

CHAPTER ONE

THE CHALLENGE TO WRITE: THE WARP, THE WEFT AND THE SPACE BETWEEN

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Abstract

Weaving, storytelling and writing share a long and parallel history. As a metaphor weaving suggests the active and complex layering of practices and products of writing in research and in education. Its strands represent the coming together of diverse identities, cultures and ways of knowing and understanding the world. At the points of intersection and in the spaces between those representations writers and readers generate new ways of understanding of what it is to be human, to learn, to teach and to discover and share knowledge. Through an interweaving of writings created by undergraduate pre-service teachers with the writings of researchers in education, this chapter and others in this text generate interconnecting narratives to consider how writing functions as a means of knowing, discovering and reflecting the world and the self, but also as a means by which we co-generate the world.

Introduction: The Warp, the weft and the space between

“Historically, woven artefacts have had a function way beyond the decorative; they have been channels for transmitting higher forms of knowledge” (Azadeh, Ramkalawon, & Simonsson, 2010, p. 47)

In this text, the writings of researcher-educators form the structuring warp: a series of theoretical strands across which the creative writings and reflections of pre-service educators create a counterbalancing and meaning-making weft. While the criss-crossing of warp and weft creates an impression of solidity, the threads remain separate. Thus, the fabric remains fluid, allowing the reader to make meaning through his or her interpretation of the narrative fibres, their intersections and the spaces between.

As an educator, my motivation in opening up a space for undergraduate pre-service teachers to create and share poetry, short stories and short plays was dual. With Teresa Cremin (nee Grainger) (Grainger, 2005), I share a concern that newly qualified teachers are embarking on careers where they ask students to become writers of poems, stories and plays, yet they themselves lack practice in the craft and art of writing across a range of literary forms (Cremin, 2006). Hence, I sought to challenge and stimulate pre-service teachers' reflexive thinking in and through writing through processes similar to those used in drama-in-education: "to develop the self as writer and through writing, and to open up a performative space" (Stephen & Muriel, 2013, p. 215) where social learning could support critical pedagogy. A further intent was that this experience would support undergraduates' learning. Becoming a writer would bring greater awareness of their own practices as teachers of writing. Using social and constructivist methods that reproduced and extended practices gained from my research in play-based and child-emergent curricula (Jones, 2011), my intent was that this experience would support undergraduates' learning through head, heart and hands, and that this in turn would inform their own practices of teaching. Alison Phipps and Lesley Saunders (2010) express that experience as

...inductive, intuitive, spiralling in approach, poetic methods - if we may speak of assembling words and the wide white spaces around them and using them in such a way as to create a 'how' - may provide a choreography, something of the spin and grace of dance (p.362)

In asking undergraduates to create and share their works, my pedagogical intent was to model a move away from the risk-averse approaches noted by British researchers Debra Myhill and Anthony Wilson in the teaching of writing in schools (2013, pp. 102-103), and the potentially limiting impact of 'playing safe'(p.101) upon learners' creativity. The authors report teachers' perceptions that writing poetry can be experimental and playful - an opportunity to break the rules of English

(2013, p.107), but also that powerful and skilled poetry is an expression of giftedness, rather than of deep learning, practice and craft. In Australia, principals (Cranston, Reid, Keating, & Mulford, 2011) have raised concerns that are consistent with those findings, with a need for schools to value and support pedagogical practices for the development of students' creativity and skills. Concerns have been raised by researchers in the United States (Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006; West, 2012) that students' experiences of the arts more broadly, and of creative thinking and practices in particular, are being limited by the pressure that accrues from high-stakes testing.

Shaping their ideas for expression through literary modes was a challenging experience for pre-service teachers, but they report the experience was also enjoyable and fulfilling. However, the process of pre-service teachers' becoming writers was subversive in its capacity to reveal hidden discourses of power, and to make transparent educators' perceptions of self and others as writers and readers. By engaging pre-service teachers in the "diverse writing strategies that account for other pedagogical and research practices...(as) ways to resist or confront, in order to subvert dominant practices in education" (Larrain, 2013, pp. 140-141), I sought to create a safe and respectful communal space for learning and research, where we could enact and share creative pedagogical practices. For Veronica Larrain (2013), context and culture are critical to narrative research. Similarly, the physical and virtual contexts and the culture within which undergraduates were encouraged to share, read and advise on enhancements for one-another's works were constructed to ensure a sense of intimacy, respect and safety. Sharing of works and feedback was optional, and several students who did not share or comment on others' work reported that they had gained in confidence and self-efficacy from the vicarious experience of watching peers and the tutor doing so. This finding is consistent with those of studies in language teacher education where a sense of safety in community and context are pivotal to the development cultural awareness (Lastrapes & Negishi, 2012, p. 41).

