumbling water pushed between headlands
an unsocked toe dips o so gently into surf

The hum of the afternoon
strollers take up half the footpath
curve & swerve & cars backed up
& a shop sells four hundred dollar shoes

There is a heart beating here
a commerce of breath
a sleeper on the boardwalk
a foam over our eyes
neighbourhoods & icons
a bridge & an opera house gifts for the new life

A diver's toes curl over the block
a spring faith threaded plunge
as a needle would sew a seam between day & night

rory harris

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Low SES contexts and English

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Abstract: In this essay, I focus on the role of teacher-research in developing intellectual engagement in the context of low SES school communities and English. When the OECD after each round of PISA results declares that ‘the socioeconomic background of students and schools does appear to have a powerful influence on performance’, the understatedness of the relationship between SES and literacy outcomes is remarkable ... but what of other areas of ‘English’ beyond ‘literacy’? What about the Australian Curriculum ‘strand’, ‘Literature’? This essay opens with an example from the early 20th century when literature teaching and class came under joint consideration as a brief exemplar of that relationship in historiography. It then focuses on findings from recent research into classroom engagement in schools in low-SES communities.

Introduction: Curriculum and class

In this essay, I want to discuss subject English and the low SES-background student¹ – the interaction, one might say, of subjectivities with the (curriculum) subject. In doing this, I will be reporting on two recent projects in low SES school communities and making a case for high-level classroom engagement being connected to a form of sustained professional development for teachers.

In 2009 – the last time *reading* literacy was the major domain being tested in PISA – the OECD report had this to say:

the socioeconomic background of students and schools does appear to have a powerful influence on performance (OECD, 2010, p. 13)

This is a recurring theme in PISA reports whatever the major domain being tested in any particular year and it is, of course, is one of the great understatements in educational discourse. Recently, work in Australia has focused particularly on the *concentration* of educational disadvantage in which the effects of individual disadvantage are multiplied when those individual disadvantages are pooled in particular schools (Erebus International 2005; Teese, 2011; Vinson et al., 2015).

Curriculum, as Bill Green reminds us, can be a ‘dividing practice’ such that ‘it produces and reproduces inequalities, differences, distinction’ (Green, 2003: 28) There is little doubt that, historically, English curriculum has been, overtly and covertly, connected with the socioeconomic status of students who study

it. English, one might say, has always been about class. Key related questions, it seems to me – though I won’t be attempting to answer or even address all of them here – include:

- To what extent can certain issues in English curriculum be represented historically as issues of equity, equality and class?
- While ‘models’ can never tell a whole story, the moment of ‘Growth’, for example, did put into the professional discourse more overt attempts to develop an English ‘close to (student’s) own lives’ (Medway et al., 2014, 145). What does that mean for low SES contexts (e.g. Moll et al., 1992)?
- English more generally has been seen to do identity work, to which my opening sentence alluded. Students have opportunities to construct subjectivities – how they see themselves, how they see the world, how they want others to see them. How is that played out in schools serving low SES communities?
- What is the effect of the curricular emphasis on *literacy* doing in general in those schools?

I don’t want this discussion to centre on basic literacy, however, which is what we usually focus on when talking about how students from low SES communities can be let down by education (e.g., ABS, 2014). Literature, for example, is as fruitful an area for discussion in these terms as literacy is. Literature has been often claimed as part of a ‘humanising’ endeavour in English curriculum (e.g. Arnold, 1869/2009; Leavis,

1930/1974; Shayer, 1972; Mathieson, 1975; Nussbaum, 1990) very often related to class, with that link itself being the basis of historiographical debate. The 1921 Newbolt Report is one obvious example. Newbolt played up the role of vernacular literature and it is usually seen as a foundation stone for the importance of literature in English from then on. Newbolt opposed both the dominance of the Classics and the idea that the study of literature was merely peripheral compared to the need for functional literacy:

no form of knowledge can take precedence of a knowledge of English, no form of literature can take precedence of English literature: and ... the two are so inextricably connected as to form the only basis possible for a national education. (Newbolt, 1921, p. 14)

Newbolt is a historical/textual site of much controversy in terms related to class. Ball et al. (1990) see it as representing 'the language and culture of the new ruling class as Language and Culture themselves' (p. 53). Doecke (forthcoming), on the other hand, sees the Report quite differently, though necessarily reflecting the socio-political world of its time:

Newbolt holds to the view that teachers need to be responsive to the dispositions and tastes of the children in their classrooms ... its vision of the role that education might play in creating the conditions where children from all classes have access to (a literary) culture – contain(s) ... the sober recognition that society is not as the authors would wish it to be. The very force of its rhetoric ... evokes an intractable situation where such practices stubbornly resist the implementation of a larger vision of education as enhancing people's sense of the 'life' available to them

Engagement, pedagogy and low-SES students

One could multiply such examples to show that (English) curriculum and issues of class are never far from each other, but I want now to discuss two recent projects which have their focus on schools in low SES communities. By not sticking only to fundamental literacy in this discussion I will be implicitly and explicitly making a case for the richest education we can give low SES students by examining issues around engagement and pedagogy and curriculum. I want to do this by making a case for engagement connected to a form of sustained professional development for teachers. There won't be anything startlingly original in what I'm proposing. I will draw heavily on the work of other researchers before me and I want to reiterate the point with which I began, viz. the role of SES in

student outcomes. That role is a given reality and I think that what Pat Thomson wrote in *Schooling the Rustbelt Kids* is still most clear and helpful on this issue:

It is not the case in rustbelt schools that nothing can be done, nor is it the case that everything can be done ... It is a matter of making a positive difference – but rustbelt staffs cannot pretend that there is an impermeable barrier between the school and the 'outside' ...

At the same time ... (t)eachers and schools must act as if every (student) can learn what matters for them to have equal life chances ... Nor should realism equate with the abandonment of the imaginary of a just and caring society ... (2002, pp. 182–183)

So, I'm concentrating here on what's actually under *our* control while recognising the larger social drivers.

At Western Sydney University we have been running for over 15 years a research program on engagement and pedagogy in low SES schools that has been largely centred in public schools in South-Western Sydney. Our research is located within (the intersection of) eight particular student contexts. These are:

- students from multicultural communities, suburban or inner-urban
- students from impoverished housing estates
- students whose oppositional behaviour places significant physical, emotional and pedagogical pressure on the classroom
- students who need support in achieving outcomes in literacy and numeracy and across all curriculum areas
- students with high English as Additional Language (EALD) needs, increasingly from refugee backgrounds
- students of Indigenous backgrounds
- students from all cultural backgrounds who live in remote contexts
- students with special needs

There is a particular engagement/pedagogical framework we use which we call the *MeE Framework*, with 'M' referring to student motivation 'e' referring to classroom engagement, and 'E' representing an engagement to the whole project of schooling and education as a resource for one's life in the present and future. In terms of classroom engagement and pedagogy ('e') – to which I will confine myself in this article – we talk of:

Classroom experiences as needing to be high cognitive, high affective, high operative ('busywork' is not engagement)

Classroom processes, which we call ‘Insider classroom’ processes and which specifically refer to four areas: student self-assessment; teacher feedback; a student community of reflection, and teacher inclusive conversations.

Message systems – what messages students are receiving about their: *knowledge; ability*; their contribution to the *control* of the classroom time and space; the classroom as a *place* where they are valued, and the classroom as an environment of discussion and reflection of their *voice* (*knowledge, ability, control, place and voice*).

Teachers for a Fair Go

One iteration of the larger research program was a project called *Teachers for a Fair Go (TFG)*. In this project, we followed over 3 years the work of 28 teachers across NSW in Priority Schools (i.e., schools with high concentrations of students from low SES backgrounds) who were regarded by their peers as highly effective at classroom engagement. The teachers were across pre-school – Year 12, in remote, rural and metropolitan locations and across a number of secondary subject areas. We made findings in each area of the *MeE Framework* (see Munns et al., 2013, for full detail and analysis of the project) but I will focus here on high cognitive classroom experiences only, and those, of course, in relation to English (see Sawyer, 2014 for detailed analysis). There were seven secondary English teachers in the project, five of whom taught at least one other subject.

We found in the research that the classroom experiences these teachers undertook with their students were indeed intellectually challenging in nature (i.e., not low cognition ‘busywork’). In addition, a second key finding on high cognitive experiences in this research was on teaching and learning being the focus of sustained and ongoing classroom conversations. In English, high-level cognitive work manifested itself in a number of ways. Firstly, intellectual challenge was embedded in both curriculum content and in the nature of student thinking which was being operationalised. This is important in English, where we often tend to think of intellectual challenge mainly in terms of curriculum, particularly as ‘more challenging texts’. However, neither trivial content nor simply copying notes or doing ‘busywork’ even on what we might regard as significant content, can open up the full possibilities of high cognitive work. Pedagogy and curriculum need to work together to create intellectual

challenge. The *application* of knowledge was significant in English and manifested itself in, for example, widespread student textual creation modelled on texts read/viewed.

Classrooms were sites of what we called a ‘culture of inquiry’. This was not about inquiry-based learning only (though there was some of that), but usually came more out of teachers’ use of questioning (in the project we referred to ‘relentless questioning’). Questioning was not IRE (Initiation-Response-Evaluation) – patterned, but used to: probe further; prompt background knowledge; revise; work towards key vocabulary and concepts and, importantly, to re-conceptualise how ideas/themes were seen/understood. One teacher, for example, had students consider a concept that arose out of a poem being studied, through a number of possible representations, with *representation* being the key concept. She asked:

- ‘Does anyone see this differently?’
- ‘How else could we look at this?’
- ‘How could we represent it visually? In writing?’
- ‘How else could we end this piece? What would be a highly effective way of doing it?’
- ‘How does any of this connect to (poet)’s other work? How can we bring them together?’

This teacher is highlighting the importance of the representation of a concept. This prompted student examination of others’ ideas within a (typically subject English) milieu in which a variety of responses were not only possible, but necessary, to consider. In interrogating their own ‘knowing’ with and about this new voice (the poet’s) in the classroom, students were also being reminded that this kind of work was fundamental to the way the discipline operates when it is operating well.

The effects of ‘relentless questioning’ included: leading students towards higher order thinking; creating intellectual space for student ‘voice’; having students question their own conclusions/think critically/appreciate a range of perspectives on a topic; creating a ‘risk-accepting’ culture in the classroom and, above all, creating a particular disposition towards knowledge – viz. that *some* (in the era of climate change deniers, a reminder that not *all*) knowledge is open to challenge, but all knowledge is open to interrogation (‘How did we get to that answer/view?’, ‘What if we’d done/said “X” instead of “Y”?’)

Conversations in these classrooms were mostly just that: teacher-student and student-student dialogues. In terms of class and group discussion, teachers saw

students working together as the very opposite of 'lowering the intellectual ante'. We were reminded of Douglas Barnes' very important work in which he showed that, 'It is precisely the teachers who value social relationships who also value intellectual exchange' (Barnes 1976: 145).

Just as pedagogy drove an inquiry culture, curriculum experiences also drove intellectual challenge. Students were engaged in sophisticated textual creation. The contexts, values and representations of experience of particular texts were studied, as were their appropriations into other times and places. Assessment tasks were set to draw out higher order responses. Students analysed language features and evaluated their effectiveness, and the terminology of literature and film study and visual representation were all a natural part of the classroom conversation. The 'how' and 'why' of textuality were foregrounded notions in the English classrooms.

Why is this even worth saying? Surely, high level intellectual work is what we expect in classrooms? Yet it is a simple reality that much decontextualised, low level, 'busywork' has consistently been shown in the research literature to be the schooling diet of low SES students. A selection of the research in Australia and internationally:

in response to standardised testing of the sort now pervasive nationally in Australia, low SES schools are particularly susceptible to concentration on the 'basics'. Since public perception of schools based on league tables particularly disadvantages low SES schools, the consequence is a focus on 'performance', rather than 'achievement' (Teese & Lamb, 2009)

Teachers in low SES schools in Queensland spend more time on direct alphabetic instruction and drill of grapheme/phoneme generalisations than their middle or high SES counterparts. Far from students in poorer communities lacking 'basic skills', they in fact receive more work on decoding at the expense of other critical aspects of reading and literacy (Luke, 2010; Luke et al., 2010)

Poor districts ... offer stripped down drill-and-practice approaches to reading and math learning, rather than teaching for higher-order applications ... critical thinking and problem-solving; collaboration ... effective oral and written communication; accessing and analysing information; curiosity and imagination. The kind of curriculum that supports these qualities has typically been rationed to the most advantaged students in the United States. (Darling-Hammond, 2010, pp. 52–54)

Haberman (1991) aptly labelled this common default position the 'pedagogy of poverty', and pointed

to the ways that student resistance to high level cognitive work, and compliance with low level tasks, can very often lead to 'busywork' being seen as a key (perhaps even the only) way to managing challenging classrooms. Ironically then, what appears to be teacher control is, in reality, student control moving towards poorer outcomes. Appropriately, given the original context of this essay, Garth Boomer argued, in specifically discussing the Disadvantaged Schools Program, that '(in) classrooms, seemingly compliant students may be outwardly compliant but inwardly withholding their mental labour' (Boomer, 1991/1999, p. 51).

Obviously a discursive shift is a necessary accompaniment to any move towards a pedagogy of higher cognition – and it has not at all gone unnoticed by the students of *Fair Go* teachers in interviews. In the later project (*Schooling for a Fair Go*) discussed below in which mentored teachers were making such a pedagogical shift, younger students said to us, 'We get to do lots of stuff and *important* stuff,' 'She tells you a lot of stuff that's *important*,' and, 'When we do *hard learning* I learn more things.' In the later years of primary school they told about being pushed into 'harder work' and its importance for their learning.

Darling-Hammond follows her discussion which I quoted above with a summary of research into teacher effectiveness:

Decades of research have shown that teachers who produce high levels of learning for initially low-and higher-achieving students alike provide active learning opportunities involving student collaboration and many uses of oral and written language, connect to students' prior knowledge and experiences, provide hands-on learning opportunities, and engage students' higher-order thought processes, including their capacities to approach tasks strategically, hypothesise, predict, evaluate, integrate and synthesise ideas. (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 55)

In a study of NSW Higher School Certificate results that Ayres, Dinham and I conducted in the 1990s, in which we focused on the practices of highly effective teachers in the HSC (i.e., teachers who over 6 years consistently had students who scored in the top 1% of their subject in school contexts – and this is important – in which such results were absolutely atypical) we also found that 'a key common factor was an emphasis on having students think, solve problems and apply knowledge. Simply reporting back knowledge or practising formulae outside of the context of application was unusual. Teachers strongly saw their

role in the classroom as challenging students, rather than 'spoon-feeding' information' (Ayres et al., 2000, n.p.).

Thus, in the *Fair Go* program of research we feel able to say that practices that define high levels of cognition also produce high levels of engagement. We cannot (yet) make large claims with respect to students' assessed outcomes but if the HSC findings I've just quoted – along with other work on effectiveness at WSU (e.g., Sawyer et al., 2007; Munns et al., 2006) – are any guide, these practices are likely to be also highly effective with respect to student outcomes.

Practitioner research

What I haven't said about *Teachers for a Fair Go* but what is actually my central point in this essay is that the teachers were co-researchers with the WSU academic team on the project. In joining after nomination and selection into the *Teachers for a Fair Go* project, the teachers agreed to: write about their practice on engagement (as part of the application/selection process); be the subject of a case study, but also be a co-author of the case study itself; read and respond to the case studies of other teachers on a project intranet, and take part in an intensive cross-case analysis over six days at the conclusion of all the case studies. The cross-case analysis probably demonstrates best the research work in which the teachers were involved. Over these six days, we:

- revisited the teachers' contextual challenges and how they were being met (i.e., reviewed data)
- discussed not just the need for high teacher expectations, but what the data showed about student 'buy-in' to the high expectations that teachers had of them (i.e., interrogated the taken-for-granted)
- examined what high cognitive/affective/operative experiences and 'insider classroom' processes looked like within grades (i.e., coded and categorised and re-considered previous categorising and interrogated the *MeE* model's explanatory force)
- discussed appropriate metaphors and revisited the narratives of the teacher work stories (i.e., re-conceptualised the data)
- mapped our findings against work such as Haberman's (1995, 2005)² (i.e., mapped findings against literature)
- investigated for the first time the specific data on literacy/technology/creativity (i.e., took new 'cuts' through the data)

- discussed our central terminology (i.e., defined key terms)

The bracketed items in that list, define much of the work that goes on during data analysis in most research projects and I hope indicates that teachers' roles in this research were not tokenistic.

In 2014, the *Guardian* ran a feature headlined 'Teachers: Life inside the exam factory', which chronicled the crisis of morale in the profession in the UK and the fact of teachers 'quitting in droves', in particular under the then regime of Michael Gove as Secretary of State for Education. One of the saddest moments in the piece was the story of a teacher in a school which Ofsted had put on special measures:

Ofsted put the school in special measures, and the fine details of her job were suddenly dictated by the borough council, via the school's management (aka senior leadership team). (The teacher) was handed lesson plans from above, and instructed to stick to them.

"They actually said, "Now do this, now say that". The basis of it was being told *exactly* what to do. There was a geography lesson I wanted to teach, on "Connecting yourself to the world". I got told off, because I contacted someone in America who had the same name as me, and I got my whole class to write to her. We took photos out of the window, sent emails, and she replied. I thought it was great: she was in New York and we were in Dagenham. But I was told it wasn't appropriate because it wasn't what was on the lesson plan'. (Harris, 2014)

What this kind of political regime reflects and promotes is a denial of teaching as intellectual work. It stands opposite in its assumptions about teachers to the work I am describing here. Of course, contradictory discourses abound today about teaching. One discourse claims that teachers are the most influential in-school factor on student outcomes (Hattie etc), which implicitly credits teachers with particular skills, knowledges and training that drive those outcomes. On the other hand, the discourse that justifies the (often commercially produced) pre-scripted lesson sees teaching as simple information delivery that can be done by anyone.

Part of speaking back to this latter discourse can be teachers taking on a 'researchly disposition' (Lingard & Renshaw, 2010) in which they are re-positioned from being always the translators of research done elsewhere or the objects of research themselves to a position of active co-researchers producing knowledge, and treating research and evidence provided by others with some professional discretion. This approach to

research is one important manifestation of teacher's work as intellectual work.

In the iteration of the *Fair Go* research program which followed *Teachers for a Fair Go* – called *Schooling for a Fair Go* – we went back to eight of the metropolitan TFG teachers and asked them to mentor another teacher at their school in their engaging practices through an action research framework. At the end of a first phase of mentoring, the original mentees were then to take on their own mentee at another school, while the original mentor worked with the rest of the (first) school on engaging practices. This process then went through a third phase. In all, teachers from 24 schools – 16 of them 'new' – were involved in this iteration of the *Fair Go* program. Training at the beginning of each phase of the project consisted of mentors and mentees (re-) familiarising themselves with the *MeE Framework* and with action research processes. Training days at the beginning of each phase also showcased the work of the previous phase (mentees in Phase 1 were introduced to the work from *Teachers for a Fair Go*). Each mentor-mentee pair was further supported by a WSU academic partner and a 'teacher-research assistant'. Mentoring consisted of:

- planning together
- observing each other teach
- team teaching
- developing expertise in action research data collection and data analysis.

The WSU academic partners were critical friends who: advised on any aspect of practitioner research; helped supply resources; visited schools; collected evaluation data, and assisted in analysing school data. The 'teacher-research assistants', who were a crucial link across all the projects: visited schools; conducted interviews on how projects were progressing; observed lessons; wrote case reports; collected evaluation data, and assisted in analysing school data. It was an essential principle of the project that action research was not only central, but must be collaborative – based on the view that a key component of educational change and successful schooling is focusing on 'developing professional quality collectively' (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 146). While the whole-school aspects of the project had varied success (sometimes determined by the ability of schools to fund whole-school professional learning in the way the overall project was able to fund the mentoring and partly subsidise the whole-school work) the one-on-one mentoring was highly successful

(see Sawyer et al., 2018, for full detail and analysis of the project, including case studies of the whole-school sites that were able to make the project work well for them).

What did the teachers' research questions look like? In one Secondary class, the Phase 1 mentee teacher regarded one class as outwardly compliant, but not fully engaged – a class of students who would particularly not partake in discussion. The teacher felt that her feedback to them might be a key 'way in' to addressing this issue. Thus, her beginning *focus question* was:

What can I do to improve the learning outcomes of students using the *MeE Framework*? In particular, how can feedback be used effectively?

Her *contributing questions* were:

- How can feedback influence students' attitudes to learning?
- How can I develop good teaching practices about the use of feedback through collaboration and mentoring?
- How can I give critical feedback without damaging esteem?
- How can teacher feedback enable more student 'voice'?

Note how the 'contributing questions' (especially the first and third) directly feed into the core identified problem in the class and how the overall focus question bundles up these contributory questions into relevant and 'do-able' focus for her action research.

In a lower-Primary class a Phase 2 teacher (Julia) faced issues of: wide diversity of academic levels among students; students who could not maintain focus; students with learning difficulties; resistance, and very high language and literacy needs (91% EALD). Julia had interests in IT and, after initial work with her mentor (Beth), decided that a focus for her students on thinking about *how* they were learning to do things might help engagement in the class. Julia's *focus questions* were:

- How do we create a culture of reflection for students and increase student self-reflection?
- How is a reflective learning community of teacher, students and parents supported by operation of a web platform such as *Edmodo*?

Julia implemented structures for the students to use to reflect, and the class discussed and decided on individual and group responsibilities in class, such as a set of technology protocols. She then set up a class *Edmodo*

site which parents were also invited to use. It meant that the parents could also help with students' reflecting at home. She wanted the parents to become part of their children's school-based learning, rather than focusing on their behaviour, which had been the topic of most prior conversations with parents. Student work was also published on the site and there was a portal for collaborative learning tasks. The group tasks and teacher, student and parent posts on the class website had a positive impact on student outcomes. There was a visible connection in which students felt their work was valued sufficiently to be jointly constructed with peers as well as the teacher, and to be published beyond the classroom. At the end of their Phase of the project, here is what Julia and Beth had to say in their own final reflections:

I walk into 1/2H and see a classroom full of engaged learners, using *Edmodo* to collaborate and encourage each other in learning. Students are talking about what they have been learning because they are looking at photos on the web platform or arcades they have made. This is a significant change to the students I met at the start of the project. They are focused, self-directed and excited to be at school. (Beth on Julia's class)

Having someone to support me by regularly communicating and discussing ideas encouraged me to be creative and innovative in my classroom practice. Feedback on lessons and ideas allowed me to grow as a teacher ... The mentoring relationship ... ensured that I reflect on my own teaching practices. ... The conversations that Beth and I had via email and in person about the *MeE Framework* helped me to have a clear understanding of how the students in my class learn and what I can implement to assist them in their learning. We continually discussed where students could go to next in regards to *Edmodo* and how to use it as a tool to build student voice and encourage student control. (Julia on the mentoring process)

Julia moved into the next phase of the project as an excellent mentor herself.

Among other things, what practitioner research does is allow teachers to give an account of themselves on their own terms – to resist, and speak back to, deficit framings of them and of their students. Teacher research should also be seen as moving from an individualistic mindset in relation to 'my class/ my data' to 'developing more general insight and transferable knowledge about teaching and learning processes ... not simply to improve practice locally, but to create a body of knowledge about learning and teaching that can inform theory and practice generally' (Lingard & Renshaw 2010: 36). In the *Fair Go* program, we also believe that research should be undertaken as a social,

collaborative phenomenon because developing 'professional quality' is most usefully done as a 'collective' enterprise. Collaborative professional learning as a form of teacher practice is, of course, a well established notion (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Bolam et al., 2005; Louis, 2006; Stoll & Seashore Louis, 2007), however here I am connecting this specifically with teacher-research and situating it within the specific contexts of low SES school communities. It is possible to disturb and disrupt understandings of what schooling for low SES students is about, and that 'disruption' can be the outcome of collaborative, collegial and communal teacher development. As Comber & Kamler have argued, low SES students are in need of 'new energy and new intellectual work by teachers' (Comber & Kamler, 2004, p. 308) and we see practitioner research as central to that work.³ Against this background, too, is Garth Boomer's own injunction:

(A)ll teaching should be directed towards the support of deliberate, personally owned and conducted, solution-oriented investigation. All teachers should be experts in 'action research' (Boomer, 1985: 125).

In fact, I would now go as far as to argue that professional development that is enacted through collaborative teacher research is a key enabling condition for successful pedagogical change in schools – and that such development needs to be strategically central to the work of schools in low SES communities. There are a number of reasons for locating engagement in low SES schools in the context of teacher research. Taking on a 'researchly disposition' in this work helps further enact teacher's work as intellectual work, not as an instrumentalist acting out of the pre-scripted lesson. A second, very pragmatic, reason, is to do with something like sustainability. Immersion in a research project with the systematic collection and analysis of data that this entails is likely to create a mindset towards practice in a more profound way than 'one-off' in-service courses. Thirdly, it takes time to effect deep changes in schooling and a 'researchly disposition' is more likely, we believe, to have teachers see their work in class (even over one year) as a 'long project' (see Munns et al., 2013) and to tolerate the time that change can take. In addition, it should be stressed that 'new energy' and 'new intellectual work' in the first instance is not about particular programs or strategies, but, rather, about a disposition towards pedagogy and engagement that is willing to take on the kind of work that practitioner research requires, and also enables.

