

School of Media, Communication and Creative Arts

Promise, Promises: The National English Curriculum in Context

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This thesis is dedicated to Niall Lucy, my esteemed colleague, who guided my research in its earlier phases, whose advice and support I appreciated, and whose loss has been keenly felt by all who had the pleasure and privilege of working with him.

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the division of the National English Curriculum into three strands--Language, Literature and Literacy--is the source of irresolvable theoretical and pedagogical problems. Moreover, the division points to wider disciplinary problems within the English learning area and consequently to its location within the broader National Curriculum. The tripartite division is a product of concerns over the teaching of literacy, especially early reading and writing, and the supposed decline of literature in Australian schools, with its links to the canon, literary traditions and national cultural heritage. Because of these emphases the role of multimodal and digital texts in the Curriculum is left weakened and diminished. A focus on 'back to basics' reopens the debate over phonics, and promotes a 'scientific' view of curriculum capable of reintroducing rigour and standards and an overoptimistic faith in testing. Moreover, the 'return' to literature aligns with anxieties about the loss of the Judeo-Christian tradition and disquiet over 'relativism' and newer, politicised readings of literature in particular and texts in general under the banner of 'critical literacy.' Despite the fact that the present Curriculum does not depart in significant ways from existing English curricula in Australia or overseas, the pressures and counter pressures on the Curriculum introduce incoherencies that could have been avoided.

In the Introduction I contextualise my publications within the context of my own research on curricula, connecting this work to central curriculum issues raised by the National Curriculum, including critical literacy, aesthetics, and genre-based pedagogy and the structure, organisation and conceptual framework of the English Curriculum. I focus in detail on the key documents relevant to the English Curriculum, and make selected state and international comparisons to illuminate concepts and pedagogies. Chapter One explores curriculum concepts in their social, historical and educational settings, and traces the emergence of Australia's Curriculum within national and international contexts, which provide vital insights into its aims, values, pedagogy, structure and content, thus offering the insights required to perform a sustained critique.

The second chapter clarifies key theoretical terms whose definitions sometimes bedevil discussions of curriculum and are intimately connected to shifting concepts of

truth, knowledge and subjectivity, especially those that discursively construct the 'student,' the 'teacher' and the 'learner.' The chapter begins with an analysis of Classical *paideia*, exploring its ties to the ethical and knowing subject and to pastoral pedagogy in order to bring contemporary curricula into sharp relief.

The next chapter examines the design brief and specifications for the Curriculum, the process of writing the Curriculum, the role of ACARA in this process, the difficulties encountered in installing the National Curriculum and remarks on the consultation process. I note the absence of teachers as true collaborators in the Curriculum and the way in which consultation tended to pre-empt any real discussion of the Curriculum framework.

Chapter Four is devoted to a lengthy examination of the English Curriculum and a detailed overview of the history of English as a discipline, granting the always provisional and shape-changing nature of the subject and the tensions, contradictions and commonalities that have informed state-based curricula. I then unpick the *Shape of the Curriculum: English* document using the following method:

- An investigation of the (flawed) three-strand structure of the curriculum: Language, Literature, and Literacy.
- An examination of the inadequate and often confusing definition and use of key concepts.
- An extended consideration of the statements on literacy.
- An exploration of the inadequate theorisation of multimodal and digital texts in the Curriculum.
- An assessment of the renewed focus on the aesthetic and the rhetorical in curriculum discourse.
- A consideration of key topics of the Curriculum: grammar, rhetoric and the aesthetic.

Chapter Five, through an analysis of selected examples and comparisons, examines content descriptions and their relationship to achievement standards, and scope and sequence in the English Curriculum. I take issue with the multiplication of scope and sequence tasks, which carry an unacknowledged legacy from outcomes-based education, importing its weaknesses rather than its strengths. Though my verdict on the Curriculum seems at times unsympathetic I believe it is consistently supported by my analysis.

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Introduction: Contextualising Publications and/with the Australian Curriculum

How I Missed the Revolution

My introduction to life as a teacher began in the late 60s at a working-class high school, Maribyrnong, in the suburbs of Melbourne. I had a (not very good) Honours degree in music and no training or experience. The fact that I was employed at all was a measure of the desperation of the Victorian Education Department since there was an acute teacher shortage at the time and graduates had little trouble getting hired.¹

My first sight of the school was a shock: the buildings were all demountables on wooden foundations and the grass of the sports oval was scabby and brown.² Rumour insinuated that the school had been built on a waste dump. Almost true: the school *was* a waste dump--for working-class kids with limited futures, for migrant kids with little or no English who lived in the nearby hostel, and for teachers who longed for transfers to better schools or more fulfilling jobs. I wish I could say that my experience there resembled the plot of *To Sir with Love* and other inspirational school stories and that I left after two years with the teary gratitude of my students. Far from it. I felt inadequate and overwhelmed and prayed no one would notice. Occasionally there were minor triumphs and small victories but all I hoped to do was survive and I survived (just).

I was not alone in this. The school was staffed by the troubled, the defeated, the disaffected, the inadequate and the discontented. I came to believe that I had been sent there precisely because I fitted one or more of these categories. The staff included

¹ Bill Hannan confirms that there was such a crisis in *The Best of Times* (51-62).

² My memory has not deceived me here. Bill Hannan, in his utterly engaging memoir of his time as a schoolteacher, active unionist and curriculum innovator in the 50s, 60s and 70s, *The Best of Times*, calls these types of schools 'chicken coops' and there is a photo of Maribyrnong to prove it. Run up on the cheap and catering for an expanded secondary post-war population, these schools were freezing in winter and unbearably hot in summer. Maribyrnong was established in 1958 and was one of the so-called LTCs (Light Timber Constructions). They certainly looked portable and temporary to me. Teachers hoped these structures would be replaced eventually but these hopes were dashed. The 'waste dump' may have been myth but Hannan confirms that Maribyrnong was built on an old quarry, after being relocated from the Melbourne Show Grounds (35).

drunks, the mentally ill, an assortment of eccentrics, and one poor soul who gradually gave up coming to work at all. Nevertheless there were compensations because scarcely a week went by without an agreeable crisis. Like the time when the maths teacher, in one of his periodical drunken rages, smashed up the lounge bar of the local pub. Or the time when the charismatic art teacher, in a Banksy moment, set her students the task of covering the walls of a classroom with graffiti. Or the magical day when a disturbed teacher captured the public address system and accused the headmaster of sexually abusing children. (Untrue. The headmaster, R. G. Gilmour, was so terrified of staff and students that he rarely ventured beyond the safety of his office.) Then there was the Year 8 student who regularly climbed onto the school roof and had to be talked down each time. And the student who broke the window in the manual arts block and attacked the woodwork teacher, declaring afterwards that it was nothing personal.

Despite this, there was a genuine camaraderie between staff and students, as if we were all in the same leaky boat, and students were very forgiving of bad teaching and bad behaviour, behaviour that would now get you sacked or even arrested. The school ran strong music and drama programs and teachers put in long hours outside school. Many staff lived locally and had the community links so desperately sought today, now that the tie between local schools and student cohorts has been weakened. Everyone knew that we didn't count and wouldn't amount to much. However, these were the 60s and there was an air of hope abroad. Many teachers at the school saw themselves as progressives who believed passionately in a better deal for working-class kids. We were also multicultural without knowing it--on the front line of the post-war migrant boom and left to flounder.

The fact that many students were not literate in their own language, let alone English, created challenges for the English Department. We had no English as a Second Language programs or anyone qualified to run them. There was a bizarre, hotly resented rule at Maribyrnong that all students had to complete four years of French regardless of ability or background and, as I had to teach both, the students and I often felt linguistically dislocated. As Hannan acidly remarks of his own experience in Victorian schools, '[f]or students, French was one of the dark rites of secondary education' (144). The English curriculum seemed pretty conservative--

poetry, novels, and so forth--and there was a Leavisite conviction that literature (reading it, writing it) could be empowering for poor kids and a belief that English should promote what is called personal growth, although I had no name for it then. Like other English teachers I wanted the subject to be exciting for kids and to offer them rich experiences. No one mentioned literacy. It was at this time I first read Marshall McLuhan and realised that I was not just in the Age of Aquarius but the age of mass media, whose cultural products could be legitimate objects of study for students. Not that we had a fully worked out pedagogy or anything like it but the English curriculum was being prised open. We were hungry for relevance.

Bill Hannan comments of his own and others' experience of English pedagogy in the 60s that 'our teacher training gave us no clues about teaching grammar, vocabulary or reading comprehension' (153), but he and a group of colleagues tried to broaden the English curriculum in order to encourage wide and diverse reading and livelier, more engaging creative tasks. This led to a collaborative project that resulted in the publication of *English Parts 1-3*, visually appealing and stimulating source books for students (154) which addressed an urgent need for more attractive syllabus material. As Bill Green reminds us ('Curriculum History . . .' 253-97), it is easy to overstate the effects of the 60s and 70s and their shock of the new but to novice teachers it seemed that we had a duty to tip the scales of privilege in favour of those with limited life chances.

Like many colleagues, I moved on from high school teaching as it was never my first choice of career (insofar as I had a life plan), but I left more credentialled, with a cut-price teaching diploma that involved attendance for one day a week at Melbourne Secondary Teachers' College. Today, if its website is to be believed, Maribyrnong, now a secondary college, has been transformed architecturally and educationally. There is a specialist sports program and a purpose-built theatre named after the wonderful drama teacher, Joan Brogden, who headed up drama while I was there.

In the same way as I drifted out of high school teaching I eventually drifted into tertiary teaching so I missed the revolution. The revolution I missed is eloquently described by Alan Reid in his recollection of his first teaching posts in the early seventies. At Strathmont Boys Technical High School, he says, '[y]ou could sense a curriculum and organisational structure in its death throes.' When he moved to

Banksia Park High School everything changed. BPHS was ‘staffed by young and enthusiastic teachers and a charismatic and progressive principal’:

[u]ncumbered by imposed syllabae [sic] we developed a system of ‘unscheduled’ lessons which allowed each student to tailor a personalised learning program each week; constructed integrated learning packages; trialled new approaches to assessment; and debated educational issues for hours in the school’s democratic decision-making structures.

...

By the end of the 70s I had been exposed to and developed an educational philosophy which was shaped around the themes of democracy, equity and progressive pedagogy. I was one of many. (‘The Influence of Curriculums Past’ 51)

However, there was also another revolution under my nose that I missed although I was in the middle of it. Hannan, who has made such a significant contribution to English teaching and educational innovation in Victoria, provides a detailed, amusing and insightful account of the struggles and visions that inspired teachers during the period of what he styles the Great Expansion. According to Hannan:

[t]he Great Expansion began about 1955 when the baby boomers reached high school age, and continued until the early 70s. In some ways it is still going on but the circumstances are now very different. The Great Expansion set out to establish a state secondary school system for everyone, essentially untroubled by competition from private and church schools. (Preface n.pag.)

In the atmosphere created by the Great Expansion the idea of secondary education for all put inevitable strains on a curriculum that had seen little substantial change for decades, divided as it was between academic subjects and technical and vocational training.

Hannan and other firebrands in the system wanted a broad-based, co-operative, non-specialist and flexible curriculum in the secondary years that emphasised independent learning. They demanded the abandonment of competitive assessment and letter or grade reporting (today we would hear cries of anguish at such a prospect since the word ‘standards’ is foregrounded in curriculum authority

documents. The WA experience of the implementation of outcomes-based education is a case in point. It led to the resignation of the minister and the whole issue has evaporated. It showed the folly of change driven from the top down and bitterly resented by both 'conservative' and 'progressive' teachers. It is worth noting that conservatives who argue, say, for a greater role for literature in the curriculum can be more receptive to the teaching of traditional grammar, but this may be a generational issue (Hannan 200). A General Studies curriculum for Years 7 to 10 was trialled at Moreland and Ferntree Gully high schools in 1968. The experimental General Studies curriculum offered the full range of subjects but delivered in a cross-disciplinary methodology using team teaching, with a much freer approach to timetabling. Students could develop their own projects, work in groups, or come together as a whole class when necessary (200).

The program, which ran for several years, fell victim to the usual problems--bureaucracy, life, staff changes and loss of enthusiasm. One can detect in this curricular experiment a foreshadowing of more recent attempts to take the curriculum out of the straitjacket of strict subject- and discipline-based learning, such as the Tasmanian Essential Learnings Project and the Queensland New Basics Project, both discussed in Chapter One of the thesis in the context of Outcomes-based Education. Hannan is open about the fact that these changes to the traditional curriculum were made in the interests of equality and student engagement and were meant to address the needs of new cohorts that were completing high school in ever greater numbers.³

When I finally left high-school teaching, after two unhappy years at Tuart Hill Senior High School, I kept my hand in and my bank balance afloat by marking Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) Literature. The next time I really became aware of curriculum developments in Subject English was when Warren Grellier, one of

³ Marion Maddox points out, in *Taking God to School: The End of Australia's Egalitarian Education?*, that such experiments continued into the 70s. However, I would contest her statement that the '1970s saw the first flush of progressive education' (xiii) since Hannan's memoir is evidence that it began before the 70s. Maddox also points to the introduction of the interdisciplinary program called MACOS (*Man: A Course of Study* [sic]), based on the work of cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner, which examined life cycles and the integration of natural and social systems (xiii). It was an American import, an example of the way in which globalisation and education have always been intertwined. It drew furious condemnation from Christians and conservatives, especially in Queensland, and was abandoned by 1985. Its interdisciplinary focus was a precursor to other curriculum experiments which have now gone firmly out of fashion with the advent of the Australian Curriculum.

Western Australia's outstanding English educators, brought the draft of a new Subject English curriculum for Years 11 and 12 to Curtin University for comment, as part of a consultation process with universities and other stakeholders. However, I was already familiar with the battles over TEE literature and new approaches to reading literary texts, changes that had made many wretched, whatever the positions they adopted. By this time the curriculum had decisively changed. Media texts were now fully integrated into the syllabus and cultural studies theories were at their centre. Not that older pedagogical or assessment models were absent from the Year 12 examination. Curtin academics played a leading role in rewriting curricula, both in Subject English and Literature, serving on syllabus committees and exam panels, providing professional development for teachers, publishing scholarly articles on curriculum and speaking at conferences. In my experience of serving on syllabus and exam committees, English teachers and academics from English, cultural studies and related disciplines were vital to the formulation of curricula and were at the heart of the learning area. I believe this should remain the case, though perhaps that is an impossible ideal in a centralised national curriculum.

Vigorous discussion of new curricula was never absent. It is hard for me to forget the intertextuality spat, when intertextuality for a time became a separate section on the Year 12 Subject English exam. Students were invited to compare texts across different genres, media and modes, which provoked some dismay and unease among teachers. I was asked, for a modest fee, to become a short-term consultant to the WA Education Department to provide much-needed guidance for teachers. However, it was clear that the new section was a misprision of the nature of intertextuality itself, since *all* texts are by their nature intertextual. Trying to explain intertextuality without undermining the exam was not one of my finest professional moments. It provides a telling illustration of the need for definitional clarity around key terms, alas sometimes absent in the Australian Curriculum: English itself, whether those terms seem novel and signal new directions, or are older terms supposedly well understood. I also learned a lesson about the tricky task of working with teachers effectively. Too often teachers feel that academics and other authorities are just brought in to patronise them or show up their deficiencies.

Over twenty years ago the then School of Communication and Cultural Studies developed a highly popular day-long on-campus program of lectures for Year 12 Subject English and Literature students. It is still running successfully. Lecturers were drawn from the School and from the secondary teaching community, both of whom worked in close collaboration. Hence staff who participated understood the demands of the syllabus and also something of the pressures that teachers are under. However, according to some media, and here *The Australian* can be relied on to put the supposedly common sense view (see, for example, 'The Literacy Debate,' *The Australian* 23-24 September, 2006) teachers are responsible for students' lack of skills. It is therefore understandable that some media commentators looked to the new Australian Curriculum as a means of redress. Tony Abbott's appointment (in 2015) of a curriculum review panel consisting of appointees more hospitable to his own views did not in the end vastly alter the curriculum. Kevin Donnelly and Ken Wilshire, the reviewers appointed by the government, not ACARA, claimed there was too much clutter in the curriculum and not enough emphasis on literacy and numeracy (the basics). They were also worried that there was not enough attention given to the Western, Judaeo-Christian tradition, and that included literature and history in the Curriculum (too politically correct). There is nothing wrong with a review of the Curriculum in itself, since from the beginning the National Curriculum Board and advisory groups envisaged that curricula and other key documents would undergo revision at least every five years in the light of consultations with stakeholders and the gradual and staged implementation of different learning areas. Note that the national curriculum has now become the Australian Curriculum, which reflects the move from the National Curriculum Board to ACARA, the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority. The new nomenclature Australian Curriculum signals the nation-building project that is the Australian Curriculum.

An Inspector Calls

Consequently, in my observations on the English curriculum as articulated in the *Shape of the Curriculum: English* (2009) and in other curriculum materials relevant to the English curriculum I have been alert to the fact that teachers should be centre stage in the discussion. I have named my own experience as a novice teacher who was

unfit for the role. At that time in Victoria an aspiring teacher did not need a teaching degree, such as a Diploma of Education to be let loose on pupils. A few years after I left, the Victorian Secondary Teachers' Union won a battle mandating a professional qualification for all secondary teachers. In retrospect I can detect in this hard fought battle the growing professionalisation of teaching, which has brought in its wake a raft of changes—policy initiatives, new assessment criteria and high stakes testing, the involvement of the Federal government in funding and accreditation, and new challenges wrought by a globalising world. Bill Hannan, whom we have already met, details teachers' struggle for recognition as 'true professionals' ('Tandberg and the Teachers,' *Inside Story*, 11th January 2018). The enemies in this struggle, according to Hannan, were bureaucrats and government agencies, but, also according to Hannan, the inspectors were most feared because of their direct impact on teachers. It is something I can attest to, since a visit from the English inspector (a very nice man) filled me with natural trepidation. I carefully coached my students before the big day and led them to understand that they also were being judged ('are we doing OK, Miss?'). In a review of Maxine McKew's *Class Act: Ending the Education Wars* (2014), Hannan praises the efforts of teachers, who have taken on board the prescriptions for school improvement:

tighter discipline, a rigorous curriculum, consistent administration and, above all else, a team of teachers united by an unshakeable belief that their students can achieve high goals.