As tutor, I found the beauty of Miyuki Kruse's draft versions and the decisions she made as author in selecting some ideas and leaving out others fascinating. Her lengthy meditation on the challenge to write, and Miyuki's decision to write indirectly of her love of home and grandparents was affecting. As author, Miyuki's gentle acknowledgement of the overwhelming call to respond to her personal loss and deep love for her grandfather, was balanced by an understanding that for her as author, the time was not yet right to do so. This allowed her to write indirectly of her

love for her grandmother and of her home in a way that is illuminated with longing, thus indirectly voicing Miyuki's love for her grandfather.

Miyuki Kruse writes:

I created my first poem when I was about 6 or 7. As I enjoyed writing a poem in my native language, (Japanese), I wanted to see if I could fully express my emotion and at the same time enjoy the creative process in my second language in the same way.

Then I started to search the feeling and emotion in me to decide the topic. This process brought me a painful memory of loss of my grandfather who recently passed away. It was too emotional and too painful to dig deeper, so I had to stop thinking about my grandfather. I rested a few days to search for another topic; however the same memory, emotion, feeling and vision of my grandfather and his country kept popping up in my head...I could see, smell, feel, almost touch and hear as if I was standing right in the middle of the country. I still wanted to avoid my painful feeling, so I tried to ignore my pain and started to write down the positive memory and about my grandmother. At the end, I decide to hide my negative feelings and melancholy behind some lines to express my feelings honestly but indirectly. This made it more comfortable to share the piece with others.

First draft

Sound of the river
Singing of cicadas
Smell of the rice field

Steps of wooden floor
Slides of slippers
Smell of miso soup

Damp in the air
Dribble of the sweat
Drinking a glass of water

I feel alive

Cook, eat, rest,
Cook, eat, rest and
Cook, eat, rest

Here I live to live

There, flow of the time is
so simple

I want
to live to live

That is my dream

Time flow with the stream of the river

The sound, colour, smell remains the same
in the memory of my grandma's village

She waved me good-bye
on the door step

The posture of her brings me back the memory of
great grandma who lived 103 years.

Suddenly, the sound, colour are squeezed leaving me melancholy

Second draft

I call you
Are you there in present?

I feel you
~~as a spirits of~~
the spirits of ancestors
in the presence of the nature

I feel you in the wind
life a waving ~~silk~~ (soft silky scarf)
that slips out of my hands

I feel you on the land (in the soil)
Warm as the sun

I feel you standing here
on the land (hollow) of ancestors
with the history of
fear, happiness and peace

I feel you in me
reminder of you
cast off skin of cicadas
in the hollow

Final: 'Memory of my country'

I call you
the voice of love
responding in me

I hear you
the spirits of ancestors
echoing in the valley

I feel you
the wind like a soft silky scarf
slipping out of my hands

I smell you
the land of my people
plowing the rice field

I see you
the memory of my country
tightening my heart

Janice writes:

By giving feedback that responded positively to the intent of the writers, and by including tentative questions, my intent was to model the use of these approaches for teacher-writers. Student feedback to Miyuki Cruze on her poem combined powerfully affirmative and affective responses in line with that modelling, “Your poem is very powerful” with

specific reference to the importance for teaching and learning of the writer's poetic evocation through the senses. "Your use of alliteration (e.g. soft, silky, scarf) aides in soothing the reader - is this also a tool to soothe yourself, the poet? This poem also appeals to me as a Montessori teacher, as I'm sure you too may have seen the parallels? The Montessori philosophy focuses on developing the child's sensorial skills and your poem has appealed to all five senses".