Next steps

When Boomer said that teachers should be taking on action research, he went on to say 'All teachers should be experts in "action research" so that they can show students how to be "action researchers"'. He followed this with what he called the 'bold injunction' that 'all students at all levels must be researchers and all teaching must be based on methods of research, if we are serious about learning. Whenever people decide to learn, they undertake research ... Learning is defined as understanding in such a way that one can say it in one's own words and be understood or do it and be effective'(Boomer, 1985: 125).

Student research is a next logical step for schools involved in teacher research. Comber's work here is centrally important. Her *Literacy, Place and the Pedagogies of Possibility* demonstrates the degree of sophistication of the literacies being undertaken by students in classes who do research in both the in-school world and the non-school world. The students in these contexts who are researching their own lifeworlds – investigating issues in local communities through their own collaborative research, producing field observations, conducting interviews – develop products such as oral histories, case studies, films, public presentations and research reports. Positioning students as researchers means that the school welcomes in student experiences and knowledges which it then builds on and, of course, opens opportunities for other experiences through the research itself. This is not just the kind of problem-based work where an answer already exists and solving the problem is about reaching the answer. This engages students in high level challenging work in which, importantly, they too become producers of knowledge. There are high stakes outcomes – the ante is 'upped' on things like student performance and students are not just going through the motions of reading and writing. They engage with real complex ideas with both teachers and people who are experts in various fields. As Comber's work shows, as content-field-based knowledge is built, so literate repertoires are built and diversified and go well beyond any simple basic literacy.

Three key points are to be made about this work. The first is that participating as researchers significantly alters student subjectivity – from consumers to producers of knowledge. Secondly, teachers build on students' personal experiences and cultural resources as a bridge for introducing (when and where necessary) more abstract ideas and conceptual knowledge

(Comber, 2016: 65). Thirdly, scaffolded from this engagement is – again when and where necessary – the 'learning of the cultural codes ... needed for success in mainstream curriculum work' (Hattam et al., 2009: 307)... and English, of course, offers myriad opportunities for students to become genuine researchers of worlds for much of their work.

Conclusion

Class and English are never far away from each other. Key historical moments, major curriculum developments, curricular emphases, paradigm competition and 'models' of English – all have been seen as having impacts that are class-related, or issuing out of class-based concerns. While 'literacy' is often foregrounded here, most areas of English are/have been interpreted through the lens of class. Here I have tried to see English broadly in terms of the potential richness of an English education available to students of low SES backgrounds and to make connections between curriculum, pedagogy and engagement for those students.

The projects discussed here certainly proved for me to be powerful statements about the engaging work of teachers and drew critical attention to how a 'researchly disposition', accompanied by purposeful mentoring and critical support, might well make a significant difference to schools and English classrooms in low SES communities. This work and the work on students-as-researchers invites us to consider that there are ways we can make informed decisions that strongly contribute to the improvement of the educational and life circumstances of these students, and, hopefully, in turn, contribute to their community's wellbeing.

Notes

- 1 I am using the term 'low SES background' over terms such as 'vulnerable', 'disadvantaged' 'high-poverty' etc. The important thing in using any terminology in this context is to remember what Garth Boomer himself said: that such labels must not 'be taken to refer to some homogeneous group with similar traits or living in similar conditions. The commonality is economic hardship.' (Boomer, 1991/1999, p. 50).
- 2 Why Haberman in particular? Over many years, his work has focused on a set of classroom practices and classroom curricula that reflect the need in high poverty schools for intellectual challenge. His work contains a set of principles that we were keen to put alongside our own findings about the practices of our highly engaging teachers. What did our teachers demonstrate that could advance this specific literature on pedagogy and poverty?

- 3 Kemmis, in fact, argues for the importance of practice-traditions in educational research and argues that '(t)he ones with the greatest and most privileged access to practice as individual and social praxis are those whose praxis it is. On this view, practitioners themselves are best positioned to be educational researchers – doing practical philosophy that aims to evaluate their own individual and collective praxis in the light of tradition and in response to current and emerging conditions and circumstances' (2010, p. 20).

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Worldly Reading: Teaching Australian literature in the twenty-first century

Larissa McLean Davies, Susan K. Martin and Lucy Buzacott

Abstract: This paper examines the role of literature in the English classroom in Australia and its part in shaping national identity. We contend that it is important to consider the possible roles of national literatures in contemporary school contexts, where students are becoming local and global citizens and argue that reading Australian literature as a part of the field of 'world literature' can support a pedagogical approach which enables dynamic reading practices. Drawing on a 2016 research project titled *Teaching Australia*, which sought to explore English teachers' engagement with Australian texts, this paper examines current and future uses of Australian literature in both the globalised world and in the Australian secondary English classroom.

Introduction: literature and the nation

In the last decade, the development and implementation of the *Australian Curriculum: English* has seen a renewed policy commitment to the role of literature in creating and shaping personal, national and international consciousness (Doecke, McLean Davies & Mead, 2011; Doecke, McLean Davies & Sawyer, 2017). As a consequence, literature, and Australian literature in particular, have been given a renewed presence in the curriculum (ACARA, 2016). Indeed, since the curriculum was first conceived Australian literature has been mandated across the compulsory years of schooling. On one level, this focus is unsurprising: in Australia and around the world, the teaching of literature has been a mechanism for reinforcing or negotiating national identity and establishing or contesting national cultures. This occurs in all the various ways in which literature is found in the English subjects on offer in secondary curricula, and in tertiary contexts around the world, and is reflective of Homi Bhabha's link between the concept of nation and the action of narration, where language itself is involved in 'the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of the nation' (2013, p. 3).

On another level, though, the mandating of Australian literature in the first national English curriculum for the country is a reminder of the specificity of the Australian national context, and the historically fraught place of Australian literature in the secondary and tertiary English curricula (Mead, 2011). In this context, the mandate for compulsory study of Australian literature, and specifically the literature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, can be understood as an intervention into national text selection practices which have ensured that an imperial shadow continues to be cast over subject English, particularly in the senior secondary years of schooling (McLean Davies, 2011; Teese, 2013; Doecke, McLean Davies & Sawyer, 2017).

While the compulsory nature of Australian literature in the Australian curriculum has been cause for public discussion (Bantick, 2014; AGDE, 2015), and has resulted in significant commentary about the kinds of texts that are appropriate under the auspices of 'Australian literature' (for example Donnelly, 2010), in this article we deliberately move beyond these debates, and consider instead a framework for the teaching of Australian literature in contemporary twenty-first century multi-cultural and multi-faith contexts. To this end, we will report on a pilot project, undertaken in 2016, called *Teaching Australia*, which was funded by the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund. This project had as its core a commitment to supporting

and resourcing the teaching of Australian literature, and to exploring ways in which the teaching of Australian literature, in the contexts of the Australian curriculum, might be 'worlded'. Before we discuss the details of this project, though, we will briefly discuss the concept of worlding literature, its genesis in the field of literary studies, and some of the inherited challenges of, as well as the motivations for applying this concept to the study of Australian literature, as it is experienced in subject English in contemporary Australian classrooms.¹

Worlding Australian literature: context and complexity

An interest in re-examining the category of world literature, and the related concern with worlding national texts has been explored in literary studies since the start of the twenty-first century. Prompted by a critical interest in book production and global reading circulation, scholars asked how the canons of world literature were made, and relatedly, how a criterion for considering national texts as 'world literature' had been established. In response to these questions, David Damrosch writes:

I take world literature to encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language ... in its most expansive sense, world literature could include any work that has ever reached beyond its home base. (2003, p. 4)

While Damrosch's notion suggests all texts that were read beyond world boundaries are 'world literature', Pascale Casanova, writing at the same time, views world literature more in terms of cultural esteem and capital (Casanova, 2004). Casanova's analysis of the literary field, what she terms the 'Republic of Letters', argues that the competition for literary status and worth means that only some nations will be represented in this esteemed group:

In the world republic of letters, the richest spaces are also the oldest, which is to say the ones that were first to enter into the literary competitions and whose national classics came also to be regarded as universal classics. (2004, p. 83)

For Casanova, empowered by the cultural capital mobilised by French history and literature, this condition is unproblematic; however, the notion that world literature is determined by powerful historical European capital obviously impacts on colonised societies, where local Indigenous literatures and the

literatures created by migrant citizens have entered literary production later than the texts of the colonisers. Although from a much older tradition than the Anglophone texts that constitute the British and North American canon, Casanova's analysis reminds us why Australian writing and Australian Indigenous writing has had to fight for a place in the curriculum – a point we will return to shortly.

Alongside these arguments about the definition and constitution of world literature, other concepts have emerged in the field of literary studies which look at worlding as a generative reading practice, rather than a matter confined to issues of capital or circulation. Regarding American literature, Bruce Robbins argues that in worlding, the 'structure of the world of nations ... work[s] its way into the novel's structure' (Robbins, 2011, p. 1103.) What is important here is the idea that a worldly reading deeply recognises the intertextual nature of all literary production. This is also reflected in Valashini Cooppan's explanation of worlding as a 'system of operating on the principles of movement and exchange [which] means comparing and connecting one text, time and place with another, and hearing the echoes of one, or indeed many, in the voice of another' (2004, p. 11).

Further, these ideas are in concert with Wai Chee Dimock's notion of the 'deep time' of literature, a conception of texts and reading practices which recognise the arbitrary nature of limiting understandings of literature, its impact and its production, to geographical national boundaries (2006). This is not to say that 'worldly' reading erases difference and homogenises texts, experiences and histories. As Cooppan contends, worlding literature is predicated on an effort to read the world as a whole, which necessarily includes 'a vision of many worlds, individually distinct and variously [and relationally] connected' rather than 'world literature as a fictive universality' (2004, p. 23). In a similar vein, Australian literary scholars Robert Dixon and Brigid Rooney argue that a practice of 'worldly' reading enables us to see Australian literature's 'connection to the world literary system' (2013, p. ix).

Dixon and Rooney's twenty-first century conception consolidates a shift to a more integrated understanding of what it might mean to world Australian literature. The distance that has been crossed in literary studies can be assessed by looking at the kind of national scholarly history represented by P.R. Stephensen in his treatise *The Foundations of Culture in Australia: An Essay towards National Self-Respect* (1935). Here, Stephensen

argued for a uniquely Australian culture that was neither British nor American and which was worthy of world recognition. This position was reflected in his involvement with the Jindyworobak movement, a group consisting of artists and writers committed to raising an Australian national imaginary informed by both Indigenous and colonial cultures (Wilde et al., 1994). While prominent academics at the time, such as J.I.M. Stewart and G.H. Cowling argued against the validity and even the existence of Australian literature, Stephensen and his Jindyworobak colleagues attempted to validate Australian literature and claim membership of the northern-hemisphere-oriented literary 'world'. This early attempt at worlding Australian literature articulates with Goethe's project, undertaken in 1827, of creating a world literature representing different nations and their stories (Pizer, 2000). While Goethe imagined a world literary field that would promote respect for different nations and cultures, his intention was 'not that nations shall think alike, but that they [would] learn how to understand each other, and, if they [did] ... not care to love one another, at least they [would] tolerate one another' (Goethe quoted in Cooppan, 2004, p. 14).

When we examine the *Australian Curriculum: English* (AC:E), it appears that the vision of the curriculum writers is to advocate for and remediate the previous neglect of the study of Australian literature. This positive discrimination towards national texts is reminiscent of the position taken by Stephensen noted above. Yet, while Stephensen and Goethe argued for national literatures achieving respect and recognition as part of a field of 'world literature', the AC:E presents Australian Literature as distinct from, and not part of the world literary field (a position more in concert with Casanova's analysis). This is evident in a statement which is repeated in the opening description for each year level of the English curriculum:

The range of literary texts for Foundation to Year 10 comprises Australian literature, including the oral narrative traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, as well as the contemporary literature of these two cultural groups, and classic and contemporary world literature, including texts from and about Asia. (ACARA, 2016, p. 14)

The syntax of this long sentence both serves to offer guidance about the range of literature that should be studied in Australian schools, but also to differentiate between local and global texts. There is no sense of the role of Australian literature in a global or world literary

field, in the way that Dixon and Rooney argue, or that Australian literature can be read and understood in a 'worldly' way.

Further to this, an analysis of the Year 7–10 AC:E document reveals that although Australian literature is mentioned in the opening, general sections of the curriculum, and, as previously cited, is referred to in contrast with world literature in the overview section for each of the year levels, neither 'Australian' nor 'world literature' are mentioned in the content descriptors or elaborations for the Language, Literature or Literacy Strands at any year level (ACARA, 2016). Thus, an interplay between these fields, and their relationship to one another is not explored. Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander literature, as well as the literature of Asia is mentioned in content descriptors, though, and usually as a way exploring cultural differences. By way of example, the Content Descriptor for Year 9 which asks students to: 'Interpret and compare how representations of people and culture in literary texts are drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts' (ACARA, 2016, p. 148) is afforded the resulting elaborations:

- exploring and reflecting on representations of values (for example love, freedom, integrity) in literature drawn from cultures and times different from the students' own
- exploring and reflecting on personal understanding of the world and human experience, interpreted in literature drawn from cultures and times different from the students' own
- reviewing historical fiction or nonfiction written by and about the peoples of Asia
- analysing literary texts created by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (including documentaries, picture books, print texts and other multimodal texts) and also texts including film produced by and about peoples of Asian background, and considering the different ways these texts represent people, places, things and issues (ACARA, 2016, p. 148)

In this content, Aboriginal, Torres Strait and Asian literatures are being considered in the context of works and experiences that are 'different to the students own', consequently, a concerning notion of the 'intended' student of the curriculum is being projected. In disconnecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literature, here and throughout the detail of the curriculum, from Australian literature, students are not encouraged to

make connections between national texts, let alone between national and 'world' literature.

It is worth noting that while the AC:E conveys a sense of the separateness of Australian and world literature categories at the outset, and then abandons these categories in the detail of the curriculum itself, since the outset of its conception conservative critics of the curriculum have sought to recalibrate the notion of Australian literature as an imperially colonised field, and to limit the field of world literature to which Australian literature can claim membership. This is evident in the report and associated documents released as part of the review of the curriculum commissioned by the Federal Liberal Government in 2014 and undertaken by Kenneth Wiltshire and Kevin Donnelly. Reflecting Donnelly's earlier comments about the limitations of Australian literature (see Donnelly, 2010), Barry Spurr, charged with reviewing the Literature Strand of the curriculum, argued:

Another test of a quality curriculum for Australian pupils is a balance between Australian and world literatures in English, especially British literature which has been most influential upon Australian writers. Our literature has not developed (and should not be read) in quarantined Australianness. It always was and remains part of world literature, while having its distinctive preoccupations and characteristics. To appreciate that development and response, a balanced reading of Australian texts requires familiarity with the British tradition. (Spurr, 2014)

Here, Spurr's claim for Australian literature as world literature seeks to eradicate the distinct and diverse nature of Australian national literatures, and sweeps aside Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander literature, and indeed any literature by or about Australians which does not evidence an Anglo-Saxon connection. This argument, that if Australian literature exists, it is only as part of the literature of the imperial motherland is reminiscent of the comments made about seventy years earlier by Stewart and Cowling, who maintained literature was located and inspired elsewhere – as Cowling wrote in the *Age* in 1935 'Literary culture is not indigenous, like the gum tree, but is from a European source' (Cowling, quoted in Stephensen, 1936).

Worlding Australian Literature: The *Teaching Australia* Project

Faced with mixed curriculum messages about the teaching of Australian literature, and the imperial

imperatives advocated by the review of the curriculum and its attendant documents, in 2016 we embarked on the *Teaching Australia* project. This project was supported by funding from the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund and sought to understand and support the teaching of Australian texts in secondary schools throughout Australia. It was designed to explore Australian teachers' attitudes towards and readiness to teach Australian literature, and to explore the potential of the notion of 'worlding' as a conceptual and pedagogical paradigm classroom practice. To achieve these aims, we conducted a survey of English teachers from throughout Australia which asked questions about their current teaching practice and engagement with Australian texts, the value of Australian literature and their use of Australian texts in their classroom. The survey garnered over 200 responses from across the country, although the concentration of responses was from the South East (Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland).² Drawing on the responses from the survey, we then held three workshops in Victoria with English teachers. For the remainder of this paper, we will discuss the workshop component, and the efficacy and ways in which we might approach a 'worldly reading' framework for the teaching of Australian literature in contemporary contexts.

The three workshops were held in November and December 2016 at the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE) conference in November, the VATE offices, and at the University of Melbourne. The workshops were free, and were open to pre-service and in-service teachers from any sector. Approximately 15 teachers attended each of the three workshops (a total of 45 participants). Workshop participants ranged from those with more than 5 years' experience to pre-service teachers in the final year of their courses.

The workshops were structured so that participants had the opportunity to discuss some of the key issues and complexities inherent in teaching national literatures in the twenty-first century where Australia's colonial past and multicultural present are often in dialogue. To give a sense of the ways and levels through which a worldly reading of Australian texts was considered, the following section gives an outline of the content and conduct of the workshops.

At the start of each workshop, a version of a question Cooppan had posed in her 2014 Keynote to the conference of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature: 'What does Australian literature

teach us about being in the world and being for the world?' was raised. Extracts of three texts were used to explore this question, and the various possibilities of a 'worldly' reading of Australian literature: *The Tribe* by Michael Mohammed Ahmad (2014), the nineteenth-century short story 'Monsieur Caloche' (1878) by Tasma, and the contemporary Indigenous sci-fi novel *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* by Ambelin Kwaymullina (2012).

These texts were chosen for a number of strategic reasons: the diversity of Australian experience these texts represent, the connections and disconnections that can be drawn within and between these texts and the worlds each text inhabits or creates, and each text's contemporary relevance and availability.³ Each of these national texts has been integrated into a world context in particular ways. *The Tribe* has recently been translated into Chinese by the famous translator Li Yao, *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* has been published in the United Kingdom, and is also available as an ebook through Amazon, iTunes, and Bookworld, and 'Monsieur Caloche' was reprinted in local and provincial newspapers as well as anthologised, and circulated through the Anglophone Colonial book market. Taking Damrosch's definition cited earlier, each of these texts can be understood, in terms of circulation, as 'world' literature. Accordingly, these circulation histories unsettle the notion of Australian literature only being produced and read in a national space, and offers ways of thinking about these texts as other than local texts about place and identity produced for only a local audience.

While the notion of 'worlding' as it has emerged in literary studies, encourages consideration of production as we have indicated, it also offers a framework for close reading of fiction. In light of this potential, participants were asked to consider Cooppan's concept of worlding as a reading practice which sees texts as connected and created by other texts, times and places. The specific questions participants considered, in the context of the fiction by Ahmad, Tasma and Kwaymullina were:

- What 'world' is the text creating?
- What worlds does this text contest?
- How do the world/s of this text connect to other textual worlds?

In the following section, we draw on the workshop conversations generated in response to these questions

to offer a brief reading of excerpts from each of these texts. In doing so, we indicate the lines of inquiry that we pursued when reading these diverse national literatures through a 'worldly' perspective.

The Tribe

This 2014 text, defined by the author as 'autobiographical fiction' (Bromley, 2015), is set in Western Sydney and consists of three interconnected stories narrated by a young boy named Bani about his extended Muslim Allawite Lebanese-Australian family. The protagonist is explicitly navigating contrasting cultural and social worlds and is constructing and negotiating familial and personal identity. In the opening chapter Ahmed introduces the reader to the spaces and people of the 'House of Adam' which is at once a suburban Sydney house and the symbolic and material house of the tribe, marked by the relationships, foods and texts that constitute the Muslim/Arab heritage of the family. The use of the name Adam also draws on the combined origin beliefs of the Muslim, Jewish and Christian faiths, and suggests a house of the world, at the same time as it describes a very specific local space. The eclectic texts of the 'House of Adam' in the novel include the family photos, the Quran, a tapestry of Elvis, and the eleven scars on the belly of Ahmed's grandmother which tell the story of the birth of the family. These different texts serve as metaphors for the worlds that Ahmed and his siblings, parents, and extended family create and inhabit.

An excerpt from the second section of the text 'The Children of Yocheved', tells the story of Bani's uncle's engagement and marriage to a woman named Zubaida. The short excerpt we explored in the workshops describes Bani and his siblings seeing Zubaida for the first time and the family's preparation for the wedding (pp. 45–51). This section of the novel begins with Zubaida arriving at Bani's family home for the first time and the children's excitement at seeing her: 'We've all heard that Zubaida is beautiful and we want to see her' (p. 45). The section draws the reader into the family home and allows us to participate in the observation of Zubaida and the rest of the family alongside the watching children. The details of the home are revealed through the snippets of conversation the children hear: 'we can hear Dad and Mum and Tayta and Auntie Nada and Uncle Osama and Uncle Ibrahim and Uncle Ehud and Ali and Zubaida talking. They speak over one another in a mixture of Arabic and English' (p. 46). Relationships and communities are forming

and developing in the world that is created in this scene and in this home, and at the same time, another world, in Lebanon is constantly evoked.

A later section includes two moments which lay bare the cultural division impacting on the family. In the first, Bani's Lebanese father watches television: '*The Twilight Zone*, which he says reminds him of watching television with his father when he was just a boy' (p. 49). In the second, Bani recalls talking to his classmates about the family's upcoming move to Lakemba in Sydney's inner-west.

'You'll be going back to where ya came from,' says Matthew Forbes. He calls it 'Leb-kemba.'

'But I'm not a Leb,' I say.

'You're a sand nigger,' Matthew says.

'But I'm not black,' I say. (50)

Here, Bani ruminates on the friction of his own identity as, ostensibly, a Lebanese-Australian. Caught between worlds he seeks to clarify his own identity in a world where he is seen by others as both black and Lebanese. Similarly, the complex duality of Bani's father's identity is highlighted as he watches western television to reconnect to his childhood and his father.

The Tribe presents characters that exist in multiple worlds and with diverse Australian identities. This text allows teachers and students of varied backgrounds to consider the worlds that Bani and his family exist in and to ask: what is their Australia? But it also raises questions about Australia's connection to the global context. The play on the name of the inner Sydney suburb Alexandria and its connection/disconnection to the vastly separate Egyptian Alexandria, is just one instance of this. Workshop participants noted that *The Tribe* would be engaging for many students, as it presents a familiar geographical world, with many aspects of the Western Sydney setting recognisable for urban Australians, including those outside of New South Wales. Lucy Neave highlights the importance of the 'world' of Western Sydney for not only the text itself, but also the author, arguing that for Ahmad and others, the community of authors that developed in the western suburbs of Sydney act 'as a site of production for inventive literary texts' (2016, p. 298). Western Sydney is therefore both a geographical place and a generative literary space in the world of the text and its author. Engaging with *The Tribe* in a worldly way encourages the reader to consider closely the various places, texts and textures that inform the world of the text, without the compulsion to reconcile these.

The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf

The first in a trilogy, this young adult novel by Indigenous writer Ambelin Kwaymullina is set in a dystopian future where young people with special abilities are deemed 'illegal'. Two sections of texts were shared with teachers in the workshops. The first 'Day Two: The Wound' (pp. 111–126), follows the protagonist Ashala after she is betrayed and attacked by another member of her tribe while in detention. Following her injury Ashala drifts in and out of consciousness. Finding her ability to 'sleepwalk' ineffective she 'drifted, sometimes rising to the surface of consciousness and sometimes falling beneath it, as if [she] was being carried along on the tides' (p. 112). She then finds herself guided into a version of her home, the Firstwood, by her friend, Georgie, who leads her to a lake where a large serpent speaks to her. The serpent calls her 'granddaughter' and reveals that 'I am your many times grandfather, one of the creators of your people' (p. 122). Like the passage considered from Ahmad's text – this section of *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* also considers family history and intergenerational relationships. It similarly suggests complex combinations of cultures and meanings attached to place.

The second excerpt we considered was 'The Secrets: Georgie' which is set four years earlier and provides more detail about Georgie's gifts as well as Ashala's history (177–191). Georgie's ability to see into the past and the future destabilises her and she asks Ashala, 'Ash, is this the real world?' (p. 179) forcing readers to consider the reliability of the story being told and the world being created by the text. Both sections of the novel set for teachers include multiple story layers and multiple 'worlds' differentiated by time, space, and place. *Ashala* proved particularly fruitful when we asked teachers to consider 'what world is the text creating' and 'what world does this text contest?' Importantly, this text links to other familiar literary worlds by genre, style and origin – science fiction, Indigenous history and story, dystopian fiction, and ecological narratives – opening up opportunities for teachers to use this text in comparison with others in their classrooms. In the workshops, we linked *Ashala* to another Indigenous superhero story – the ABC television series *Cleverman* – and participants considered how these links might be drawn out with students in their classrooms.