This puts teachers at the centre of curriculum change and implementation. Moreover, Hannan observes that, although 'progressive' is now a somewhat tarnished word, the desired changes are the result of broad innovation designed to empower teachers and students.

However, if teachers are at the centre of change, there is a recurring feeling in the community and among some political elites that teacher training is often an inadequate preparation for teachers' professional roles, particularly the low ATAR scores of entrants to an education degree. But it can be hard to evaluate the connection between training and performance in lifting student achievement. A 2004 American study (Harris, Sass, et al., *Teacher Training, Teacher Quality and Student Achievement*, Center [sic] for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research,

Working Paper 3 [2007]) the authors conclude that pre-service training for teachers does not necessarily result in improved student performance. Recently Alan Tudge, the current Federal Minister for Education, Skills and Employment, has launched a fresh review of teacher training (June 21, 2021) in the hopes that Initial Teacher Education (ITE) can be improved after Australia's slipping PISA ratings. This order-another-review may end up being misguided. There have been so many reviews into education and they suffer from the blight that what Albright, Clement and Holmes call 'presentism,' the way school innovation, research and initiatives for change meet resistance in part because teachers are simply overwhelmed and may prefer things the way they are. This is understandable, a kind of reform fatigue. Bourke, in 'Teacher Professional Standards: Mirage or Miracle Cure? An Archaeology of Professionalism in Education' (unpublished dissertation, Queensland University of Technology 2011), concludes that 'the managerial discourse of professionalism through professional standards has been unduly privileged.' She goes on to show that, in Australia, while there has been resistance to this discourse, teachers ultimately yield 'to the discourse of professional standards as docile bodies.' Jory Brass, in a thoughtful recent article, observes how in America the processes of quality assurance, accountability and private sector involvement have changed the face of teaching and not for the better. While Australia has not been influenced to the same degree, it has not been impervious to these trends.

Lewis, Savage and Holloway, writing in 2019, investigate how, policies, programs and funding are responses to a perceived crisis ('Standards without Standardisations') It has led to a focus on teacher training and the development of ways to assess, improve, regulate and reward teachers. They observe that there has been a sense of calamity surrounding teacher recruitment, retention and performance that has led to reviews, policy reform and policy development, and accreditation. Using the Foucauldian theory of governmentality, the authors examine in detail the history and educational contexts of a standards-based rather than an outcomes-based approach to improving teacher quality, which arise out of market driven and techno-scientific rationalities. Despite the formidable quantity of policy innovations, reform agendas and the proliferation of research, the implementation of systems of accountability does not easily translate into usable sets of standards that cannot easily

be applied successfully, in part because, the authors argue, local and national conditions vary. In fact there is no guarantee that reforms can be executed successfully, but they can certainly feel alienating to teachers. I am almost nostalgic about my own early teaching experience for the benign neglect that characterised it.

Bourke examines in detail the discourses around the Dawkins educational reforms in the 80s (to be discussed in Chapter One) which continually marginalise and erased the voices of teachers, who must be trained and disciplined. There is always a danger that teachers will be 'othered' by educational and professional processes and are likely to be seen as obstacles to reform. This remains a hazard in the rollout of the Australian Curriculum, as I will point out in later chapters. English teachers are peculiarly placed because they are held to account over the teaching of literacy, even though literacy is acknowledged to be the responsibility of teachers across all learning areas, at least as far as teaching students the genres relevant to those disciplines. English teachers must encourage traits like creativity and imagination, even though, again, this is the responsibility of all learning areas. English teachers frequently find themselves dealing with sensitive issues (such as racism), as do history teachers, by the nature of the curriculum, which encourages an engagement with, say, indigenous texts and cultures in the service of intercultural understanding. Not, of course, that English teachers are or have ever been a monolithic group. They can be good or bad, they can be well or badly trained, they argue among themselves about such topics as the place of literature in the Curriculum, and their challenges can be starkly different among different schools and cohorts. The WA experience of the implementation of outcomes-based education is a case in point. It led to the resignation of the minister and the whole issue seems to have largely evaporated in light of the Australian Curriculum, which adopts a standard based assessment model while not completely abandoning outcomes.⁴ It showed the folly of change driven from the top down and bitterly resented by both conservatives who felt that OBE was foolhardy because it robbed curricula of the knowledge of civilisation and culture, and progressive teachers who disliked OBE for the same reasons--as a managerial tool. The Australian

⁴ The Queensland Education Authority has a useful discussion paper on the difficulty of distinguishing between outcomes and standards (www.qscc.qld.edu.au. 2002).

Curriculum, whatever its strength or weaknesses, had to proceed in stages and to try to bring teachers with it. It is worth noting that conservatives who argue, say, for a greater role for literature in the curriculum can be more receptive to the teaching of traditional grammar, but this may be, as Hannan notes, a generational issue.

Yet the processes in which teachers find themselves enmeshed should not imply that teachers lack agency or are dupes of the system, whatever the policy frameworks or the demands of an increasingly marketised and globalised system. Boum, in a recent article on teachers as agents of change, notes that teachers often refuse to be co-opted in an instrumental way or conform to an 'image of the ideal global teacher' (63). Moreover, teachers and researchers may not see change as entailing an orientation towards social justice but rather as an instrument to improve, for instance, students' scores on literacy tests. However, Lane, Lacefield-Parachini, and Isken argue that new teachers can be inducted into a 'critical pedagogy' that enables them to question structural inequities within the school and the wider culture (55-68). Thus teachers can envisage their role in multiple ways in their orientation to curricula.

Shaping the Curriculum

The advent of a national curriculum meant there was an opportunity to rethink English curricula as part of the desire to create what is claimed to be (or at least hopes to be) a world class curriculum. This claim implies that other comparable curricula, national or international, have been consulted but also that English, along with other learning areas, must support the General Capabilities and Cross-curricular priorities in the Australian Curriculum and the educational goals identified in the *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008). The document acknowledges new challenges and policy environments, such as an increasingly globalised world and multicultural populations. The document privileges the delivery of a democratic and equitable curriculum that is futures oriented. It also means that, wherever possible, the methodologies employed by curriculum writers should be evidence based. However, the writers of curricula do not begin with a blank sheet and are influenced by current disciplinary knowledges and the demands of the Australian Curriculum within specific policy and political environments, global and national. The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (2008), which laid out objectives, aspirations and

conditions for the proposed national curriculum, allows states to inflect curricula the according to the needs of local and regional cohorts. How well has the Australian Curriculum: English (AC: E) risen to the multiple challenges that the AC sets itself in a globalised world? This prompts other questions: What has the discipline of English meant over the last century? And what does it mean and do now? These questions underlie my published research in 'The State of the Art: English.' I contextualised the history of the discipline as a means to argue for its retention in the Senior secondary curriculum. My discussion of key terms such as intertextuality was meant to define the term through a detailed reading of a text in order to give teachers a sense of confidence when they employ such terms in the classroom. My published work also reflects on the nature of the literary canon and the notion of an Australian literary tradition in the light of the inclusion of Indigenous texts in the curriculum.

In order to answer these questions I read the Curriculum by locating English in its disciplinary contexts—both historical and contemporary—and have identified the external and internal pressure points that have shaped the new Curriculum. This has meant an examination of a wide range of curriculum documents produced by the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA) that are essential to this investigation. The key documents that are relevant to this project are listed in date order at the beginning of Chapter One. Many curriculum documents have undergone a number of revisions in light of consultation and the longer process of shaping the curriculum, which is always on going as the curriculum is trialled, modified and evaluated. I have also cited other relevant ACARA documents, such as the General Capabilities and Cross-curriculum Priorities, and have cited drawn on other paracurriculum materials to understand the English Curriculum in the context of the Curriculum as a whole. I have included these materials as part of the discussion of AC:E where relevant and as they come up in the course of my discussion, but I could not analyse all material forensically given the sheer volume of documents. I have chosen to focus on a manageable group that cover the structures, aims and rationale of the English curriculum, and I cite implementation surveys, consultation reports, and the scope and sequence materials that lay out in detail the achievement standards for each year level. I observe However, I observe that in the case of English the shape of the English Curriculum does not fundamentally change from the first iteration of

the English Curriculum in the . *National English Curriculum: Initial Advice* (2008) and the *Shape of the Curriculum: English* (2009).

The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (2009) (latest version 2020) articulates the goals of a national curriculum meant to serve as a blueprint for the future, a curriculum that will deliver equity, transparency and clarity. English teachers are charged with delivering literacy outcomes for the school, whether or not other learning areas take their responsibilities for literacy in their field seriously. English teachers must cope with those students who need extra help with literacy, and English teachers often deal with much of the emotional 'work' of the school, given that the curriculum encourages discussion of such topics as race and gender, at the very least as part of the literature strand. In the Australian Curriculum teachers are identified as the primary audience for curriculum documents but seem to be largely missing from the process, except in the artificial, stage-managed and highly choreographed procedures of 'official' consultation.

The Australian Curriculum recognises that all students are entitled to equitable educational provision that will allow them to take their place as citizens of a national and global world, and will equip them to realise their ambitions in the workplace, regardless of their background. It is legitimate to ask whether there is a document that explains the curriculum development process and one that outlines the curriculum design process (both to be discussed in Chapter Three), with panel members entrusted with the overall shape of the curriculum in designated learning areas. Teachers are said to teachers as their primary audience, who deserve a curriculum that values clarity, consistency and plain language and is explicit in its content and achievement standards. Each learning area of the Curriculum must be articulated with the General Capabilities and Cross-Curriculum Priorities that all students should be able to demonstrate and develop across year levels as they progress through school. These Capabilities and Priorities are to be intrinsic to and integrated into the whole curriculum. The seven General Capabilities are as follows: Literacy, Numeracy, ICT, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, and Intercultural Understanding. The Cross-curriculum Priorities are: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures; Engagement with Asia; and

Sustainability. Syllabi at the school level should incorporate these Capabilities and Priorities in the content and achievement standards of learning programs.

There is now (as of 2015) a *National Literacy Learning Progression v.3* plan that helps teachers to chart how well students are performing and progressing during in their incremental mastery of literacy. The document is not meant to replace AC: E but to provide an extensive checklist of skills that students should have acquired mastered as they progress through each year level. It was developed in order to address the concerns of curriculum responders who felt that more learning time ought to be devoted to literacy. It takes in modes—speaking and listening, reading and viewing, and writing—and it is divided into has been trialled in some schools and against NAPLAN before being adopted. The Educational Australian Council of Education Research (ACER), Council, charged with addressing educational issues of national significance, identified literacy and numeracy as issues matters for national action. It was felt that literacy is so fundamental to school achievement in other learning areas, not just English, and in fostering the literacies required for post-school destinations that it requires more detailed attention. While it is helpful in categorising and embedding the tasks and skills students need to master as they progress through school, it is quite a complex document and when put side by side with English curriculum documents and the General Capacities and Cross-curriculum Priorities, teachers, quite reasonably, may find it a little daunting. The *Literacy Progression* document certainly underscores the importance of explicit the teacher's role in scaffolding literacy learning and teaching meant to govern the whole of the Curriculum, though it does not mandate particular pedagogies.

In addition to key curriculum documents already cited, there are a range of materials that provide guidance for teachers. For example, *English: Sequence of Content--F6* (2015) affords a comprehensive and detailed framework of content and assessment tasks and is organised around the three strands that structure the English Curriculum: Language, Literature and Literacy. There is also a handy *Glossary* for the English Curriculum that helps teachers decode curriculum term. This does not exhaust the number of documents relevant to English curricula, which include scope and sequence documents across all levels, from the F-10 to Senior Secondary English

curriculum, implementation surveys, and consultation reports that will be referred to analysed as appropriate during the course of the thesis.

At some points in the thesis I make some international comparisons of the AC: E with English in other jurisdictions, in particular this case England and Ontario. Since the Australian Curriculum is meant to be world class some comparisons seem indicated. The England curriculum experienced some of the same difficulties as the Australian Curriculum as it was rolled out (for example, literacy teaching and literature provoked controversy. In the *National English Curriculum: Initial Response* cited above, which preceded the writing of the curriculum, there are links to curricula from other comparable educational jurisdictions that offer useful comparisons. Ontario and British Columbia are mentioned, because, in the first instance, Canada has roughly the same population as Australia and operates in a federal system. Since the thesis was submitted and in the course of a curriculum review, ACARA has benchmarked the Curriculum against those of Singapore, Finland, New Zealand and British Columbia and come to some of the same conclusions I have arrived at (the comparisons can be found on the ACARA website under the heading Research). I have not sought to base the thesis solely on national and international comparisons of English curricula since it would require a much lengthier investigation than it already is. An appraisal of national educational goals across comparable school systems with which Australia likes to compare itself demonstrates that jurisdictions mandate the study of literature and especially national literatures. Literacy is likewise high on the list and in general terms the English Curriculum do not on the face of it depart significantly from curricula from other comparable jurisdictions, but that does not signify that the curriculum is impervious to critique.

In order to evaluate the English curriculum I have drawn on the expertise of scholars from relevant disciplines in education, such as the work of linguists, sociologists, and curriculum specialists, but, in my avowed aim to situate the curriculum in wider historical contexts, I have freely incorporated studies which draw on the work of key cultural theorists—Pierre Bourdieu, Zygmunt Baumann, and Ian Hunter—in order to address broader issues of education in modernity and postmodernity, such as the emergence of the European nation-state's mass education system. As regards schooling, Hunter traces the rise of the liberal, self-realising,

autonomous subject from the cultural formations of a Christian pastoral pedagogy, to generate schooled subjects useful to the state. Bauman is another who tracks the transition from modernity, characterised by rationality, to a consumerist postmodernity, and he explores the (shifting) dynamics of power through these changes--who possesses it and what freedoms have been surrendered to make the modern nation-state a stable entity. Bourdieu has been especially attractive to scholars because he developed a sociology of education that saw it as a means to distribute the 'cultural capital' that elites possess and transmit, and he regarded pedagogy as a form of symbolic violence. It is hard to derive an uncomplicated narrative of progress from the work of these scholars, however different their assumptions, and perhaps for that very reason their work has been fruitful for contemporary critics of past and present practices who offer critiques of the current bureaucratic milieu of the school.

Regardless of the content of curricula, many who read the sheer volume of curriculum materials of the Australian Curriculum might be forgiven for seeing the whole apparatus of aims, goals, assessment and standards as designed to produce certain kinds of docile subjects. Moreover, the General Capabilities and Cross-curriculum m Priorities, however laudable their aims, might strike an unsympathetic reader as exactly designed, in Hunter's words, to install the supposedly free subject at the centre of schooling, the subject who must accommodate to the demands of 'ethical and civic life' (*Rethinking the School* 177).

It is not surprising, then, to find scholars who believe that education is increasingly hostage to market forces, high stakes testing, and standardisation, based on the scientific rationality of which Bourdieu speaks. Sadiq Abdullah, Wayne Au, Stephen J, Ball, Nathalie Bulle and Josephine Anderson are five scholars who, among many, express reservations about these trends, even as nation states are increasingly reliant on such instruments and the power of the market to deliver better educational outcomes for all. In the case of English curricula, these global contexts often coalesce around literacy: what is it? What are the best ways to teach it? Therefore literacy curricula are closely scrutinised to find 'what really works' when it comes to producing literate subjects (assuming that teachers are also literate subjects). Historical research

tells us that literacy cannot be understood outside social and communicative contexts⁵ and in the Australian Curriculum literacy is a process of becoming literate--in formal and informal contexts. I have been influenced, among others, by the work of Frances Christie, Gunther Kress, and Misty Adoniou, all of whom do not regard literacy as a fixed possession of the individual but rather the product of distinct social systems and literate practices, including pre-literate practices such as scribbling. Literacy also raises pedagogical issues, such as the effectiveness of teacher driven instruction direct instruction versus inquiry-based learning, very much an area of dispute. Grammar and phonics are two other fronts in the literacy campaign and are the source of some contention. Phonics is are mandated in the Australian Curriculum but not every scholar is persuaded. For example, Misty Adoniou and John Hattie, two prominent scholars, have disagreed quite bitterly on the subject, Adoniou arguing that phonics is not the silver bullet in teaching children how to read while Hattie is a passionate advocate.

Linguists have been crucial to curriculum development, as they should be, especially in the development of a meta language to talk about language although there has been some disagreement between linguists and the discipline of English as it has been understood in the last few decades. Before beginning the writing of the English Curriculum the National Curriculum Board issued the *National English Curriculum: Initial Advice*, already noted. . Peter Freebody (who headed up the initial advisory group on the English Learning Area) is an expert on literacy and equity and has served on a number of government bodies, including the National Institute of Education in Singapore. The National Curriculum Board and the English Advisory Group were recruited from a wide range of experts, some of whom have themselves published on the Australian Curriculum. The *Initial Advice* makes clear that the *Advice* was released as a discussion document for feedback and consultation. However, the contours of the Curriculum were are already well defined, such as the division into the three strands of Language, Literature and Literacy and Language, the educational contexts the Curriculum, such as globalisation and multiliteracies, and the General

⁵ By way of example, literacy in the ancient world was the province of scribes who were highly trained in more than one language and were capable of decoding difficult systems such as cuneiform tablets.

Capabilities and Cross-curricula Priorities were in place. Understandably, then, the AC:E has not been created *ab ovo*. The appended list of references to the document is a who's who of curriculum specialists, such as Brian Cope, Allan Luke, Alan Reid, Wayne Sawyer, and James Gee. Beverly Derewianka, and Mary Macken-Horarik are linguists who have contributed to curriculum conversations in Australia and are trained in Michael Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, which has influenced the Curriculum, especially in the case of genre-based pedagogy, which assists students to master culturally powerful genres. In the eyes of some critics genre-based pedagogy risks leading to an uncritical adoption of these genres. Hunter supports genre-based pedagogy because its aims are more modest than the liberatory promises of pedagogues such as John Gatto and Michael Apple, who still believe that education can radically transform the lives of students.