Educator-writer-researchers Sheila Trahar (2013) and Anthony Wilson (2009, 2013) suggest that writing is contested territory, in terms of theory and practice. For pre-service teachers, their reflection in and upon the writing choices they made in creating literary works emerged as a way of transforming understandings of self and the world, as described by Trahar (2013).

The challenge to write

Writing is a complex and demanding process, and the challenges of what to write, and how to shape the raw materials of words into meaningful forms can be confronting even for experienced authors (Cremin & Myhill, 2012, p. 10). For undergraduate pre-service teachers, the space to create a poem, a story or a play was perceived differently from that given to academic writing. Miyuki reflects: "Freedom of choice can give the power to the writer to create a personally meaningful piece". While responding to academic tasks presents intellectual challenges, this apprenticeship in the rigours of writing for academic and professional purposes, as suggested by Lesley Saunders in her foreword to this text, gives way to other choices and challenges during an academic career. For teachers to support learners in advancing their understandings and skills in the craft of writing that takes literary forms, this suggests that they too need an understanding of, and an apprenticeship in the craft and art of writing. This is particularly important where self-reflexive writing has become a means for professional and personal development and also for undertaking and sharing research (Richardson, 2013; Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005).

The online environment allowed students to learn from personal feedback from course tutors, but also to use tutors' and peers' postings to guide one another in making choices about the style, form, voice and editing of texts. Rather than the highly structured approach of explicit teaching, a 'just in time' approach allowed contextual and individual teaching about the craft of writing: the use of speech in short stories, the

conventions governing scripts for theatre and film, ways of achieving consistency of voice in narrative pieces, and the merits and uses of different poetic forms. My hope was that participants in the course would transfer these communal, respectful, contextual and dialogic practices to their teaching of writing. As Chapter 10 indicates, however, institutional and professional habitus (Bourdieu, 1992; Maton, 2008) may present barriers to the transfer of personal knowledge and creative practices of writing into formal teaching contexts.

Literary forms, and particularly poetry as a framing device for telling the deeper narratives of human stories (McIntosh & Warren, 2013), elicited a powerful response from undergraduates. Engaging as adult writers with poetic forms brought a shift in thinking from that of teacher and students 'playing with language' (Myhill & Wilson, 2013, p. 107) to a wrestling with meaning, message, theme, voice, tone and symbol. Most authors chose to use rhyme and metre in spite of their awareness of the disciplines imposed by those forms. Without exception, pre-service teachers as authors strove to articulate the power and fragility of what it is to be human, as shown by works in Chapter 3, and to speak of the importance of love, family and the land as shown by their works in Chapter 6. In their reflections several writers described their struggle, not so much in finding a topic for their writing, but in holding back stories that were longing to be told. The creative space is powerful: it gives life to stories, and in the telling we honour what is important.

Nicole Hargreaves writes:

Having not produced any type of creative writing since I was in high school more than 15 years ago, this was quite a challenge for me. I chose very personal topics because I knew that my feelings and emotions would shine through in my work if I was able to speak from my heart. I chose to write a poem about my children, as this style of writing allowed me to convey my feelings for them in a clear and concise manner. I was able to convey my message through the use of rhythm, rhyme and figurative language. These poetic devices provided a guide, allowing for my words to flow as I composed, making the final piece pleasing to the ear.

My World

I look, I stare, I can't believe
That I am Mum to three of these.
Gorgeous creatures, inside and out

They are my world without a doubt.

A boy, a girl, another boy!
I'm proud as punch, I jump for joy!
The pain I have endured is gone
The moment my gorgeous babe is born.

I watch them learn, flourish and grow.
I love them more than life, I know.
First days of school, first football game...
My life will never be the same!

They make me laugh, they make me cry.
They drive me up the wall, "Oh my!"
But most of all, they make me see
The lovely gift of family.
The gift I must give more is time.
A little more would be divine.
My busy life gets in the way.
Still, my love grows stronger every day.

The day will come that they will leave.
My heart will break, but I believe
The love and care that we provided
Will be what helps to keep them guided.

I hope they understand that we
Work hard to live life comfortably.
I hope they know, I hope they see
Just how they mean the world to me!

An ethics of care: disclosure and risk

James Williams, a professor of Rhetoric and Linguistics noted to me as editor and author of this work his concerns about the risks of "writing from the self" in teacher education courses.