'Monsieur Caloche'

This short story by Tasma (the pseudonym used by

nineteenth-century colonial Australian writer Jessie Catherine Convreur), was selected to introduce participants to the possibilities that lie in their access to a rich source of nineteenth-century Australian literature via online collections. The use of digital text offers different opportunities for readers and the digitisation project means that a mass of contemporary contextual material is available to support the teaching of nineteenth-century Australian texts through the large free newspaper databases, *Trove* and the New Zealand *Papers Past*.

Much colonial Australian literature is out of copyright and available in reliable form on various websites including Project Gutenberg, SETIS and State Library and University sites such as the University of Adelaide's eBooks collection, and the University of Melbourne's Colonial Australian Popular Fiction Digital Archive.⁴ 'Monsieur Caloche' is a short story describing a delicate but disfigured young French immigrant arriving for a job interview as clerk with the firm of Bogg and Company. Bullying, self-made Sir Matthew Bogg takes a dislike to him, and sends him up country, as a kind of revenge on the boy's supposed pretensions. He survives this experience, despite his effeminacy, because of his riding skill, but when Bogg visits and tries to catch him out, and assaults him, he flees on horseback and dies in the bush. His death uncovers the fact that 'he' is a 'she', living disguised as a man because of social investment in female beauty.

During the workshop, we examined the opening the section of the story, when 'Monsieur Caloche', waiting in the outer office, under close observation by a row of curious eyes, is a wondrous study of 'Frenchiness' to the clerks, who note his smallpox scarring, his clean clothes and dainty features, and obvious nervousness. They even ponder whether he drinks exotic alcohol like Absinthe, 'peering for traces of dissipation in his foreign face. But they could find nothing to betray it in the soft eyes ... or the smooth lips set closely over the even row of small French teeth' (p. 6).

Despite the potential barrier of the nineteenth-century language, workshop participants saw ways in which contemporary issues around migration, the stereotyping of national subjects, gender assumptions and production, and bullying, might be explored through this text. We looked at the extent to which ethnic identity is coded for the clerks (and through them the reader) by a set of vague physical markers – 'foreign face', 'French teeth'. The novelty of this level of ethnic stereotyping and othering against a French

national, in a text which seems very 'white' on the surface, provided the opportunity to consider the ways in which global waves of migration have been followed by matching waves of racism. Participants explored the question: What happens when we take a wider historical and international view of the way national identity has been produced? The clerks' collective identity and coherence is put together in opposition to the foreigner in their midst. However, the stabilities of these identities are brought into question in this story by the revelation that the Frenchman – whose features and mannerisms apparently clearly signify one type of identity (the national) – is actually a woman. If 'clear' ethnic identifiers are actually gender identifiers, the reader's assumptions can be interrogated alongside or in addition to those of the characters within the text. Is it just that those identified as subordinate in the social system are aligned with femininity as well as racialised and exotic figures (McClintock, 1995), or does the displacement bring the whole understanding of identity formation into question? Consideration of these questions led to a discussion of how participants might use this text as a worlded text in order to explore contemporary issues of migration, race and gender.

Following each of the workshops, participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback and complete a short questionnaire. Of the 37 participants who provided detailed feedback, 17 indicated that they would use *The Tribe* in their classrooms, eight indicated they would set the *Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, and another eight indicated that they would use 'Monsieur Caloche'. When asked to provide detail of how they might incorporate these new texts into their classrooms participants suggested that *Ashala* might be used as an effective introduction to Australian literature or in comparison with the film *Avatar*. 'Monsieur Caloche' was identified for inclusion in a gothic literature unit, for passage analysis, or as part of a compilation of short Australian texts. *The Tribe* was the most popular choice and workshop participants felt the text could be usefully utilised in comparison with *Chinese Cinderella* (Yen Mah, 1999), the film *Oranges and Sunshine* (Loach, 2011) or the poetry of Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1970). Teachers also felt that *The Tribe* could be included in a unit focused on diversity or in the context of considering issues of family and belonging. These responses indicate the connected and comparative way in which participants were considering these texts in the workshop, and the different national and international, historical and contemporary worlds that they were

imagining could be evoked through sustained study. In doing so, they were arguably seeing these Australian texts 'from somewhere other than the center and the end that is national literature' (Cooppan, 2014, p. 1). That is, not as an end point, but as connected to and interrelated with other national and international fictions.

Conclusion: from nation to world – literature and identity formation

By way of conclusion to the workshop, and as part of the final feedback and questionnaire document, we asked teachers what they felt was the 'purpose or value of teaching Australian literature'. Their responses can be grouped into the following key themes:

- Creating a national identity or 'voice' (10 responses)
- Understanding Australia's place in the world (7 responses)
- Understanding history (6 responses)
- Relevance to student's lives (6 responses)
- Understanding the community/supporting multiculturalism (4 responses)

These different responses separate the priorities for and value of teaching Australian literature in terms of local and global and past and present, and take up the texts and conversation of the workshop in diverse ways. It is our view that a 'worldly' framework, such as we have sketched here, enables these different values and priorities to be brought into dialogue. Indeed, it is through such a framework that the intention and potential of the Literary Strand of the curriculum, produced below might be made manifest:

The appreciation of literature ... provides students with access to mediated experiences and truths that support and challenge the development of individual identity. Through engagement with literature, students learn about themselves, each other and the world. (ACARA, 2016, p. 6)

As we have shown, this intended connection between people, places and texts is currently absent in the details of the curriculum documents. While the *Teaching Australia* project, and in particular, the workshop component of this project served as an initial exploration of the potential of worlding, it is imperative that, as a profession, we further explore this and other frameworks for teaching national texts. Without theoretically informed conceptual frameworks for approaching Australian literature in contemporary contexts, we are unable to contest or speak back

to the historically influenced and at times imperially informed approaches evident in contemporary policy and curriculum documents. Finally, while there has often been a divide between those who work in tertiary and secondary literary studies (Doecke et al., 2011), implicit in the article is an argument for collaboration across these fields, and for mutual sharing of theoretical and textual resources in order that the teaching of Australian literature might be expanded, recontextualised and 'worlded' for the twenty-first century.

Notes

- 1 We have also considered the concept of worlding as a theoretical framework in regard to the teaching and publication history of Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*. See McLean Davies and Martin 'Toward Worlding Settler Texts: Tracking the Uses of Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* through the Curriculum' in *Australian Literary Studies (ALS)*, forthcoming, 2017.
- 2 The findings of this survey are discussed in some detail in a forthcoming publication.
- 3 The authors would like to thank Giramondo Press and Walker Books for providing texts for the project workshops.
- 4 <http://www.apfa.esrc.unimelb.edu.au>

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approximately 30 entries and we are hopeful that there will be an increase in the number of entries in 2017. We will showcase the finalists with a special screening of their films in late November. Special thanks to Samantha Deacon (Casuarina Senior College) for coordinating this activity.

A new project for ETANT in 2017 has been the development of our journal *EnglishcoNnect*. A huge thank you to Elizabeth Mountford (School Support Services) as our editor. The fourth edition on Poetry is currently being prepared for publication. Access to the journal is available through the AATE/ETANT website.

We have recently agreed to be hosts for the Plain English Speaking Award national finals in August 2018 and the National Schools Debating Championships in May 2019. Special thanks to ETANT members Jackie Dupe and Sam Schuman (Darwin High School) for their willingness to coordinate these events.

John Oakman, ETANT President

ACT

ACTATE members enjoyed a film analysis workshop with Thomas Caldwell (writer, broadcaster, film critic, public speaker, film programmer and author of *Film Analysis Handbook*) in Term 3. Thomas is a highly engaging speaker and the event was well attended.

Our pilot online course, Teaching Writing Digitally, run by Rita van Haren, Prue Gill and Jen Nott was successful. We will offer this again in 2018 and are happy to open it up to other jurisdictions. Our evaluation showed that we need lots of flexibility with some just wanting to participate in the discussion forum while others also want to go through a peer-reviewed project about developing a unit of work. This year we had one participant from Queensland and one from

South Australia. We are also considering providing an online course targeting beginning teachers next – it would provide a forum to seek advice on classroom quandaries as they arise and has the flexibility new teachers need to fit the learning around their workload at school.

We have one Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/ACTATEAustralia/?ref=bookmarks> and one Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EnglishTeachersACT>. Our Facebook page has 201 followers and our facebook group has 101 members. These are used to publicise our activities, news, events and information relevant to the teaching of English. We are continuing to develop and grow this community and create more interaction in 2018.

We recently ran a competition to get event participants involved in Twitter. Those who tweeted during the professional learning had a chance of winning prizes such as framed posters for the classroom or bottles of wine. Information for how to join twitter was provided on each table for the uninitiated. This competition has helped establish a group of actate tweeters who we will maintain contact with and encourage ongoing communication.

Our final professional learning event for the year was a great success. Trialling a new format, we offered a number of ten-minute presentations by local teachers about their lesson/unit ideas for using visual texts in the classroom. The presentations were fast and furious and every session offered 2–3 short sharp ideas, tools, strategies or weblinks that participants could take away and try in their own classrooms. We had great feedback from this and will continue to run one 'speed PL' event each year.

Cara Shipp, ACTATE Delegate

Aiden's World: Exploring Freedoms in Writing

Lena Pasqua

Abstract: Many English teachers identify as readers, drawing on broad literary knowledge to shape their pedagogy and to meet ever-increasing curriculum demands. Teachers identifying as writers, however, face the paradox of enabling authorial agency while adhering to time constraints and rigid assessment criteria. This article examines the role of the writer-teacher amid increasingly prominent high-stakes testing and a consequent emphasis on formulaic writing that lends itself to assessment. As a writer embarking on teaching in secondary schools, the author considers the continuing devaluation of creative writing. Drawing on her experiences as a creative writing workshop presenter, the author challenges deficit-based models of assessment that fail to recognise cultural capital and that ultimately stifle creative writing in schools. Through a degree of self-analysis the author determines her role as an English teacher and the value in flipping the creative writing classroom to facilitate and sustain creative writers.

I delivered short-story classes at school writing camps for Year 7–10 students. This is where I fell in love with enabling creative writing. Many students had written stories before; others did not know where to start. At breakfast in the camp hall, avid writers sat in flannelette pyjamas and footy socks, annotating writing drafts beside breakfast bowls. The gaze got me every time, when they'd stop writing, stop eating, to think. I know the gaze: that moment you travel the mind searching for words that may be the best ones you will write. Aiden, a Year 9 student, produced the story 'Perfect Yellow World'. He is one of the reasons why I returned to study, to teach in secondary schools. Now, as I write responses to selection criteria for teaching positions, I wonder how much room is left for creative writing in schools. The discourse on teaching and assessment of writing is broad and conflicting.

Aiden wrote nothing in my first workshop but he engaged with peers during group discussions. Our four-day camp comprised 90-minute workshops where students participated in structured writing exercises that generated story plots, character profiles and short story drafts in the genres of fiction and autobiography. Gannon (2008, p. 33) suggests that although students don't always easily come to writing, there is pleasure in being immersed in the process. Gannon's inquiry into coming to writing includes exploration of ethics and aesthetics in process writing, drawing from diverse English models. The English growth model focuses on encouraging and developing personal and imaginative expression in writing (Dixon, 1967). Process writing draws from this model. It is student-centred pedagogy that considers all stages of writing, such as drafting and revision, as creative acts (Graves, 1983). Writing camp allowed time and space for these creative acts. Whether in the workshop space, mess hall or on the lawn by the swings, students continuously and spontaneously explored the possibilities of language and story. And when asked, presenters joined impromptu reading and feedback sessions. All of us had elected to be at writing camp and the mood reflected this: we were relaxed and open to fresh adventures in writing.

In contrast to the English growth model, the skills model focuses on mastery of grammar, form and genre (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993); the cultural heritage model features reading and emulating writing from canonical texts (Plunkett, 2011); and critical literacy involves

analysis and interpretation through, for example, a socio-political lens (Luke, 2011). Gannon (2008, p. 34) supports process writing that combines elements of these models in order to explore ethical, functional, expressive and aesthetic dimensions. She suggests that both teachers and students exist as writers beyond the classroom. Their trajectories as writers result in subjectivities toward writing. For teachers, these subjectivities shape teacher-writer identity: teachers draw from personal writing experiences to determine the best pedagogical strategies for facilitating creative writing. For example, teachers' experiences of non-linear process writing prompt pedagogy that guides students to rework drafts and to embrace uncertainty as a natural part of the writing process. Additionally, students learn literary conventions as well as how to break these rules (2008, pp. 39–40).

Drawing from my own writing processes and experiments with genre and style, I invited Aiden to break with convention. His first lines emerged. However, prior to this, though Aiden had willingly participated in a small group characterisation exercise generated by a visual prompt, he would not engage in the next step: writing the beginning of a fiction narrative using a prescribed opening line. The visual prompt featured young work colleagues in conference – the focus of discussion in Aiden's group and the first indicator that Aiden had a story to tell. His peers observed that a particular worker seemed troubled: she appeared to be the only one not participating in the conference. When a peer suggested quite creatively that the woman might be mute, Aiden offered that perhaps she did not want to talk: 'stuff happened that she doesn't want to talk about'. I pressed Aiden to elaborate but he pulled back from the discussion.

Pen poised, Aiden appeared ready to write but his measured contributions to the discussion and his failure to begin the prescribed writing task suggested that there was another story to tell – one in which he was perhaps emotionally invested. Vass, Littleton, Miell and Jones (2008) explored the creative outcomes of collaboration during the writing process. The authors suggest that writers' interactions prompt the recollection and sharing of knowledge and emotional experiences. These responses trigger and channel creative flow (p. 196). Though this study is focused on primary school students, the findings are relevant to adolescent writers, particularly when one considers creativity in the developmental stages of adolescence. Rothenberg (1990) suggests that sense of

self as a creative individual develops in adolescence during biological, psychological and sociological changes. This development involves a balance of making connections with others while building and maintaining independence and self-identity.

Aiden had connected creatively with his peers but needed the time and space to address and express what was personally relevant. During informal consultations outside workshop time, Aiden suggested that his story was not a 'proper story'. He confided, 'it's about a weird dream I keep having'. Following our workshop on plot and narrative arc, Aiden was concerned that his story – a series of dreamt images – did not follow the conventions of narrative, particularly with regard to story resolution. While this is a significant concern in the lead up to school assessments, the priority at writing camp is exploration of ideas and language. I instructed Aiden to ignore the prescribed genre and story beginning I had set for the class and told him 'just write'. Beginning with an ethereal image of a child, Aiden wrote.

Aiden wrote because his teacher saw her writer self in him: that frustrating moment when you can't produce a word despite the burgeoning images and narratives in your head. He wrote because his writer-teacher – unconstrained by teaching schedules and assessment criteria – identified his need as well as fear to write. Aiden's fear to disclose a personal experience dissipated after I purposely shared my own autobiographical short stories in workshops.

This level of emotional engagement from the writer-teacher is as Cremin and Baker (2010, p. 20) posit, situated on the intrapersonal level of a teacher identity continuum. Contrary to this, the teacher-writer draws from the institutional level of the continuum. At this level, teachers write to teach. The continuum represents teachers' shifting focus from writing for the self and writing for the system or to teach. These shifting identities influence pedagogy: writer-teachers often write collaboratively with students, scaffolding them as writers and encouraging individual voice and choice. The writer-teacher knows the importance of authorial agency but this kind of freedom often eludes the classroom. Teacher-writer identities therefore take over, aware that institutional requirements in the current climate outrank authorial agency (Cremin and Baker, 2010, p. 19). Could Aiden have written 'Perfect Yellow World' in the classroom? While his peers worked on a narrative hook for their short story beginning, Aiden's autobiographical stream-of-consciousness writing

spilled over to the next page.

Extending on Cremin and Baker's (2010) study into teacher identity, Weaven and Clifford (2015, p. 61) explore the position of teacher-writers in English classrooms. The authors discuss the positive impact of teachers' writerly behaviour, particularly in addressing students' cultural capital. Zipin (2009) suggests power-elite cultural capital in the curriculum alienates cultural others; valuing forms of cultural capital over others enhances as well as diminishes student experiences and opportunities. Bourdieu (1986) refers to habitus as a person's physical embodiment of cultural capital: skills, habits and dispositions acquired from personal experiences. Teacher identity, Weaven and Clifford (2015, p. 62) suggest, involves taking a stance on matters such as deficit models of thinking. Deficit thinking positions students who do not possess capital of dominant cultures as lacking. For example, focusing on Aiden's inability to adhere to narrative structure or to assessment timelines, rather than recognising the skills he demonstrates, involves deficit thinking. Rejecting deficit thinking includes engaging with students in process writing and valuing individual skills and interests. Aiden's personal life and mode of expression shaped his habitus. The quest to decipher a recurring dream that he could not share with his family shaped his writing. Writing camp afforded Aiden the time to explore ideas and language that enabled him to convey an inscrutable image in his mind: a monochrome yellow world divided by a picket fence.

Aiden's yellow world developed inside and outside of workshop sessions. Workshops afforded in-depth and contextualised exploration of the function of devices such as dialogue. Central to Aiden's yellow world was a child who remained silent despite appearing poised to speak. At school Aiden had learnt to 'show, don't tell' through dialogue. The absence of dialogue in his writing concerned him. This generated discussions during which Aiden and his peers considered the function of dialogue beyond rudimentary understanding that is often imposed by constricted curriculums and time-poor teaching schedules. Through the speechless character in 'Perfect Yellow World', Aiden and his peers learnt about and experimented with the unspoken as a literary device. They wrote dialogue and pared it back to create awkward silences and narrative hooks. Outside of workshops, the discussions continued: 'It's creepier when they don't talk'. This immersion in the writing process nurtured creative freedom and enabled contextualised and therefore more meaningful

learning (Welsh, 2013, pp. 48–49). However, the freedoms afforded by a workshop approach may not always be possible in an environment of continuous reporting, assessment and high-stakes NAPLAN testing (Parr, Bulfin and Rutherford, 2013, p. 2). How would time restrictions and prescriptive writing tasks impact a Year 9 writer such as Aiden? How does Aiden's creative writing develop as his future teachers work for him and inadvertently against him to prepare him for the demands of VCE English?

Frawley (2014, p. 22) suggests that although VCE expository and persuasive writing contain elements of creative writing, these tasks are nonetheless prescriptive and subject to high-stakes assessment criteria. Consequently, this influences teachers' perceptions of creative writing and the manner in which they teach writing (2014, p. 17). High-stakes assessments result in time-poor teaching schedules that limit pedagogical strategies such as process writing. Furthermore, due to rigid criteria and the focus on target ATAR scores, both students and teachers often favour safer formulaic writing (2014, p. 21). This has further negative implications for creative writing as schools continue to structure policy and practices that prioritise VCE scores.

Wyatt-Smith and Jackson (2016, p. 233) suggest that NAPLAN testing ensures public accountability and informs practices for educational improvement. Reporting on the latest NAPLAN results, the authors cite an increase in students failing to achieve the national standard in writing. Though the authors state that NAPLAN does not directly address and inform practices in classrooms and at the individual level, they infer that standardised benchmarks and teacher training in criterial knowledge would improve writing performance. This rationale suggests that NAPLAN writing tasks are equitable and objectively assessed and that poor assessment results indicate questionable teaching. While the authors (2016, p. 234) dismiss comparisons of NAPLAN content and criteria to curriculum demands, NAPLAN marking guides demonstrate otherwise. Explicit knowledge, skills and standards guide NAPLAN assessment. Marking guides for narrative writing (ACARA, 2016) heavily weight literacy skills and stipulate quality criteria for creative elements such as narrative ideas and use of language. This invites subjective interpretation of student writing and thus subjective assessment. Proposed NAPLAN benchmarks such as 'standard exemplars' (Wyatt-Smith and Jackson (2016, p. 236) also disadvantage students who do not possess the cultural capital valued

by these benchmarks. Furthermore, calls for higher teacher professionalism (Wyatt-Smith and Jackson, 2016, pp. 240–241) focus on stricter adherence to criteria, thus further restricting pedagogical practices and ultimately de-professionalising teachers (Parr, Bulfin and Rutherford, 2013, p. 2). For the Year 9 NAPLAN narrative task, Aiden may have failed to respond to a prescriptive prompt that held no personal meaning. This level of disconnection in adolescent students leads to disengagement and ultimately prevents the intrinsic motivation required to learn and succeed (Erikson, 1968). On the other hand, Aiden may have found an avenue to respond in his distinct way. However, the individual voice and style that shaped Aiden's evocative stream-of-consciousness work would score poorly for NAPLAN; his failure to adhere to rigid criteria would constitute sub-standard writing and generate a score that negatively impacts on his self-efficacy as a writer.

Parr, Bulfin and Rutherford (2013, p. 2) suggest that NAPLAN produces damaging outcomes across education: teachers shift away from student-centred pedagogy and schools engage in questionable practices to compete on publicised market rankings (My School, 2016). Wyatt-Smith and Jackson (2016, p. 240) argue that formulaic NAPLAN tasks prepare students for VCE success. However, this focus discounts the role of creative writing beyond secondary school. As Parr, Bulfin and Rutherford (2013, p.p. 4–5) suggest, creative writing plays a significant role in professional discourse through narratives and autoethnographies that reflect on practice and contribute to research and scholarly debate.

The issues discussed have significant implications for my future teaching. In my writing-camp workshops Aiden completed his own style of story. On camp performance night and before an engaged audience of peers Aiden shared his 'Perfect Yellow World'. The imagery was frightening without consciously conveying fear. His beautifully reworked turns of phrase were also seemingly unconscious. The subject of Aiden's creative writing: a child dressed in yellow, looking back at the reader yet refusing to speak. 'Fading in and out of her yellow world'. Exploration through creative writing may not have deciphered Aiden's disturbing dream or resolved his underlying personal issues. His writing, however, granted him voice and enabled him to learn the functions and power of language in a most meaningful way. Is there room for this kind of exploration and learning in our classrooms and who do I need

to become to continue facilitating creative writing? How do I negotiate an education system that 'shape-shifts' according to market-driven testing? This inquiry paper prompts questions regarding my teacher identity, the future of creative writing in schools and the best pedagogical practices to facilitate creative writing. My responses follow.

I am a teacher and a writer. I will always be a student as long as I strive to meet individual student needs and attempt to negotiate a curriculum that in practice does not always promote equity. I am therefore a blend of teacher, writer and student. My pedagogy may also require blending if I am to continue teaching creative writing. Ideally, I will teach within an English faculty that is fully aware of the value of creative writing and the need for the time and creative space writing camps provide. Realistically, awareness alone will not direct the necessary school resources and level of priority toward creative writing. Flipping the creative writing classroom may be the answer to the ongoing devaluation of creative writing in schools and the consequent time-poor teaching schedules. This involves teaching from beyond the school gate then bringing the writing back in. The flipped classroom (Tucker, 2012) will feature brief teacher-generated podcasts that include writing starters such as visual prompts for see, think, wonder exercises and mini lectures demonstrating literary techniques. Online discussion platforms such as Wikis and Facebook pages invite inquiry, story ideas and the choice to take part in teacher-student collaborative writing. Not bound by chronological time or test criteria, this flipped classroom invites students to come to writing through process writing that periodically returns to the classroom, as time permits and for face-to-face workshops. For students who do not possess the cultural capital to participate online, I will borrow moments from the teaching day to prepare them for classroom workshops. These strategies provide an equitable alternative for avid creative writers by establishing a writing community that embraces authorial agency. This writing community, however, cannot exist in isolation and opposition to the curriculum and school assessments. On a holistic level, my role as English teacher includes facilitating students to succeed in subject English. Strategies such as establishing transferable skills and connections between free creative writing and assessed writing tasks may serve as a bridge across the ever-growing divide between creative and academic writing. Language is the bridge. The more I prompt exploration of the function of language

across all writing, the more my students will discover that they are in command of language that narrates, analyses, persuades, contemplates and, for some, liberates. The final words belong to Aiden:

I got to write about something I have never told about or explained to anyone. And that just felt like a huge relief to write it down. (Carozzi, 2010).