Published Research

In my published research as a whole, I have always striven to engage teachers in a dialogue about curriculum concepts and to demonstrate how these concepts can inform the reading of individual texts, whether those readings are centred on generic conventions, aesthetic strategies, or cultural and historical contexts, all of which are interrelated. Thus I have been principally concerned about how to translate syllabi into teachable programs by elucidating the conceptual frameworks of English syllabi and applying them to texts. In the course of my research I have focused on such concepts as literary traditions, including the creation of literary canons, the place of Indigenous texts in the curriculum, and the definition of key theoretical terms. I have also tried to show that readings of individual texts can be fully integrated in order to address several outcomes at the same time, as envisaged by curriculum writers, in order to resist the atomisation of curricula. All of my research is relevant to the AC:E, as a careful reading of the Curriculum shows.

By way of illustration, I was asked to contribute an article on intertextuality--a key syllabus concept--for a volume of *Interpretations*, the Journal of the English Teachers' Association of Western Australia. I decided to build the article around Williamson's then very successful and fashionable play *Dead White Males*. My aim was not only to provide a nuanced and accessible exploration of the concept of

intertextuality as fundamental to the curriculum, but to criticise the play's slick conservatism, its bardolatry and its sexist politics and to link them up by showing how these issues and concepts were caught up in England's new national curriculum.

The play's central character is a trendy Marxist academic, Swain, who encourages students to read Shakespeare through the lens of gender politics while (ab)using his position in order to sexually harass female students. His hypocrisy and intellectual glibness are held up to scorn and ridicule and Shakespeare himself appears as a character on stage to act as a corrective to Swain's views and a reproach to Swain's shabby attempt to demean Shakespeare's universal genius. Williamson astutely invites audiences to be appalled at what passes for literary criticism in the modern academy and audiences seemed receptive to the message because the play proved very popular and was given a run in the UK in a regional theatre (Southampton). Consequently the play fits seamlessly into a right-wing critique about the (age old) 'corruption of the young' which has been so prevalent in debates swirling around English curricula. For example in the UK in the 70s and 80s the study of Shakespeare became a debate about national identity and cultural authority, and left-wing scholars, as members of the New Left, were busy with re-readings of Shakespeare (even as the Globe itself was being rebuilt on the South Bank). The place of literature within the academy and by extension in schools has been undermined by fashionable 'theories' and therefore the teaching of the canon and 'good' literature seriously compromised.

At base, the play is also a defence of, and defensive about, a nostalgic version of authentic Australian masculinity, embodied in an older working-class patriarch, pitted against and maligned by a university-educated younger generation (from which Williamson originally emerged) being led astray by the Swains of the world. Consequently *Dead White Males* is not simply about literature as the carrier of universal aesthetic and moral values, but about *national* values. This is a smart move by Williamson because the old patriarch of the play is an almost dead white male who, along with Shakespeare, has been betrayed by the young. Hence to betray Shakespeare is to betray a dominant version of Australian identity.

Although the play had some success in the United Kingdom since its critique of the 'politicisation' of literature resonated there, it feels most at home in Australian theatrical history because it seems almost a reply to Seymour's ground-breaking *The*

One Day of the Year (1960) in which a working-class university student aggressively rejects his father's values, and macho, patriotic masculinity but eventually is able to achieve some kind of reconciliation with members of the older generation and to view them with less disdain. *Dead White Males* therefore sits within an intergenerational discourse, but this time it is not the arrogance of the young that is the obstacle but the insufferable self-importance of the morally flawed Swain that generates resentment.

The AC:E is divided into the strands Literacy, Literature, Language, Literature, each to be accorded equal weight in students' learning. Essential to the Curriculum's renewed concern about installing literature at its heart, the document emphasises the need for students to understand the Australian literary tradition and to master the conventions of literacy criticism as well as reading Australian literature. *Dead White Males* perfectly illustrates the dilemmas such an approach to the Curriculum brings in its wake since the play regards Shakespeare as the literary tradition embodied and as the origin and sign of the literary itself, authorising Williamson's defence of his own authorship and Shakespeare's as well. Shakespeare is obviously the starting point of the Australian literary and theatrical tradition, and this, while true, links Australia to its imperial origins replicated in other British colonies. In theatre Australia had, in the second half of the twentieth century, to free itself from the dominance of British drama in order to establish an indigenous theatre, to which Williamson has contributed so brilliantly throughout his career.

While I am completely against abolishing Shakespeare from the curriculum, a Shakespeare that is only a representative of a certain kind of cultural heritage is one that is truly a dead white male. Thus *Dead White Males* sets its face against 'political correctness' but at the same time it invites a reflection on literary traditions and, in this case, Australian literary and, importantly, theatrical traditions. The play has a close relationship with its intertext *As You Like It*, whose ending is staged in the course of the play to remind spectators of Shakespeare's masterful grasp of theatrical conventions and his witty command of the pastoral, which he parodies for its threadbare conventions though it was so popular in his day (see James S. Shapiro, *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599* for a detailed assessment of the genre of the pastoral). Hence the article does more than just explain the concept of intertextuality but contributes to the exploration of key curriculum concepts and

explores the generic conventions which are inseparable from the ideological commitments of the text.

My article was also in part a critique of a cultural heritage view of Shakespeare promoted by the Thatcher government's wistful yet aggressive vision of Englishness, and thus by extension a critical assessment of curricula overly reliant on a national canon. And in England the canon surfaces as a grievance even in the Mother of Parliaments, where conservatives like Michael Gove deplore the loss of literary heritage. I drew on the work of a recent generation of Shakespeare scholars, such as Catherine Belsey, John Dollimore, and Alan Sinfield, and edited volumes such as *Alternative Shakespeares* and *Political Shakespeare*, as well as my knowledge of performance history in the United Kingdom, acquired over several decades, to demonstrate that Shakespeare must be open to re readings if he is not to become fossilised.

The Australian Curriculum, based on the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2009), claims to centralise equity and to respect difference and diversity. The AC:E laid out in the *Shape of the Curriculum: English* and its accompanying documents, makes much of the need for students to read Indigenous texts as fundamental to their experience of literature. However reading say, stories of the Dreamtime (always mediated) and works by Indigenous writers problematises, disturbs and raises questions about an 'Australian' literary tradition derived from the self-conscious nationalism of the *Bulletin*. And given the vast increase in social media where racist commentary is in plain view, the task of the teacher is more nerve-racking. Aboriginal voices, with some exceptions, were largely unheard in Australia until social and political developments in the 70s meant that they were openly solicited. Such texts began to enter literature and English courses and English teachers by default acquired another duty--to combat racism and prejudice among non-Indigenous students (while not really naming the problem of race).

They were not helped in the 90s by Howard's talk of mainstream Australia and being 'relaxed and comfortable' about racist attitudes. I provided an article for *Interpretations* (33.4, 1999, 36-50) (republished in its South Australian equivalent) that employed postcolonial theory to examine the fraught relationship between modernity and Aboriginality in Australia. It dwelt on the question of who defines Aboriginality,

the relationship between the Indigenous and the multicultural, the manner in which Aborigines were seen by many as rightfully excluded from modernity and history, and the privileges that attend such belonging; they were regarded as impertinent intruders in contemporary Australia while being condemned for not adjusting to modernity and assimilating into white society. It also explored the ways in which being 'Australian' is constructed in opposition to Aboriginality. Thus I hoped to expose the contradictory positioning of Aborigines in the nation--too white or not white enough, too traditional or not traditional enough. While the Australian Curriculum acknowledges Indigeneity, wants students to respect different linguistic and cultural traditions, and encourages the inclusion of Indigenous texts in the syllabus, there can be an air of tokenism about the rhetoric because it is vital to recognise that the incorporation of such issues and texts challenges and destabilises dominant narratives of the nation, that invoking the aesthetic, the moral and the experiential, as the English Learning Area persistently does, inevitably raises questions about whose experience is being privileged, what implications for equality and justice the texts bring in their train, and how one values these texts aesthetically. I am acutely aware that talking about and for Aborigines places non-Indigenous critics and teachers in awkward ideological positions, a problem which has to be faced. And it is being faced in the new review (2021). Stuart Riddle, an eminent scholar, in *The Conversation* welcomes the new curriculum because it states plainly that Indigenous Australians view colonisation as invasion, and that there is a renewed focus on the various language groups that make up linguistic diversity in Australia. These changes have already provoked a backlash from conservative commentators and Alan Tudge, the Minister of Education, who wants Anzac Day to be sacred and deplores any talk of invasion .

Moreover, while Indigenous students are identified as requiring special measures, the Indigenous remains an Other to the curriculum, not a subject of it, although this may gradually change. Because, in the Curriculum, the Indigenous inhabits the literary, outside the category of literature Aboriginal students are often the marginalised objects of literacy intervention. Under the seven General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum F-10, Intercultural Understanding is recognised as a key capacity that students should acquire, but if, for example, English or history teachers

are inhibited from teaching, say, 'critical race theory,' the ideal of intercultural understanding,

Which supports global and civic citizenship, may be absent.

The question of the Australian literary and theatrical tradition became acute and exhilarating when Indigenous theatre began to occupy stages. It is hard to overestimate the excitement that plays such as Jack Davis's *No Sugar* and Jimmy Chi's musical *Bran Nue Dae* created in the 70s and 80s, especially in Western Australia. Naturally they were quickly picked up by English teachers, who are always eager to find texts that promote intercultural understanding, which is one of the Australian Curriculum's cross-curricular priorities. Professor Brian Dibble and I offered a paper for the 1992 Australia in the World: Perceptions and Possibilities Conference, entitled 'Looking at Them Looking at Us: Jack Davis's *No Sugar*,' subsequently published in the collection of conference papers, which examined the role of identity in *No Sugar*. It dealt with the theme of internal exile in the play, especially the concept of space both in the staging and in the staging's link to colonial spaces that confined Nyoongahs to increasingly cramped and despised locations (such as the prison) and confined spaces of the mind and soul. We also emphasised Nyoongahs' ability to survive in the face of relentless exclusion and bureaucratic overregulation.

Subsequently, Professor Dibble and I contributed a paper to *Westerly* on *No Sugar* in which we noted, in a postcolonial context, the complex linguistic relationships the play sets up. First and foremost, the Nyoongah characters must use the language of the oppressors, which they do with their own inflections, vernacular and humour, cleverly pitting their English against the bureaucratic language of government, that of the lecture hall and the infantilisation of the Sunday School. At times, the Millimurra family speak in 'language,' which is not translated for the audience and enables the family to gain a measure of privacy and community, though of course 'language' is disapproved of by the authorities. Hence the play highlights the role of language as a means of controlling the indigenous subject. Language loss and the varieties of English to be found across Australia can only resonate ironically in terms of respect for difference, although Davis himself, among others, shows that education had not been wasted on Aborigines of his generation. The play cleverly reflects on the conditions of its own production and adroitly positions non-Indigenous

audiences so as to challenge their colonial gaze and to gauge their reactions to an Indigenous writer employing the genre of drama and Western theatre to challenge them. However, Davis's work demonstrates that there is a generosity in the way Indigenous Australians reach out to those who have marginalised them, despite a long history of rejection. In 'Modernity and Aboriginality' Brian Dibble and I pointed out that Aborigines have been excluded from history (*Westerly* 7.2 [1992] 93-96). In our analysis of *No Sugar*, we nevertheless drew attention to Davis's strategic use of history, set as the play is in 1929, the centenary of Western Australia's founding, and written for WA's 150th anniversary. The Nyoongahs at Moore River Mission are compelled to celebrate the centenary in an official ceremony in which they are reduced to stage props but which they disrupt and turn into farce by a carnivalesque gesture of resistance.

The musical *Bran Nue Dae* was a runaway success when it reached the stage with the help of the director Andrew Ross. The work of the Broome musician Jimmy Chi and his band Knuckles, joyfully yet with undertones of sadness tells a history of Australia under whites' noses but unacknowledged and ignored. The historian, writer and ABC Radio National presenter Michael Cathcart wittily remarked that he had no problem with a national Australian history curriculum (*ABC Bush Telegraph*); he just thought it ought to be written from Broome.⁶ There is wisdom in his observation since the north of Australia is a zone of ambiguity, an ethnic mix that created anxiety in the south and therefore tends to dis/locate mainstream history. Broome exploited non-whites in the pearling industry, wanted workers from Asia who would not stay or settle, and is now an expensive holiday destination trading on its heritage and landscape, while the north was proposed as a Special Economic Zone by both major political parties (an idea now extinct, it seems). Broome, whether authorities wanted it or not, created a vigorous multicultural mix of Aborigines, Chinese, Japanese and others, to which *Bran Nue Dae* is testimony.

When the musical began to be incorporated into the Western Australian English syllabus by teachers I sought to provide a reading of it that would be helpful to them, analysing this piece of musical theatre by its use of generic conventions, and its

⁶ I have not been able to recover the exact date of the transmission.

position as a postcolonial text within the Australian literary tradition and national context. I began with the music itself, well aware that the varieties of Indigenous musical culture that survived the arrival of whites were classified as ethnomusicology, consigning Aborigines to the realm of the anthropological, as I discovered as an undergraduate when studying a unit on Aboriginal music. There are echoes in *Bran Nue Dae* of some of the idioms of this musical culture, but Indigenous musicians draw on a powerful and eclectic mix of styles. In *Bran Nue Dae* Country and Western music, rock-'n-roll and the hymns taught in school all exert their influence. There is a sentimental desire to celebrate Indigenous musical, artistic and literary texts as an authentic expression of culture which Australians can affirm without being unduly confronted, and the reception of *Bran Nue Dae* had something of that atmosphere about it.

The semi-autobiographical narrative of *Bran Nue Dae* tells the story of a young Aboriginal man who leaves his Perth boarding school run by Lutheran brothers and travels back to Broome. Along the way he undergoes that Aboriginal rite of passage, being imprisoned, gets romantically involved, and discovers that he is actually the son of a Lutheran missionary and an Aboriginal mother, a type of miscegenation narrative that was suppressed, especially in the north, but is here openly celebrated. In fact, everybody, by the end of the musical, seems happy to be identified as an Aborigine, even the German backpacker in his busted van who gives everyone a lift to Broome. The use of Broome Kreol, like the use of 'language' in *No Sugar*, once again estranges Standard Australian English and allows audiences to hear difference.

A salient and alternative method by which to understand Aboriginal theatre is through the Deleuze-Guattarian paradigm of a minor literature, enunciated in their book *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. A minor literature is one which deterritorialises a major language through a minor literature written in the major language from a marginalised or minoritarian position. A minor literature is by nature political:

[i]ts cramped spaces force each individual intrigue to connect to politics. The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified because a whole other story is vibrating in it. (17)

Hence a minor literature is a collective literature that allows it to express the possibility of another community created from the margins (17). By bringing into play spatial metaphors of deterritorialisation, borders and margins, Deleuze and Guattari make available an analysis which can be rendered serviceable to the examination of the growth of an Indigenous drama in Australia. Davis writes in English, the language of the coloniser, in a situation in which the vernacular language has mostly been lost or weakened and has been for a long time a 'secret' language for whose use Aborigines were often punished. Then there is the vehicular language which, according to Deleuze and Guattari, operates within urban, governmental and commercial realms (23). This, too, is English in *No Sugar* but the relationship between this language (and its formal registers) and that of the Nyoongahs at the Moore River settlement alienates the Millimurra family from English even while they employ it to undermine their masters, and makes their own language strange but potentially powerful. Once a vernacular language, the local tongue has become a mythic language since it is involved in the spiritual and the religious, the connection of Aborigines to land and culture, and also a form of rebellion against the authorities.

Alongside my interest in Indigenous drama I developed a fascination with contemporary Irish drama, for some of the same reasons. The so-called 'renaissance' of Irish drama, which began during the 70s, constitutes a decolonising moment in which revisionist histories, buried experiences, the brutal resurgence of the Irish Troubles and a new Irish cultural and economic confidence became a heady mixture. The plays that emerged from these forces were generally of such high quality that they made mainstream stages in the United Kingdom and around the world and thus they resonated with more than the Irish. I provided extensive curriculum materials for the English Teachers' Association to accompany Brian Friel's *Translations* when it was added to the Year 12 Literature curriculum (not included in the Publications Bibliography). The play seems designed for the Deleuze-Guatterian category of a minor literature, not least because it plays a clever trick on the audience. All the dialogue is in English, but for most of the play the characters are speaking in 'Gaelic' and at other times in English. Thus the characters sometimes painfully translate each other's lines while the audience hears only English, a consummate theatrical device.

The play is set in 1833 in a Hedge School run by a drunken superannuated old rogue, a Classical scholar, who instructs his Gaelic-speaking adult pupils in Greek and Latin even as the authorities are setting up English-speaking, government-run schools meant to eradicate Gaelic. Meanwhile English soldiers are surveying the whole of Ireland in the Great Survey and changing placenames in order to rationalise them. Hints of the potato famine to come are already in the air.

According to the Deleuze-Guattarian linguistic system, Gaelic is the vernacular language connected to the everyday, to land and to culture, which is considered backward, local and rural. The vehicular language is English, the tongue of modernity, rationality and order. The characters that choose English are for better or worse choosing to go with the new Ireland. Latin (the play concludes with a long speech from the *Aeneid* that depicts the fatal coming of the Romans, who will obliterate the Carthaginians) has become a mythic and elegiac language, the carrier of a culture that is equated with the Gaelic-becoming-past, but remains in the play as fresh as yesterday. Nevertheless English, through the dialogue's quotations from Wordsworth, is also the language of a culture that the Irish can appropriate, since the Irish are well-known for beating the British at English. As Gaelic is becoming-strange to the Irish in the play, the villagers feel they are internal exiles, much like the Aborigines in *No Sugar*. Thus the play is collective and political in the manner of a minor literature and the resistance to the oppressor is gaining strength as we learn of guerrilla tactics from the (offstage) locals, such as relocating surveying poles to disorientate the soldiers spatially.