We have considerable research showing that self-expressive writing has therapeutic benefits for those who are experiencing mental, emotional, and physical trauma. 'Writing from the self,' to use your expression, appears to serve as a form of self-reflection that many people in these situations have

never engaged in previously. Such writing is understandably private, and it appears to help people in these circumstances better deal with their traumas.

When self-expressive writing is used in an educational setting, the parameters are substantially different from what we find in clinical settings (Williams, 2013).

Williams makes the important point that educators are rarely qualified psychologists or psychotherapists and that there are risks attendant to opening spaces for writing from personal experience. He also notes that in the United States “an entire strand of writing pedagogy embraces the notion of ‘writing as psychotherapy’ with the teacher serving as counselor and therapist”. As educators, we have a duty of care for our students. How best can we navigate the tensions between the safety of more constrained practices (such as giving topics on which to write) and opening spaces for creative thinking and practice? This challenge confronts educators at every level, but it is particularly pertinent to our practices of teaching and learning in the arts and in writing. Having created a space for a story to emerge, what processes do educators put in place for listening to, responding to and supporting or arranging support for individuals whose narratives may reveal trauma? Importantly, in our choices of topics, and in opening spaces for sharing stories, we as educators need to have a clear understanding of what those approaches intend to achieve, and what support systems are there for authors who may need them.

Children in schools also experience profound disruptions in their lives. Hence, for educators of writers at every age, our opening of a space in which to write has potential to bring joy and achievement for students, but brings also a moral and ethical burden. In striving to retain a supportive but professional approach I focused mainly upon the form rather than the content of what was written, although it was vital that I honoured the writers’ experiences and original voices, and the deeper meanings of their narratives. Thus began a restrained dance: stepping back to allow space for freedom of expression, and forward to gently suggest modifications or sources of support.

In working creatively, educators and researchers balance risk against the perceived and measurable benefits observed in the connection with arts-based learning by researchers over several decades (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; McIntosh & Warren, 2013): the experience of writing as a creative practice initiated mixed feelings of vulnerability, agency and pride in pre-service teachers. Their anonymous feedback to the university over three offers of the course indicated pre-service teachers’ sense of achievement in

creating works that affirmed their unique voices and experiences, and re-affirmed connectedness with self, community and the land.

Renee Lockwood writes:

My ideas came from personal experiences. I have lived on a sheep, cattle and crop property in Northern New South Wales all my life and have experienced and witnessed many of the physical and emotional trials and tribulations which come from daily life on the land. My family has been through many hardships, and in particular the droughts which Australia has experienced until two years ago when the rain has fallen and the seasons have changed. I have seen members of my family going through depression and I recall helplines such as Beyond Blue ringing to offer Australian farmers the opportunity to speak with counsellors. I included this within my story. It is a numbing experience to fight for something with nothing in return. I wanted to ensure the readers were able to develop an understanding of life on the land.

Tom gazed through the kitchen window looking towards the bland and undisturbed sky. For weeks now he had been listening to the weather report in hope he would hear the breaking news of rainfall. The last five seasons had been an unwelcome gift from hell which had left the farming community of Greyson in despair and damaging drought. The clear sky and increasing morning heat would bring another day of hard work and gut-wrenching stock losses. Tom prepared himself daily for what he would find when he checked and fed the little amount of livestock he now owned.

Turning towards the backdoor, he grudgingly pulled on his high top work boots and headed for his truck stopping only to hear the calves desperate calls coming from the cattle yards as they searched for their mothers. Yesterday he had to sell each and every one of his heifers to help buy more feed and pay the increasing bills which lay unopened on the kitchen table. Driving out of the house paddock and into the hills, Tom scanned the barren landscape only to see brown grass and the image of two wedge tail eagles in the distance. They would be lingering above something that had recently died.

Tom scanned the bony silhouettes of his once prized sheep which were known district wide for their soft rolling fleece and broad structure. He remembered the times he had once won so many prizes for their fine wool. Feeling the ever present sadness grow within him he began to idle the vehicle out of the paddock and onto the next to check the one thing which held some positive hope. Driving towards the little specks of lush green pasture the feeling of dread began to lift from his body and hope was replaced by the prospect that maybe this crop would help to lift the cloud of depression and provide a positive link to a clearer future. Tom had sown

the crop of oats a month prior and had continued to water it through irrigation, moistening the cracked and dusted soil.