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July

again this breadth of road
types dull kiss of miles
paddocks monument piles of stone
mid-winter pasture a scarf of sky cloudless
as the bitumen beats a getting out of town
time, tide & rhythm
the calendar flaps behind the kitchen door
these flat Mallee roads landscape into the sun
bric-a-brac towns fade into the afternoon

the morning is cow breath frigid
clouds roll & gather a short black rush
warmth to the heart Bendigo
galleries & dead white males
a fringe of bare shiraz Heathcote
high street in damp coats
socks dream of an open fire
a blanket over our shoulders
we pour this stuff down our throats
as if there was no tomorrow
the tasting notes first drafts

ordering goat curry
at the local Indian
is a political act

ten novels for ten dollars
Rushworth Community Hall

trying to avoid the freeway
after Violet Town
& we do & get lost

bump & grind of motel car park
wet slick four by four's bully against the damp

towns surrounded the hills cup chimneys
smoking a warmth around cupped hands
tea bags, instant coffee & high pressure motel showers
no one complains over a quilt of maps
missed side roads & shortcuts

piss take identity of the Heidelberg school
Chinese ride horses too
& I know a bloke lost on Collins Street
Murray Art Museum Albury

we head back towards the River
recall pints of flagon muscatel
on my eighteenth birthday
as we drive down the high street of Rutherglen
in half bottles & with a label amazed

Echuca is zero degrees at the farmer's market
& the fresh avocados are cheap enough
to consider smuggling across borders

rory harris

July 2017

AATE Cutting Edge Plenary Keynote Hobart, July, 2017

Fiona Woods, University of Tasmania

It's July, which means that Semester Two will shortly begin at the university where I teach. Into my first-year creative writing class, there will come approximately 70 new students.

My students will be taking up Commonwealth Supported Places, which means that for each of those students to attend my first-year unit, the taxpayer will contribute a sum of money that is calculated according to a legislated formula. Additionally, each one of those 70 students will pay, in order to take my unit – out of their own or somebody else's pockets – \$793. Or, they will rack up a Higher Education Contribution debt for that amount.

But what will my students get for their money, and the money that the taxpayer stumps up on their behalf? We have to remember, of course, that not all of the \$793 – plus Commonwealth Grant Scheme allocation – can go towards teaching costs. A percentage of it must go towards central costs such as admissions, the library, campus maintenance, administrative staff, prizes, senior management, advertising: all the things that are collectively referred to as 'keeping the lights on'.

But, in terms of teaching: in 2017 they will get a curated list of reading resources, nine hours of face-to-face lectures (with the option to listen to recordings of those live lectures), and fourteen hours of face-to-face facilitated workshops in which each student receives careful feedback on their creative work from staff and other students.

These workshops are where the real learning happens. At the beginning of semester, about 20 nervous people come together with an idea for a story somewhere inside themselves. By the end of semester, they have written those stories, they have shared those stories with others, they have heard the stories of their peers, they have seen people laugh, maybe cry, maybe get angry. They have learned more about the delicate art of giving critical feedback. They have learned more about the delicate art of receiving critical feedback. By the end of the semester they are a community. Younger students have a new appreciation of, and tolerance for, older students. And vice versa. Friendships have been made. Respect has been built. Boundaries have been pushed. Some groups gel better than others – it's a matter of chemistry. But in the best cases, magic happens.

In addition to attending the lectures and the workshops, the students will submit four assignments, and staff will be paid for 70 minutes of marking per student, for all those assignments combined. But as do English teaching staff at all levels of education – and I know that you are no strangers to this – the staff will contribute a considerable amount of extra time, their own time, in order to do this marking adequately. I do not mean to dismiss mathematicians and scientists or the marking that they do in their disciplines, but I do think it is fair to point out that in English, marking is especially complex and time-consuming, in part because we are responding to the expression of abstract ideas, but also because, at the same time – and as a crucial part of the discipline – we are also trying to help students improve the writing skills that they rely upon to express those ideas.

If all goes well, at the end of 13 weeks of study, my seventy students will have passed the

unit and earned one twenty-fourth of a Bachelor of Arts.

What I have described is what will happen in 2017.

But sometime in the not-too-distant future, a good deal of what I have just described will change, because this level of service is already seen as unaffordable and unsustainable. And because the technology is there, ready and waiting to make education cheaper to deliver. This is pressure that is being brought to bear both from within and without, and not only at my university, but right across the tertiary sector in Australia.

These are the sorts of things that are happening:

Recorded, online lectures are replacing live, face-to-face lectures. This is at least in part because recorded lectures can be used for a number of years. An institution can pay for a lecture to be written and recorded, and for several years at least, that same lecture be repeated without further cost.

Savings are also being made in marking. If at least some of the assessments in a unit can be done by computer instead of by humans, then labour costs are reduced. The pressure to do this is felt even in disciplines where multiple-choice quiz assessment cannot be appropriately applied.

Tutorials are also changing. If a course can be virtually delivered, then it can attract students in geographically diverse locations and universities are no longer limited to their traditional catchments. More students create economy of scale. If tutorials are virtually taught, rather than constrained by room size, more students can be serviced without the need to employ more staff.

In many quarters, these changes are seen unequivocally good. Because cost savings are good, aren't they? Because efficiency is good, isn't it? Because when we are dealing with public money, we ought to be as careful and economical as possible – ought we not?

Well, whether or not a cost saving is a good thing will depend on what is lost as a result of it. And on whether or not the economy we are pursuing is a false one. And, also, on who is enjoying the cost saving – because it is unlikely in the current global political context that students will ever again pay less for their higher education. In fact, it is likely that in the future, students will pay more, but what they will get will be very different from education as we have understood it in the past. Especially at undergraduate level, education will be less reliant on communication between people, and more reliant on students consuming

pre-prepared resources. Increasingly, students will be educated by machine.

I would like to suggest that in education generally, but most especially in our deeply human disciplines of English and Creative Writing, what stands to be lost in the course of these cost savings is deeply significant, because the seventy students who will come into my class for the first time in Semester Two of this year are not 70 lots of \$793 plus Commonwealth Grant Scheme allocation. They are 70 human beings, each one of them with their own story to tell, their own reason for being at university, their own reason for studying creative writing, their own vulnerabilities and fears, their own skills and voices.

Within the 70, there will be many 19- and 20-year-olds, come straight from school. Some of them will be the first people in their families to attend university. Some will have a clear career pathway mapped out for themselves, while others will be unsure what an Arts Degree is going to do for them in their lives, but it's just what they feel drawn to. Or perhaps they don't have the marks to do anything else.

There will also be a handful of 24-, 25-, 26-year-olds, who've been travelling, or working in hospitality or retail. Who are still working in hospitality and retail, or who are young parents, and trying to fit their studies in around their work and/or family responsibilities. In fact, the majority of the 19- and 20-year-olds will be in the same boat so far as work is concerned. It's rare for anyone, these days, to be able to afford to complete their tertiary studies in a truly full-time capacity.

Also, in my class, will be mature age students: people in their 40s and 50s wanting to see if they can change career direction, people in their 60s and 70s who want to know what they're capable of, and who often – in my experience – are searching for a chance to remedy the damage to their self-esteem that was done during their first pass through an education system that was, in their time, marked a great many exclusionary and/or pigeonholing practices.

Of the 70 students who enrol in my unit, only about half will be there in the first lecture of semester. The other half will elect to listen to the recording later, at a time that suits them. Or perhaps they won't listen at all. But the ones who do come will experience what we're experiencing tonight – a live performance, a real-time meeting. You can, right now, see me, and hear me, and feel my energy. But it's not uni-directional. For those of you are in this room, I'm not beaming out at you from a screen, having recorded these thoughts

in a studio some time ago. I'm here and now and you are part of this, too, because your energy and your responses are affecting me.

When we teach, we not only transmit knowledge. At least as importantly, we transmit energy. In our beloved discipline of English, we transmit enthusiasm for the works of literature we love, admiration for the potential and malleability of the language with love, passion for the sentences that make us catch fire, respect for the words that are the building blocks of the unsurpassed miracle that is the human capacity to make literature out of 26 letters of the alphabet, a handful of punctuation marks and some white space.

Yes, I admit it, I am waxing lyrical, but I don't care if you just had a cynical little snort up your sleeve about it, because even if you did have that reaction you know what I'm talking about. Even if the students I encounter, in real time, in a classroom, think that I am over-excitable or weird because I can be moved to hyperbole about a beautifully constructed sentence, they do not doubt my sincerity. Because they can see my face, and they can hear my voice, and they can feel my energy. And that is part of what we give, as teachers. Yes, we grade papers and we write reports and we design assessment tasks according to sound pedagogical principles; but what we really do, if we are doing our jobs well, is light fires in people.

Let's go back to the year 1982.

February. I was nine and a half years old, and going in to class five at Hobart's co-educational Quaker private school, The Friends' School. My mother was on staff in the primary school, and so, it was difficult for anyone – staff or student – to see me as anyone other than my mother's daughter. Although I might not have been able to articulate it this way when I was a child, I felt like I was going through life under a veil. People could see me, but not precisely, because they were looking through a layer of something that had nothing to do with me.

But class five would change everything, because class five was taught by Peter Jerrim, and Peter Jerrim saw me quite clearly. He saw a nine-year-old girl who was full of stories and who loved words. He and I struck a deal. If I was to do maths and physical education every day without complaining, then he would let me have most of the rest of the day to write stories. So I did, and he took those stories home and read them, and discussed them with me.

Peter did something else special. For the last half hour of every day – every day – he would have all us

kids sit on the mat, and he would read to us. He read us books that changed the interior landscape of my mind. I remember all of them. *Over Sea, Under Stone* by Susan Cooper, *Whispering in the Wind*, by Alan Marshall, and many, many more. At a crucial moment in my childhood, a teacher inspired, enthused and educated me.

I was lucky enough to have Peter Jerrim as my class xix teacher also. That year, he let me keep writing, he read more of my stories, he cast me in the school play. His faith in me and in my talent utterly and irrevocably changed my life. He lit the fire. He confirmed in me what I knew to be true of myself. And in this way, he enabled me to learn from the many other fine teachers who would cross my path in high school, and beyond.

Do any of you remember the sound that computers used to make when you connected to dial-up internet. It was called a handshake. It was a chirruping noise, with synthetic bells and chimes. But until the handshake was complete, information could not flow.

Education is like this, too. Until we have met our students, really properly *met* them, information does not flow. Education, whether it suits our ideological position or not, is a deeply emotional event. Having now taught a great many mature age refugees from their first pass through the education system, I understand how great is a teacher's power, both to give, and to withhold. How great is our power to, both to empower, and to crush.

I did my PhD at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia where I was lucky to have as my PhD supervisor Dr Richard Rossiter. Richard has had extraordinary record with his PhD students in the discipline of creative writing. Almost all his PhD students have published novels; many have won significant prizes and/or gone on to impressive writing careers. He was asked, at a conference much like this one, what his secret was. 'What,' he was asked, 'is the nature of your Midas touch?' And, of his students, he said this: 'At the risk of sounding inappropriate, I love them.' It was as simple and as difficult as that.

Now, because we all know that it's insane to listen to a teacher go on for 40 minutes at a stretch, I'm going to stop talking just for four minutes. That gives you two minutes to turn to the person next to you and tell them about the person who was 'that teacher' for you. Or, perhaps the time that you were 'that teacher' for somebody else. And then it gives them two minutes to tell you the same.

Some time ago, I read a newspaper article in which an education correspondent argued that the single

most predictive feature of a successful teacher was that teacher's own level of educational attainment. He argued that we needed to stop watching movies like *Goodbye Mr Chips* and *Dead Poet's Society*, we needed to stop with the warm fuzzies, and instead, we needed to create a situation in which only students with the highest results be accepted for education degrees. Because what students need more than anything is teachers who are academic high achievers.

Although I normally regard this correspondent's work highly, in this instance, my response can be encapsulated in just one highly technical term.

Rubbish.

To borrow a formulation from that goddess of literacy, Mem Fox – if I were queen for a day, I would set aside day at the beginning of every year and make heaps of popcorn and get all English teachers, everywhere, to watch *Dead Poet's Society* and *Freedom Writers*, or any other movie that they would like to see, that is about teachers – and teachers of English, particularly – making a difference in their students' lives through their passion and their commitment and, above all, the way that they give of themselves.

But here's the problem with the work that is done by 'that teacher'.

It cannot be measured.

We live in a world that is obsessed with measurement. We have to be able to measure achievement, measure improvement, measure engagement, measure impact. We spend so much time measuring that it reduces the amount of time we have available to achieve, improve, engage and effect change. We also find ourselves designing projects and assessments not for their intrinsic goodness and value, but because their results can be easily and successfully measured. Horribly often, the tail wags the dog in this regard.

But the work of 'that teacher', the one who sets us afire – it's a mystery, it's unique, it's individual, it's accidental. It's chemical, perhaps even alchemical. It's imperfect and unpredictable. It's outside of measurement, it's outside of control. Can it be made fair and equitable? Probably not. Can we make sure that the magic happens, at some point in the education of every single child? Sadly, probably not. And yet, I maintain that it is the single most important thing that we do. But increasingly, the room for the magic is being squeezed out – by the reporting, by the measuring, and by the crowded curriculum (how could you possibly, these days, let a kid write stories for most of every day?). And, it is being squeezed out by what is called

economic reality, which is really, of course, nothing more complicated than the human hunger for profit. But also, perhaps, it is being squeezed out by a lack of faith in human-ness.

Perhaps a year ago, perhaps more, I was driving and listening to that blessed, endangered treasure that is the ABC's Radio National.

Speaking on air was the West Australian doctor, and head of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, Peter Underwood. And what he was saying made me pull over to the kerb on Churchill Avenue so that I could give him and his words my full attention.

Underwood was speaking about contemporary medical research and his concerns about the direction much of it seemed to be taking. He spoke of a researcher who was working on a computer program that was designed to diagnose depression. The machine measured and analysed the sound of a patient's voice, and the movement of their eyes, face and body, searching for markers of depression. The researcher's rationale was: if a patient is suspected of having pneumonia, a doctor can order an X-ray, but if a patient is suspected of having depression, the only means of diagnosis is via the subjective analysis of a person, otherwise known as a doctor.

Underwood went on to explain that the researcher was looking for a silver bullet. The researcher, said Underwood wanted to take the diagnosis of depression away from a fallible human being and instead entrust it to a machine. To quote him: 'an instrument emptied of the wishy-washy, muck-and-mystery feelings – and the resultant emotion-fuelled decisions – that, as streams from mountain rocks, bubble out from our too, too solid flesh. Yes – a computer.'

But, said Underwood – and this is where I was sitting in my parked car, hands gripping the steering wheel, frozen by a mixture of gratitude and recognition – and I quote:

we know that during the process of what is called *history taking* – when the doctor encourages the patient to *tell their story* – something happens. And this something is gorgeous, astonishing and mysterious. As the two talk – and, often, during the examination, touch each other – they create a bond. And this bond, this *relationship* – this little living thing built only from our wispy human senses and our mental capacity to understand each other – has power. These seeming *soft* components of the medical interaction turn out to govern every outcome, from subsequent pain to the duration of the condition. In short, as they step into the wonder-filled world of the person before them, the so-human doctor,

not the machine, is the one with the magic – the magic of entering another's mind, the magic of compassion.

Reading this again makes me emotional. You can see that, right? You can feel that in the room, can't you?

The reason I was frozen to the spot by his words when I first heard them, and the reason I am emotional about it now is because, although he was talking about medicine, he could just as easily have been talking about education.

This is the education I want to do. This is the education I want my children to have. This is the education that I want all children to have. This is the education that I want people – whether they are children or not – to have. The education of magic, and of compassion.

We can change people's lives. For the better. We have that power. But it's really unlikely that we will do it through writing an awesome set of Intended Learning Outcomes, or designing an excellent assessment rubric. We won't do it by sitting alone in a room checking off that our students have contributed the requisite number of words to an online chat thread.

This year, I will be forty-five years old. That means I've seen a lot of technological change over the course of my lifetime.

When I was a little girl, my father worked with computers that took up whole rooms and relied on punch cards, otherwise known as 'Hollerith cards', to store and transfer data. These cards were long and rectangular with snipped out edges. My father used to bring the spare one's home, where we'd use them for telephone messages, or the clues to Christmas Day treasure hunts.

The year I started high school, we students were excited to have a brand-new computer lab full of boxy machines with black screens and blinking green rectangles for cursors. We were given a page of elementary coding, and if we managed to type it in accurately, the computers rewarded us by producing a bright green spiral in the middle of their screens. I'm old enough to have played Pacman and Space Invaders, and not only as some kind of ironically retro activity.

Just as I was leaving school and beginning work, email was beginning to be part of everyday life. Model by model, my mobile phones shrank in size, and I remember where I was standing the day my phone surprised me by accepting an SMS message. 'What are you doing?' asked one of my friends, in a text. I hadn't even known this was something that my phone could do.

Like all of you in this room, I've watched technology create human miracles. Like a fly-in, fly-out father on an oil rig in the Indian Ocean being present at the birth of his child in Hobart, live, via web-cam. Or a far-away grand-daughter being virtually present at her grandfather's funeral on the other side of the world. Today, I heard the writer Julie Koh talk about the possibility of Virtual Reality bringing works of short fiction to life, and what she described sounded like magic.

But also like all of you in this room, I've watched technology play into the hands of the profit-making machines, and erect money-saving barriers between those who serve, and those who are served. Between those who suffer, and those whose job it is to alleviate suffering. And, crucially for all of us in this room, for those who learn, and those who teach.

I fear that the time will come when my capacity to educate students will be reduced to the virtual. 70 new students – or maybe more – will virtually come into my virtual classroom. They will virtually listen to recordings of my lectures, but they will not hear my voice in real time, or see my face in real time, or feel my energy in real time. I will not meet them, not truly. In the subtle, beautiful discipline of creative writing, students will be partly assessed by the blunt instrument of an online quiz. There is nothing in my discipline that will be sensible to measure in this way, but I will presumably need to invent something. Because it will be a financial imperative.

When it comes time for workshops, I will no longer sit in a classroom with my students, and have the capacity to moderate my responses to them – give them more challenging if they want it, and are asking for it, or pull back if they're feeling confronted. Instead, I will provide feedback that is designed to be safe and mild, because it will have to be delivered through the flat medium of online text, and I will not trust the capacity of that medium to deliver a complex, potentially difficult, message. For that, we will always need the human, present, nuances of body language and facial expression.

And so my teaching will be diminished. My capacity to inspire and enthuse will be diminished. But students will not pay less for this diminished form of education. They may even pay more. And, instead of being seen by real humans, however imperfect we might be, undergraduate students could be seen – really seen – by nobody. Because they will be invisible, at home at their computers, behind a wall technology that is – let us make no mistake about it – designed to

keep them away from staff, because this is the cheapest way to do business. Think about how you feel when you are on hold to Telstra, or your bank, or, heaven forbid, Centrelink. Your call is important to us, you have been placed in a queue, did you know we can help you via our website www.getlost.com.au? We know how all these phrases translate. We do not want to talk to you. We are not here to help you. Not with what you're paying. Go solve your own problem.

Is this the style of education we want? It's not what I want.

Of course, we must realise that we are complicit to a degree in these processes. We all know that \$1 a litre milk is destroying the dairy industry, and yet we buy it. It is part of human nature to want to get the most and pay the lowest price for it, but the most is not always the same as the best.

If we want to keep humanity strong in education, an especially if we want to keep humanity strong in the Humanities, then we are going to have to value it. Which is not necessarily the same as measuring it. If we don't speak up for being human, if we don't insist on being human, if we don't value our own importance, as teachers, as humans, to encounter and inspire other human beings, then we will be consumed by the machine.

The worst thing that you could take away from my address tonight is the idea that we need to be able to measure the work of the heart that teachers do. We don't. We can't. But we all have to try to find the space to do the real work, the precious work, the true work.

All jobs have what a friend of mine calls 'the washing up': the task that nobody really wants to do, but that has to be done. For us, in education, the 'washing up' is probably the marking, the reporting, and the measuring. But we are drifting towards a situation in which all we will do is washing up; there will no longer even be a meal. Or if there is, it will be something we hurriedly bolt down while we're marking, something that we wash down with a glass of \$1 per litre milk.

In our small ways, we will need to find ways to push back against the mania for measuring, to leave ourselves room for magic. But if I can ask you to take any one thing away from tonight, it is a renewed belief and faith in the importance of you, as a teacher, as a force for compassion and education. In amongst all that washing up, never you forget you are someone who can reach into the soul of another person and switch it on.

You will leave this conference, and go back to your classrooms, your schools. There will be demands on you, reports to write, administrative tasks to tick off, things to measure. You will walk into classrooms full of students that may challenge or even terrify you with their sass and their apparent self-possession and their amazing capacity to set off your own insecurities. I know, there are times when a room full of students is frightening and pre-emptively exhausting. There are even times when it might feel easier to set assignments via computer, and record classes in the privacy of your own office than to front up to that rawness, all that humanity. The challenge of it.

But when you take your *self*, your whole self, your human self, into a classroom, and try, no matter the obstacles, to light fires in those other humans in front of you; when you take it on yourself to be the source of energy-for-good in the room; when you work to unlock in your students the power to truly read and to unleash their power to tell their stories through writing; when you look into your students' eyes and really (not virtually) see them, when you listen to their voices and really (not virtually) hear them – that, *that*, my friends and colleagues, is when you find yourself at the cutting edge of education.

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Uncovering the Paradigm: Combining the Old and the New in a 21st-century Pedagogy for Teaching Film in English

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Abstract: The emphasis on 21st century learning practices in Australia has led to a paradox of concerns in the field of teaching. This paper examines dual deficiencies related to teaching film in the subject of English; being the lack of contextualisation and authenticity in traditional modes of film study, and the widening gulf between teachers and students in regards to exponentially emergent media technologies. The application of a paradigm based on the usage of film grammar provides a solution to these ongoing issues, with students moving away from the identification and analysis of film techniques towards more authentic application of cinematic skills in order to become active meaning-makers, and to cultivate competencies in 'produsage' (Bruns, 2008) that are more conducive to increasingly complex work spaces.

The first time I taught film was during my practicum block; halcyon days spent driving up the mountain in my grandmother's Hyundai Getz, my hair much thicker, my waist less so, and a single A4 folder my only resource. The mountain isn't metaphorical (I live in the riverside city of Penrith at the base of the Blue Mountains), however, the uphill struggle of my Nan's castoff car as I nervously chugged my way towards Springwood High School may have been somewhat symbolic of my lack of surety at the time. I mean, I did not even have a laptop computer, and this was 2010. I actually made activity sheets by physically cutting and pasting hand-drawn elements onto the one piece of paper.

Suffice to say, there was a distinct sense of the traditional in how I approached teaching during my time as a student-teacher. I looked at themes in the text, the Pixar film *Up* (Rivera and Docter, 2009), and wrote corresponding comprehension questions for the Year 9 class to answer, and I was not even aware of how they would be assessed after I completed my four-week block of teaching. The idea of teaching a topic without knowing the nature of its assessment (flying blind, as it were) absolutely horrifies me now, so I have journeyed some fair degree of distance since my transformative days at Springwood High School. I have a wonderful supervising teacher to thank for self-actualisation there but, alas, that is not the point of this treatise.

The point is that I focused my examination of film, and what film is, on an actual film. I treated it much like any other English topic; as a text to be taught, something to be observed, the student as responder rather than participant. However, when the opportunity now arises for me to put the student into the composer's seat, it becomes a much more rewarding exercise in student efficacy. The student manipulating the language of film first-hand becomes an effective way for them to achieve fluency in film grammar, and it is this shift away from a purely consumptive point to one of production that forms the basis for much of this article.

Competing discourses

In a broader sociological sense, the rise of technologically-based media has been accompanied by two largely-conflicting metanarratives; a technophilic discourse and a technophobic discourse (Sefton-Green and Buckingham, 1996). In other words, the vision of the glorious

technological utopia of tomorrow is often contrasted with anxieties surrounding potential technological disaster. In the centre of this ongoing culture-wide debate are those who will be most affected: our students.

From an educational standpoint, cultural and social anxieties towards exponential and rapid changes in technology are reflected by the complicated relationship between student, teacher, pedagogy, and available technology. The distinctions between technological consumption and production have become blurred (Sefton-Green and Buckingham, 1996) – the prevalence of new technologies like open-source software, the blogosphere, and Web 2.0 have changed media as a tool of delivery to one of two-way communication. Many of us are no longer characterised as passive consumers or active creators, we are now both; ‘producers’ (Bird, 2011). The multi-directional nature of these technologies has, to some extent, democratised media in unforetold ways.

Like all pioneered fields, ‘produsage’ has its origins in the amateur (Bruns, 2008). The texts created by producers are not always constructed by those who have a natural talent or affinity for more traditional modes of communication, such as reading and writing. In response to this, the scholar Axel Bruns posits a five-stranded model for teaching and understanding produsage processes, these skills being; the Creative, the Collaborative, the Critical, the Combinatory, and the Communicative. Otherwise abbreviated as ‘Generation C: C5C’ (Bruns, 2008), this paradigm seeks to give educators a starting point for bringing produsage into the classroom.

The English teacher therefore needs to be mindful of the danger in privileging the written word over practical work (McLuskie, 2000) as our society moves more deeply into the 21st century. The teacher will look at the C5C model and realise that written theory and analysis does not fit so easily into all five of the processes. The teacher might also look at the push for produsage-coverage in the curriculum and start to consider some of the potential issues that will arise from our existent communications and mediated connections in the 20th century.