By way of contrast I offered a paper to the Australasian Association for the Study of Literature, subsequently published in the collection of conference papers, an analysis of Neil Jordan's biopic *Michael Collins* (1996), an award-winning film much heralded and meant to be in some sense definitive. It presents the negotiations with Britain over (limited) self-government and the events of the Irish Civil War, with Collins, the Big Fella, murdered by his own ranks and cast as sacrificial hero for the cause of Ireland, betrayed by England and misguided and vicious opponents. The film once more recycles Irish history as a series of Christ-like theatrical martyrdoms, casting the English as Romans (an image that also occurs in *Translations*). Julia

Roberts (improbably) plays the Cathleen ni Houlihan figure⁷ who embodies the nation, for which men must sacrifice themselves, and who must mourn for her fallen hero. Thus mapped onto the sacrificial narrative, with its overtones of Girardian⁸ sacred violence and mimesis and its role in community and national formation, is another deeply implicated in it--a gendered narrative that sees Ireland as a woman fought over by rivals, a narrative that has denied agency to Irish women, who have been for so long viewed as pure virgins or Madonnas encouraged to offer their sons for Ireland. It is not just that the film oversimplifies history, as it must; it is that the Christological narratives of Irish history have proved to be one of the intractable problems of recent Irish history itself. It is not that *Translations* does not reference some of these tropes--the young woman who embodies Ireland, the violent history foreshadowed, the rival brothers who must choose their allegiances--but Friel handles them more intelligently and subtly so that the audience is moved to critique as well as accept them (for example, the central female character in *Translations* is no mourning Madonna but a feisty and practical woman who takes her destiny into her own hands). Without diminishing the scale of the woes Britain inflicted on Ireland, the critic is hard put to avoid the conclusion that allegiance to such clichéd narratives as *Michael Collins* aggravates rather than helps to heal divisions. Thus I furnished interpretations of plays interconnected by their postcolonial themes, which are inseparable from their dramatic strategies, generic conventions and aesthetic choices. Looking back on this work, I now realise that Williamson's *Dead White Males* is capable of supporting a postcolonial reading, since it foregrounds Australia's prickly relationship to the British hegemon while reclaiming Shakespeare for a sentimentalised version of Australian masculinity.

I am now more forcefully struck by how deeply grounded in the pedagogical the plays are. By this I do not only refer to the ethical purposes literature serves in the

⁷ Cathleen ni Houlihan is a mythic Irish figure who represents Ireland herself and appears in W. B. Yeats' 1902 play of the same name. It is set at the beginning of the 1798 rebellion and its pro-Nationalist stance is emblematic of the Irish Renaissance to which Yeats was such a significant contributor. In fact *Michael Collins* does not seem to have moved on from the ideological positions enshrined in the play, which foreshadows the violence to come in the struggle for independence.

⁸ Rene Girard's theory of mimetic violence as an explanation for the origin of religion and sacrifice, and whatever its merits, is one of the most intellectually influential in the field of religious studies today and even has a journal (*Mimesis*) entirely devoted to his work. According to Girard, Jesus' ultimate sacrifice of himself brought the cult of sacrifice to an end. No one told the Irish.

classroom. Rather, I allude to the fact that pedagogy is central to the plays themselves. In *Bran Nue Dae* the young man escapes from his Lutheran boarding school in Perth to embark on a journey back to Broome, a trip that educates him in his own history and identity. *No Sugar* never leaves the educational behind--Sunday school, the Foundation Day ceremony that incorporates Nyoongahs into a colonial narrative of civilisation and progress, the lecture that Neville, the Protector of Aborigines, gives to the WA Historical Society, and the fact that Indigenous people are viewed as perennially childish and child-like, in need of white governance and instruction, which led to the Stolen Generation. *Translations* begins with what the linguist Street calls 'a literacy event' (133), a scene in which a disabled girl is gently encouraged to repeat her name. In the play, teaching the Classical tongues, learning English, losing Gaelic, demonstrates the fragility of cultural translation, the links between language and culture, and the use and abuse of literacy, surely a live issue in the context of the Australian Curriculum. Becoming literate in Greek and Latin seems a superfluity and a gesture towards a Classical past co-opted to establish the Irish as worthy inheritors of what has come to be known as Western or European civilisation. And indeed Ireland supported for many centuries a learned, scholarly culture whose influence was European wide. Thus English seems an invasive language of the future. *Dead White Males* is set in a university and forms part of a fairly lengthy tradition of the institutional (and academic) satire at which Williamson excels and though there are now more protocols in place to discourage the abuse of power in universities, Williamson draws an equivalence between sexual and intellectual exploitation in the pedagogical bond.

Surveying the collection of writings I have contextualised, it is clear that they bear on the question of literary tradition, and in particular on Australian literary tradition in a postcolonial framework. In the *National English Curriculum: Framing Paper* (2008) the writers note that the teaching of literature is 'gradually less oriented to a colonial agenda and more open to an international English and world literature' (#38) and that is admirable. The integration of Indigenous and regional literatures into the scope of the Curriculum fundamentally alters its shape. First of all, teachers must address the needs of an increasingly diverse cohort of students for whom an Australian literary tradition (or a European or British one) must seem remote. Secondly, one

wonders how seriously the new Curriculum really takes, or encourages teachers to take, the issue of including Indigenous and Asian-Pacific texts, particularly as the Curriculum is focused on national identity and there are obvious contradictions entailed in harmonising a nation-building project, a globalising world and a multicultural society. In fact the chain of logic appears to begin with the idea that canonical literature needs to be restored in a renovated curriculum, that Australian literature must be included in a nation-building curriculum, that Indigenous texts must be included if the rhetoric of inclusivity and difference is to be taken seriously and that, since Australia is in the Asian century, then a nod to the region is required. I do not suggest that curriculum writers were cynical or wrote in bad faith but I do recognise that they had to negotiate many competing interests. To be effective in encompassing diversity we might start with texts that foreground asylum seekers and refugee, given that the movement of refugees is one of our most pressing global and national issues?⁹ Hence the curriculum's explicit focus on literary history, literary traditions and literary criticism, may, but need not, divert attention from other areas, goals and global challenges posed by the English curriculum. I realise that governments through their educational institutions must call on recognised experts to devise curriculum materials but that governments may not always support the results.

The State of the Art

In 2000 I was commissioned by the English Teachers' Association of Western Australia to write a position paper in the light of new curriculum developments. These were a) the development of the Western Australian Curriculum Framework, begun in 1990, aligned with the National Profiles that had been developed during the Dawkins era (Watt 50) and b) the highly controversial Post-compulsory Education Review in Western Australia, the result of a sustained move towards outcomes-focused education in line with other states and the ambitions of the Federal government to move towards a national curriculum. This lengthy and sometimes tormented and

⁹ In 2010 Catherine Simmons directed a production called *Journey of Asylum--Waiting* at the Bella Union Theatre at the Melbourne Trades Hall. It was based on the experiences of asylum seekers in a form called Verbatim Theatre, a type of documentary theatre developed by the Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn, London. In 2013 the Queensland Theatre Company presented *I am Here*, a verbatim theatre piece based on the experiences of African refugees resettled in Australia.

conflicted process is described in detail in Chapter One of the thesis, its implications carefully explored, and its often paradoxical effects investigated. At the time I had not digested the full implications of curriculum changes around the nation, although I was distrustful of outcomes-focused education because I felt that it had not really been argued for. As Watt crisply observes, ‘policy makers viewed outcomes-based education to be compatible with the drive for economic reform, because it promised the delivery of measurable outcomes’ (6). My primary concern was the fate of Subject English if the Post-compulsory Review recommendations were adopted, since I felt that the kinds of skills and understandings English supported could easily be dismissed on the grounds that students only required an English Competency Certificate. Hence the State of the Art arose from a configuration of particular political and educational reform processes. One of its aims was to provide a brief history of the development of the discipline of English in the last hundred years or so because I believe that teachers ought to know something of this history in order to comprehend how curricula are developed and how syllabus documents incorporate sometimes conflicting aims. It is a project I have continued in the thesis since I believe that teachers will benefit from an understanding of the discipline of English in its social and historical contexts. I also note that the Curriculum Framework allows each state to inflect the curriculum as it thinks fit and in line with regional variations, so long as syllabi reflect the key concepts, Cross-curricular Priorities and General Capabilities.

The Post-compulsory Review included within its purview the place of Subject English in the senior secondary curriculum, and the possibility of students being able to demonstrate English Language Competence for secondary graduation through other learning areas. This move would have obviated the need for discrete English courses of study at Years 11 and 12, although students could still take such courses (as long as they continued to exist). The position paper *The Development and Demonstration of English Language Competence for Secondary Graduation* sought opinions from stakeholders and canvassed options. This at a time when international tests were in the early stage of development, as the Post-compulsory Review notes in its canvassing of secondary graduation in Australia, Canada, America and the UK (2-3). The language of competencies had gained a hold on the minds of governments and employers because they seemed to promise objective measures and a focus on

practical and workplace literacies. Tertiary institutions generally stipulated a pass in Subject English or its equivalent as the entry level requirement, although in WA some high-ranking private schools encouraged students to undertake Literature instead since it is considered an elite subject. One of the perennial concerns with devolving responsibility for literacy to designated learning areas has always been time, assessment and teacher training. Defining ‘competence’ is a tough assignment and the generation of meaningful standards a challenge. English teachers and academics expressed alarm at proposed changes since Subject English takes in a wide range of intellectual, linguistic and multimodal skills and understandings that are not easily incorporated into other learning areas. It is not that such competencies cannot be incorporated in other disciplinary areas, but in crowded curricula they may be sidelined. My knowledge of the communication units that students are required to pass at Curtin to ensure that graduate attributes are met are undervalued and tokenistic, despite the fact that teachers in this area are enthusiastic and skilled. During the intervening years NAPLAN testing is now pervasive at the lower and middle school levels and there is a fresh emphasis on writing across the curriculum (see ‘Cross Curricula Priorities,’ ACARA 2 July, 2020).

The initial position paper grew to three substantial essays, published in successive issues of *Interpretations*, then republished as a stand-alone monograph. The aim of the three papers, considered together, was to resituate English in the light of the Post-compulsory Review. Specifically:

- To argue for the legitimacy of Subject English as a separate TEE subject.
- To offer a brief disciplinary history of English in order to contextualise current debates.
- To defend the concept of ‘critical literacy’ as a suite of theoretical techniques deployed to analyse language and texts in their social contexts.
- To link disciplinary theory to pedagogy.

In 2001 I presented, at a Curtin humanities research seminar, a paper on the Post-compulsory Review and its implications. The Post-compulsory Review wanted to articulate a new relationship between work and school (workplace literacy), between K-10 and K-11/12, and between tertiary and non-tertiary destinations. Doubts remained in some minds about whether enough attention was being paid to basic literacy skills in Subject English, together with a suspicion of critical literacy as an unwelcome

innovation¹⁰. In some cases students were enrolling in Subject English and taking the exam without having studied it formally. This became part of the case that English Language competence could be demonstrated without undertaking Subject English itself. English teachers are often a little defensive about their discipline because they feel it is an easy target for censure and of course there are always boundary disputes over disciplinary knowledge and its career consequences.

In my seminar and articles for *Interpretations* (cited in the Bibliography) I expressed apprehension that the abolition of TEE Subject English would undermine English at middle school level, potentially reduce the English skills of university entrants across the board and impoverish English for students who chose a non-tertiary destination. I also worried about the effects on teacher training. Would graduates want to specialise in English if there were diminished career paths? Or would English become simply a service area. I need not have worried since the Australian Curriculum demands many highly trained English teachers with an excellent grounding in literacy, literature, multiliteracies and digital literacies to cope with new textual forms.

I also realise more forcefully than before that these essays are embedded in the experience of teachers, first, as gendered subjects (English is predominately taught by women) and, second, as ethical subjects because they are often assigned by the nature of the discipline to do uncomfortable 'cultural work,' such as addressing issues of gender, race and other forms of inequality. If teachers are to include some Indigenous texts in their programs, for example, they can hardly ignore the place of Indigenous people in Australia. But to all intents and purposes, teachers are absent from the AC:E except in the spectral processes of consultation documents, which were constructed in such a way that only minor amendments to the Curriculum were in reality canvassed. Moreover, examples of radical curriculum change installed in Australia (for instance, in Tasmania and Western Australia) lead the observer to conclude that sufficient professional development funds need to be allocated for such purposes (Jones and Cheng 147-72). I in no way suggest that curriculum writers are hostile to teachers.

¹⁰ For a useful overview of these debates, consult Beryl Exley and Kathy Mills, 'Parsing the Australian Curriculum: Grammar, Multimodality and Cross-cultural Texts', *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 35.2 (1992), 205. Also, Andrew Goodwyn and Carol Fuller, *The Great Literacy Debate*, 2012.

Nevertheless teachers are often seen as culpable in the eyes of media especially when it comes to literacy and the supposed decline of literature--hence former Prime Minister Julia Gillard's press statement, cited in Chapter Four of the thesis, that there will be nothing postmodernist about the new curriculum. Though her statement takes in more than English (history for example), English teachers (and academics) have been held responsible for the lack of attention to literacy and the enfeeblement of literature by questioning the value of transmitting the tradition to a new generation and by incorporating 'new-fangled,' relativistic, 'politically correct' theories in syllabi.

The AC:E is also exercised by the same matters that troubled the Post-compulsory Review and has preserved basically the same structure for post-compulsory units--English, Literature, Essential English and English as a Second Language. However, it has thrown a heavy, and, I believe potentially disproportionate, emphasis across all years on literacy and its associated pedagogical and assessment regimes and it has made literature a non-negotiable element of all English courses of study at all levels. This may be no bad thing in both cases but literacy can easily overwhelm the Curriculum to the exclusion of much else since it is tested in NAPLAN and because literacy and language overlap. The ACARA *Literacy Learning Continuum* (2015) document lays out the skills that students need to master literacy at different levels and it is also the title of a popular educational book by Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, an American publication and one in a series of similar books helping teachers to deal with all aspects of literacy. It is not easily available in Australia and very expensive. It may be wonderful but it is also a part of the lucrative educational book trade that has come, to the dismay of some American educators, to dominate the agenda in schools. In a scathing assessment Howie asserts of the new English curriculum:

[i]t is difficult to conceive of anything that could be more *un-English* than using the three strands of language, literature and literacy to delimit curriculum content. For in effect the draft Australian curriculum is asking the nation's English teachers to forget everything they know--ironically enough--about the nature and workings of language, literacy and literature, in order to accept the three strands as valid and useful. (qtd. in Macken-Horarik 208)

He has been taken to task for this view in Macken-Horarik's article, but through a detailed examination of the relevant documents I demonstrate that the reservations of critics are well-founded because the tripartite division vitiates the conceptual, pedagogical and assessment structures of the Curriculum and entangles syllabi in too many multiple layers of standards and assessment.

However, critics of the new Curriculum need to pause before being too severe on curriculum writers because they frequently operate in a fraught political environment when it comes to certain areas of the curriculum. We need look no further than the installation of a national curriculum in England in 1988,¹¹ since it provided a model and impetus for Australia's Curriculum. Bethan Marshall offers an overview of experiments with English curricula during this period, from the work of Brian Cox,¹² whose curriculum aimed at consensus but pleased neither the Left nor Right, to New Labour's obsession with literacy teaching, to the Conservatives' wish to return curricula to a prelapsarian purity that reminds them of their Oxford days (188-92). She sums up the disquiet of critics as clustered around early reading, a canon of authors and Standard English (191). This is not a far cry from the concerns voiced by Australian commentators and politicians (Kevin Donnelly being a standout example: see Libby Tunstall, 'The Curriculum Review Full of Contradictions,' *The Conversation*, October 15 2014), and no curriculum writer can afford to ignore them. Thus the Australian Curriculum foregrounds correct usage and grammar, has a strong commitment to literature and emphasises phonics in early reading. But, just as in England, educators, though they may be resigned to political meddling, bring their own expertise to the curriculum. For example, in England (and in Australia) linguists influenced views of early language learning and adopted less prescriptive positions on grammar. In the *National English Curriculum: Framing Paper* there is a strong acknowledgment that 'basics' and explicit instruction need to be wedded to authentic tasks and engagement with a range of skills and texts. In England curriculum writers and, for that matter teachers, restive with governments' attempts to control the

¹¹ Since devolution Wales and Scotland now have their own curricula, which are not identical to the curriculum in England.

¹² Influenced by linguists, Brian Cox introduced a thread known as 'knowledge about language' into the curriculum, which is incorporated into the language strand in the Australian Curriculum.

curriculum (Marshall 187-99), came into conflict with successive secretaries of state for education.

The Head of the Advisory Panel on English in the Australian Curriculum, Peter Freebody, a linguist and a distinguished and long-standing contributor to research in New Literacies, had to reconcile, one imagines, his professional expertise with political expectations and avoided any exceptionally cramped views of what English should be. The Literature strand does not mandate texts and despite the prominence of literature in the Curriculum opinions are divided over whether literature has been downgraded or enhanced.¹³ Mastering Standard Australian English is prioritised and the importance of writing across the curriculum is highly ranked. The Curriculum pays due attention to the social and cultural contexts of texts, their rhetorical purposes and aesthetic qualities. New communication technologies are acknowledged as vital to the English Curriculum, as are multiliteracies and digital texts.