For Renee, as for Miyuki, love of family and the land are intimately connected. As an educator, and over a decade of arts practice I had connected with pre-service teachers as adults with busy lives, Facebook and Twitter accounts, delicately balancing work, family and study in their determination to become teachers. The stories I did not hear as we painted, danced and explored myths through drama were of individuals' personal relationships with a situated history. This revelation was humbling. Writing allowed the telling of those narratives.

Jaclyn Fitzgerald writes:

Before my husband (Pete) left for Afghanistan, I knew this would be a testing time for all of us. As a husband, father and combat soldier on the front line Pete faces innumerable challenges, both emotionally and physically. The stories of Australian soldiers throughout history are widely represented in literature, and in modern times these experiences are also shared widely and made available through the media. Through this collection of writing, what I seek to portray is a candid, honest and very real account of the stories of an Army wife and her children. Being such a deeply personal exploration into a theme I am very familiar with, creating this portfolio has been a challenging and, at times, emotionally overwhelming experience. However, it has also been a thoroughly rewarding and empowering journey, in which I feel I have developed a sense of renewed strength. I am reminded of the power of the written word to heal, transform and reveal individuals as they explore, revisit and appreciate traumatic experiences, and of the nurture writing can provide. These pieces have enabled me to share my burden, and in doing so I feel I have gained a better sense of how these experiences have helped shape my understandings of myself, my husband and our children, and of course, our extended Defence family. Like my future students, our unique histories have, do and will continue to define us as they are moulded, shaped and re-shaped, much like the writing itself.

Jaclyn's poem and short story are shared in Chapter 8.

Writing as catharsis: the affective domain and teaching writing

For a small number of pre-service teachers, the opportunity to write initiated a re-visiting of loss and grief. Over the three years of the course offering, four authors (each of whom had lost a child or children in tragic circumstances or in the break-up of a marriage) chose to write about, or to draft letters to their lost children. Inevitably, this gave rise to feelings of overwhelming grief and anger. As teachers who were ready to enter the field, the authors acknowledged my concern and the burden of my duty of care for their wellbeing. Counsellors at the university offered to work with any student who sought help, but the four authors noted that they had not found counselling helpful in the past. All four completed the course. Two chose to share their works in this book and another two wrote a year later to say that the experience had brought greater understanding, if not acceptance: the experience of writing had transformed their lives.

As lecturer I had not planned for the joy and shared feelings of grief as I read works that were profoundly moving, and that spoke of love, family and home. At times, overwhelmed, I would emerge from my office red-eyed to debrief with good-humoured colleagues. I was grateful for the rubrics that focused on form, genre, style and structure, but the affective domain impacted upon me and transformed my thinking as an educator. Marking works required two responses: the first was a clear-eyed and critical review of form and craft, and I was comfortable to allocate a mark on that basis. The second imperative was to respond as a human being: my written comments responded to the writers' intents, their voices, and their courage in daring to engage with the craft of telling. Marking became, like writing itself, an art and a craft – a means to share meaning-making.

At the outset of each offer of the course participants challenged the requirement to write for adult readers, suggesting that it was 'so much easier to write for children' than for adults. This brought about critical discussions relating to future educators' beliefs about children's needs and interests, and of children as critical consumers and creators of texts. Writing in schools was often conceived as something 'children do', not as something the teacher may engage in *with* students. Teaching writing involved explicit instruction, keeping children on-task, skilful time and resource management and assessment and reporting of performance. Many pre-service teachers' imagined futures anticipated government requirements: their wishes at the start of the course were to have a predictable experience of study (Phipps & Guilherme, 2004, p. 44) that attended to those demands. They sought confidence in operating within curriculum frameworks. Fortunately, student feedback at the end of the course attested to participants' recognition of the value of the experience for their practice both within and also beyond curriculum frameworks.