Our students ‘are often conceptualised as icons of growth and development; and new technology is seen to offer similar hopes of transforming contemporary society into a better one’ (Sefton-Green and Buckingham, 1996) and it is the conflating of these ideas that provides teachers with their greatest

challenge: if children are the experts then how do we, the older generation, keep up with them in the field of education?

There is an expectation in Australian society that schools will be at the forefront of technological change (Sefton-Green & Buckingham, 1996), however, the disparity between ideological innovation in pedagogy (which is generally more than enough) and current models of government funding in education (generally never enough) means that this is often not the case. In their research during the mid-’90s, Julian Sefton-Green and David Buckingham describe the difficulty in collecting samples of digitally-produced work from 60–70 students, with only 6 or so students able or willing to give them pieces they had created. Several factors, which will be familiar to those of us who have taught English in conjunction with the use of technology, are suggested as contributing to this phenomenon. Among the major issues mentioned were that files were often too large to transport from one computer to another, printers would break or malfunction, and technical issues would often prevent students from completing their projects (Sefton-Green & Buckingham, 1996). Even more than 20 years later these problems sound recognisable.

In addition to this challenge, most young people are already sophisticated media users when they get to school, with an often inherent and subconscious understanding of interactivity and nonlinearity (McLuskie, 2000). In fact, ‘In the absence of schools fulfilling this function, it has been the family and the home which have provided the most salient context for learning digital production’ (Sefton-Green & Buckingham, 1996), and it is this autodidacticism, when paired with a lack of adequate technological resources within the school, that compounds the aforementioned issues further.

Therefore, if the youth of today are so media-savvy, it begs the question: what does the English teacher teach students in regards to the media? The answer is film grammar. By combining the new technological knowhow of our students with pre-existing paradigms relating to film editing theory we can bring film production or ‘produsage’ into a schooling context.

What is film grammar?

In NSW English we tend to explicitly teach film to each year group roughly once a year. Some schools use it to assess the mode of viewing and representing, others use it to teach writing in the form of an essay

or expository response, some use a combination of the two, and I have also seen film used as a text to facilitate discussion of larger themes through a reading-based examination.

In the current new NSW English syllabus, the use of the six modes for assessment (speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing, representing) is no longer an explicit, prescriptive part of our curriculum in the way that it used to be. These modes are still included in the syllabus but are not given the same level of significance as other elements of the document, such as the 'Learning Across the Curriculum' areas (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2015). This means that using said modes as the concept behind our overall programming is not only voluntary, it is also possibly an inhibitor of more exciting and engaging ways that English can be taught and learnt. I'm not saying that we should chuck the baby out with the bathwater; the previous modes of communication will always be an integral part of English, however, if we can move away from using them as our mandatory starting point then it can free up a multitude of other possibilities.

The additional point here is that I want to teach film techniques by having students engage with them directly rather than just identifying and analysing them. This is an approach that sits in line with the integrated nature of 21st Century Learning, e.g., Project-Based Learning (Laveault, 2014). We want students to engage with complex problems in a more sustained manner (Gary, 2015), and it's not always possible to have students prepared for such complexity when the areas of knowledge needed are highly specialised. Why waste time on teaching obscure specialties in a vacuum when students can learn 'on the job' by engaging with these skills completely in context? Any English teachers looking to get their school to change the focus from Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths or 'STEM' (NSW Department of Education, 2017) to 'STEAM' by wedging in an 'A' (for 'Arts') will find this concept useful.

In literacy, we speak about the value of using new words in context. The research provided by NSW Curriculum Support (Baumann, Ware, & Carr-Edwards, 2007) promotes the value of contextualising new terms when incorporating vocabulary instruction into our lessons as teachers. This means that, rather than teaching the definition of a word and having students copy this into their books, or even having students look up a definition themselves, we instead discuss the meaning of the new term and then have the

students use it in context as part of a sentence of their own making. By *using* the word, the student achieves a deeper level of understanding. The same applies with essay writing – we can teach the formula for writing paragraphs, and show students essay structure, but unless they put it into practise for themselves then they won't ever really know how to do it.

Nancy Atwell's mini-lesson approach (Atwell, 1998) is this concept *de rigueur*; embedded into a pedagogy that focuses on teaching literary techniques by making them into skills to be practised.

The same mini-lesson ideology translates quite easily with film techniques, only instead of thinking about these things – camera angles, camera shot sizes, editing, etc. – as techniques, it all becomes a film grammar; a film grammar made up of codes and conventions that viewers require in order to 'read' and 'write' cinema (McDonald, 2015; Walsh, 2010). This means that, first, the teacher shows their students how to read film and, second, students then show that they can write film. It's film literacy. Much like the more traditional modes of writing and speaking, instruction of film grammar will allow students to 'interrogate and innovate in their own language use in the same way that filmmakers do' (Fortuna, 2010).

The academia surrounding film's 'linguistic' aspects is by no means universal, and this can be ascertained quite easily through a quick survey or available papers on film literacy. Tynyanov characterises cinema as a set of semantic codes (Tynyanov, 1982), Eikhenbaum defines it as more akin to a figurative language that 'translates linguistic tropes' (Eikhenbaum, 1982), and Tecucianu eschews the analogy of grammar altogether in favour of a view that places more of an emphasis on the multimodality of the medium (Tecucianu, 2014). James Monaco even goes as far as asking, 'Is it necessary, really, to learn how to read a film?', highlighting the art's mimicry of reality as reason enough to reject the need for explicit instruction in 'reading' cinema (Monaco, 2000), whereas, in contrast, LoBrutto coins the term 'cinemate' as a filmcentric equivalent to 'literate'; a means to describe one's ability to learn how to 'read' film (LoBrutto, 2005).

In adapting ideas of film grammar for the classroom, I would argue that we *do* learn to read film, intuitively at a very young age. The ease of understanding that accompanies film, in particular the way that a sequence of shots can construct a narrative, would initially seem to defy explanation. It should be noted, however, that by applying an extended analogy in

which film editing and narrative construction is seen as a form of grammar, students can be taught how to apply a more meaningful approach to film production that works in tandem with their own affinity for produsage.

In this paradigm, students are taught film literacy through the aforesaid mini-lesson approach, in this case focusing on five different examples of film grammar: the close-up, the 180 degree rule, cross-cutting, the reverse angle, and unplanned detail. The choice of features here reflects the evolution of cinema itself – the way film grammar developed in the early days of silent film was a radical process in which filmmakers discovered and invented ways to communicate complex ideas that could build a uniquely cinematic narrative. In reference to this, the English teacher might deploy selected parts of Mark Cousins' comprehensive 15-part series *The Story of Film* (Cousins, 2011), an Irish documentary that not only illuminates the way cinematic storytelling came to be; but also acts, in small digestible chunks, as a perfect teaching tool for high school students. *The Story of Film* is highly recommended as the definitive film history.

Teaching film grammar

In brief, to add context to this article, significant aspects of film grammar are best described as thus:

The Close-Up

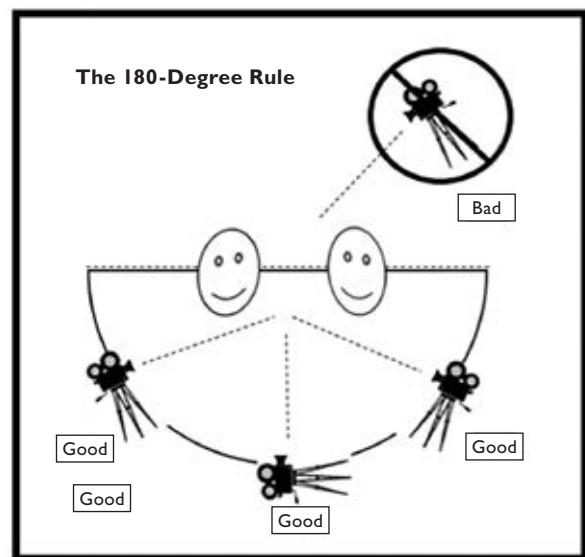
Invented in 1901 with the film *The Sick Kitten* (Smith, 1901), the close-up was an innovative jump in logic that gave viewers a way to see what was happening in more detail. It is important to note here that, before the close-up was invented, the audience had no concept of why a camera would cut away from something happening to show the same thing happening much closer. We understand now that this is a convention of film language because we're used to seeing it in nearly every genre of visual storytelling; viewers are fluent in what a close-up means because they've become visually literate in moving images by watching television from an early age. Students should understand that this was not always the case so that they can appreciate the manner in which a close-up fits into a filmed or televised sequence, and how it is used as a way to pull the audience's focus in on a particular element.

The 180 Degree Rule

The 180 Degree Rule in filmmaking is something that is taken for granted so much now that modern

audiences are aware of it in only a subconscious way. This is despite the fact that this rule, much like the close-up, exists in nearly all television and film. And yet, we often don't teach this 'technique' when talking about film with students because it's a grammatical function that is completely embedded in the language of cinema.

Basically, the 180 degree rule refers to the fact that when two actors are conversing or interacting on the screen, the camera angles and editing choices should reflect the idea that each participant is facing the other. This means that when the actors don't physically share the screen, the shots of them should imply that they are still facing one another for their conversation, as if they are on opposite ends of the same 180 degree line looking inwards at the centre point. Therefore, the camera should never film an actor facing the same way as the person they're speaking to as this will break the illusion that the actors share the same space.



Cutting from Shot 1 to Shot 2 gives the impression that these two figures are facing one another despite not being in shot together.

I have found that teaching this rule is integral to students learning how to edit their raw footage into a narrative. Students will often film two people talking to each other either in wide shot, or by swinging the



The shots below show the rule being broken, if the figure in Shot 1 is filmed from the other side then she doesn't appear to be facing the figure in Shot 2 anymore.

camera back and forth between the two people. This is akin to a writer not being able to use commas or ellipsis to construct a sentence. By understanding the 180 degree rule, a student will be able to cut from one person talking to the other, creating a grammatically efficient and cinematically pleasing depiction of a conversation.

The Reverse Angle

The reverse angle, a reversal of a previous shot where the camera films someone from behind rather than the front, is another technique that seems deceptively simple to the eye. It is important to recognise, however, that the invention/discovery of the reverse angle in the early days of cinema signified something incredibly radical. The movement of the camera to show the same action, character or object from a completely new angle is part of the birth of film as a medium of storytelling completely of its own.

Imagine this, the first films were all filmed on a stage, with the static camera pointing at the scene and filming the actors on a set. This set is built like a set in a play, with only three walls, as the audience does not see the 'fourth wall' from which the camera films. At this point, films are just like the theatre. But then, with the discovery that the camera could be repositioned to film what was happening from a new and different angle, the set becomes three dimensional. Directors realised that they could move their cameras around within the scene itself, rather than only positioning the camera from a theatre audience's viewpoint. This of course meant that three-dimensional, four-walled sets had to be built. Cinema was radically changed forever from a filmed theatre-like production to something entirely different.

Cross-Cutting

The evolution of cinema into its own art form is also represented by the development of cross-cutting, the

editing technique wherein two separate scenes are spliced together to show concurrent action. Prior to the realisation that the director could jump back and forth between scenes happening in two locations, the way a story was told was in a purely linear, sequential fashion. Mark Cousins describes this as the difference between '*and then*' and '*meanwhile*' (Cousins, 2011). Previously, something would happen *and then* the scene would change to what happened *next*.

With the invention of cross-cutting, something would happen and *meanwhile* we would see what was happening *elsewhere*. This demonstrates the way in which these techniques are a kind of grammar that allow the composer to create a new kind of narrative endemic to cinema itself, in which things can be shown happening at the same time. It brings a certain immediacy to film that cannot be achieved in either theatre or literature.

Unplanned Detail

The final keystone of the skills taught is the idea of 'unplanned detail', identified by Cousins as the things that happen on the screen that don't relate directly to the narrative. Sometimes these things are accidental. Cousins uses an example from the epic silent film *Way Down East* (Griffith, 1920), in which a character is depicted unconscious and floating on an ice floe. At one point, her limp hand is seen dragging on the ice, a detail that was entirely unplanned but wholly organic and instrumental in achieving a sort of realism not seen in other modes of art or entertainment.

This aspect of film grammar can be seen throughout the history of cinema. Cousins describes it as 'the wind in the trees'; aspects of nature captured on film that could not always be orchestrated by the director. I include this fifth 'skill' as a point of extension for more artistically-minded students who may be inclined to point the camera at something for a while in the hope of capturing something unique. It's also another thing that separates film so completely from literature or art – the idea that not everything on screen has been deliberately constructed by the director; some things are instead captured.

The Assessment/Project

One way to achieve the desired efficacy and agency amongst students in a project-based context is to use the mini-lesson approach. The mini-lesson's prominence in 21st century English pedagogy was pioneered by American educator Nancy Atwell as a vehicle for

teaching the various qualities of writing (Atwell, 1998), and this is something that Professor Wayne Sawyer has conducted significant research into with Western Sydney schools as well (Sawyer, 2010).

The idea here is to utilise this technique for a new but not entirely disconnected context; in other words, the teaching of film grammar. For the purposes of this filmmaking topic, the idea is to 'frontload' the students before they undertake the assessable project. To achieve this, the five separate aspects of film grammar are taught in mini-lessons across just a few periods. Students are shown the aspect and how it works, given some brief context on why it came about in cinema's development, and are then asked to demonstrate this aspect in groups. For example:

- The close-up is explored using iPads, allowing the students to concurrently demonstrate the technique whilst also figuring out how the technology can be used for their overall filmmaking purposes.
- The reverse angle is a simple role-playing activity, with students working in pairs to show the teacher how they would stage a reverse angle – one student stands still while the other moves an imaginary camera around them to demonstrate how the shot would be reversed.
- Cross-cutting skills are established with two sets of pre-made storyboards. Each storyboard shows a separate scene. Students work in groups to cut both storyboards up and paste them together as one overall storyboard, determining for themselves when they would cross-cut between the two scenes. The results, in practice, reveal the directorial diversity amongst the students – with no two groups creating a single cross-cut sequence the same.

Each skill is isolated in the mini-lesson format and pulled out of the overall topic, intensifying the interaction of the student with this skill in a single stand-alone lesson that narrows and deepens engagement. Not only does the student put this skill into action within the mini-lesson, they are then later given the opportunity to put all five skills together in the project – creating a short film as a group. Instead of being asked to explain or identify the skill, they use the skill in context – firstly in a soft practice form, and then secondly, for assessment in the authentic form.

My use of the term 'frontloading' refers to the practice of giving the students all the necessary information so they can focus on *doing* the skill (as opposed to relying on their ability to identify and analyse the

process used – which is not the focal point of a product-based project task). Instead of testing a student's ability to recall their newfound knowledge, or giving them something to analyse from scratch, the assessment task brings together all the skills in an authentic project in which students construct their own film, hopefully demonstrating film grammar in the way that it is actually used. Many students are gifted in terms of critical thinking and analysis but may not always necessarily have the skills to formulate these gifts into the traditional modes of English communication (writing, representing, reading, etc.) as these are abilities that are extrinsically taught. Scaffolding therefore becomes a valid means of bypassing the elements that students may already be proficient in – we know that lots of students can often do the thinking required so rather than waste time on this stage it's more useful to get them to skip ahead to the application of skills so they can work on the modes of communication. Give them the necessary information so they can exclusively work on the tools to express it. Project-based learning works against the assumption that such ability is innate (Wyatt-Smith & Klenowski, 2014).

It may be the case that some students *aren't* proficient in analysis and critical thinking *but* it is also not something that the teacher is assessing at this particular point in time. What do teachers tend to do in these situations? One familiar option may be to assign students a task in which they are expected to both analyse *and* communicate. In other words, the students identify and clarify all the information first before moving on to the production side of things. The teacher then assesses both elements, which leads to middling results and little success in either, with students mentally fatigued by the length and expectations of the task.

Or, we frontload.

The teacher takes away the analysis element in order to concentrate on communication, as this is what we want to explicitly teach at this point. The communication becomes the entire task. Students can be given all the information they need, which then forces them to focus more explicitly on the skills. This isn't a new idea; it's reflected in flipped classrooms and the concept of scaffolding. It's project-based learning; assessment *as* learning. I don't see this so much as an epiphany, more as just a reinforcement of the direction students should be pushed in. The student takes the information given to them and uses it to formulate their own response to the task. It's fine for the information to be given

to them directly, without subtlety or hidden nuance, because they're essentially doing what a university student does – working with a variety of texts and ideas to bring a diverse array of content into their own hands as they put it all into practise. The more students do this, the wider and deeper their personal knowledge of the subject will become. Steering students into a scenario where they write their own film grammar is perfect for this.

After teaching the mini-lessons on the five film techniques, the assessment task requires students to work in groups to create a short, preferably silent, narrative film that makes use of these techniques. As with most project-based learning, students are largely given free rein to put their learning into practise.

Conclusion

The rapidity of change in the 21st century continues to cause a near-violent sense of upheaval within the human consciousness as we strive to understand and utilise new technologies. The transfer of this struggle into the classroom requires huge paradigm shifts that are not always compatible with the realities of Australian society – notably the proficiency of students in learning produsage skills outside of (and in spite of) the syllabus, and the inability of government funding models to keep up with the needs of the teaching profession to keep abreast of the ongoing media revolution. The quandary left in the wake of these challenges is in how we, as English teachers, might approach the gap between student technological literacy and a need to maintain pedagogical relevance in the 21st century.

Through revisiting the emergence and creation of film grammar in the earliest days of cinema, teachers can apply an English-specific paradigm of understanding film to the use of technology. Students combine their own technological fluency (in using iPads and associated apps to edit footage) with the teacher's instruction of skills, allowing for the construction of a meaningful digital moving image narrative. The codes and conventions of film grammar reposition students to consider the effect of editing processes on silent film narratives, such as the ways in which concurrent storylines can be blended, or the importance of considering the physical positioning of characters when combining shots together.

The teaching of each skill in context through mini-lessons allows for 'soft' practice, with students then using the C5C model of produsage to create their own short film that utilises each of the frontloaded

elements of film grammar. Teachers can approach the project holistically or analytically, evaluating and guiding students in their use of pre-existing produsage skills in combination with new understandings of film. We generally don't teach high school students how to combine consonants when pronouncing words but we do teach them how to represent a point of view when verbally persuading an audience. The approach to media can be the same – we might not teach students how to use the technology but we can teach them to how to co-opt it in the goal of crafting a visual narrative that influences an audience's impression of what they're seeing.

We put them in the hot seat. As creators and collaborators they skip the explicit teacher-led learning of comprehension and analysis and instead independently draw upon these skills through shared learning and the composition of their own text. The knowledge is contextualised through authentic application.

When I started teaching I didn't even have a laptop computer but the students I taught were more than capable of operating within a virtual world of digital media. I own a laptop now and do my best to keep up to date but my knowledge of technology realistically has a minimal bearing on closing the gap between myself (born in an age when the primary school had one computer for everyone to share) and the digital natives I continue to teach (who are able to operate an iPhone before they even start kindergarten). Synthesising these two worlds isn't impossible though, and it's through finding and delivering the right theoretical framework (in this case, film grammar), that a working paradigm can successfully bring the worlds of the old and the new together, ensuring that systems of knowledge and skill continue to grow with the next generation and beyond.

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Reconciliation Agendas in the Australian Curriculum English: Using Postcolonial Theory to Enter the Fray

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this document/website contains references to people who have passed away. Since this article was initially written, one of the main people discussed, Dr G. Yunupingu, has passed away. At the National Indigenous Music Awards held on Larrakia Nation in August 2017, David Djunga Djunga Yunupingu paid tribute to his late nephew, Dr G. Yunupingu. The essence of his tribute encapsulated the peaceful soul and connectivity that resonates through Dr G.'s music. He referred to his music as a 'bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia'.

Abstract: This article begins by discussing the Australian Curriculum: English and its remit to contribute to this nation's reconciliation agenda. Ever cognisant of our individual identities as non-Indigenous teachers and teacher educators and our relations to this topic, we hone in on one Content Description from Year 10, and analyse one stimulus text, an interview transcript between Michael Hohnen and Patrick Pittman. In the interview, Hohnen reflects on the long term collaborative relationship with Dr G. Yunupingu, a hailed musician from Galiwinku (Elcho Island), North East Arnhem Land. The theoretical grounding for thinking about these reflective recounts is drawn from a critical theory paradigm imbued with a postcolonial lens. Specifically, we draw on Bhabha's (1994) notion of cultural hybridity. Our analysis of this text points to the utility of using postcolonial theory for framing discussions of this ilk. We conclude by commenting on implications for non-Indigenous teachers and teacher educators working within an agenda of reconciliation in subject English.

The Reconciliation Agenda: The shift into schooling spaces

In 1988, at the Barunga festival in the Northern Territory, Indigenous representatives Galarrwuy Yunupingu and Wenten Rubuntja presented then-Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke with a statement of Aboriginal political objectives. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities sought, yet again, to peacefully redress the long history of dispossession, assimilation and racial and constitutional discrimination. Hawke responded with a promise that a treaty would be signed with Indigenous Australians by 1990. On 5th June 1991, the House of Representatives passed the *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Bill*. This Bill formally set in motion the 'Reconciliation Decade' (Pratt, 2005) and a process of reconciliation which has become a major, albeit slowly progressing, theme of Australian political and civic life. Since the introduction of the Bill, major debates such as native title, the stolen generations, practical reconciliation and Rudd's 'Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples' (Parliament of Australia, 2008) have taken place.

The Australian Government currently defines reconciliation as the 'unity and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous Australians. It is about respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and valuing justice and equity for all Australians' (2017, para 1). This version of reconciliation has overtly shifted into schooling spaces as a result of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2008). This landmark document declared that all Australian students should 'understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians' (p. 8). Furthermore, it was also the impetus for the development of the inaugural *Australian Curriculum* by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (hereafter ACARA). One curricula, the *Australian Curriculum: English* (hereafter AC:E), was implemented in the initial rollout in 2012. Aside from its more conservative intent of creating 'confident communicators' and 'imaginative thinkers', the AC:E (ACARA, 2017, p. 4) is designed to help students to 'become ethical, thoughtful, informed and active members of society' (p. 4). The rationale affirms that the AC:E 'plays an important part in developing the understanding, attitudes and capabilities of those who will take responsibility for Australia's future' (p. 4). Embedded within the AC:E and the other curricula developed by ACARA (for example, 'History') are three cross-curriculum priorities, one of which is *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures* (p. 16). This cross-curriculum priority provides the overt justification for including reconciliation agendas in the disciplinary field of English. The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures* cross-curriculum priority was embedded not just for the benefit of Indigenous Australian students (Shipp, 2012), but to benefit all students. The AC:E states that the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures* priority 'provides opportunities for all learners to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the world's oldest living cultures. This knowledge and understanding will enrich their ability to participate positively in the ongoing development of Australia' (2012, p. 16).

Absent from this policy was the greater reality that the vision for reconciliation is complex and highly contested by researchers who dedicate their work to

this territory (see Nakata, 2003; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2009; Wallace, 2010; Freeman, 2014; Worby, Irabinna-Rigney & Ulalka, 2011). Freeman (2014) cautions that too often formalised processes and discourses of reconciliation serve to reduce the differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples instead of negotiating, acknowledging and respectfully embracing difference. Worby et al. (2011) include a statement from Patrick Dodson's 2000 Lingiari Lecture speech. Dodson insists that the quality of reconciliation in Australia will depend on an ability to embrace all its aspects over four levels:

There is the personal level. This is the level of human encounter ... then there is the reconciliation at the social level. These are the social policy matters that have to do with health, housing, education, employment, welfare and an economic base ... then there is the reconciliation of governance. This is about governments making laws that remove rights, or enhance them ... Finally there is the reconciliation of recognition. The sovereign position that Aboriginal peoples assert has never been ceded ... to have any substantial reconciliation we must encompass all these aspects, no matter how challenging that may seem. (2011, pp. 205–206)

To address all elements is beyond the scope of this paper. This paper is primarily concerned with the 'personal level' of reconciliation: the level of human encounter and the processes of negotiating ways of working together in 'unity' and 'respect' (Worby et al. 2011). We offer a possible way forward for negotiating, acknowledging and respectfully embracing difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

In the section that follows, we each introduce ourselves and our identities of relatedness with this topic as they are understood in this place at this time. The third section highlights the inherent tensions of working as non-Indigenous teachers and teacher educators on topics that embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. In the fourth section, we delve into the AC:E and hone in on a Year 10 Content Description that requires students to 'analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts, through language, structural and/or visual choices' (ACARA, 2017, p. 118). We introduce a stimulus text, a transcript of an interview between Michael Hohnen and Patrick Pittman (Hohnen & Pittman, 2011). In the interview, Hohnen reflects on the long term collaborative relationship with Dr G. Yunupingu,

a hailed musician from Galiwinku (Elcho Island), North East Arnhem Land. We draw on a postcolonial theory of cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) to frame our discussion about instances of Indigenous and non-Indigenous human encounters and the processes of negotiating ways of working together in 'unity' and 'respect' (Worby, Irabinna-Rigley & Ulalka Tur, 2011). Our logic for doing so is to inspire the English teacher to consider how postcolonial theories can frame future classroom discussions. We conclude by considering the utility or otherwise of this approach for helping to break down the us/them social divide.