In saying this, one must allow that the Curriculum relies heavily on already existing state curricula because in Australia these curricula comprehend the subject's current disciplinary knowledge and status and because the co-operation of states and their teachers are required for a curriculum to have any hope of succeeding. Nor are English curricula across the nation exactly alike. Education ministers are often regarded as meddlers and Christopher's Pyne's appointment of a panel to review the Australian Curriculum early in 2015 has led to defences of the Curriculum in its present form as balanced, fair and rigorous. Bill Loudon notes that the English Curriculum does not differ significantly from state curricula and from curricula in high-performing international jurisdictions such as Ontario, New Zealand, Finland and Singapore, as I have ready canvassed ('The Australian Curriculum Review: What the Submissions Say'). Thus an evaluation of the English Curriculum must bear in mind that we are not looking at a complete overhaul but an opportunity, at best, to rethink some of its elements or, at worst, to tinker round its edges. Stewart Riddle, though, is one academic, an expert on pedagogy, sociology of education, and democracy and the curriculum, who regards metaphors of crisis, battles and wars as

¹³ For an overview of debates, see Stewart Riddle, 'Hooked on the Classics: Literature in the Literature in the English Classroom, *The Conversation* October 16 (2014).

deeply inappropriate for what goes on in the English classroom. He is broadly supportive of the Australian Curriculum because it does acknowledge that literacy education is not just about reading and writing (*The Conversation* February 18 2015) Howie's reaction to the Curriculum, cited above, is evidence of a fissure that seems to have opened up between English teachers and curriculum statements. No question that linguists are indispensable to the knowledge base of the Curriculum and that there are considerable overlaps between sociolinguistic theory and English curricula. Nevertheless, there is not an exact fit between the Curriculum and English teachers' assumptions and expectations, especially at senior levels. The problem surfaced in a 2009 article by Macken-Horarik, already cited, entitled 'Building a Knowledge Structure for English: Reflections on the Challenges of Coherence, Cumulative Learning, Portability and Face Validity.' As Macken-Horarik tartly observes:

[t]here is a groundswell of opposition to its [the National English Curriculum's] three-strand structure . . . and to its strong emphasis on knowledge as 'content' rather than as 'process.' In addition, many are concerned at the absence of the 'learner' and the 'teacher' in the curriculum. (199)

She is highly critical of the English Teachers' Association's final submission to the National Curriculum Board in 2009 on the grounds that it is suspicious of the recontextualisation of English as a body of knowledge about language that is portable, coherent and cumulative (208)--in Basil Bernstein's words a curriculum that exhibits specialised structures of explicit knowledge (161)--and she is harsh on critics of the three-strand structure. Drawing on Bernstein's and Maton's ground breaking work on the nature of disciplinary knowledge she faults the profession's response because it devalues bodies of (meta) knowledge (about language) in favour of process or ways of knowing (207). Macken-Horarik makes the entirely sensible point that many teachers feel ill-equipped to deal with grammar and lack a consistent metalanguage to talk about language. She also remarks on the challenge of 'creat[ing] an interface between literary and linguistic ways of talking about texts--something stylistics has attempted in other times, and cultural studies in a different milieu' (204). Several problems stem from these intradisciplinary tensions but others from the fact that the Curriculum itself is not explicit about the metalanguages being invoked, though Macken-Horarik concedes that a metalanguage that encompasses verbal and multimodal texts throws

up some obstacles (206). Macken-Horarik, who is writing, remember, in 2011, argues that, without resolving these issues, a world-class curriculum is impossible (209).

In the position papers I published I reviewed the (always ongoing) 'literacy crisis,' its origins, current contours and imbrication in ethical debates about the 'proper' subject of schooling. This 'crisis' had to be dealt with (again) in the thesis because the new Curriculum focuses with even greater intensity on literacy so that the history, definition and curriculum statements about literacy require even closer scrutiny and more extensive commentary. Literacy is to be embedded across the Curriculum in ways that are appropriate to each learning area (see *Literacy across the Curriculum* in the *General Capabilities* document) as well as constituting one of the three strands in English. In the papers I situate disputes over literacy within the parameters of neo-conservative and neo-liberal discourses in which the words 'efficiency,' 'transparency,' and 'accountability' are paramount. However, in the thesis I survey the neo-liberal case in greater detail and the language of managerialism that supports its central formulae, formulae which fortify the case for the revitalisation of the entire education system along market or technoscientific lines, crucially the imposition of competitive forces, and yet the apparently contradictory impulse to put in place fairly rigid structures of compliance. The effects of globalisation on curricula and the adoption of international measures of achievement, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), run out of the Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and Progress in International Reading Results and Literacy Study (PIRRLS), were not factors considered in my position papers because these measures were in their infancy, and I have therefore found it necessary to investigate the interaction of the global and the national in curricula. International measurements have now garnered a decisive authority in gauging the success of a nation's education system, given that nation-wide tests for literacy and numeracy are now mandatory.¹⁴ These developments demand attention because they are fully

¹⁴ The release of new PISA data showing Australia's declining results in maths and reading (though Australia is still above the OECD level and above countries such as Britain and the US) caused a flurry in the media, with predictable calls for more rigour and improved teacher performance. It has also given force to the argument that increased spending on education in the last decade has not resulted in

integrated into school assessment and are instruments used to evaluate schools and teachers and distribute funding. The introduction of the National Assessment Program on Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) as a measure of school/teacher/student success is a retrograde move and the experience and research of educators in the United Kingdom and America supports this conclusion. For example, Booher-Jennings, in her appraisal of the No Child Left Behind program in America, meant to compensate for past injustices towards the poor and marginalised, has ended up reinforcing divisions because schools are given perverse incentives to focus on educational ‘triage’ by getting students ‘over the line’ in order for teachers to look good on tests. This inevitably skews curricula, assessment and pedagogy (756-61).¹⁵

In the position papers I felt it necessary to deal with pedagogy since theories are not pedagogically neutral, and the ‘teacher,’ the ‘learner,’ and the ‘student’ are discursively framed entities. One of the fault lines that runs through the Australian Curriculum as a whole is that generated by disputes over pedagogy, although these are not explicitly articulated. In the Pedagogy and Assessment: Some Broad Assumptions section of the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English (7.0-7.3)* reference is made to ‘explicit teaching,’ ‘discovery-based or exploratory approaches’ and the need for ‘encouragement, support and indirect guidance’ of learners.’ The section also highlights the need to provide ‘flexible and responsive classroom activities,’ ‘interactive learning to develop depth and complexity’ and ‘approach[es] that ‘best meet students’ language and literacy needs,’ presumably a nod towards student diversity. In addition, teachers should make clear and cumulative connections

improved performance. However, Australia has a long tail in education correlated with low socio-economic status and Indigeneity. Leaving aside the issue of how reliable PISA data are in assessing performance (on this point see Luke and Schleicher, ‘Seeing School Systems through the Prism of PISA,’ and Lingard and Rawolle, ‘New Scalar Politics: Implications for Education Policy’), alarmist appeals for intervention are unhelpful and destabilising.

¹⁵ There has now been a Senate Enquiry into the effects of NAPLAN. Its findings were largely unfavourable. The enquiry reported that children were being made excessively anxious by NAPLAN tests, that they were being used by the media to create league tables for schools when that was not their intended purpose, that teachers were teaching to the test and that some teachers were avoiding taking on year groups that were due to be tested for fear of the pressures it creates. Moreover, test results have a turnaround time of four months and are thus not timely enough for diagnostic or intervention purposes. All these problems were foreseen but that hardly shakes the faith of those who advocate for or impose them.

between knowledge and skills across multiple curriculum areas,' no small task, as we shall see. At least teachers appear in this section, if only indistinctly.

There seems nothing at first glance that is disturbing about the observations on pedagogy since they leave open a wide range of possibilities for teachers and the pedagogies are familiar to them. Nonetheless, closer scrutiny of the documents reveals tensions over how to teach reading and writing (phonics or whole language methods?), a strong emphasis on explicit teaching of basic language skills and increased concentration on mastering literary devices. Behind such curriculum moves lie disputes over so-called 'progressive pedagogies' and whether they have led to the 'dumbing down' of English and the infiltration during the 60s and 70s of fashionable theories that focussed too much on personal expression, and not enough on the building blocks of language or the mastery of school genres. 'Progressive pedagogies' can be a catch-all phrase that masks different assumptions about the roles of the learner and the teacher. In the position papers I devoted a section to the emergence of progressive pedagogies in the post-war era, noting that child-centred pedagogies can be traced to earlier periods (for example, to the work of John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky). Process-based learning, which tended to start where students were, emphasise collaborative learning between students and teachers and among students, and minimise ranking. This approach clearly influenced Hannan and Alan Reid in the 60s and 70s (and me, though I was only feeling my way). The debate over process learning (common in English curricula), and explicit instruction accentuating the mastery of syllabus content, remains a live curriculum issue. I situate my discussion of pedagogy in the thesis in the context of Classical rhetoric and dialectic because ancient pedagogical and literacy practices illuminate concepts such as rhetoric and the aesthetic pertinent to the discussion of English curricula and shed light on the ethical dimensions of the Curriculum.

A conjunction of forces in the post-war period--the expansion of secondary schooling, the growing impatience with rigid class divisions and destinations--were hospitable to new pedagogies. As I remarked in 'The State of the Art: Part 3':

[t]eachers were animated by a genuine and often fervent commitment to working with students by starting from the students' own experiences and linguistic universe, and new pedagogies gradually grew to seem 'natural' in two

senses: the commonsensical, since they were 'obvious,' and the artless, since they were in harmony with the intrinsic capacities and learning styles of young people. (5)

The influential Personal Growth Model, promoted by the Dartmouth Circle in the 60s and chiefly associated with the work of John Dixon and James Britton, encouraged the capacity of English curricula to foster individuality and creativity, predominantly by encounters with literature that had the potential 'to cultivate students' moral and imaginative faculties' through 'a distillation and intensification of experience' ('State of the Art: Part 2' 4), not just by reading literature in a disciplined manner but by allowing students to create and experiment with their own texts, often through personal response. The image of the English teacher in popular culture was permanently influenced by this vision--charismatic, spontaneous, leading by guidance and empathy.

Thus English came to be regarded as an emancipatory discipline given that it freed students from class destinies, helped them to realise their creative abilities and initiated them into the mysteries of an elite culture that valued aesthetic and moral discrimination. Not that middle- and upper-class students were to be denied the emancipatory promises of creativity since such promises were available to all indiscriminately. However, during the 60s and 70s English became associated with liberation in a second sense easily conflated with the first: the re-evaluation of working-class culture as authentic and vital and the expansion of the concept of 'culture' to encompass 'a particular way of life' (Williams, *The Long Revolution* 56), even if the view of a working-class culture in organic connection with its roots now appears profoundly nostalgic. Thus lower-class students did not necessarily require freeing from their working-class origins and students and teachers could be led to recognise their own relative class positions, to undo the binary opposition of high culture/low culture that fissured the English curriculum, and perform an ideological critique both of mass and elite culture. In addition, the Marxist analysis of class as a central economic and cultural determinant, which underpinned the emerging discipline of cultural studies, explained the production, maintenance and reproduction of an unequal society through the replication of existing political and economic power relationships that made the school a site of ideological struggle.

These insights led to a radical reconfiguration of cultural production and cultural objects--in the case of English from the literary 'work' to the all-purpose 'text.' Texts were now 'material products of a particular society and therefore they . . . reproduced the ideologies and systems of representation in the culture' ('State of the Art: Part 3' 9). They are enmeshed in the capitalist cycle of production and consumption and 'their generic and formal structures are constituted *intertextually* through their connections to other texts and, by extension, to the systems of meaning from which all texts emerge' (10). Consequently, there can be no innocent, apolitical or 'natural' act of reading and writing (10), whether inside or outside the classroom.

Pegrum points to 'social constructivism' as the most effective pedagogical theory to emerge from and to accommodate these new conditions of knowledge since it interrogates the assumption that reality is unmediated and directly apprehensible (27) and is therefore, in his view, more in tune with the collaborationist, participatory, provisional nature of Web.2.0 (28). He argues that, unlike transmission and psychological behaviourist models, it puts learners at the centre and draws on their pre-existing knowledge and perspectives (27). Pegrum admits that such a pedagogy is more time-consuming and demanding than others but that it has rewards even if it does not deliver an efficiency dividend. Hammond and Macken-Horarik, in a valuable article entitled 'Critical Literacy: Challenges and Questions for ELT Classrooms' (1999), argue that current debates in Australia have focused on 'the relationship between social ideologies, identities, and values on the one hand and development of the linguistic and other codes that realise these on the other' (530). The authors ask the question: how does critical literacy 'presuppose control of mainstream literacy practices?' (528) and they aver, like Pegrum, that teaching critical literacy can be time-consuming but can be very effective, as they demonstrate through their case studies centred on science classrooms.

Hence social constructivism is not only attuned to digital technologies but to the socio-political tenor of recent theories of literacy, which regard it as multiple, inherently contextual and more than an inert skill or technology. As a result it is more likely to stimulate critical awareness and therefore has implications for how learning is conducted in the classroom since students are assumed to be able to contribute to their own learning by becoming critical readers and viewers of texts. Literacy is

dependent on anterior theories of language in which language is neither neutral nor transparent but a dynamic system of meaning-making embedded in symbolic processes and practices through which representation, meaning and language operate (Hall 25).

The so-called 'linguistic turn' in cultural studies refuses the model of language as a fixed set of relationships but sees it as dialogic, always in play, a place where meaning is negotiated and never fully mastered or unchanging. It is these concepts of language and literacy that are captured in the term 'critical literacy,' which I defended in the position papers but is now absent from curriculum documents, notwithstanding the fact that the *Framing Paper* lists an impressive bibliography that includes the work of key theorists in sociolinguistics and the 'New Literacies.' One conclusion it is possible to draw from the position papers and the thesis is that pedagogical methods and the theories that underpin disciplines are not conceptually distinct. That is, it really matters for teaching strategies whether you think that grammar is a prescriptive system that requires a detailed knowledge of technical terms or whether for you language is always in flux and its rules can be inculcated without the mastery of a repertoire of highly specialised vocabulary. Is there research evidence, for example, for the view that students are better writers for knowing one type of grammar rather than another? Or that the better they parse a sentence, the greater their command of language? Adoniou does not think so ('Improving Kid's Literacy--A Little Knowledge Goes a Long Way,' *The Conversation* May 22 2015). Hence the phonics debate has not completely gone away. The AC:E assumes rather than argues that intensive teaching of grammar will automatically produce improved results (Macken-Horarik 179-94). Macken-Horarik argues for a systemic functional linguistics as a key to improving student performance rather than traditional grammar.

One of the topics inevitably raised by the AC:E involves the place of multimodal and digital texts in the Curriculum, an issue made even more urgent by constant technological innovation. This is not a problem that can be 'solved' by the Curriculum, but in a futures-oriented, globalised curriculum, which is referenced in the *National English Curriculum: Framing Paper* it can hardly be ignored. Older multimodal texts, such as plays and picture books, present little difficulty, but newer ones, such as graphic novels, for instance, can be dismissed as scarcely legitimate

objects of study depending on teachers' assumptions about the worth of texts. Digital communications and the use of digitalised texts on tablets and smart phones are changing the ways in which we read, write, access information and opinion, and problem solve and is influencing the nature of the discipline of English in tertiary settings (Baron 193-200). Yet the English Curriculum has trouble integrating such materials conceptually given that new technologies entail a reconsideration of texts and textuality (a concern addressed under multimodal texts in Chapter Four of the thesis). In a curriculum privileging literacy and literature but including multimodal texts and multiliteracies, the new communication order (Snyder, *Tasmanian Curriculum* 1-13) is subsidiary and such texts sometimes seem to be intruders upon and a disordering principle in the English Learning Area, whatever the motives of curriculum writers and despite the fact that multimodal and digital texts are incorporated into the Scope and Sequence, Achievement Standards and Content Descriptions.

Equity and the Curriculum

It was not my intention in the position papers to initiate a general discussion of equity in schooling even though the papers and my other publications have equity implications.¹⁶ Gendered and postcolonial readings of texts critique the ways in which the power to represent is vested in some but not others, creating identities located in hierarchies of difference. In the thesis I take up the issue of equity in schooling through Labor's Better Schools Program (based on the Gonski Review of school funding) and Bourdieu's concepts of 'cultural capital' and 'habitus' as the means by which economic advantage can be translated into symbolic forms of capital based on class preferences and systems of taste. Hence increased resources that help close the gap between the outcomes for minority or disadvantaged groups and the privileged, however vital, are by themselves insufficient to overcome inequality if *representational* resources and cultural competence are unequally distributed.

Although Bourdieu and those who have drawn upon his impressive corpus of work, such as Apple and Giroux, have tended to highlight his theorisation of class

¹⁶ Stuart Riddle labels our educational system as among the most *unequal* in comparable countries.

distinction, in the position papers I also chose to discuss feminist readings of texts as an instance where critical literacy and gender are brought into play. It hardly needs pointing out, given the #metoo movement, that feminism in Australia is, as Anna Goldsworthy argues in a *Quarterly Essay* (213), 'unfinished business.' Gendered readings of texts in English classrooms, though routine at senior levels, can still cause disquiet, as we see from Williamson's response to them in *Dead White Males*. Although such readings do not turn 'real' men into a threatened species, as Williamson seems to suggest, there must be intellectual and emotional spaces in classrooms to explore the sources of inequity. Absent that, educators cannot address its causes and consequences or point to reasons why the Australian Curriculum identifies certain classes of students as requiring equity provision (*Student Diversity, The Australian Curriculum, v.3, 2011*).

Some of this disquiet is bred of the fear that schools in general and English classrooms in particular are 'feminine' spaces where moral and emotional nurturance and guidance are deemed indispensable. Down the ages among the privileged it has meant men teaching boys. In 2001 I participated in a public lecture at the University of Western Australia on boys and schooling when the idea that boys were being denied masculine role models in schools and that boys required a different pedagogy from girls had taken (profitable) hold, with experts brought in to help schools create teaching environments more sympathetic to boys (though not *gay* boys, naturally). Steve Biddulph is one of the authors offering resources for parents to help them raise boys. I have little time for this view but I recognise in the calls for rigour and depth in the Australian Curriculum a long-held masculine apprehension about the feminisation of schooling. English teachers negotiate their position as instructors in a 'feminine' subject in a profession still dominated by men even if women are overrepresented in sections of it. Thus the institutionalisation of gender difference in the school possesses salience beyond the pedagogical space of the classroom. The Australian Curriculum constantly refers to equity, envisaged as one of the national and international goals of education in that schooling should be geared to provide equality of opportunity for all, and which the Australian Curriculum is designed to facilitate. The Curriculum states that all students have a 'learning entitlement' (*Melbourne Declaration 2009*) and the Curriculum presumably constitutes the bulk of this entitlement. Furthermore, the

Curriculum is also keen to inculcate respect for diversity and difference at every phase of the Curriculum and in all learning areas. Besides literacy, numeracy and ICT competence, under *General Capabilities* students are to develop ethical behaviour, personal and social competence, critical and creative thinking and intercultural understanding. Detailed examples are provided to demonstrate how each capability might be integrated into syllabi, and what assessment tasks might be appropriate to different learning areas. In Chapter One I examine equity and diversity and their relationship to curriculum and pedagogy and cast doubt on whether the commitment to them goes beyond the rhetorical since a real engagement with diversity, I argue, would have produced a modified English curriculum, despite the obviously good intentions of those charged with writing the General Capabilities.