In transferring their experience of being and becoming writers to teaching, there were challenges for pre-service teachers, as discussed in Chapter 10. However, these existed also for me as an educator. There was evidence of a gap between undergraduates' seeming grasp of functional grammar, and their ability to transfer that knowledge to their own writing. Beverley Derewianka (2012), who citing her own findings and those of Richard Andrews (2005), indicates that further research is required to establish the evidence, if any "for the effective use of grammar teaching of any kind in the development of writing" (p.144). Further, many undergraduates seemed unable to make the connection between their own challenging and creative experience of writing, and how they engaged in working with younger writers. These gaps are important. They challenge educators to research into the personal and professional constraints upon our transferring knowledge and understanding into practice.

Acknowledging the silent author – the reader

The knowledge that one may return to read one's earlier words, or that others may do so creates a dialectic between one's knowledge of self and practice framed by time, place and social relationships, and what is recorded within the text. Hence Jean Clandinin (2010) discusses teachers' writing in terms of an exploration of professional landscapes where concepts of identity and praxis are fluid, "embodied, relational and context specific" (p. 863). In this complex territory, the act of writing carries with it the shadow of an unknown future reader, and this in turn gives life to a consciousness of the writer's current and future identity. Hence writing in the present is burdened by our imagining of a future reader. Thus, recognising that the 'truth' of what we write is always partial, contextual, informed by time, the written word shimmers under the light of doubt and the limits of our prescience. The act of writing is foreshadowed by the author's recognition that his or her understanding of the *now* is limited, and that the backward shadow of the future makes the seeming truths of the present less certain. Thus the reader, in bringing to the text his or her own experiences, values, interpretations and judgements becomes an-other author. Ann-Marie Bathmaker and Penelope Harnett (2010), refer to the power of writing for meaning-making in an era where life trajectories are complex and multiple, suggesting that while writing is an act of creation where we "construct our identities" (p.5) within uncertain temporal perspectives, it is also an adventure whereby our craft in the telling can "restore meaning to (our) lives" (Bettelheim, 1988, p. 4).

Teachers as writers

Why is the experience of writing poems, plays and short stories important for educators? As educators we author many documents: this labour requires finely honed skills in planning and reporting, reflection for continuous professional development, and establishing credibility through the discourses of teaching and learning, policy-making and implementation as discussed in Chapter 4 by Anne Jasman. However, there is another and vital aspect of writing for teachers that is largely neglected in curriculum guidelines: when educators become collaborators with students in creating and evaluating the meaning and forms of texts (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008), we become partners in research. This shift to partnership confronts and reveals aspects of professional habitus so that power and distance give way to creative energy. Creating original works in traditional and new media for our own or for students' enjoyment (Wilson, 2013), we become writer-researchers (Cremin & Myhill, 2012).

Teresa Cremin observes that "Artistry and creativity have not been at the forefront of writing pedagogy in recent years" (2006, p. 415). Prior to their study in this course, pre-service educators indicated that they had limited experience of thinking about, crafting or editing a work beyond the frameworks of academic writing. Planning lessons to support younger writers in creating poems, stories and plays was unthreatening, but pre-service teachers were fearful of the challenge of creating such works themselves. Yet, evidence suggests that there are benefits where teachers become creators of knowledge with their students, embracing the same learning challenges. Reporting from a two-year study of writing in British schools, Cremin (2006) notes the importance of teachers modelling writing processes for and with their students: "Risk-taking is a characteristic of successful literacy teachers who...engage artistically, experiment with possibilities and remain open to ideas and strategies which may benefit learners" (p.418). So should teachers engage in creative writing programs?

Creative writing or writing within education programs?

While a burgeoning interest in creative writing has spawned the growth of courses for writers seeking publication in the United Kingdom (Morrison, 2013) and in Australia, where Jen Webb estimated enrolments at "3,000 to 5,000 people...a significant number in a nation of 21 million people"

(2009, p. 64), creative writing courses appear to be informed by participants' desire to focus upon publication. In creative writing courses, Pelletier and Jarvis suggest that a focus upon publication may lead to an "over-emphasis on craft" (2013, p. 1) noting that pedagogical approaches used in creative writing courses are rarely reflexive in nature. It is these two dimensions that differentiate between creative writing courses that are offered at university (rather than community) level, and within courses within programs for pre-service teacher education where writing is central. A focus on publication and on craft, rather than upon reflection differentiates the former from the latter. Writing in teacher education is underpinned by reflection upon learning for professional practice (Clandinin, 2012; Pack, 2011).