Our individual relatedness to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

Academic and Indigenous Elder Karen Martin (2008) highlights the importance of relatedness to Country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Martin (2008) explains that the footprint of relatedness is grounded 'on the ontological premise' of the multiplicity of Entities in the human and non-human world (p. 71). She states that 'how you come to know about your world' can be dependent on an awareness and openness to acknowledge how one is positioned in a multitude of relationships (p. 71). With the rise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples working collaboratively on shared visions and endeavours, Martin (2008) asserts that 'this relatedness remains core' (p. 76). It is thus essential for each of us to declare, as best we can, who we are, from where we come and why we seek to explore within the space of intercultural relations. We each come to this discussion as teachers or teacher educators from different backgrounds and experiences.

Author one, Megan Wood, is a passionate primary school educator, determined and inspired by her colleagues, students, community and the local, national and global affairs that inform and influence the societies in which we live. She currently lives and works in Wadeye on *Kardu Diminin* land, in the *Thamarrurr* region of the Northern Territory. She believes that to be a progressive, successful and reconciliatory non-Indigenous educator in an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community school, educators require an active awareness of dominant ideologies that are imbued across the borders of cultural difference 'in an attempt to position others' (Giroux, 2005, p. 100). Furthermore, an ability to continually reflect on how we (as cultural, social beings) are arranged and positioned when collaborating at the borders of

cultural difference, is essential for positioning intercultural partnerships. She maintains an ongoing awareness of the colonial legacy of Western researchers who have attempted to represent the cultural orientation of Indigenous peoples through 'different conceptualisations of things such as time, space and subjectivity, different and competing theories of knowledge, highly specialised forms of language and structures of power' (Smith, 1999, p. 45). In attempting to generate postcolonial conversations regarding Indigenous affairs one must be constantly reflective so as to mitigate the risk of producing self-proclaiming narratives that reinscribe a particular type of authority that counters the author's initial intentions. She acknowledges that there may be moments where her writing may be perceived as slipping into the colonial authority we attempt to avoid. These moments, documented as written discourse, need to be challenged and discussed to continue to support a progressive and postcolonial way of thinking and being that can be embedded into institutional practices.

Author 2, Beryl Exley, was born on *Wiradjuri* land in the state which is known as New South Wales in the 1960s and grew up on *Yuggera* land in the state known as Queensland. Whilst she has Aboriginal kin in her maternal and paternal family trees, she identifies as white Australian because her life was not/is not infused with an Indigenous perspective. Her schooling years only offered 'romantic white notions of Australian history' (Sarra, 2010, para 7) where 'learning about contemporary Indigenous culture never included learning from or deep questions about other ways of knowing'. She has been a teacher and teacher educator in schools supporting and supported by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for the last three decades. Her specialisation is the enactment of the AC:E, with a particular focus on inquiry based learning for coming to understand the Language, Literature and Literacy strands. Through her connections with some Indigenous educators and Indigenous community members in the Torres Straits (see Exley, 2010, 2012) and Logan community (see Exley, Davis & Dooley, 2016), she has learnt the importance of forgoing the Western researcher-educator's illusion of the right to know all, instead learning to listen, observe and participate in culturally appropriate activities when invited to do so. Beryl's warrant for contributing to the penning of this article is tied to her professional responsibility as a teacher educator. In some ways, Beryl is representative of the myriad of

well-intentioned but not necessarily knowledgeable non-Indigenous Australian teachers implementing the AC:E and its inherent reconciliation agenda.

Author 3, Linda Knight, was born overseas and moved to Australia as an adult. She now lives on *Turrbal* land in the state known as Queensland. As someone who has predominantly lived overseas she recognises that the majority of her perceptions of the world have been shaped by a white, colonial culture. Consequently during her time in Australia she has come to build an awareness of the importance of taking responsibility for her part in Australian history, society and culture and that the past and present are important to continue to understand from different standpoints. Through her work as an artist and community educator she embeds this shared responsibility into her teaching and research about young Australian children, their families and communities, their education and care. After seventeen years in Australia she still has much to learn about the Indigenous knowledge systems that have shaped and continue to shape the histories, spaces and lives of all who live in Australia. She understands the importance of committing to nurturing relationships that are built and sustained over time, and that are dynamic, trusting and mutually respectful, and she works to generate, interpret and respond to these aims as she conducts her work in early years education.

The reconciliation agenda in the AC:E and tensions for non-Indigenous teachers

The literature on the uptake of the Reconciliation agenda in teaching practice is limited (Kanu, 2012; Harrison, 2011; Buxton, 2015; McLaughlan & Whatman, 2015). So too is the literature which reports on reconciliatory work within the AC:E. Two manuscripts, however, are noteworthy. The first manuscript, written by non-Indigenous teachers, Wagner and Wenlock (2012), recount the planning of a unit of work for Year 8 English students exploring Australian Identity through films which highlight experiences of Indigenous Australians. The second manuscript, written by non-Indigenous curriculum commentators Exley and Chan (2014) explores tensions between AC:E policy and practice. In an attempt to better understand the challenge of introducing a reconciliation agenda into the AC:E, it is instructive to overview literature that explores pre-service teachers' and teachers' understandings of the colonial and imperialistic history of this nation.

Concerns about preservice teachers' knowledge

gap of Aboriginal culture and history were noted in a study by Anderson and Atkinson (2012). In her PhD dissertation, academic and Indigenous Elder Phillips (2011) reflected on her work in preservice teacher education courses over eight years, concluding, in the main, Indigenous viewpoints are poorly understood and attempts to embed Indigenous perspectives were aggressively challenged by some preservice teachers. Harrison (2011) comments on observations of proactive teachers unwittingly drawing on stereotypes, Internet, media, books and journals about Indigenous histories and cultures to compensate for gaps in their knowledge bases. Research studies undertaken by Craven and Price (2011), Harrison and Greenfield (2011), Santoro, Reid, Crawford and Simpson (2011), and Zurzolo (2010) add to the collection of studies that confirm many non-Indigenous teachers are still developing an inadequate appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. Buxton's (2015) Master of Philosophy thesis concluded that some non-Indigenous teachers had an under-developed repertoire of suitable pedagogies for teaching about understandings of Indigenous cultures.

The largest national study on broader issues around the education of Indigenous students, *The Stronger Smarter Learning Communities Project*, asserted that the potential of embedding an Indigenous perspective in Key Learning Areas may not be realised due to inappropriate pedagogical approaches that had the collateral effect of 'defining and positioning the sole Indigenous student in the class as an *object* of study and commentary' (Luke, et al., 2013, p. 224, emphasis in original). Relevant to our discussion is key finding Number 16 which claimed 'broad community support for the embedding of Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum, but Indigenous students and staff report significant problems with non-Indigenous teacher knowledge and intercultural sensitivity' (p. 120). After evidencing demonstrations of this ilk on multiple occasions, the research team cautioned that 'the Australian Curriculum mandate for the embedding of Indigenous knowledges raises major issues in terms of the requisite depth of teacher knowledge of Indigenous cultures, histories, issues and languages' (p. 417).

The AC:E cross curriculum priority of *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures* requires teachers to be knowledgeable about localised Indigenous content and ways of knowing, accumulated over 70 000+ years. Trudgen's (2010) recount of life as a *Balanda* (non-Aboriginal) in a remote Aboriginal community in

Strand	Substrand	Content Description	Selected elaborations
Literacy	Texts in Context	Analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts, through language, structural and/or visual choices (ACELY 1749).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering ethical positions across more than one culture as represented in text and consider the similarities and differences • Questioning the representation of stereotypes of people, cultures, places, events and concepts, and expressing views on the appropriateness of these representations • Analysing the way socio-cultural values, attitudes and beliefs are presented in texts by comparing the way news is reported in commercial media and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media

Table 1. ACELY1749 Year 10 Content Description (ACARA, 2017, p. 105)

Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory provides a lens through which to view the complexities of coming to know and understand the world view of another person. After living, working, laughing and crying with a proud and functional Aboriginal mob for more than 10 years, he asserts no definitive list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives or world views exists. Rather, a 'people's world view is the product of a host of environmental and historical factors' that shift continuously over time and space (p. 102). Thus for us, a number of related tensions emerge: (i) to remain silent on the cross curriculum priority within the AC:E is to contribute to the symbolic violence of silencing the reconciliation agenda; (ii) to enter into the reconciliation space of the AC:E as a non-Indigenous educator with a limited knowledge base is to contribute to the marginalisation of Indigenous knowledges; and (iii) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges are not always known, and sometimes can never be known by non-Indigenous educators such as ourselves (see Exley, Davis & Dooley, 2016).

In the pursuit of identifying educational practices that are reconciliatory, Worby, et al. (2011) suggest an exploration of productive intercultural partnerships. They emphasise exploration, cautioning that merely acknowledging or celebrating successful intercultural collaborations runs the risk of being tokenistic. Sutton (2009) draws on examples of well-functioning Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships, explaining how these intellectual partnerships contribute 'to the rich fabric of understanding and appreciation of Australia's cultures' (p. 193). He asserts that the relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples, where cultural differences are ever present, is the kind of reconciliation that 'matters most'. In the work presented here, we consider how this take on the reconciliation agenda might come to be part of the classroom discussion. This work on

intercultural partnerships stems from a Masters of Education Dissertation completed by Megan Wood (2015) and supervised by Linda Knight and Beryl Exley. The following section introduces one Year 10 AC:E Content Description, a stimulus text and an overview of the theory of cultural hybridity that could be used to frame the teaching and learning.

The AC:E content description, the stimulus text and the theory of cultural hybridity

In an attempt to explore the kind of reconciliation that 'matters most' (Sutton, 2009), we hone in on one Year 10 Content Description from the Language Strand of the AC:E (see Table 1).

The Content Description is broad, so on this occasion, we focus on the use of verbal language in one stimulus text, the interview transcript between non-Indigenous musician Michael Hohnen and non-Indigenous journalist Patrick Pittman, entitled 'Michael Hohnen and Dr G. Yunupingu are Collaborators' (Hohnen & Pittman, 2011). Michael Hohnen is a long time musician and co-director of Skinnyfish Music. Many reflective outputs have promoted the partnership and collaborative endeavours of Michael Hohnen and Dr G. Yunupingu. Pittman is a writer, editor and radio broadcaster 'who loves pushing magazines to feature more about development politics' (Peard, 2013, para. 1). In the interview, Hohnen reflects on the long term collaborative relationship with Dr G. Yunupingu, a hailed musician from Galiwinku (Elcho Island), North East Arnhem Land. Dr G. Yunupingu regularly appeared in magazines, newspapers, concert advertisements, television performances, and social media, however, it is widely known that Dr G. Yunupingu wouldn't give interviews. Friend and musical collaborator Michael Hohnen embraced the role of Dr G. Yunupingu's spokesperson. The interview between Hohnen and Pittman was published in *Dumbo Feather*,

a magazine that documents interviews with 'extraordinary people' (About Dumbo Feather, 2016). *Dumbo Feather* is published quarterly on the internet and as a print magazine. Each edition contains five profiles explicating the stories of people across various vocations, for example education, science, fashion and the Arts. The magazine claims to appeal to an audience 'who want to be inspired and told a different story than the one they hear every day' (About Dumbo Feather, 2016, para. 2). The interview transcript is documented in 5,960 words with approximately 26 questions/prompts from Pittman. The stimulus text has been read in its entirety and for the purposes of this paper, three reflective recounts have been identified because they showcase respectful cultural intersections.

The goal of the Year 10 Content Description is to 'analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts, through language, structural and/or visual choices' (ACARA, 2017, p. 118). We are interested in how processes of intercultural negotiation are actioned and accounted for. In our analysis, we draw on the postcolonial theory of cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) to seek insight into one of many pathways that re/envision the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples.

The absence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authorship is a noted limitation of our analysis. Furthermore, the stimulus text promotes non-Indigenous story which also favours perspective from non-Indigenous logic. These elements of the paper may be considered a contradiction especially given that the analytical frame is postcolonial theory. However, we need to be clear about the boundaries of our work here. We use Hohnen's reflective recounts to explore how non-Indigenous peoples' stories and experiences can elicit critical conversations about the ideological power imbalance in societies, in particular, contexts where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples are working together. We view this analysis as an example of reconciliatory work; when time is taken to critically consider the differences between social and cultural beings, there is a deepened insight that challenges the mindset and potentially supports non-Indigenous people in the social level of reconciliation. This limitation provides opportunity for an analytical frame that deconstructs and challenges the assumptions of the 'West' (Bhabha, 1994).

The theoretical grounding for our thinking about

these reflective recounts has been drawn from a critical theory paradigm imbued with a postcolonial lens. Postcolonial theory offers ways to think about the effect of colonisation on culture whilst challenging us to acknowledge the hierarchical and imperial legacies of colonialism and how colonial power takes form and perpetuates inequality in Western discourse (Kaplan, 2013). We draw on the postcolonial theories of Homi K. Bhabha, in particular the concept of cultural hybridity as introduced in his text *The Location of Culture* (1994). Cultural hybridity, the emergent and performative act of cultural translation, is a term used by Bhabha (1994) that explores processes of negotiation and accommodation at and within cultural boundaries. Cultural boundaries refer to the borderline between culturally different people and societies. This concept of cultural hybridity denies the oppositional colonial binaries that attempt to represent and 'give a hegemonic 'normality' to the uneven development and the differential (often disadvantaged) histories of nations, race, communities and people' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 246). Cultural hybridity refers to the way we critique our own behaviors and those of others in order to produce a meaningful way of behaving together. Hybridity is a conceptualisation of the intercultural. It is the 'the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56). Documented moments of cultural hybridity enable a social imagery of the way subjects (in their multiplicity) entangle in moments of cultural translation. Bhabha's (1994) theories of cultural hybridity assist us to think about multiple identities working as 'hybrids', each bringing different ways of being that influence the processes of negotiation.

This paper has engaged with post-qualitative inquiry to mobilise and provide a forum for postcolonial theory. Patti Lather (2013) states that post-qualitative inquiry aims to generate knowledge differently, by denying the 'standpoint epistemologies' (p. 635) that privilege a humanist subject voice as 'transparent descriptions of lived experiences' (p. 635) in search of the 'truth'. For the purpose of this paper, an analytical process of 'thinking with theory' has guided the discussion in response to the reflective recount, which in turn minimises the risk of producing totalising 'answers' to a conceptual frame that cannot be contained to codes. Post-qualitative inquiry promotes the evolving and ever-changing mind, matters and behaviours of society, aiming to fulfill both the ontological and epistemological rigour of the theoretical grounds. Thus this post-qualitative inquiry guides us to reveal and

deliberate about the negotiations and accommodations of difference at and within the borders of cultural difference from the perspective of non-Indigenous peoples. The following section introduces the three reflective recounts we focus upon.

Introducing and analysing the reflective recounts

Reflective Recount # 1 – Hohnen Does the Talking: Working Together / Going With It

Reflective Recount # 1 is in response to a thought-provoking question from Pittman (see Table 2). Pittman is alluding to the contested history which still resonates today when non-Indigenous peoples speak ‘on behalf’ of Indigenous peoples.

Patrick Pittman	You find yourself in this role as a spokesman for Dr G. Yunupingu as well as the label man. That must be something that people are suspicious of, the white man doing the talking?
Michael Hohnen	I reckon. I feel it's the only choice I've got. You saw him, he doesn't want to have anything to do with it at all, and won't commit to any answers. Occasionally when he's with me for a few days, I can get a few things out of him. He listens to a lot of things that I say on radio and tells me what he thinks, in private. He doesn't come out with much to me, and we've hung out together for fifteen years. We don't talk a lot about anything that heavy, it's more of a social and musical relationship. It's a fun relationship, he has his own life and I have my own life and it's really healthy in that way. He never asks loads of questions, and I never delve deeply into his world. When we're working with Dr G. Yunupingu, we have to go with him, we have to be with him and try and make it work for him. A lot of people are quite tight and rigid and can't change the way they're structured and their business, or their family life, or anything, to go in that direction. I think that probably helps us achieve what we're doing.

Table 2. Hohnen and Pitman, 2007, paras 43–44

We construe Pittman's question as one that supports creating imaginings of Hohnen as the white man doing the talking, dominating the partnership, reveling in the glory of the music's success and rousing suspicion. In response to Pittman's question, Hohnen simply states ‘I reckon. I feel it's the only choice I've got’. Hohnen affirms that Dr G. Yunupingu maintained awareness of what Hohnen talked about and would let him know what he thought. He continues to elude that this process of collegiality is private, between them and ‘happens when it happens’. He proceeds to talk about multiple topics: the human agency of Hohnen

and Dr G. Yunupingu; the materiality of music; and the interviews, advertising and media responsibilities that welcome outsiders to question and consequently contribute further subjective perceptions of the relationship. In Hohnen's reflective recount, Hohnen and Dr G. Yunupingu are entangled together, creating what Bhabha (1994) would reference as a ‘hybrid site of cultural negotiation’ (p. 255). Bhabha (1994) purports that these differences cannot be totalised as there is no common measure for differences that dwell in the same space. Each moment is entangled with multiplicities that create the signifying differences, before being reinscribed and relocated by another reflective recount. It seems that the processes of negotiation are always evolving and bound by specific contexts of time and place (Bhabha, 1994).

Bhabha's (1994) assertion that ‘a moment when something is beyond control, but it is not beyond accommodation’ (p. 12), is a reminder of the subjects that influence given moments of intercultural interaction. Cultural hybridity incites moments of uncertainty. The way others perceive the hybridity of a particular relationship or have opinions about how it should be, has the potential to effect the way one behaves. In relation to Hohnen's reflective recount, if one believes they are evoking suspicion based on totalising assumptions about how to behave, this has potential to alter the way one behaves. The subjectivity of onlookers or outsiders has the potential to contribute to the way people engage in intercultural interaction. Non-Indigenous people are frequently represented in the binary opposition as dominating, more powerful and oppressive – more often than not, for justifiable reasons. A negative representation of non-Indigenous peoples is not necessarily a negative thing; an acknowledgement of the power and ideology imbued in colonial relations is a critical element in the production of a discourse of difference (Giroux, 2005). However, applying a notion of power and control as a general conjecture to all non-Indigenous people working in an intercultural space risks the reproduction of presupposed assertions.

Hohnen's reflective recount takes us beyond the border and ‘instead of papering over difference’ (Lather, 2013, p. 642), we see some of the roles for which each person is responsible. Theories of cultural hybridity also enable us to consider how relationships can change from day to day. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the stimulus text and therefore the analysis, is limited with regard to understanding

the extent of Dr G. Yunupingu 's unwillingness to 'do interviews', and Hohnen's jurisdiction to talk on behalf of him. The essence of this analytical reference is that of negotiation, figuring out 'roles and responsibilities', being aware of the strengths and limits of your significant other.

Perhaps sometimes it was appropriate for Hohnen to 'speak for' Dr G. Yunupingu, and perhaps there were days when it was not. Cultural hybridity provides opportunity for people working at and within the borders of cultural difference to negotiate the construction of their relationship (Bhabha, 1994). There are many ways this negotiation of roles and responsibilities can unfold, depending on the context, the collaborative endeavour and the differing political investments of individual positions and people. Hohnen's reflective recount does not explain the negotiation process. For example, he does not disclose how they both came to know and activate their individual roles and responsibilities or how they established the expectation that neither of them 'delve deep' (para. 43) into each other's worlds. Instead, Hohnen explains the negotiated outcome and we are reminded that each moment of intercultural encounter is different.

Reflective Recount # 2 – Making an Album Together

Reflective recount # 2 talks about Hohnen and Dr G. Yunupingu making an album together, providing insight into some of the active and reflective processes (see Table 3). Hohnen describes the toing and froing of creating an album, highlighting the certain protocols that Dr G. Yunupingu needed to observe before making a recording.

Pittman's question lends itself to challenge the binary. Hohnen's explanations do not explicitly state that he adapted to the intercultural encounters based on the cultural responsibilities of Dr G. Yunupingu or that the album writing processes he and Dr G. Yunupingu followed were 'out of his control'. We learn that the song writing processes cannot be prescribed. There may be reoccurring elements that arise, for example Dr G. Yunupingu needing to check certain lyrics with family, however, how they make an album in its entirety cannot be prescribed. The reflective recount emphasises the notion of cultural hybridity that suggests that moments of social and cultural interaction cannot be controlled but can be accommodated. In this reflective recount we learn that Hohnen and Dr G. Yunupingu were 'enmeshed' with other subjectivities that work together to create the emergent

Patrick Pitman	Let's talk about how you guys make an album together. Does he bring songs to you; does he sing to you, do you jam them out? How does it work?
Michael Hohnen	Yeah he does. He'll play something in the hotel, and I'll say it sounds great, so he'll work on it for a while longer. Six or twelve months later, he'll have lyrics for it, and he's checked those lyrics with lots of family members. It makes sense, he doesn't want to present something to the public until he knows and he's been told by not just one person but lots of different people that it makes sense. You should use that ancestor's work, or you can't phrase it like that. One interesting thing for this album is that I've heard two or three really strong songs by his family. I'll say to him, what about that song by those guys. Now, I need about three or four years – I suggested one song on this album about three years ago, and then last year he played it for me, in a dressing room. He didn't say anything, but we were just sitting there and he played it and sang it to me. That was like saying: 'Oh, Michael, you know that song you asked me to do two or three years ago? Here it is.' There was none of that, but he just sat there grinning, because he knows that I thought that would be a great song for this album. Or something that he should do in the future, so it's more me seeding ideas, him going with some and him rejecting some totally. There was another song that we wanted on this record which was a Manduwuy (Yunupingu of Yothu Yindi) song, from their big album, and we talked about it, he suggested it, and we couldn't get in touch with Manduwuy for two or three days while we were in the studio. He wouldn't do it until he'd been given the go-ahead, so we didn't do it on the album.

Table 3. Hohnen and Pitman, 2011, paras 41–45

differences, similarities and limits within the relationship. The subject of time, cultural tradition, family epistemology (knowledge) and ontology (ways of being), and music, are mutually produced in the enactments of cultural hybridity.

Reflective Recount # 3 – Cultural Difference

Reflective Recount # 3 comes towards the end of the interview (see Table 4). Pittman comments on the different cultures Hohnen's music label works across, provoking a conversation about cultural difference.

Rather than explicating his knowledge of the diversities that may/may not exist between the cultures with which he works, Hohnen refocuses his thoughts of cultural difference to support cultural hybridity. His articulations refrain from naming cultural differences between himself and his collaborators and

Patrick Pitman	You must have to work across many different cultures for the label.
Michael Hohnen	All through Arnhem Land, it's like a miniature Europe. Think about how differently the French and the Germans think of their own cultures, language and everything is structured so differently, and it's the same. At one stage, there were hundreds of different countries. I think we all know that much more now. There were similarities, but if you go west of Darwin, it's quite different again. When you go to Japan, or anywhere else, you pick up that you have to change the way you act in those countries. Unless you're a Bogan and you go to Bali and decide that you're going to go to parties all day and you don't actually go and meet Balinese people and deal with them. It's the same when you go to Aboriginal Australia; it's a totally different world.

Table 4. Hohnen and Pittman, 2011, paras 50–51

he makes no assertion that cultural difference is a problematic within these intercultural relationships. Hohnen's articulations remind us that unless an effort is made to confer sense at cultural boundaries, the potential is to maintain interpretations of the cultural 'Other' through outsider perspectives. Bhabha's (1994) notion of 'beyond' is evident in Hohnen's articulations. Hohnen suggests when you go to different countries, there is a raised awareness of the need to 'change the way you act' (para. 51). Critical consciousness, the deepening awareness of the sociocultural reality that shapes one's way of being and the ability to alter that reality, is an important attribute in developing capabilities to negotiate effective cultural encounters. This reflective recount inspires potential conversations about the diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identities. It also amplifies the inability to define how to behave within moments of intercultural collaboration based on the cultural labels that are assumed and assigned to particular cultural groups. Bhabha (1994) emphasises that a deeper understanding of how to work across different cultures is the performative process of cultural communication through negotiation, where opportunity for translation and shared understandings evolve.