Schooling the Subject

Entirely predictably, the Australian Curriculum is grounded in the concept of the liberal-humanist subject in the form of a rational, autonomous, responsible, ethical self inherited from the Enlightenment, which is presupposed to be both pedagogy's teleology and origin. The self is assumed to be a stable and universal entity possessed of an essence that is the source of agency and meaning. But however prevalent the idea of the self-realising individual has been in the West since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the concept of the free and unconstrained self, independent of social and cultural determinations, has been vigorously scrutinised on several grounds. Firstly, according to Foucault, individuals are not the origin of meaning or knowledge, since the culture speaks in and through them--they cannot stand outside or against it. Secondly, knowledge and truth do not exist in some domain beyond power but acquire a self-disciplinary authority that regulates, constrains and generates what counts as truth (*Knowledge/Power* 131).

The school as a site for the production of subjects and truth has been closely examined, not least in the work of Ian Hunter, who draws on Foucault in order to argue that the 'pastoral pedagogy' favoured by contemporary pedagogues, whose origins can be traced back to the sixteenth century at least, is no less constraining and interested in the production of self-regulating subjects than more intellectually and physically coercive systems of education that still live in the memory of some schooled

in the first half of the twentieth century ('Is English an Emancipatory Discipline?' 1-4) and *Rethinking the School: Subjectivity, Bureaucracy, Criticism* [1994]). In Foucault's understanding power is dispersed and decentred and does not issue from a single, monopolistic source but is a microphysics that not only represses but constitutes a generative and productive series of networks (Hall 50). As such, it is difficult to resist although if there are multiple nodes of power there may be multiple nodes of localised resistance. Waters is one who, in his recent book *Childhood, Schooling and Bureaucracy*, regards schooling in the modern state as a means of producing docile and compliant subjects serviceable to capitalism through the whole apparatus of contemporary bureaucratic and managerial systems (1-30), including the discipline of the market which turns students, parents and teachers into consumers. For an even more radical position, one could do no better than to examine the work of John Gatto in which he excoriates mass schooling as a means of control and deplores the modern institution of the school (see *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*). The liberal subject supports a curriculum which regards the production of the ethical subject as paramount but at the same time the cultural and linguistic turn in the educational literature implicitly or explicitly undermines this concept.

Thus there is a keen debate among theorists about whether schooling *inevitably* exerts its multi-focused and dispersed disciplinary micropolitics of power to construct subjects suitably and flexibly fashioned for the requirements of the nation-state or the globalised economy, whether those requirements seek to create the submissive subjects of the marketplace and the technological/managerialist bureaucracy or the morally and socially competent individual capable of taking charge of their own life and operating proficiently in a multi-ethnic society. For example, the General Capabilities mandated in the curriculum are explicit about the subjects of schooling required under the new dispensation--socially adept and adaptable, highly literate and numerate, ethical, and at ease with and respectful of cultural difference.¹⁷ These

¹⁷ Marion Maddox's recent book on religion and schooling examines what became known as 'the religious difficulty'--that of incorporating or excluding religion in a secular society. Given the proliferation of religious schools, supported by generous public funding, and chaplaincy programs, she wonders how intercultural understanding, including religious plurality, is to be managed in those

qualities can attract the same criticism levelled at pastoral pedagogy since they are clearly designed to produce ‘good subjects.’ For instance, Western Australian respondents to the *General Capabilities Consultation Report* wondered whether ethical behaviour ought to be the goal of the Capabilities instead of a more modest ‘ethical understanding’ (22).

Such tensions can be detected in Green et al.’s acute analysis of ‘the reading lesson’ as trope. They observe that by the first half twentieth century the reading lesson possessed a ‘politico-ethical character’ (330) such that

[t]he reading lesson is at once disciplinary and pastoral, an exercise in artful redundancy, the articulation of conduct and disposition, a (mundane) practice of government. (331)

Green et al. note, additionally, that, while reading literature retains its ethical/pastoral essence, at the same time the process of reading has been technologised, and the ‘scientification’ of reading pedagogy has continued and intensified over the decades. In fact the AC:E displays an identical tendency to regard the teaching of reading and writing as necessitating a scientific method while literature, by contrast, requires an initiation. Moreover, Lankshear, in his overview of the meanings of literacy in contemporary education, argues that today literacy is constructed as an ‘individual performance and, indeed, as an individual possession’ (10), while literacy has become commodified, making students into subjects who must endlessly demonstrate their competency and teachers into semi-commercial providers. He has researched new literacies and multiliteracies in a global context and the challenges and possibilities of they bring to English curricula (see Lankshear and Knobel, *Literacies: Social. Cultural and Historical Perspective*, 2011, which view literacies as social practice). He is certainly not alone among educators to worry about commercial publishers who seek to marketise curricula. Macken-Horarik also notes it as a problem. Hence it is possible to recognise the limitations of the Enlightenment subject of freedom, to acknowledge the disciplinary power which any system of schooling imposes, and yet to wish to choose among competing aims, goals and pedagogies. The sharpest divisions are between

schools who insist on an exclusively sectarian focus. This trend also has effects on science curricula, sex education and other areas.

those who advocate for ‘economic efficiency and competitiveness, cultural cohesion, and national allegiance’ (Lankshear 10), as does the Australian Curriculum, and those who adhere to the ideal of education as personal fulfilment (broadly conceived) and social justice. Both camps are invested in a variety of theoretical commitments, are equally interested in the production of certain subjectivities and truths, and agree that education should be serviceable to the state, but diverge over means and ends.

From Ian Hunter, who regards the liberatory promises of education as a ruse of power, to Apple, who argues, in *Can Education Change Society?*, that education can still effect social transformation in the interests of equality and justice, there are obviously deep divisions about the purposes and effects of schooling. However, to acknowledge that schools are sites that generate subjectivities and truths does not put an end to argument. It still leaves open questions about what purposes and subjectivities should be cultivated and encouraged and, as Riddle observes, while such questions are debated, transformation is occurring but ‘not necessarily in ways that critical and progressive educators might wish’ (‘NAPLAN Only Measures a Fraction of Literacy Learning (*The Conversation*)).

Critical Literacy

In any account of English curricula a scholar must deal with the concept of ‘critical literacy’ since much of what is contested in recent curricula swirls about this term. The term ‘critical literacy’ became current in English curricula during the 90s and there is now a considerable literature devoted to research and pedagogy in the area, which explains why two respondents of the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority’s *Trial Consultation Report* (2010) noted its absence (21). However, critical literacy does not have to be explicitly identified or named to influence curricula, as we have already seen, and one of the difficulties of definition is that ‘critical literacy’ overlaps with the so-called New Literacies, linguistics, social semiotics, postmodernism and cultural studies, and may be differently inflected in different educational jurisdictions across countries (Misson and Morgan xi). It is frequently condemned because it allegedly promotes cultural and intellectual relativism and

undermines in some minds the 'Judaean-Christian' heritage,¹⁸ producing a 'mindless scepticism' according to *The Australian's* Luke Slattery (qtd in Howie 224)¹⁹.

Thus it is imperative to attempt some kind of definitional clarity around the term. Writing in 1998, Lankshear observes that 'critical literacy' [is] a relatively new term [that] combines the concepts of critical thinking and communications' (6). In the *AC: E* critical thinking and the skills of argument and persuasion are accepted as essential for both workplace and academic literacy and thus the word 'critical,'²⁰ although relatively infrequently used in the *Shape* document, remains uncontroversial. Alastair Reid observes, in a Scottish context, that '*persuasive skills* are most often viewed as the productive outcome of "critical literacy" in learners' ([italics original] 64). He identifies a sometimes hidden conflict between teachers' perceptions of 'critical literacy' as the acquisition of persuasive skills, and critical literacy as a commitment to social justice. Obviously 'critical literacy' does not cause alarm if it is limited to critical thinking but given the history of critical literacy in state English curricula it arouses distrust in some. Coffey states bluntly that 'critical literacy' was developed by social critical theorists concerned with social injustice and inequalities' (1). It can inform classroom practices and pedagogy, especially in English, but also critiques the structures and goals of schooling as a whole (as we have noted above) and indeed the way in which educational research itself is conducted. Among the names who have contributed to the field are many whose work is well-known and highly respected in international education circles, such as Luke, Lankshear, Knobel, Christie, Kress, Morgan, and Gee, to select only a few, though educationalists do not always agree among themselves. Critical literacy can empower teachers and students to become social activists: 'educators can invite students to take part in a larger community discourse that attempts to solve problems and created alternatives to oppressive situations' (Coffey 3).

¹⁸ The 'Judaean-Christian heritage' is often a point of dispute in the news since critics of the Australian Curriculum argue that this heritage is our birthright, but it obscures the historical divisions between Christians and Jews that led to lethal anti-Semitism.

¹⁹ It is worth observing that cultural relativism dates back to the anthropology of Franz Boas.

²⁰ Andrew Delbanco, in his review in the *New York Review of Books* entitled 'Scandals of Higher Education' acidly labels 'critical thinking' as the reigning banality--'a term that seems to mean something like the ability to think through difficult problems. There is nothing wrong with that goal, but it is a decidedly instrumental one that conceives of students as problem-solvers-in-training to be deployed into a society that that needs them' (46).

In an English curriculum, critical literacy is used to ‘demonstrate the function language plays in the social construction of the self’ (Coffey 3), ‘evaluate whose knowledge is being privileged in texts and deconstruct the message of those meanings’ (2). Hence critical literacy scrutinises texts for their division of economic and representational power and resources (Blackledge qtd in Coffey 2). Misson and Morgan summarise the questions a critical literacy approach to texts asks:

- Whose views are being represented?
- What interests are being served?
- What reading position is one being invited to take up?
- What cultural assumptions is the text taking for granted?
- What is absent from the text that one might expect to be there? (214)

Stated in this way, critical literacy can indeed perform a critique not just of individual texts but of the values that underlie texts, which link to the world outside school and enable students and teachers to acknowledge their own situatedness within hierarchical systems. The Department of Education, Tasmania, helpfully defines critical literacy under five headings as attention to

- The style and structure of texts.
- Texts as historical constructs that reflect values and beliefs and are capable of multiple interpretations.
- The way in which power relationships and inequalities are embedded in texts.
- The way in which meaning in texts is dependent on contexts of production and reception.
- The way in which understanding critical literacy can encourage students to become agents of social change. (www.tas.ed.gov.au)

Although critical literacy is viewed as a negative practice, deconstructing texts in order to reveal their ideological weaknesses and blind spots, textual analysis need not necessarily result in disparagement or dismissal. The matter is far less simple. For example, the historical-critical and comparative linguistic methods of reading the Bible have been around since at least Origen’s *Hexapla* in the second century; and gathered momentum during the Enlightenment, and are now mainstream in schools of divinity. It does not follow that those using such methods are necessarily unbelievers or that the aesthetic and cultural value of the Bible is in doubt. In fact, the Bible exactly fits the definition of literature in the English Curriculum: ‘works that are valued for their form and style and are recognised as having enduring or artistic value’ (9). This would seem to be elementary. The fact that the Bible has undergone a

transformation from word of God to literary artefact is one of the shifts that has occurred over the last century. And to reject all such readings and methods is to reject not postmodernism but the Enlightenment as well (*Pomo Oz*, Niall Lucy, with Steve Mickler 54-86).

When the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* speaks of contributing to equity as a key aim of the Australian Curriculum, it is unspecific about how such an aim is to be accomplished or the kinds of inequity that are to be remediated by such provision, an issue I take up at several points in the thesis. English is one learning area in which such issues are acute; for example, if students are to study Indigenous literature it is hard to see how such discussions can be avoided. Exposing the gaps and silences and forms of oppression encoded in the language of texts may result in social action or may be confined to the analysis as an end in itself, leading to a form of social immobilisation (Alastair Reid 65). Nevertheless to those on the outside looking in, any reference to critical literacy or postmodernism confirms their worst fears--a subversion of institutional goals and a distraction from the real business of education. They must be expunged from curricula. Howie quotes alarmist responses:

[t]he *Weekend Australian* revealed how postmodernism has infiltrated schools, often under the term of Critical Literacy, raising fears that the secondary syllabus had been heavily politicised by the same theories that had radicalised the universities in the late 80s. (224)

It is pointless to repeat the usual charges hurled at postmodernism and critical literacy since they are unfocussed and clumsy and tend to overstate the radicalising effects of a 'more critically suspicious analysis of texts' (Misson and Morgan 20). Moreover, if critical literacy seems to coalesce around themes, ideas and issues in texts, as if it were a matter of content only, the 'critical' can easily be decontaminated. However, critical literacy encompasses the rhetorical, generic, narrative, enunciative contexts and aesthetic strategies of texts and it is important not to sever the discursive and representational from the aesthetic.

It is essential to remark that critical literacy did not arrive on the scene suddenly and unheralded. Misson and Morgan trace the shifts that have occurred since the 70s:

[b]efore the 1970s . . . you could use the terms *critical* and *criticism* secure in knowing that your hearers would understand that you were referring to the work that literary critics do and that students were to emulate.

. . .

These days, in a number of classrooms, the term *critical* is no longer mostly joined to *literary* and *literary criticism*, but has migrated to join up with *literacy*, in *critical literacy*. . . [Critical literacy] means identifying the ideology inscribed in any text, determining who benefits from the very partial representation of the world offered in that text, resisting any invitations to comply with worldviews that are socially unjust, and taking verbal and any other action to redress such injustices. ([italics original] 3)

The AC:E wants to install literary tradition and literary criticism in the syllabus, which is reflected in the literature section of the *Framing Paper* (#38 and 39), where students are to learn about their own literary traditions, such as Indigenous and Asia-Pacific texts, and hence postcolonial in its orientation, which is admirable but can raise the ire of critics who wish to centralise the *Western* tradition, however defined. Others may regard such ‘politically correct’ positions as distracting from the core business of inculcating basic literacy and thus may be inconsistent with other theoretical objectives, such as those linked to efficiency or productivity. Critical literacy and its sources and implications will be pursued at greater length in Chapter Four of the thesis, where the shifting definitions of ‘English’ as a discipline will be narrativised and appraised.

Hence opponents of critical literacy may be motivated by protectionist impulses to save ‘literature’ from the wreckers, even if back in 1983 Eagleton had argued that literary values were not intrinsic and the canon ‘a creation of history, not of absolute standards of taste . . .’ (Misson and Morgan 7). In the position papers I observed that literature as a means of cultivating the self as well as constructing the nation is now compromised and nostalgic and the dream that it can instantiate and sustain a common culture is receding. Not only has it proved difficult to deliver on the promises of emancipation implicit or explicit in the concept of the self-realising individual, but it is agreed by contemporary theorists of subjectivity, crucially Foucault, that the concept of the free and unconstrained self, outside and independent

of social and cultural determinations, is philosophically and historically impossible to maintain. Consequently the project of literature's cultivation of the self, which has served both broadly progressive and conservative agendas over time, has become seemingly, and regrettably, a preserve of the Right, since the process establishes a pernicious binary that pits a supposedly timeless version of how to read literature against teachers who adopt different critical approaches. Howie, in his defence of critical literacy (224-36), frankly admits that critical literacy represents a radical shift in the way literature is taught and the way children are expected to read (225). New theories supposedly undermine the simple joys of reading or a close encounter between text and reader, but this is to forget that the influential New Criticism scarcely promoted an innocent encounter with literature and was accused of pulling wings off butterflies, though its political investments, always present, were not always visible.

Niall Lucy, in *Pomo Oz: Fear and Loathing Downunder*, opens up another front in the critical literacy debate by attacking Graeme Turner for his article in the *International Journal for Cultural Studies* declaring that critical literacy destroys students' pleasure in reading (33-52). One could argue that any analysis of literary texts risks endangering pleasure, including analysis devoted to identifying rhetorical devices, singled out for special attention in the Curriculum. Presumably rhetoric has no political import, a belief that the history of rhetoric comprehensively refutes. Turner is one Australia's most distinguished humanities academics who, by the way, was instrumental in installing cultural studies concepts at the centre of new English curricula in 1980s Western Australia. Turner blames 'critical literacy' for betraying cultural studies through educationalists' promotion of discourse analysis based on Michael Halliday's systemic functional linguistics and the associated sociolinguistic theories that emerged in the New Literacies movement. Lucy regards this dichotomy as false and so do I (37), but in the course of the thesis I reveal theoretical tensions between genre pedagogy and cultural studies that remain unresolved in the English Curriculum.

Rehabilitating the Aesthetic in the English Curriculum

Misson and Morgan, in their significant study *Critical Literacy and the Aesthetic: Transforming the English Classroom*, explore the question of 'why critical

literacy feels uncomfortable with aesthetic texts' (xi). Published in 2006 and therefore before the release of the National Curriculum, the book identifies the problems critical literacy has in its encounters with the aesthetic and explores in detail and with practical examples ways in which they can be brought into a productive relationship. The authors instance Western Australia's *English Learning Area Statements* (1998) as one curriculum heavily weighted towards critical literacy and contrast it with the England Curriculum, in which aesthetic appreciation is predominant though seemingly irreconcilable with political critique (23). The AC:E gives greater prominence to the aesthetic but does not effectively spell out its relationship to the critical, to literary criticism, to literary interpretation or to rhetoric. Under the heading 'Literature' in the *Framing Paper* literature (broadly understood) consists of texts that have 'personal, social and aesthetic value' (#25). Moreover, it tends to link the aesthetic to the literary, where it is assumed to be most 'properly' located. However, Misson and Morgan and the media theorist Andrew Burn (1-11) stress that there is a poetics and aesthetics of media as there is of literature, and that minimising the aesthetic appeal of popular and media texts does them no service. Nor does it give confidence to students to create their own texts and to reflect on their aesthetic choices.

The Places of Rhetoric

Men and dynasties pass but style abides

Sir Ronald Syme, qtd in Mary Beard, 265

Along with the aesthetic, rhetoric has made something of a comeback in recent years (Moon, 'Remembering Rhetoric' 37-52) and Ian Hunter argues for an English curriculum shorn of emancipatory goals and more focussed on initiating students into the modest proficiencies of rhetorical training tied to the genres most useful in the contemporary workplace and civic life ('After English: Towards a Less Critical Literacy' 315-34). Aristotle in his precise analysis of rhetoric defends the persuasive features of oratory and defends rhetoric against the Platonic charge that it is invariably meretricious and deceptive. The distant echoes of such quarrels can be detected in the evaluation of mass media as employing underhand methods of persuasion, while persuasion in literary texts is unlikely to be regarded as manipulative.