Pauline Dobbie writes:

Reflecting upon the creative process of developing three original creative works, I found it quite difficult at the onset, as my first barrier was deciding the topic for each genre. Considering a topic for my poem I allowed myself time to consider a stimulus, in this case my loves and what I enjoy doing; hence the topic of the beach. I sat with my eyes closed and imagined myself lying on the beach and recalled my innermost thoughts and feelings. When I started to write them down I felt the words came quite smoothly; referring to my dictionary and thesaurus for ideas of richer and deeper vocabulary. As I did doubt my abilities to write a meaningful piece of poetry, reading the end product was very fulfilling. I truly felt I was able to capture the essence of what the beach means to me.

My Beach

I lie abandoned on the sun-drenched sand,
Eyes closed from the glare, yet all other senses dance
The raining warmth of the sun beats down on my skin.
A deeply permeating warm embrace

I breathe in the ocean's perfume and let it fill my lungs.
Reluctantly I let it go, and fall into a trance.
The unspoiled aroma of sand and sea abounds.
A lifesaving ambience enfolding

I hear the thunderous disturbance of every wave,
A violent betrayal and destruction of stance

Yet after the spray the peacefulness drifts in.
A pervading tranquillity embedding

I sense the changes as the cooling winds steal in,
The sting on my skin as the sands start to prance
The releasing of the warm embrace.
An intimate discovery emergent.

A balanced expression of the human factor in teaching and research would be expected to attend to the affective and spiritual dimensions of life (Adu-Febiri, 2011), as well as to the dimensions of cognitive learning and skills development. The reflections of pre-service teachers who chose to share works in this book, and of those who chose not publish, show that the affective domain may be known and expressed through writing that is creative. However, this domain is largely silenced within institutional planning and processes for teaching and learning, and within the academy, as Ali Black suggests in Chapter 13. Is this the case also for research, that other discipline wherein we interweave words and worlds?

Writing as research: Weaving words

Historically, the written word and the woven fibre have offered parallel evidential narratives of human craft and social cohesion. The earliest evidence of weaving (Kruger, 2001), has been found as impressions of fibres in clay shards. This predates known records of writing but not of other forms of narrative and symbolic mark-making. Writing's earliest function was in the form of mark-making for the recording of stock (Robinson, 2007, pp. 11-14), but the purpose of that coding began to change, according to Michel Foucault (1983), at some time during the second century (BCE) of the Greco-Roman empire, when ascetics began to use writing as a means of recording thoughts and actions within their broader disciplines of meditation. Shortly after this, because of the fixed nature of the written word, writing soon took on another valuable quality. It became ethopoietic in function: "an agent of the transformation of truth into ethos" (Foucault, 1983, p. 415). In its ability to express intent and action in time, writing makes transparent any deviation from the author's stated plans. Both author and reader may look back on a fixed point to evaluate the writers' stated intent and integrity in action, thus revealing self-deception or bad faith (Sartre, 1969). In this way, recursive writing in relation to reflexive thinking for personal development was born – and

from there evolved our 21st century trust in the power of reflection to enhance professional understanding and practice (van Manen, 1995).

Similarly, writing reveals relationships of power and positionality in research, revealing what Denzin (2009) describes as the ethical requirement for the researcher to build “collaborative, reciprocal, trusting, mutually accountable relationships with those studied” (p.49). For beginning researchers, and particularly those who use narrative methods, the processes of doctoral study demand a rigorous apprenticeship in writing as research (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 1997). The forms of writing by which researchers articulate their contributions to knowledge determine reputation and authority: our writing choices position us as researchers within opposing discourses and practices. Participatory research (Ellis et al., 2008; Richardson, 2001) in a range of fields, and particularly in the field of education, rely upon co-constructed narratives for complex, nuanced readings.