Conclusion: renewed tensions and building to greater outcomes

In this paper we have considered the reflective recounts of intercultural collaboration from the perspective of one non-Indigenous person working in an intercultural context. Hohnen's reflective recounts enable an opportunity to imagine the wonder, awe and potentially of

working in such a partnership that offers different and unique ways of being in the world. Motivated by a desire to explore possibilities for embedding *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures* into Content Descriptions from the AC:E, we drew on postcolonial theory to analyse how difference is enacted, performed and negotiated within sites of intercultural interactions and collaboration. We found this theory provided a critical consideration of the differences between social and cultural beings, a deepened insight that challenges the mindset and potentially supports non-Indigenous people in the social level of reconciliation. This realisation brings us to a new and not yet resolved tension: we are cognisant that this focus on reconciliation seeks to support and strengthen the understanding of non-Indigenous peoples. This heightened understanding, ironically, carries potential to further contribute to the social dominance of non-Indigenous peoples. We, thus, maintain concern for and focus on situations where non-Indigenous peoples (unfortunately) dominate. We also hold some hope that an increased awareness of the underlying power dynamics within sites of intercultural collaboration has potential to support critical reflection and reconsideration of actions. In all, this paper serves as evidence of the evolving depth and breadth of disciplinary knowledge for English teachers implementing the current AC:E.

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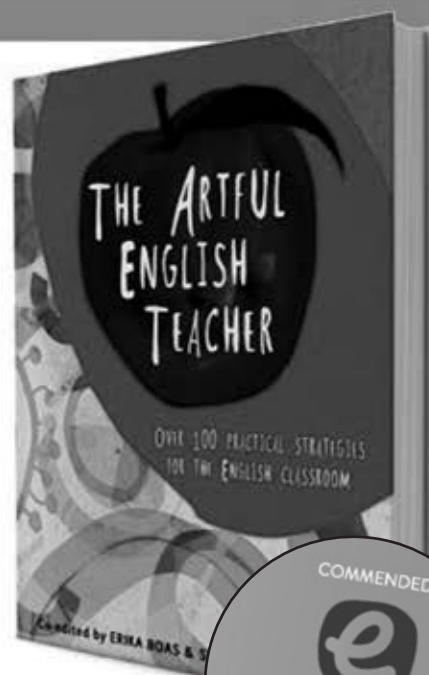
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Metacognition in the English Classroom: Reflections of Middle Years Teachers Navigating the Australian Curriculum: English

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Abstract: This article investigates the perceptions and lived experience of practising middle years' and pre-service teachers of English in their efforts to make sense of, and use metacognition. The investigation focuses on metacognition as a means to enhance student learning by fostering self-awareness of their students' thinking as they engage in reading, writing and problem solving in English classrooms. Metacognition is considered an essential cognitive process for successful learning; however, to explain metacognition using a reductionist approach does little to enable teachers to fully integrate this important concept into their pedagogical practices. In this small study, participants reported on their prior knowledge and understandings of metacognition, citing their source of this knowledge, and understandings of metacognition, and whether the Australian Curriculum informed and guided their understandings about metacognition. They also reflected on their experience and efforts to interpret their understandings and how they embed, or might embed metacognition into their classroom practice.

Introduction

Four decades ago, Flavell (1976) first coined the term 'metacognition.' Today, *metacognition* is considered a key skill in preparing young people to navigate life in the 21st century. Theoretically, strong links exist between critical thinking, creative thinking and metacognition. In the Australian Curriculum, critical and creative thinking are given prominence in the General Capabilities, a key dimension incorporating knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that, together with curriculum content and the cross-curriculum priorities, will assist students to function successfully in the 21st century. However, the extent to which these skills are taught and assessed in Australian schools is unknown, and further complicated by some unhelpful rhetoric suggesting that young people 'cannot think' (Collins, 2014).

In today's English classrooms, efforts to promote critical thinking by questioning texts, for example, how audience and purpose, language choice and impact on the reader/listener, are commonplace. Yet, how often are learners invited to question their thinking, or reflect on their learning? The Australian Curriculum: English, supported by the General Capabilities, provides opportunities for students to develop the skills, knowledge and attributes required for the 21st century, therein presenting an ongoing challenge for both the curriculum and teachers (Masters, 2015). Teaching critical and creative thinking involves students thinking broadly and deeply, using skills, behaviours and dispositions that need to be explicitly and simultaneously developed. The successful employment of these essential thinking skills requires deliberate skill development including opportunities for students to enact self-awareness, self-knowledge and self-understanding.

Metacognition is at the centre of the learning process (Hacker, 2009). Students become 'aware of their own thinking as they read, write, and solve problems' and teachers enable this awareness by 'informing students about effective problem-solving strategies and discussing cognitive and motivation characteristics of thinking' (Paris & Winograd, 1990, p. 15). Metacognition includes both the awareness of our knowledge, what we do and do not know, and how we regulate our knowledge through planning, controlling and monitoring our cognitive processes (Baker & Brown, 1984; Tarricone, 2011). Self-awareness enables learners to gauge when, where and how they use strategies for learning and complex problem solving, the employment of critical reflection and evaluation of their learning, to modify strategy use as needed (Flavell, 1979, 1985; Tarricone, 2011; Zimmerman, 2008). Understanding how metacognitive awareness and behaviours assist in the learning process has the capacity to empower students within and beyond the classroom.

The authors performed a search of the following terms: metacognition, reflection, critical thinking in the Australian Curriculum: English. A search for the term *metacognition* produced a nil response. As expected, the search produced a listing under the General Capabilities for *critical* and *creative thinking*. Although *metacognition* is not cited in the Australian Curriculum: English, the document provides opportunities for teaching metacognitive awareness. For example, as reiterated in the Review of the Australian Curriculum (2014), students are required to demonstrate *general capabilities*, that is, the ability to 'develop a range of generic skills such as the ability to think flexibly, to communicate well and work collaboratively with others' and the 'capacity to think creatively and innovate, to problem solve and to engage with new subject disciplines' (p. 66). To be proficient in critical thinking requires that students develop a 'deep understanding of domain knowledge' (p. 26). In the Australian Curriculum: English, students need a wide and adaptive set of knowledge, understanding and skills to achieve educational standards (National Curriculum Board, 2009, p. 6). Reflecting on decades of research, one proven way of achieving this outcome is to give students the understanding, knowledge and tools to regulate their cognitive processes by teaching them about their metacognitive behaviours and skills.

As this study suggests, English teachers may pay little attention to teaching metacognitive strategies,

possibly due to not having the necessary knowledge to implement learning that engages students in metacognitive awareness. The teacher participants acknowledged they possess some theoretical understanding of metacognition, usually derived from university courses, professional reading, personal research, teaching experience and observation. However, deep understanding about metacognition as a cognitive process can be undermined by simplistic representations in the literature such as 'thinking about thinking', and unawareness that these skills can be explicitly taught and learned (Wilson, 2014) with minimal effort.

Defining metacognition

In recent years, metacognition has gained attention in the fields of neuroscience, psychology and education, distinguished by efforts to link theory and practice. Due to the multi-disciplined and sometimes poor approaches to research, authors have struggled with metacognition, describing it as 'complex', 'lacking coherence', 'vague' and 'fuzzy' (Hacker, 2009; Tarricone, 2011; Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters & Afflerbach, 2006). Ever since John Flavell's (1979) decision to ascribe the label of *metacognition* to this cognitive process; efforts to define metacognition have been problematic. For example, Brown (1987) contended that the term *metacognition* is inadequate and confusing, and identified two problems:

it is difficult to distinguish between what is meta and what is cognitive; and there are many different historical roots from which this area of inquiry developed. The confusion that follows the use of a single term for a multifaceted problem is the inevitable outcome of mixing metaphors. (p. 66)

Brown's redefinition of metacognition has since influenced the role of metacognition in reading instruction (Griffith & Ruan, 2005; Roe & Smith, 2012).

At this point, we recognise Michael Pressley's contribution to *strategies research*, a field marked by significant conceptualisations and re-conceptualisations about the nature, development, and teaching of cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Harris, Alexander & Graham, 2008). While Pressley gave definition to these concepts, he is widely recognised for the construction of characteristics of effective strategies-based instruction that has influenced reading instruction in the USA. Unlike the USA, Australia has not endorsed strategies-based instruction in the teaching of reading. Instead, the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999) has

been the most influential in recent decades, and the most predominantly adopted by curriculum writers and researchers. The Four Resources model recognises that competent readers draw on a repertoire of practices (resources), simultaneously, rather than being served up a battery of techniques (strategies) without any knowledge of how they combine to produce meaning.

Of interest to this study is Pressley's (2005) observation about teachers' metacognitive awareness about their students:

engaging, effective teachers have a lot of metacognition about their students, and they use their understandings of the students and the curricular options every single minute of every single hour of every instructional day to make instructional decisions about their students. (p. 407)

Pressley concludes: 'we very much need to study carefully such metacognition, how it does develop, and how teachers can become committed to teaching in ways that serve children as well as they increase young teachers' understandings of their students' (p. 407).

Situating metacognition in education

In education, it is not uncommon to read a reductionist approach when defining metacognition as a cognitive process; invariably, authors are inclined to employ a simplistic and rudimentary definition such as 'thinking about thinking' (Bannister-Tyrrell, 2013; Tarricone, 2011). Applying simplistic definitions to define metacognition serves not only undermines the concept but reduces opportunities for educators to maximise important learning opportunities for their students. Over time, 'traditions of research inquiry' (Veenman, et al., 2006, p. 5) associated with metacognition have produced many models. This small study draws on a model, designed by Tarricone (2011), an Australian academic, which synthesises a rich and diverse field of theories and research pertinent to education.

Drawing on extensive research from cognitive, developmental and educational psychology, Tarricone (2011) developed a model featuring an interactive and non-hierarchical taxonomy that works well for education. This model represents metacognition as two core-components (see Figure 1) as originally outlined by Flavell (1976) and Brown (1978). The first core-component is 'knowledge of cognition' (KoC), sometimes also represented in other models as 'metacognitive knowledge' and involves *knowing about* one's own cognitive processes. The second core-component is 'regulation of

cognition' (RoC) or metacognitive regulation, which involves the purposeful *use* of one's own cognitive processes (Brown, 1978; Dunlosky & Metcalf, 2009).

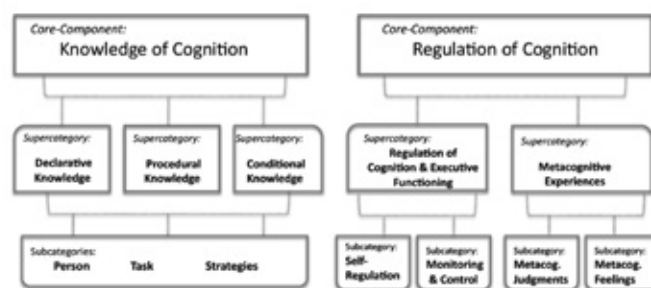


Figure 1. Adaptation of Tarricone's subcomponents, categories, supercategories, subcategories and key elements of metacognition as presented in the conceptual framework.

Knowledge of cognition

Knowledge of cognition includes three supercategories. First, *declarative knowledge*, that is, being aware of what we do and do not know. This information is stable but unreliable as our perceptions of our abilities can be false. Second, *procedural knowledge*, that is, knowing how to do things, the strategies and skills needed to successfully complete a task. And finally, *conditional knowledge*, that is, knowing when, where and why to use declarative and procedural knowledge.

Impacting on declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge are what Flavell (1979) called *knowledge variables* of 'person', 'task' and 'strategies'. The first variable, *knowledge of person* includes our cognitive knowledge of our self and others, in other words, our 'beliefs and intuitions, understandings, misunderstandings, perceptions and conceptions regarding abilities, properties and processes of oneself and others' (p. 158). Pintrich (2002) explained how these skills help and hinder students' facilitating their own learning:

If for example a student realises that she does not know very much about a particular topic, she might pay more attention to the topic while reading and use different strategies to make sure she understands the topic being studied ... Students who lack knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses will be less likely to adapt to different situations and regulate their own learning in them. (p. 6)

Knowledge of tasks, the second variable, includes our understandings about the demands and context of a task and our sensitivity to the requirements and objectives of the task. Finally, *knowledge of strategies* includes the application and initiation of appropriate strategies

as necessary, which is influenced by our declarative and procedural knowledge and self-regulation. At this point, it is important to clarify that the two core-components do not exist in isolation to each other as Figure 1 might suggest; instead they are reliant upon and constantly interacting on and with each other.

Regulation of cognition

The second core-component of metacognition, also known as *metacognitive control* or Regulation of Cognition (RoC) (see Figure 1), involves the monitoring, regulating and control of our cognition and learning; in contrast to KoC, RoC is the actual use of these strategies. RoC is comprised of monitoring and controlling our cognition, self-regulation and is impacted on by our feelings and judgements of our metacognitive experiences. These are not the same as our 'affective' feelings; instead our metacognitive understandings of our performance and previous experiences are influenced by the complexity of a task, personal factors such as self-concept and our metacognitive knowledge (Tarricone, 2011). Self-regulation is an important and expanding field of research in its own right. Although deemed 'an important sub-process of self-regulation,' metacognition has been found to be 'solely insufficient for successful self-regulation' (Tarricone, 2011, p. 169).

A brief overview of some of the complex, multi-dimensional and reciprocating factors involved in conceptualising metacognition demonstrates what the simplistic idiom of 'thinking about thinking' fails to grasp. Reductionist labels rob teachers of the necessary understandings that can inform pedagogical underpinnings and ways of integrating these essential understandings and life skills into daily teaching practice. Sensitive to these implications, this small study attempted to make sense of teachers' understandings about metacognition by giving voice to pre-service and practising middle years teachers of English, and how their understandings about metacognition play out, if at all, in their pedagogical practice.

Methodology

The aim of this study is to uncover the subjective experience of the individual. It subscribes to the school of hermeneutic phenomenology, which seeks to understand the meaning of experience by searching for themes, and engaging with the data, interpretively. In hermeneutic phenomenology, the analytical method is not formalised, so that the context

of the phenomenon itself determines how the data are analysed (Langdridge, 2007). From a researcher perspective, phenomenology as a methodology was chosen since it best described the experiences we wished to elicit from our study. It afforded us the best opportunity to 'give voice' to the experiences represented by the teachers in the context of the study.

Our teacher participants were invited to respond to an open-ended survey generated by a set of prompts. We read the predominantly unguarded and reflective accounts offered to us by our participants. We 'isolated' themes, also viewed as written interpretations of 'lived experience' (van Manen, 1997). In hermeneutic phenomenology, the goal is to examine the text, to reflect on the content to discover something 'telling', something 'meaningful', something 'thematic' (van Manen, 1997). Having identified 'phenomenal' themes, we reworked the theme/s deemed significant in interpreting the meaning of the phenomenon or 'lived experience.' As a method of analysis, hermeneutic phenomenology required the researchers to be mindful in identifying experiences (or 'isolating' themes) and knowing that we extracted genuine 'lived experience' and defined the meaning of an individual's (a teacher participant's) experience.

Participants

Twelve teachers participated in this small study: four secondary pre-service teachers and nine practising teachers including four secondary teachers and five primary teachers with between 10 to 30-plus years of teaching experience in English. The study was timely for our pre-service teachers enrolled in the last trimester of their degree. We wanted to know what these novice teachers understood by the concept 'metacognition' and if indeed, an understanding of metacognition may be tacit. We also wanted to know how, if at all, their university study and practical experience may have contributed to a body of knowledge and prepared them with the requisite skills for teaching cognitive and metacognitive strategies in the English classroom. Given the emphasis on *creative and critical thinking* identified in the *General Capabilities*, we wanted to know how our practising teachers were positioned for incorporating cognitive and metacognitive strategies into their teaching, and if, in fact, an understanding of metacognition is tacit, and the teaching of metacognitive strategies is intentional or tangential.

The following table provides data about our twelve participants.

Table 1. Participants' teaching experience and context

Participants	Secondary	Primary	Practising	Pre-service	Years Teaching	Qualifications
Female					27	BA Dip Ed Grad Dip Arts, M.Ed. Grad Cert G&T
Female					14	B/Teach, B/Arts, M.Ed, COGE
Female					6	BLang, BA (Hons), Grad. Dip. Ed., Grad.Dip.Hum. MTeach (Sec)
Female					0	Completing Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching
Female					0	Completing Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching
Male					0	Completing Master of Teaching (Secondary)
Female					0	Incomplete
Female					23	MA Curriculum Studies
Female					20	Ba Teaching (K-6), Ba Education (K-6, LOTE major), Grad Cert Religious Education, Masters Education
Female					9	B Teach/ B Arts (Hons.); MEd
Female					30+	Dip Ed- Teaching – Primary- Grad Dip
Female					25	Diploma of Teaching (Primary) Grad Cert in Gifted and Talented Education; Masters of Research

Findings

Here we provide examples of experiences or themes located in the data.

Conceptualising metacognition

Only a third of the participants expressed their understanding of metacognition as 'thinking about thinking'. This is a positive finding since the literature often promotes metacognition in this way. Only one practising teacher explained metacognition as 'thinking about thinking'; however, she mediated this with 'knowing what you do know – what you think and how you learn'. What was surprising was that most pre-service teachers defined metacognition in this way, casting doubt about currency of understandings about metacognition.

Practitioner responses reflected a considered understanding about metacognitive awareness in relation to learning and cognitive processes, such as knowing when to invoke *strategies* in 'planning how to approach a task, for learning and problem solving' which 'may also involve self-assessment of personal achievement and progress'. This same participant clarified that metacognition is simply not 'a set of processes that students become aware of and accustomed to following when faced with a learning challenge', arguing that metacognition is also a 'momentary awareness when [students] make a connection between subjects or apparently disparate pieces of information. This is that moment of 'wonder' or 'connection' that becomes 'remembered because of the feeling that is associated with cognition'.

Another participant flagged the function of *higher-order thinking* and *reflection* in demonstrating meta-cognitive awareness: 'students engage in planning, monitoring, evaluating and reflecting upon the whole learning process, rather than just completing a task'. A pre-service teacher offered a thoughtful and more nuanced interpretation of metacognition as a 'framework and discourse of thinking about thinking'. She illuminated:

I say 'framework' because thinking-about-thinking is not something we necessarily do naturally, or every day: therefore to introduce the notion, I use the idea of a 'framework.' That is, understanding and analysing how we came to know or understand a certain thing, and why we respond to it in particular ways.

However, the closest explanation to current understandings about metacognition came from a primary teacher undertaking a post-graduate degree. She defined metacognition as 'an individual's understanding and knowledge of their own cognitive processes and their ability to monitor and control these processes by planning how to approach a given task, monitoring their comprehension, and evaluating their progress toward task completion'.

Situating metacognition in the Australian Curriculum: English

In general, teachers agreed that the Australian Curriculum: English provides openings for teaching metacognition. For example, the secondary teachers reported that the English Curriculum is 'very broad

and open', affording teachers multiple opportunities for metacognition to:

be built into student learning with respect to the seven *capabilities* in the curriculum and the conceptual focus of the English syllabus. The breadth of the curriculum and syllabus invite reflective thinking in light of the critical and creative thinking ... but pedagogically, it is how we [enact] it ...

A scan performed by one participant of outcomes and verbs such as *evaluate*, *refine*, *hypothesise* revealed openings for high order thinking processing, although the corollary is that 'some teachers will just see the dot points within the content as "tick boxes" and just work through them at a consistent pace'. This participant refuted such an approach: '... in order for students to engage in higher order skills and in the methods in which they learn, they need to be taught using a variety of *strategies*'.

Most teachers in this study acknowledged the emphasis on *reflection* and *self-reflection* in the English Curriculum, equating the same with metacognition. For example, one primary teacher identified metacognition through the outcomes focused on the *reflection* of learning: 'E. learn and reflect on their learning through their study of English – ENe-12E, EN1-12E, EN2-12E, EN3-12E'. A secondary teacher welcomed the emphasis on *self-reflection* arguing that past approaches to metacognition such as 'the write your thoughts on a sheet and hand it in' are 'contrived and fail to plumb the thinking and self-understanding of how the individual student has used their learning'. This same teacher added, thoughtfully: '... I find questioning and hearing other students talk does create reflection and thoughtfulness – a tenuous but beginning cognisance in each other about how people learn.' By contrast, one participant argued that more importance was placed on thinking skills, citing AUSVELS. 'I can see why Victoria does not want to totally relinquish their state curriculum. ... ACARA seems to be more focused on the Problem Solving side of thinking, rather than the self-actualisation of metacognitive thinking'.

The pre-service teachers in this study equivocated in their reporting of the place of metacognition in the Australian Curriculum; the essence of their knowing, however, has relevance for future curriculum development and the pedagogical needs of early career teachers as will be discussed further. The following account is representative of the small sample, and constitutes expected data:

My encounters with ACARA do not leave me with the impression that metacognition is essential learning for all students. On practicum placement, I do not think that I have ever heard a teacher explicitly address metacognition in the classroom. Many proficient teachers do this naturally, without thinking about it; however, beginning teachers and less capable teachers may fail to implement metacognitive awareness and learning in their classrooms if the English Curriculum – does not effectively mandate it.

Another participant's more pragmatic approach is consistent with the above: 'the curriculum needs to set out *what* students have to study and leave the *how* students study to teachers to regulate. I think metacognition is related more to how teachers teach rather than the content'. As well, one primary teacher, having scanned the relevant documents, voiced discontent about the lack of an overt focus on metacognition in the syllabus, reflecting similar attitudes by other participants.

There is little direct reference to metacognition in the syllabus where the scope and sequence of teaching/learning lies. It is mentioned in the General Capabilities area under *Critical and Creative Thinking* but is only found when delving deeper into this link. It receives only a brief mention in the initial overview. Very few teachers would have knowledge of where it lies in the syllabus and its implications for programming and planning. If it were given greater emphasis, or perhaps integrated into the core of the syllabus there would be greater understanding and acknowledgement of its impact on improved outcomes for students and may be considered to a greater degree when teachers program.

Engaging students in metacognitive skills and practices

Practising teachers self-reported teaching metacognitive skills to their students. Nevertheless, few claimed that they teach metacognitive skills explicitly. For example, a secondary teacher wrote: 'reflecting on exams or feedback, but not explicitly otherwise'. Similarly, another wrote:

Yes but not explicitly. Metacognitive skills form part of the room, the learning environment ... students providing critical reflection to each other, through informal discussion, through reflecting on learning in portfolios and setting personal goals for areas to work on.

One participant affirmed having 'done [metacognition] for years' observing that students achieve 'maturing metacognition' by 'adjusting their learning pattern or approach to challenges'. In this account, the teacher

Table 2. Overview of the strategies highlighted by participants for teaching metacognition across the literacy modes of speaking and listening, reading and viewing, writing and composing.

Speaking and Listening	Reading and Viewing	Writing and Composing
Teacher-directed self-reflection e.g. open articulation of students' thoughts and ideas	Questioning techniques challenge students to think about a text using a multiple perspective (critical literacy)	Questionnaires. Explore audio, visual or kinaesthetic learning. Note-taking using different learning styles (any of the above)
Formal speeches. Critical feedback invited verbally and written on a reflection sheet (teacher & students)	Reciprocal reading. Using small groups to promote reading comprehension.	Portfolios. Setting personal goals and enabling reflection on learning for improvement
Structures foster student to student discourse e.g. Socratic Circles, Four Corners (students select a point of view & support it		Empathetic, creative and reflective writing tasks aligned to Readers' Response.
Teacher led discussions and brainstorming		Exposition texts. Using right of reply activities Journaling: non- specific format
Teacher recording groups to observe engagement: students reflect on behaviours and what they are doing		End of unit checklist – check a box/complete a questionnaire
Teacher-questioning student thinking about their learning.		
Teacher demonstrates verbalising thoughts and reasoning aloud		
Student-led conferences for parents. Focus on areas on strength and improvement.		
Student-led debates		

theorises that metacognition can be developed in students 'if done early and with students who possess some degree of self-awareness. Perhaps self-awareness is the prerequisite. I suspect that students of higher ability tend to be more metacognitive at an earlier age and are more excited about it'. Another practitioner admitted to not having taught metacognition in 'any planned or systematic manner' but 'routinely provided students with opportunities to transfer knowledge to new concepts and reflect on their decisions and processes critically'. These responses demonstrate a deeper understanding of the multidimensionality of metacognition.

The pre-service teachers' accounts were somewhat apologetic about the teaching of metacognitive skills. 'Metacognition, I confess, has been lower on the list of my priorities, or perhaps I am just not capable enough yet, or have not had enough sustained time in the classroom'. Some acknowledged having cognisance of teaching metacognition, citing questioning techniques and questionnaires.

Table 2 overviews the strategies participants used to promote metacognition in their classrooms. What

is most interesting about this data is the one mode in which metacognitive research has been prolific, that is, reading which is not reflected in these data. How might this information be communicated with teachers?

Discussion

Responses from these twelve middle school teachers uncover an innate understanding of what metacognition is. The nature and depth of their understandings diminishes the perceived need for simplistic or reductionist approaches, frequently represented in the literature, to this important cognitive function. The building blocks of metacognition such as critical reflection, self-knowledge and self-awareness, problem solving and connections with prior knowledge were identified across most participant responses. Pedagogical approaches embraced by the practising teachers reflected an understanding of the importance of metacognition for student learning; however, as Table 2 highlights, there are many metacognitive skills and processes that either have not been identified as metacognitive by these practising teachers, or the scope of what might be included is unknown.