Consequently, rhetoric can be viewed through a sophistical lens as a set of persuasive skills that can be taught in order to serve a limited range of social and civic functions that do not have to be and were in the past largely unconnected to critical literacy and social justice. The AC:E for that reason must prevaricate here--it cannot abolish the term 'critical' but is sensitive 'critical literacy'. The word 'critical' occurs in the *Framing Paper* under #36, for instance, as one of the ways texts are to be evaluated and generated and therefore as an essential capacity identified as desirable. However it is hard to circumscribe its boundaries, as eighteenth-century Biblical critics found when philological and other investigations of Biblical texts led to increasing doubts about their historical authenticity (Boer 33-56). The long centuries of biblical interpretation constitute a textbook case of how interpretation functions to define both the limits of interpretation and the principles of interpretation itself. As an aside, I remark that this concept of 'interpretation' fed into the interpretation of literary texts.

Imagination and Creativity

Imagination is mentioned several times in the *Shape of the Curriculum: English* as a quality to be valued for its own sake and for its ability, in a global world, to advance the interests of the markets which reward agile thinking and innovation. 'Imagination' is intimately connected to literature in a Romantic and post-Romantic age and is therefore thought to be a property of the Romantic artist and is a desirable feature of texts and a sought-after quality for students to demonstrate, not simply respond to or analyse. In the *Senior English Unit 1* and elsewhere it is employed as a means of classifying texts, which are divided into the 'imaginative, interpretive and persuasive,' not watertight categories if they are categories at all. Imagination inevitably possesses aesthetic and rhetorical dimensions. Who would deny imagination to Shakespeare's great soliloquies, for example, even if they have their origins in the Bard's entirely standard rhetorical training? However, texts can employ aesthetic codes and rhetorical strategies without at all demonstrating imagination in the lofty Romantic manner. However, today 'imagination' is deemed, like 'creativity,' to be essential to healthy child development, for example in the work of child psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Indeed it is now difficult to separate contemporary

theories of childhood and children's emotional, social and cognitive development from ideas of creative play and the free use of the imagination that emerged during the Romantic period. Not that imagination and creativity are *undisciplined* in themselves and it would be naïve to suppose that imagination and creativity cannot be cultivated in children (or adults).

In the English Curriculum creativity is, as one would expect, associated primarily with literature but one scrutinises the *Shape* document in vain to discover what pedagogies encourage creativity in students, what counts as creativity, and how it is to be reliably assessed. Doecke, Parr and Sawyer, incisive critics of the new Curriculum, have noticed the unfocused and incoherent nature of 'creativity' in the curriculum and its merely routine invocation (1-10). But to examine creativity purely in the context of the English Curriculum because of its hallowed associations with literature is to miss the importance of the interaction of the national and the global in recent curriculum reforms. National curricula in advanced economies explicitly seek to foster general capacities, dispositions and behaviour in students meant to serve and advance the interests of the nation by supplying the twenty-first century skills supposedly indispensable to surviving and thriving in a global world. Critical and Creative thinking is on the list of capabilities, and the lists vary little internationally. The *International Curriculum and Assessment Comparative Table for National Education Aims* shows that there is a convergence of aims across developed economies, aims that are meant to be embedded in each learning area, where possible.

Thus the appearance of creativity in the English curriculum is not just the signal of a return to an earlier notion of the literary but a sign of the global integration of curricula. 'Creativity,' once associated almost exclusively with the arts, and much earlier exclusively with God's creative act or in imitation of that act, is now omnipresent and has migrated almost by stealth to all areas of endeavour. In fact the word 'creativity' is of fairly recent origin, traceable to the philosophy Alfred North Whitehead's *Process and Reality* (1927) ('Creativity') and only became an independent object of study during the nineteenth century. There is now a formidable volume of research into the psychological, neurobiological, philosophical, sociological and

educational dimensions of creativity²¹ which assumes (or hopes) that creative individuals, the process of creativity, and the nature of creativity itself can be identified and cultivated. There is even a test for creativity, the Torrance Test, though its reliability is in question ('Creativity'). The drive for increased creativity is not only a desire to enhance personal fulfilment or artistic expression but is closely intertwined with economic success and scientific and technological discovery. Hence the intense focus on creativity in current educational and business literature. The work of Byrge and Hansen is emblematic here. They clearly believe that creativity is not some post-Romantic leftover but can be taught using the right tools ('The Creative Platform: A New Paradigm for Teaching Creativity' 33-51). The arts are now redesignated as 'creative industries,' a sure sign of the commodification of the creative in a consumer society.

There is thus a significant amount of research devoted to finding the best way to stimulate creative thinking, ranging from problem-solving methods to intrinsically motivating tasks, and English teachers are no strangers when it comes to valuing such methods and tasks. One of the debates that divides what I shall call 'creativity studies' is whether schools encourage or crush creativity in students, despite the efforts of individual teachers. Ken Robinson, a long-time advocate of creativity, believes that schools are designed to suppress it ('Why Schools Kill Creativity: The Case for an Education System that Nurtures Creativity'). He is a forthright opponent of the standards and testing culture, which he sees as fundamentally incompatible with fostering creativity. In 1998 the UK National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education produced an extensive report on creativity entitled *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* in which the authors review current theories and competing definitions of creativity. They conclude that creativity is not at odds with critical thinking, that creativity is not confined to the arts but inheres in all areas of life, and that creativity is not limited and should not be limited to a chosen few (93). However, they strongly emphasise that it impoverishes creativity if it is valued solely for economic ends. If the English Curriculum seems unsure about creativity, perhaps it

²¹ For an overview of the extensive research in the area, consult *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity*, edited by James C. Kaufman and Robert J. Steinberg.

is owing to the pressures exerted on the term by its incorporation into the aims of international and national school systems. Clearly many theorists believe that creativity can be taught but to teach it requires professional development if it is to be taken seriously.²²

The ‘Creative and Critical Thinking’ section in the *General Capabilities* document states:

[c]reative thinking involves students in learning to generate and apply new ideas in specific contexts, seeing existing situations in a new way, identifying alternative explanations, and seeing or making new links that generate a positive outcome. (1)

There is nothing controversial in this definition, although creativity can be a more dark and dangerous quality than ‘positive outcome’ suggests. The *Critical and Creative Thinking Learning Continuum* that accompanies the statements is meant to offer outcomes and examples of tasks across all year levels to show how these capacities can be incorporated into all learning areas. They are also meant to demonstrate how students can be guided to evaluate the procedures and outcomes they have adopted to complete the tasks. The *General Capabilities* is accompanied by a *Consultation Report* that records the responses of key stakeholders to the document. I am in full agreement with Western Australian respondents, who observed that ‘creative thinking’ is poorly addressed since the Learning Continuum under this capability is almost wholly devoted to critical thinking. WA also regretted the lack of attention to the arts, but as we have seen, the historical tension between artistic creativity and creativity as a general human capacity is reflected in recent research. Most respondents demanded more precise definitions of terms under this Capability, found much to quarrel with in the Learning Continuum and asked for more detailed examples of tasks to be included in it. The plea for clarification and more detailed modelling of tasks is totally understandable but symptomatic of wider problems, and it may not be alleviated by more specification. Victoria has a critical and creative continuum that values

²² Kenneth Goldsmith’s *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in a Digital Age* is based on the unit he developed at the University of Pennsylvania. He responds to writing in the digital age, questioning concepts of authorship, authenticity and creativity in an age of appropriation and the interchangeability of words and images.

originality, innovation, enterprise and adaptability. Other states also have similar material. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the qualities sought are primarily about the demands of the twenty-first century workplace.

Every capability, cross-curricular priorities and list of outcomes in learning areas develops a life of its own. This is not an argument to abandon general capabilities and cross-curricula priorities as such but a word of caution about embedding them in curricula by multiplying assessments. Many of these overlapping tasks, capacities and outcomes can be evaluated by assessments designed to measure multiple forms of learning, skills, behaviours and dispositions but risks the tendency to reify certain accomplishments in ways that invite and demand ever more clarification. It also risks dis/integrating the curriculum by fragmenting it into proliferating outcomes and assessments that go against the spirit of the curriculum, which was supposed to simplify and streamline. Over specification can betray a worrying lack of confidence in teacher professionalism or a worthy desire to assist teachers by detailed specification. Even if examples are there chiefly as guidance one hopes that they don't become more like instructions and commands. After all, what makes good teachers is precisely creativity and imagination, hoping that administrative, testing regimes will not stifle these qualities.

Ironically, under Areas for Further Development, the *Consultation Report on the General Capabilities* remarks that 'the potential confusion in the assessment and reporting of student achievement, or perceptions of adding further to an overcrowded curriculum, were not widely expressed' (15). Respondents were also concerned about how capabilities should be assessed, noting that the literacy and numeracy capabilities have a defined national assessment requirement (16), in contrast to other capabilities, though this seems about to change.²³ In addition they noted the lack of inclusivity in regard to students with a disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (17).

²³ Justine Ferrari, 'New Tests to Assess "Modern" Skills.' *Weekend Australian* 22-23 November 2013. *The Nation*: 3. Print.

Syllabus Content, Achievement Standards and Assessment in the English

Learning Area

Although syllabus content and achievement standards will be considered in greater depth in Chapter Five of the thesis, given the ever present possibilities of over specification in the Curriculum, some observations on content and assessment seem fitting here. The three-strand division of Language, Literature and Literacy, is the central organising element in the English Curriculum and must be integrated into content and assessment, together with the Organising Elements of the Literacy Capability, summed up as:

- Comprehending texts through listening, reading and viewing.
- Composing texts through speaking, writing and creating.

The processes require the following areas of knowledge:

- Text knowledge
- Grammar knowledge
- Word knowledge
- Visual knowledge (*General Capabilities, Literacy 6*)

These are overlaid by another grid whose components are selected from the *Shape of the Curriculum: English*:

- Expressing and developing ideas
- Interpreting, analysing and evaluating
- Creating texts
- Language for interaction
- Text structure and organisation
- Concepts of print and screen

The *English Scope and Sequence* document identifies these core foci (and adds another--Language Variation and Change) and labels them sub-strands, divided yet again into threads. While the *Shape* document may be relatively concise, the transformation of curriculum into syllabus is mired in relentless detail. The syllabus is then further separated into Achievement Standards (e.g., 'by the end of Year 8 students should be able to . . .'); Content Descriptions (e.g., 'Investigate how complex sentences can be used to . . .'); and Elaborations, which offer sub-topics to be investigated under Content Descriptions (e.g., 'Investigating how the choice of conjunctions . . .'). The Content Description is meant to be related to the Achievement Standard. Work Samples are provided to indicate satisfactory, below satisfactory and above satisfactory performance. One example must suffice here, taken

from the Content Description for Year 7: 'Understand how language is used to evaluate texts and how evaluations about a text can be substantiated by reference to the text and other sources' (sub-strands Language/Language for Interaction). Apart from the randomness and dual nature of the Content Description, how is it related to Language for Interaction when it clearly belongs to Interpreting, Evaluating and Analysing? What are the criteria for evaluation? And how else, except through language, are students to evaluate texts, unless they perform this evaluation through visual and other modes? The Description is clearly related to the following Achievement Standard: 'Students interpret texts, questioning the reliability of sources of ideas and information.' But the fill-in-a-grid methodology, the cross-hatching and the multiple specifications and outcomes are not the sign of a lean and mean syllabus and can only bewilder and complicate.

The *Queensland Studies Authority Response* to the draft Senior Secondary English units forensically dissects the problems: inconsistency between Achievement Standards and Content Descriptions; overlapping tasks and a high degree of redundancy; inability of the Achievement Standards to help teachers distinguish A to E levels of student performance; the failure to acknowledge teachers' judgement as an essential component of assessment; poor phrasing and editing in the Content Descriptions and Achievement Standards. However, this writer's objections start further back. The prescriptive content of the syllabus, the absolute mania for detailed scope and sequence tasks, the inordinate number of skills, behaviours, concepts and information the syllabus needs to test in the name of rigour, with accompanying examples and samples, overcomplicate syllabi and diminish the role of teachers, while compelling them into compromise simply because of the sheer number of syllabus demands. I do not believe that such a system will advance student learning and may even hinder it. The Australian Association for the Teaching of English also has strong reservations about the scope and sequence of the syllabus ('AATE Response to the Draft F-10 Australian Curriculum: English'). In particular it pinpoints the lack of cohesion in the content descriptions in which concepts can appear under different strands in different years, a lack of developmental structure and a proliferation of small learning descriptors that risk fragmenting knowledge, and the blurring of the distinction between the language and literacy strands (7). The faults in content

descriptions and assessment tasks weaken the Curriculum but they may also indicate flaws in the Curriculum itself. In Chapter Five I have analysed some examples of the scope and sequence documents to indicate how poorly written many of them are when teachers need clarity. The AATE response to the draft curriculum (2009) captures many of my own criticisms, though I hope to provide an in-depth analysis of what has contributed to the tensions and reservations expressed by many English Teachers.

Helping Teachers to Negotiate the New Curriculum

In 2013 Oxford University Press (Australia) published the significantly titled *Language, Literacy and Literature* written by Alyson Simpson, Simone White, Barbara Comber and Peter Freebody, all education academics. Freebody heads the committee which drafted the English Curriculum, and Alyson Simpson, along with Mary Macken-Horarik, another close collaborator, are on the Advisory Committee for the English Curriculum. This has to be born in mind when assessing their contributions. Chapter One cites the section of the English Curriculum that identifies and explains the three strands in the English Curriculum (12), though the book is meant to address the general literacy capability through a focus on writing across the curriculum. The book's target audience is pre-service teachers, not just English teachers, and its scope encompasses the cross curriculum priorities: sustainability, ICT and Indigenous perspectives. English teachers, though, are principally charged with ensuring literacy standards and teaching language and literature so it is of special relevance to them. The book also solicits a wider readership, from practising teachers to interested academics.

The book demonstrates that not all that is wrong with English Curriculum can be sheeted home to its writers, who have had to negotiate with competing interests without compromising their intellectual integrity. There is much to admire in the book. It offers case studies, practical examples for the guidance of teachers (and importantly by teachers), theoretical frameworks, learning objectives, exercises, and work samples. Its attention to multimodal texts is exemplary and it skilfully integrates discipline areas, general capabilities and the cross-curricular priorities into the case studies. For example, the volume incorporates projects on sustainability, Indigenous reconciliation, gender, and literacy across the curriculum. It employs the admirable

Four Resources Model (4RM) approach to texts developed by Allan Luke and Peter Freebody, summarised as follows:

- Breaking the codes of written English
- Participating in the meaning systems of texts
- Using a variety of powerful texts in a variety of contexts
- Analysing texts (Simpson et al. 13)

The authors argue that such a model is adaptable to different forms of pedagogy and assessment but give prominence to an agentive pedagogy that empowers students to be active learners (208).

The authors also include a consideration of critical literacy, defined as ‘a respect for cultural and linguistic differences and an awareness of the interlinked nature of language [and] power . . .’ (31), and in the useful Glossary as ‘[t]he ability to assess and reflect objectively on visual, written or spoken texts for the way in which themes, issues or ideas are presented’ (209). Whether or not one considers these to be adequate definitions of the term, critical literacy is certainly not confined to themes or ideas: rhetorical and reading strategies and systems of representation are at its core. The suggestion that language and power are interlinked leaves that connection unexplained, although the suggestion that students should examine the way ideas and themes are presented indicates that something is at work here in the process of reflecting objectively that takes in textual strategies. But such strategies do not simply act as placeholders for themes or issues. They are *constitutive* of those ideas through linguistic, visual and other choices.

Anyone interested in the AC:E will be drawn to the introduction in order to discover the rationale for the tripartite division of the English Curriculum, ‘the three legs that support the concept of English’ (xxvii). Acknowledging that it is ‘not possible to completely separate them in reality,’ the authors seem to regard the division as a heuristic device for teachers and educators (xxv). Yet that is not how the *Shape* document reads since it reifies each aspect of the English Curriculum and has given rise to anxieties about how the three strands are interconnected and how each is to be taught and assessed. The first strand emphasises knowledge about language, which means getting to know how the English language works by acquiring a vocabulary through which to analyse it, while the literacy strand sweeps up correctness, fluency and style, together with multimodal and digital texts and the contexts, purposes and

audiences of texts in general. However, there are strong arguments to be made that knowledge about language is wider than the English language and that using language effectively by incrementally mastering the grammatical, generic, and semantic codes of language in order to analyse and generate texts vitally constitutes 'knowledge about language.' There is no reason why there should be a distinction between literacy and language in this regard. Moreover, there is no inherent reason why multimodal and digital texts need appear under literacy, unless what is in view are notions of 'visual' literacy or 'media' literacy. They are, in addition, relevant to the literature strand and indeed sometimes appear under this heading.

Literacy does nevertheless require definition and theorisation if it is to be measured and fostered. However, literacy is what results from the mastery of complex linguistic and other semiotic structures. Therefore, at the risk of sounding behind the times, a critic might contend that literacy as a division of the Curriculum and syllabus content is redundant. This point is supported by the Four Resources Model, which focuses on decoding, generating and analysing texts in context. If students are able to master these skills at appropriate levels across the years of schooling then they are literate, bearing in mind that what constitutes an appropriate level varies according to the literacy demands societies and institutions place on citizens and workers.

When it comes to literature, the authors are cautious in their approach, admitting that literature has long been incorporated into Subject English but that debates about the role and definition of literature in the curriculum are longstanding and ongoing. They rehearse the standard defences: that literature is a source of pleasure, including aesthetic pleasure, that it has been accorded importance in the formation of subjectivity, and that it carries heritage value. A study of literature encourages close reading of texts and 'multiple layers of interpretative resources' which leads to attention to the material aspects of language and multiple interpretations of individual texts. Through literature students have the chance to widen their experience and explore social issues (17). These justifications for studying literature are perfectly defensible, although a defence of literature seems to involve minimising the linguistic strategies which literary texts share with other texts but which are not exclusive to them.