Self-reflexive writing (Mittapalli & Samaras, 2008) allows personal and professional lives to be contextualised within cultural and temporal ethics and practices (Dressel & Langreiter, 2003; Schon, 1987), so that it acts as a spur for educators’ and researcher’s critical self-evaluation. In Chapter 2 of this book, Yvonne Findlay’s autoethnographic journey portrays identity as socially constructed and context-dependent (Alvermann, 2000). Yet, although such narrative and autoethnographic research methods (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) are long established, their value for social, cultural and educational research remains contested. This is particularly so in a political climate that values positivism over the complex human dimension (Torres, 2013), and where neo-liberal research agendas privilege quantitative research methods over those where complex human dimensions are voiced in terms of uncertainty, complexity and interculturality (Dervin, 2013; Lipman, 2013; Patrick, 2013). In particular, narrative, autoethnographic and self-reflexive writing (Butz & Besio, 2004; Ellis, 2004; Ellis et al., 2011; Foucault, 1983) in research has been criticised on the grounds that it is solipsistic (Alvermann, 2000; Ellis et al., 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2000) because of authors’ focus upon the personal, affective and subjective domains (Davies, 2012; Goodson, 2012). For writer-researchers in this contested field (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005) this challenge to write calls on our critical judgement of the performative aspects of our own and others’ writing as research: theory and voice must align.

Emerging issues for writing

Evidence from government inspectors' reports (Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills, 2012) on the teaching of English in British schools suggests that the most successful teachers "identified the particular needs of their pupils and then designed a distinctive curriculum" (2012, p. 6) rather than adhering to a proscribed curriculum. This epistemology and practice is supported by the findings of researcher-practitioners in global contexts and particularly in relation to learning that is supported by writers' situated writing from place and community (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2013; Trahar, 2013). Robert Allen Warrior (1995) reports benefits for Canada's First Nations from educational practices that embrace indigenous pedagogies (as discussed in Chapter 5), and similar studies in the United States (Amerman, 2011; Verbos, Gladstone, & Kennedy, 2011), Mexico (Urrieta, 2013) Hawaii (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2013), and with the Indigenous peoples of Australia (Kapitzke et al., 2000) attest to the value of curriculum that is place and community-emergent, and supported by technologies and enhanced infrastructure (Hillhouse, 2014). In line with these findings, and those of Chapter 5, the opportunity to write from familiar and important places for family, culture and personal experience appears to have benefits for writers and researchers from indigenous and settler cultures alike, as demonstrated in Chapters 3, 6, 8 and 11 of this book, and earlier in this chapter where pre-service teachers' writings attest to the power of family, place and belonging as starting points for knowledge generation.

Process or discovery writing?

Cremin and Myhill (2012) describe the impact of early studies by Emig (1971) and Britton et al (1975) as having shaped present-day pedagogical processes that many teachers use with students in planning, drafting and revising their work. While such practices have value for many writers and teachers, their dominance in framing teachers' imagination and practices some four decades later may also be problematic as suggested in Chapter 10. Process writing continues to inform teacher-facilitated "writing conferences" (Cremin & Myhill, 2012, pp. 19-20) with students, and while Russell Jones and Dominic Wyse (2013) attest to the lasting value of these approaches, particularly where these are supported by focused conversations and a clear sense of purpose and audience (2013, pp. 22-23) they note also the "value of open-ended talk (for) building on real language choices and children's editorial control over their own writing"

(p.11). Cremin and Myhill (2013) suggest that an over-reliance on process approaches may restrict the writing experience for “discovery writers” (p.21). They echo concerns raised by Jones and Wyse (2013) that a focus on testing and reporting encourages risk-averse approaches to the teaching of writing and this in turn impacts upon learners’ enjoyment of English, and of writing in particular. Hence, Cremin (2006) urges classroom practitioners to nurture their own skills and to “tolerate uncertainty, take risks and engage artistically” (Cremin, p. 415) so as to become writers with their students. It is fitting that this chapter concludes with the words of Jenny Hoang, whose work with a peer is featured in Chapter 10: writing is a challenge, but it brings many rewards.

Jenny Hoang writes:

In order for students to create a creative piece of writing they need to have self-confidence, a safe learning space and knowledge and skills related to literacy. I wanted to experience writing different types of texts, texts that I have never tried creating before. Through this creative journey I developed my self-confidence in these two genres. Writing a Haiku and creating a comic was difficult, (so) I approached this assessment very cautiously and researched and looked at various examples before creating my draft. From experiencing the thinking process I have gained an understanding of the challenges that my students may encounter and the skills that my students will need to have.

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