The practising teachers in this study were keenly aware of what does and does not constitute 'metacognitive' activity in their classrooms, for example, tabulated sheet forms as reflection activities:

It just becomes a meaningless fill in that most students give little genuine thought to, and it isn't something that becomes a shared understanding of how each student thinks or approaches their learning ... what is written is often limited or too 'scaffolded' to make it a truly genuine insight into the students' understanding of how their processes of learning ... and how consciously these have been utilised. Students just don't give these reflections that much consideration, which pretty well negates the metacognitive development we want to hear and see.

Approaching metacognitive practices as a worksheet, or one-off activity, is going to have little impact on promoting deep learning as this participant highlights. Including verbal and written questions that allow students to focus on their own self-awareness, and how these are similar or different to their peers and others, will promote KoC and more specifically knowledge of self and others. Through carefully designed questions focused on KoC, we can assist students to identify their own self-knowledge and self-awareness and encourage self-appraisal of their cognition, helping them to identify what they do and do not yet understand about the content presented. Powerful ways to promote metacognitive behaviours in the English classroom include 'think-alouds' (Baker, 2005; Israel, 2007; Hacker, 2009). This is where the teacher models self-talk and self-questioning for students, articulating the problem solving process, such as identifying an issue and the steps required to finding a solution. Teacher think-alouds also work well for demonstrating how to complete a task, the importance of remembering current understandings and transference of knowledge.

At the heart of metacognition is critical reflection and critical thinking (Tarricone, 2011). Evidence-based research suggests that providing students with opportunities to grapple with higher order concepts using the above-mentioned strategies has the potential to promote metacognitive skills and strategies. Scaffolded problem-solving opportunities, for example, will allow for the development of metacognitive skills and understandings as well as effective ways to learn how to think critically. Critical thinking employs reasoning to control and monitor inferences; however, critical thinking is not necessarily metacognitive unless purposeful and deliberate reflection is undertaken

(Tarricone, 2011), and also requires internal (or external) dialogue to critique prior knowledge and to situate new knowledge. Opportunities for collaborative discussion where individual beliefs, judgements and understandings are respectfully shared represent powerful opportunities for metacognitive growth. In this, the skill of the teacher cannot be underestimated in providing a safe learning environment for a diverse range of students. Small groups where students feel safe to discuss their thinking with peers can avoid full-class discussions that might be dominated by one or two stronger personalities. Although teachers do not always feel comfortable working with learning journals, they are considered effective tools for giving every student a voice and opportunity to reflect critically and deeply on their learning, as well as a safe place to disagree with others. Learning journals can take many forms such as blogs, e-tools, mind mapping, sketching and other free choice tools that afford students space for personal creative expression and reflexive thinking opportunities.

Conclusion

As Masters (2015) observes, a curriculum that prepares students with the 'knowledge and skills required for life and work beyond school' (online) must consider important skills beyond content knowledge. While education systems buy into high stakes testing regimes designed to test content knowledge rather than harness skills such as critical and creative thinking and team-based problem solving and reflective practice, teachers will be obligated to focus on content-driven curricula. The Australian Curriculum: English is well placed to assist our students in becoming thoughtful 21st citizens. By focusing on critical and creative thinking and, in particular, critical reflection, teachers might move beyond reductionist understandings of metacognition and enable students to use and develop this essential cognitive function in the process of becoming 'agents of their own thinking' rather than victims of manipulation (Hacker, 2009, p. 20).

At the heart of teaching is the process of assisting students to make connections with prior understandings, identifying what we know and do not know, and planning how to meet task goals. These strategies and skills are metacognitive; therefore, metacognition might be considered the engine room of learning. However, according to this study, teaching metacognition does not assume a 'high priority', which is a disconcerting finding in light of Hattie's research

claiming *metacognition* as one of 20 influences on effective student learning and achievement (DEECD, 2010, p. 2). While it appears that proficient and experienced teachers will teach, either intentionally or unintentionally, using metacognition, it is uncertain that early career teachers, for example, may implement metacognitive awareness and learning in their classrooms if the English Curriculum does not mandate it, and as such, will need scaffolding of their own learning.

In the main, developing effective teaching pedagogies requires 'a vocabulary to describe aspects of thinking that we believe to be teachable' (Moseley, et al., 2005, p. 8). With the promise of adaptive pedagogies informed by continued research in psychology and neuroscience, and imbued with an abundance of resources, teachers of English can confidently mine opportunities to promote metacognitive behaviours in their students, with minimal shifts in their teaching practice.

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& READING VIEWING

with Deb McPherson

I've been thinking lately about what a good review can offer readers, especially teachers who have so many demands on their time and limited opportunity to read the huge range of new texts available for their students in the classroom. Reviews can give a pointer to teachers about some texts that merit their attention. Obviously, an opinion is called for – what is the appeal of this text and to whom may it appeal? I won't waste your time on texts if I don't think they will engage some of your students in the classroom. I can't recommend texts which haven't engaged me too, at some level. A brief idea of what happens, the style of writing or designing and the impact of the text written or created and perhaps some ideas on how it might be used in the classroom. With a much greater focus in classrooms today on student choice and voice about what they read and view it's important to have a range of texts to capture their interests and enthusiasm. Not all these texts will work with all students, but there will be readers, and reluctant and disengaged ones as well, who will find something here that speaks to them.

For a change, I'm starting with texts for students in Year 11. Teachers in NSW have a new Stage 6 English syllabus to implement in 2018/19 and it should prove a catalyst for much more wide reading and viewing in the senior years.

Fiction for Year 11

It's no coincidence that the first three reviews in my column have dystopian themes in common. There has been an explosion in speculative, futuristic texts over the last few years. Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale* has been successfully adapted for television. Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has reappeared in the bestseller lists nearly 70 years after it was published (President Trump helped) and is also being performed on the stage. Students are drawn to the dystopian genre as they are understandably interested in what the world could be like in their future. Literature can certainly

help in that exploration.

In an article 'Dystopia is Realism: The Future Is Here if You Look Closely' Christopher Brown said:

The greatest potential of dystopian realism—a speculative fiction that reports ugly truths about the human society we live in—is to discover its real alternatives. The imagination of better tomorrows is a project our politics seems to have largely abandoned. Maybe rigorous literary examinations can discover other possibilities, through the safe laboratory of the novel.

Encouraging students to read and view widely in this genre can have very positive results. Posing tasks such as 'write/create a description of a better tomorrow in any medium' can enable them to use the texts they have read and viewed as research points to compose a description of a future world that is better than the one they currently inhabit.

Teachers interested in constructing a wide reading unit could access *Electric Lit Dystopian* fiction which contains a brief history which could be used as an introduction to such a unit: <https://electriclitliterature.com/the-rise-of-dystopian-fiction-from-soviet-dissidents-to-70s-paranoia-to-murakami-a73b945c5d37>

Exit West Mohsin Hamid (2017)
Hamish Hamilton 229 pp.

Two young people find each other and fall in love in a city on the edge of war. Saeed and Nadia live precariously as their city falls deeper into bombings, checkpoints and martial law. She rides a motor bike, lives alone and wears a flowing black robe. He lives with his family, is reasonably devout and worries about leaving his city. But leave they must and the reader discovers that surrealism can be seamlessly part of a realistic novel. Ordinary looking doors are revealed as



portals to other places and countries. Nadia and Saeed travel to Mykonos and Germany, to London and to the US as they use the doors to move randomly across the world. They become adept at adapting to new places as refugees must, and while they find their relationship changing they still try to keep communicating and loving in difficult and challenging situations.

This fable-like novel has a clear simplicity that is deeply moving. While violence is portrayed and there are scenes of brutality and menace, there are moments of kindness and hope as well. Brexit and Trump echoes occur as homelessness and the fabric of normal life is torn. But the reader can also see decency and courage in the lives of Nadia and Saeed, even as they move apart.

Exit West was shortlisted for the 2017 Booker Prize and its elegant prose, accessibility and prescience are remarkable. As Sophie Gilbert points out Hamid doesn't so much put a human face on refugees as put 'a refugee face on all of humankind' because in the future we may all become migrants. This novel will engage and enthrall Year 11 readers. I can't recommend it too highly.

***Landscape with Invisible Hand* M.T. Anderson (2017)**
Candlewick Press 149 pp.



M.T. Anderson of *Feed* fame has delivered a very different tale of invasion by aliens, from the usual flood of dystopian texts, and this one has a great deal of dry, satirical humour as well. No force, no bloodthirsty battles are involved and yet Earth has surrendered to the most subtle of foreign takeovers and is paying for the privilege. It won't take long for students to read this novella and yet it is a demanding read in some ways. The vuvv have taken over earth peacefully by exchanging their advanced technology and medical science for a place on the earth. The problem is that an economic invasion has just the same force as a military one and humans are out of jobs and desperate to earn a living. One way they can is to supply the vuvv with what they love most – 1950s earth culture, including romantic clichés to be delivered by broadcasting true

love scenarios. But for artist Adam, and his girlfriend Chloe, things get complicated when they really start to dislike each other and the vuvv suspect that their true love emotions are no longer authentic and demand financial restitution on their contract. Adam has other complications apart from his loathing of Chloe – he suffers from debilitating IBD (while lacking the money to buy a cure from the vuvv) and that can make for some challenging situations. He also has the dilemma of whether to deliver the artwork that the vuvv desire or to stay true to himself and the sort of art he really wants to create.

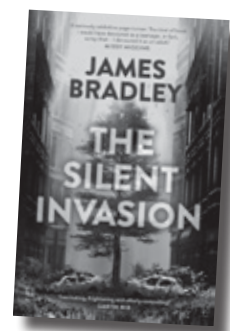
This novel provides a timely contrast with some of the formulaic dystopian texts and really lets students investigate a very different future. Anderson launches attacks on pitiless market economics, facile art and human greed and privilege, while he also portrays what happens to creativity and thought in such a world. This novella would be a valuable part of a wide reading unit on dystopias.

***The Silent Invasion* James Bradley (2017)**
Pan Macmillan 288 pp.

As Book I of the *Changes* trilogy, *The Silent Invasion* also takes a different approach to a dystopian future, although there are not many laughs in this tense and gripping thriller.

In 2027 Australia is divided into quarantine zones and safe zones. Alien spores appear to be changing living creatures – people, plants and animals. Changed creatures favour tropical areas and humanity, under martial law, has retreated to the colder parts of the continent. If a human is infected they begin to exhibit a slight phosphorescence and it is then that authorities seize them and take them away to an unknown fate.

Callie Achebe is the narrator. She is only sixteen and still mourning the death of her father when she notices Gracie, her younger half-sister, showing signs of changing. Callie decides to run away with her to the north, to the Exclusion Zone beyond the quarantine wall to where Gracie would be accepted. It's a difficult dangerous journey, shared with Matt, whom they meet on the road, who also wants to go north. Drones patrol the area near the wall and vicious hunters pursue Callie, Gracie and Matt. There is violence, assault and animal abuse and cruelty. Callie proves to be a resilient and resourceful character, but when Gracie



is finally delivered to the north her change is nearly complete and her indifference to Callie is devastating. The ending is intriguing and does make me look out for Book Two. While there are some plot contrivances this novel suggests greater depth to come. It could form part of a wide reading unit into dystopian fiction.

James Bradley is well known for his novel, *Wrack*, and other adult fiction and *The Silent Invasion* is his first work for a YA audience.

New Boy Tracy Chevalier (2017)
Hogarth Press 188 pp.



This novel is another in the intriguing series of retellings of Shakespeare's work by Hogarth Press such as Margaret Atwood's brilliant recasting of *The Tempest* in *Hag-Seed*. Chevalier takes the drama of *Othello* and transports it to a primary school in Washington DC in the 1970s towards the end of the school year. Osei Kokote, the son of a Ghanaian diplomat is the new boy at the school and the events of the story take place in a single day. At the school are Ian, the school bully channelling Iago, Dee, the school beauty, the unpleasant and racist teacher, Mr Brabant, malleable Rod and the undervalued Millie. The famous handkerchief becomes a strawberry pencil case with (as expected) disastrous results.

While this reworking is not as sophisticated or successful as Atwood's *Hag-Seed* it does allow a clear examination of the role and difficulties of the outsider, and the compression of the action into a single day lends an urgency and believability to the story. The quick turnabout of emotions and events from morning recess to after school propels the reader through the story. If your Year 11 class was studying *Othello*, *New Boy* would provide an interesting contrast.

Moonrise Sarah Crossan (2017)
Bloomsbury 383 pp.

Ed is on death row and Joe hasn't seen him in ten

years. Now the execution date has been set and Joe has headed to Texas to see his brother before he dies. Joe is full of anger and regret, and questions about what his brother did or did not do. The reader moves back and forward in time as Joe remembers his upbringing with a mother who didn't care about him but a sister and brother who did. His aunt steps in to help the children but refuses to help Ed after his arrest. When Joe is seven Ed tells him on the phone

They think I hurt someone.

But I didn't. You hear? ...

'Cos people are gonna be telling you all kinds of lies.

I need you to know the truth.

But Joe doesn't really know the truth behind Ed's arrest for a cop murder. Leaving behind a promising athletic career he visits Ed daily after setting up in Wakeling, Texas in a dingy hotel room and finally understands how Ed was convicted of a crime he did not commit. He links up with Nell, another difficult human being, and starts the agonising process of waiting to see if the appeal against the death penalty is successful.



Moonrise is a powerful novel about the denial of justice, about life on the poverty line and about siblings and the love that binds them together. It's also about forgiveness and it's another great novel from Sarah Crossan, who wrote *One*, about conjoined twins, the winner of the Carnegie Medal in 2016.

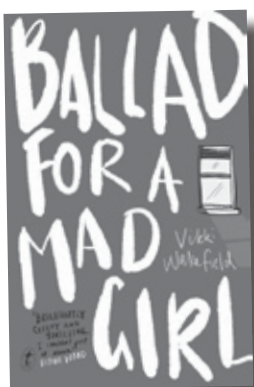
In an interview on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmLQATvDcP0> Sarah Crossan explains that verse novels appeal to her because:

you don't have to worry about all the in-between stuff in a story. You create these snapshots of people's lives like a series of photographs ... (whereas a conventional novel is more like a film) ... In a verse novel, readers are prepared to work harder to do a bit more work, but having said that it's an easier read because there is so much white space on the page.

I think she has really summed up why verse novels are such a wonderful form to explore in the classroom, especially with disengaged or reluctant readers. Just put *One, We Come Apart* (both reviewed in *English in Australia* 52.2) and *Moonrise* and together in the book box and watch the reading and discussion begin.

Fiction for Years 9 and 10

Ballad for a Mad Girl Vikki Wakefield (2017)
Text Publishing 309 pp.



Vikki Wakefield is one of the best Young Adult writers in Australia and she does not repeat herself and she does not disappoint. Each novel is distinctive and *Ballad for a Mad Girl* takes the reader into some dark places as she delivers an unsettling and edgy exploration of a twenty-year-old mystery bound up with a young woman's risky behaviour and the shadow of mental illness (or is that the breathe of the supernatural)?

Seventeen-year-old Grace is up for a challenge – any challenge – and some people think she is a bit mad. Her mother's death the previous year has forced the family into town and living in town does not suit her. In Swanston, the two high schools are fiercely competitive and Grace and her close circle of friends are out on an evening dare to cross a pipe high above a ravine. Many students are there to see the contest and the area is lit by car lights. Grace already holds the record and expects to defend it easily but she is unnerved by the discovery of the name of a missing girl scratched on the pipe. She is paralysed by the conviction that the car headlights have gone off and something is trying to push her off the pipe. Ignominiously rescued by a member of the other school, she finds her reputation sullied and her thoughts confused. She begins to feel she is being haunted or stalked. As she tries to find out what really happened to the missing Hannah Holt twenty years ago her friendships and family are sorely tested. Some hold and some fail. And the reader is pulled into an ambivalent situation where Grace's mental stability and sense of reality are juxtaposed against the possibility of a paranormal haunting.

This brilliantly plotted exploration of family and friendship is chilling and compelling in equal parts,

with a dazzling ending. Joining *Ballad for a Mad Girl* with *All I Ever Wanted* and *Inbetween Days* as an author study would give students quality literature to discuss and explore in the Year 10 (or Year 11) classroom.

Fiction for Years 7 and 8

Shaozhen Wai Chim 2017
Allen & Unwin 197 pp. and
Hotaka John Heffernan 2017
Allen & Unwin 204 pp.
Through My Eyes Natural Disaster Zones series



Both these novels provide an insight into the daily lives of young people in different cultures to our own. Both are framed by experiences in authentic natural disasters. For *Shaozhen* it is a lengthy drought in his remote Henen region in China, while for *Hotaka* it is in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami on the coast of Japan in 2011.

Life in a small village in China is hard for *Shaozhen*, especially when his mother joins his father away working in the regional city. There are many left-behinds in the village. As the water situation worsens amidst the worst drought in sixty years and the corn begins to die *Shaozhen* struggles to find a solution that will help his grandmother and his village survive.

For *Hotaka* the situation is very different. The novel opens with the devastating earthquake and tsunami that destroys most of his town, Omori-wan, and kills his grandfather and best friend. Three years later *Hotaka* finds it difficult to shake his feeling of depression and the area still shows the results of that terrible time. A sea wall is proposed and *Sakura*, a classmate, is passionately opposed to its construction. Together they

try to convince the townspeople that the money could be better spent on support for the people rather than walls that nature will tear down. John Heffernan spent a month in the affected by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami and effectively integrates details of Japanese belief and culture in his story.

With a strong story line and an authentic disaster setting, these novels offer an excellent introduction into life in China and Japan for students in your Year 7 or 8 classroom. Each has a language glossary and there are two other novels in the series; *Lyla* in New Zealand centred on the 2011 earthquake in Christchurch and *Angel* in the Philippines who is caught up in Cyclone Haiyan in 2013.

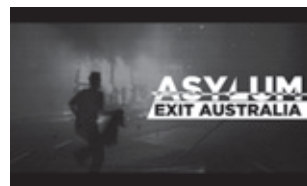
Multimodal and digital texts

Increasingly around Australia educational authorities are advocating that students respond to and compose complex multimodal and digital texts. A new senior English Syllabus in NSW has mandated the study of a multimodal text for the Standard English course in Year 11 from 2018. The following brief reviews highlight some excellent texts to explore. My grateful thanks to Rosemary Henzell, from Willoughby Girls High School in Sydney, who brought several of these texts to my attention. The first five texts below can be found on the SBS website Online Features and interactive storytelling at <http://www.sbs.com.au/features>.



Cronulla Riots is an SBS feature based around a documentary on the Cronulla riots that offers an interactive experience to explore the history, lead-up and consequences of the riots. You can watch the documentary, explore the themes and go deeper into the individual stories and background to the day that shocked Australia. There are nine chapters with interactive maps, reflections, interviews and video: <http://www.sbs.com.au/cronullariots/>

Exit Australia is a powerful interactive simulation from SBS based on the experiences of real asylum seekers, drawing on statistics and facts about the difficult journeys undertaken by refugees. Your challenge is to get



out of an Australia that has suddenly become hostile, and in which the lives of you and your family are threatened. It is a 'choose your own adventure' style interactive that explores Australia as a war zone. Your task is to survive. <http://www.sbs.com.au/features>



The Boat is a short interactive digital narrative that explores the journey of Vietnamese refugees. As a viewer, you sway with the boat's journey and suffer through the storm and piracy. The interactive graphic novel is an involving and emotional experience. The narrative is illustrated by Vietnamese-Australian artist Matt Huynh, whose parents fled Vietnam after the war. SBS has adapted the title short story from author Nan Le's award winning anthology. There are also excellent teaching activities available to download at the site including video clips with the artist and explorations of setting and character. <http://www.sbs.com.au/theboat/>



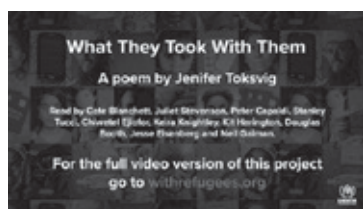
My Grandmother's Lingo is a shorter digital experience that teaches you several words of an endangered Indigenous language to highlight the issue of lost languages. <http://www.sbs.com.au/features>



K'gari (Fraser Island) is a ten minute interactive experience about a first 'fake story' as it retells the story of Eliza Fraser's time on the island from an Indigenous perspective. <http://www.sbs.com.au/features>

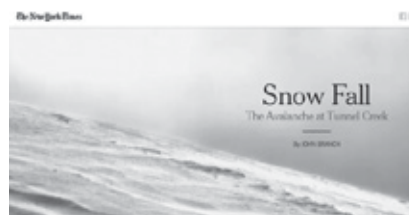


Kafka's Wound is a creative collaborative essay (<http://thespace.lrb.co.uk>). The *London Review of Books* wanted to create a digital library essay that pushed the boundaries of the essay. Will Self (Professor of Contemporary Thought at Brunel University) wrote the essay based on the text, *The Country Doctor* by Franz Kafka. Self challenged 70 other staff and students to be involved in digital responses ranging from music, animations, films, texts and multiple routes through the essay. (A longer review appeared in *English In Australia* Volume 51, No. 2 2016.)



What They Took With Them is a film based on a rhythmic poem entitled 'What They Took With Them' by Jenifer Toksvig. Jenifer was inspired by stories and first-hand testimonies from refugees forced to flee their homes and items they took with them. One of the sources for the poem was Brian Sokol's photography project, 'The Most Important Thing,' made in collaboration with UNHCR. Many of Brian's photos, along with first-hand accounts from the refugees he photographed, are featured in the film. (From UNHCR website) This film is a remarkable experience, a visual feast of Reader's Theatre as well known actors such as Cate Blanchett, recite lines from a poem that chronicles <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xS-Q2sgNjI8> (A longer review appeared in *English in Australia* Volume 52, No. 1 2017)

Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek is a New York Times journalism project that tells the story of the 2012 Tunnel Creek avalanche in the Cascade Mountains, USA. A blend of narrative with interactive elements, including video, survivor accounts, time-lapse maps and animations <http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall/#/?part=tunnel-creek>. (A longer review appeared in *English in Australia* Volume 51, No. 2 2016.)



Reference and professional development

The Artful English Teacher Erica Boas and Susan Gazis (eds) (2016), AATE 312 pp.

'Freshen up. Simplify. Look Again' was an injunction by Gareth Boomer to English teachers everywhere and this manual, edited by Erica Boas and Susan Gazis, lives up to that recommendation.

In the introduction Wayne Sawyer compares the teacher to a conductor. While what the conductor is doing appears simple on the surface (waving a stick around) it hides the ability to read and interpret all the musical parts at once, play and understand the capabilities of diverse musical instruments and to motivate and co-ordinate all the players' parts into a whole. Hidden as well is the teacher's ability to co-ordinate many kinds of knowledge and to move students forward in their understandings, joys and skills in English. So 'artful' works very well indeed as the description of the teacher.

The text is divided into the following sections: English Concepts, Fostering Collaboration, Learner Engagement, Differentiation, Gradual Release of Responsibility, Inquiry Approaches, Formative Feedback, Culminating Projects, Powerful Pedagogies, ICT & Digital Tools, Know Your Setting & Context, Community Engagement, Mentoring, Tips for Casual Teachers and the Role of Professional Associations.

This book offers some fresh approaches to English that can be taken up by early career teachers and experienced staff alike. It is subtitled '100 Practical Strategies for the English Classroom' and it comprehensively delivers on this promise. Practical teaching strategies form the backbone of the text. There are



terrific examples of ways to engage students through activating prior knowledge and providing opportunities for student voice and agency. Welcome letters, hot seating and joint writing can foster collaboration. In the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) chapter Daniel Howard illustrates how to move students from guided assistance to independence through a range of strategies linked to Fisher and Frey's instructional model (2008):

1. I do it – focus lesson
2. We do it – guided instruction
3. You do it together – collaborative
4. You do it alone – independent (p. 86)

His authentic examples are coded to this simple terminology:

1. I do – you watch
2. I do – you help
3. You do – I help
4. You do I watch

Erika Boas's chapter on developing an inquiry approach by framing the learning with essential questions is also very valuable. As a keen reader and viewer of the Dystopian genre I really liked her framing question for students: 'How can we work towards creating a perfect or better society?' She offers great suggestions for follow-up strategies to engage students in making connections between the texts they had chosen to explore. The end product for the students was to create their own dystopian (or utopian) texts in a range of mediums. This chapter is well matched by Kate Daly's Culminating Projects.

What is particularly satisfying about this text is the way the authentic voices of classroom teachers and their students resonate throughout it. There are so many strategies that readers will be spoilt for choice. Every faculty member will find inspiration and practical assistance in this wonderful text for English teachers everywhere. Every faculty should have one.

Until next time enjoy your reading and viewing experiences and I hope you find something in this column to inspire and enthuse your students.



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