Leaving this complication aside until it can be discussed at greater length, I find that there are some glaring theoretical difficulties in the approach to literary texts. One example must suffice. In an extended unit on novel reading, 8-9 year old students are asked to complete an exercise on point of view. They isolate the point of view of different characters in the novel and then 'learn to think as the author' (95) in order to determine what the author is trying to tell the reader (93). This exercise rings alarm bells for many English teachers since readers have no unmediated access to the author's intention apart from the narrative voice or voices, to say nothing of the concept of the 'implied' author, the 'character' of the author created by the narrative. No one expects young readers to make such subtle distinctions and it is valuable training to get students to recognise there can be multiple points of view in a novel or story, some more privileged than others. Nevertheless it is disturbing to invoke theories of reading texts that must be 'unlearned' at later stages of schooling, theories that cause English teachers trained in their discipline to wince. In Chapter Five the authors define what they call 'narrative bias'--'the way a narrator can control a reader's point of view in order to manipulate their perception' (145). 'Bias' and 'manipulate' suggest stealth techniques when all texts must adopt a point of view. True, novelists make sophisticated choices about how to tell a story but there is no 'objective' or neutral point of view from which they deviate.

A final reservation about the book and its relation to the English Curriculum concerns the concept of 'text types' or genres and their role in language across the curriculum; that is, by identifying the 'oral and written genres of particular subject areas' (Bailey, Burkett, and Freeman 617). Based on Halliday's socio-linguistic theory that the organising principle of text is its social purpose--its context of situation--the method aims to empower students by making explicit the literacy demands of school genres by description and classification of texts according to grammatical and structural regularities (Alison Lee 415). In Unsworth's words:

[s]tudents will be in a better position to both understand and critically interpret and to create and manipulate texts . . . when they understand that different genres or text types exist; . . . are a means of achieving different social purposes; . . . [and] are typically structured in particular ways; . . . [with]

characteristic grammatical features. (qtd. in Bailey, Burkett and Freeman 617 [ellipses in quote])

Genre-based pedagogy gained significant purchase on curricula during the 80s and 90s. It is *Language, Literacy and Literature* pinpoints eight core text types relevant to a range of disciplines: 'recount, information report, procedure, exposition, discussion, explanation, narrative response/review (66-67). There is no gainsaying that texts have social purposes and that written genres are governed by particular linguistic conventions. Nor is there anything necessarily amiss with explicitly teaching such conventions. Students can struggle with the texts and genres of schooling. However, the text types are not watertight categories and bleed into each other. For instance the recount--used to retell and evaluate events—is overlaid by narrative, used to entertain and instruct through storytelling. Exposition--to persuade through argument using a single point of view--overlaps with discussion, which employs opposing viewpoints. An information report (used to classify and describe) requires similar skills to providing instructions and explanations. The linguistic skills necessary to evaluate an artistic work are not fundamentally different from those used to construct an argument.

Moreover, text types seem to get caught up in binaries such as informative/factual/literal/referential versus expressive/persuasive/aesthetic/rhetorical. It has been the work of contemporary theorists such as Foucault, Derrida and De Man to undo such binaries. As Norris notes of De Man's project: De Man questions 'whether language . . . can indeed be brought under the governing terms of a purely *grammatical* account . . . and whether language can indeed provide a passage to a real-world phenomenal order of experience that would guarantee [a] perfect correspondence between thought and reality' (83). Theories of textuality, language and genre as enshrined in many syllabus documents around Australia, run counter to the idea of reifying genre and assume that there is no neutral position from which a text can be read or written' (Luke and Freebody 193). If that is the case, then basing an English curriculum around the core text types of schooling, themselves far from definitive, is bound to create difficulties for an English curriculum. Since Peter Freebody was charged with oversight of the English Curriculum it is safe to assume that *Language, Literacy and Literature* has received his

imprimatur, and it is evident that there is an intimate theoretical relationship between the book and curriculum documents: the strands, the list of text types, the statements about literature, to nominate three. This fact goes a long way to explaining some of the more opaque aspects of the Curriculum, as I shall demonstrate, and why English teachers and academics may find some statements bewildering. The theoretical assumptions underpinning the Curriculum are not spelled out and result in confusion. I would single out the failure to recognise that all texts and text types are persuasive and establish a point of view, though they differ as to purpose and the semiotic resources they employ. Thus the book illuminates some of the difficulties with terminology found in the Curriculum but does not excuse them since the Curriculum as far as possible must be free-standing.

It must by now be obvious to the reader that my evaluation of the English Curriculum is rooted not simply in the Curriculum as it now stands but seeks to establish a wider view of the English curriculum which locates it in recent (and sometimes older) historical and theoretical contexts, and I hope that my observations on curricula in general are thought-provoking even if readers disagree with them. The Australian Curriculum afforded me opportunities to reconsider the English learning area not in order to diminish or erase existing curricula or to question their value but to identify some of their weaknesses. If my criticism of the Curriculum sometimes appears harsh or nit-picking, it is because I believe defining terms and getting the language right is important.

Thesis Structure

The body of the thesis is divided into the following chapters:

- **Introduction: contextualising Publications and/with the National English Curriculum**
- **Troublesome Terms: Pedagogy, Curriculum, Syllabus, Subject, Discipline**
- **Devising the National Curriculum**
- **Designing the National Curriculum**
- **‘Thank God for English Teachers’: The Shape of the Curriculum--English**
- **A Coda on Syllabus, Standards and Assessment**
- **Conclusion: Truly, Madly Deeply**

This structure allows me to explore the emergence of the Australian Curriculum, locating it in the context of global and national developments in education. The first section is grounded in the understanding that an evaluation of the English Curriculum must be meticulously conducted in the context of a reading of the Australian Curriculum in general and the English Curriculum in particular. Hence, the Curriculum must be interpreted and evaluated through its historical and contemporary contexts, which provide vital insights into its aims, values, pedagogy, structure and content and offer the insights required to inform such a critique.

The second chapter clarifies key theoretical terms whose definitions sometimes bedevil discussions of curriculum, though not for the sole purpose of clarification. Definitional issues are intimately connected to shifting concepts of truth, knowledge and subjectivity, especially those that discursively construct the 'student,' the 'teacher' and the 'learner,' as Hunter would agree (*Rethinking the School* 24-5). The chapter begins with an analysis of Classical *paideia*, exploring its connections to the ethical and knowing subject and to Hunter's pastoral pedagogy in order to illuminate contemporary curricula, especially the renewed emphasis on subjects and disciplines.

The next chapter examines the design briefs and specifications for the process of writing the Curriculum, the role of ACARA in this process, the difficulties encountered in installing the Curriculum and remarks on the consultation process. I note the absence of teachers as true collaborators in the Curriculum and the way in which the curriculum design brief tended to pre-empt any real discussion of the Curriculum framework. This may change with the new review.

Chapter Four is devoted to a lengthy examination of the English Curriculum in the light of earlier sections. I supply an overview of the history of English as a discipline, granting the always provisional and shape-changing nature of the subject and focusing on the tensions, contradictions and commonalities that have informed state-based curricula. I then unpick the *Shape of the Curriculum: English* document using the following method:

- An investigation of the (flawed) three-strand structure of the Curriculum: Language, Literature and Literacy.
- An examination of the inadequate and often confusing definition of key concepts.
- An extended consideration of the statements on literacy.

- An exploration of the inadequate theorisation of multimodal and digital texts in the Curriculum.
- An assessment of the renewed focus on the aesthetic and the rhetorical in curriculum discourse.
- A consideration of grammar in the Curriculum.
- Observations on syllabus, standards and assessment.

In the course of the discussion I address within the limits available to me critiques of English curricula both from within and outside the profession.

It must now be obvious to any reader the positions I take regarding the Curriculum and the English Curriculum. I am not inherently opposed to a national curriculum, though I reject the claim that the Curriculum is world class, whatever that is taken to mean, even if ACARA undertook the mapping of relevant international curricula, but I do not suggest that the English Curriculum is misguided, since the *Framing Paper* identifies key concepts and current educational contexts, such as globalisation, English in a multicultural environment, that are vital to consider in Australian society. These observations are not meant to censure curriculum writers because their task was formidable as the new curriculum was designed for the nation and they had to reach a consensus on many issues. I am opposed to the current regimes of national testing and evaluation which seem to constitute ‘education reform’ and which hypnotise both Labor and Coalition parties. I have little patience with calls for rigour, the default assumption being that present curricula lack rigour, which I vehemently dispute. I cannot take seriously the claims that the new Curriculum promotes equity given that equity is taken to mean homogeneity and is driven by performance on tests. The unequal funding for government schools is one of the principles that give rise to inequity. Given the Gonski Review and the demonstrable inequities in school funding I find it hard to describe education in Australia as equitable. I confess to resenting the constant belittling of teachers by media and governments, such that the Australian Curriculum, whatever the goodwill and expertise of its writers, can be presented by critics as an exercise meant to compensate for the deficiencies of teachers and pull them into line.

As far as the English Curriculum is concerned, I argue that it is caught between competing disciplinary definitions of ‘English’ and that it is, ironically, far too ambitious. I welcome the fact that English is central to the Curriculum and that it has

been broadly defined in line with developments in the discipline and subject area over several decades. I have no problem with explicit teaching of skills, although I think the methods, scope and sequence of these skills require scrutiny. I have no quarrel with, in fact I applaud, the teaching of aesthetic and rhetorical strategies, and I think that many teachers already instruct students in how to employ them.

My chief objection to the organising principle of the English Curriculum--the division into the strands of Language, Literature and Literacy--is shared by others whose opinions are more expert than mine. I hasten to add that I am not opposed to the teaching of literature but feel that it carries too much ideological baggage in the Curriculum. In a world-class curriculum one should expect theoretical consistency, clear definitions of terms, and a very high standard of editing and proofreading. This is not generally the case with some English Curriculum documents. I take issue with the multiplication of scope and sequence tasks, which bears an unacknowledged legacy from outcomes-based education, importing its weaknesses rather than its strengths. Though my verdict on the Curriculum can seem at times unsympathetic but not dismissive I believe it is supported by my analysis. Nevertheless I am dismayed that the Federal government has seen fit to interfere with the Australian Curriculum. Now that it is in place and has generally, with reservations, been accepted around the nation, teachers need stability and Australia does not need to squander its limited resources on major amendments although it is quite proper that the government should review the Australian Curriculum at regular intervals but not because of partisan political commitments, like the review Tony Abbott entrusted to Donnelly and Wilshire, who do not operate within the structures of ACARA.

Chapter One

Promises, Promises: Reading the National English Curriculum in Context

The national curriculum enfranchises the population.

Peter Garrett, Press Release, 11 July, 2011

I am not against the idea of a national history curriculum; I just think it should be written from Broome.

Michael Cathcart, *Bush Telegraph*, ABC Radio National, 2012

This is not a good time for a country to be entering into a national curriculum.

Marie Brennan, 'National Curriculum: A Political-Educational Tangle,' 260

There is no good reason why a national curriculum, in Britain or elsewhere, should operate along traditional lines.

John White, *The Invention of the Secondary Curriculum*, 12

Why Not a National Curriculum?

When the Rudd government was elected in 2007 the Prime Minister had an ambitious reform agenda--like Whitlam and Keating before him he was a man in a hurry. One of the reforms on his long list was the development of a national curriculum--scarcely surprising since over the last thirty-five years successive Federal governments, both Labor and Liberal, have actively pursued this elusive goal. Indeed the puzzle surely is: why didn't Australia move to a national curriculum long before 2007 if successive Federal governments were enthusiastic supporters of it? Answers to this question will be considered later, but an equally valid question is: why did the Rudd government succeed in getting the states to agree to it in 2007? Answer: Labor was in power across most of Australia and thus a golden political opportunity presented itself. Now that Labor is out of government federally, the Coalition has no intention of turning back the tide on a national curriculum the tide since it grants the Federal government more control over curricula.

However, an historical account of educational innovation in Australia since the 70s, such as that provided by the impressive and thorough Melbourne Curriculum Project, provokes a thoughtful reader to conclude that we have long been moving

towards a national curriculum in incremental steps and by de facto means (Brennan, 'National Curriculum . . .' 262). In Connor's words, 'a curriculum is born into a context and inherits a history' (272) and the immediate context for any discussion of the Australian Curriculum must be the larger history of curriculum in Australia that led gradually, unevenly but not inevitably to the development of a national curriculum.

Donnelly and Wiltshire remind us that there was an attempt in 1980 by the Curriculum Development Corporation (federally funded) to think through a core curriculum for Australian Schools (1980), using a model that hoped to move beyond basics and traditional curricula, with their focus on disciplines, and place more emphasis on skills, competencies, capacities and understandings (52-53). As we shall discover this document focused many of the concerns of and conflicts over the prospectus for a national curriculum, including general capabilities and cross-curricular priorities.

Equally, the educational determinants of curricula, institutional, professional and pedagogical, have always existed in a complex interplay with wider social, political and economic forces, which, for our present purposes, centrally include: a) the penetration of the market into every area of life, b) the growth of digital technologies, and c) the pressures of globalisation. Education is regarded as crucial in handling these changes and managing their results. Therefore Chapter One is informed by the conviction that it is impossible to evaluate the Australian Curriculum in general and the English Curriculum in particular without a grasp of the politico-educational contexts that have shaped curriculum developments in recent decades. Hence, the Curriculum must be interpreted and evaluated through its historical and contemporary contexts, which provide vital insights into its aims, values, pedagogy, structure and content.

Globalisation and the National Curriculum

Many countries, primarily developed nations, have established statutory national curricula with varying inbuilt degrees of prescription. A national curriculum is one that vests educational goals, curriculum, implementation of curricula, and the setting of standards in a national educational authority (Knight et al.). A national curriculum sets out subjects or learning areas to be taught, the knowledge, skills and

understandings students should master in particular learning areas (this may include generic and cross-curricular skills), standards of attainment and methods of assessment. The list of countries that now have a national curriculum are: England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland (through devolution), Jordan, Singapore, China, New Zealand, France, Hungary, Italy, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands, Norway and Portugal (Knight et al.). The central authority may have a light touch, allowing flexibility in the development of curricula and discretionary power to teachers, schools and provincial authorities, or, as in England, may be much more prescriptive (this prescriptive approach has never been fully accepted by the teaching profession and has been moderated over time (see Ursula Clark 189-200). The United Kingdom (before devolution) was the first to develop a national curriculum (in 1988) and unsurprisingly its methods, assumptions and fortunes have had an effect on Australia's venture (see, for example, Thomson 21-27; Barcan 108-39). In the US, local and state authorities still retain control over curricula and funding but follow common curriculum guidelines (Knight et al). The advantages and disadvantages of a national curriculum are not far to seek and crucially depend on specific national contexts and the mode of its implementation. Australia's Curriculum is very ambitious in its scope. The installation of a national curriculum may signal a desire for the retention of national control over education in relatively authoritarian societies but in liberal democracies may be the result of perceived efficiency and productivity gains, and a unifying factor in multicultural societies.²⁴ A national curriculum can also run the risk of too much homogeneity and imposition from above so there needs to be a fine balance between prescription and autonomy. In Australia the curriculum as a nation-building project designed to meet global, twenty-first century challenges has been underscored in the Australian Curriculum documents and in statements by the Labor government, but the Curriculum as it stands has not been wholeheartedly accepted by the Coalition in part because of the struggle between Coalition states and Federal Labor when it was installed and ideological differences between the parties, despite their consensus thinking on major educational issues. The Howard government

²⁴ In Napoleonic France it was an instrument used to help create the French nation itself, which had not yet developed a French identity that encompassed all its citizens.

interested itself in curriculum through initiatives such as the history summit and tied funding arrangements. Under the Coalition Brennan notes an intensification of the 'discourses of derision' aimed at teachers, schools, and pedagogies such as outcomes based education (261). In fact the *Sturm und Drang* that surrounded the lead up to the Australian Curriculum, whatever real issues were at stake, invites metaphors such as storms in teacups, and mountains out of molehills.

The Coalition was not as unreserved in its support of the development of a national curriculum as was the Labor Party in 1992 and 2007 but it is now an official plank of Coalition policy. The Coalition has not objected to the greater centralisation of power in the hands of state ministers when convenient; nor has it been discouraged from intervening in curriculum debates (Barcan 108-39). In the light of these developments, one can safely argue that the greater centralisation of curricula signifies a desire to define precisely how education should serve the nation and has now become crucial to many nations' globalising project to transform education in an era when many societies have become more culturally diverse, and global economic pressures more insistent. It is no accident that international comparative measures of educational attainment are now more salient and likely to have political effects at home. Rizvi and Lingard, in their impressive study of globalisation and education, remark:

[c]urriculum has been linked to the reconstitution of education as a central aim of national economic policy, as well as being central to the imagined community the nation wishes to construct through schooling. Both are responses in their own ways to the perceived pressures of globalisation. (96)

When the National Curriculum Board (later ACARA) began its work it commissioned a Curriculum Mapping Exercise in key learning areas which examined the degree of alignment among Australian state curricula and between these curricula and international examples chosen from countries whose education systems are comparable to Australia's. Researchers concluded that Australian curricula did not differ markedly among states and that there was a high degree of alignment between Australian curricula and those of other high-performing jurisdictions. The *Review of the Expert Panel of the England National Curriculum* in 2011 (a response to widespread criticism of the national curriculum) also performed its own mapping exercise across a

range of international jurisdictions and decided that there was a high degree of alignment across them. In the English learning area, although jurisdictions organised their curricula on different models, the English curricula integrated speaking, listening reading and writing and sometimes viewing. All jurisdictions wanted students to read, write, create and engage with a wide range of texts and text types, and all wanted students to master basic language skills, understand how language works, and use it imaginatively and creatively. Students need language skills to participate effectively in society and must be able to analyse texts and language critically. The Panel found it hard to determine the level of challenge in different curricula but found that there were distinct levels of specificity in curricula and standards. However, the level of specificity was not identical across all domains for all curricula (31-43; 125-35).

In 2012 the Grattan Institute published a report, authored by Ben Jensen et al., *Catching Up: Learning from the Best School Systems in East Asia*.²⁵ Jensen et al. note that Hong Kong, Korea, Shanghai and Singapore are four of the five highest performing jurisdictions according to PISA and PISA seems to be the crucial and seemingly the almost sole measure of success. The report grew out of the *Learning from the Best* Roundtable in September, 2011, attended by the then Prime Minister Julia Gillard, and the Federal Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth Peter Garrett. Thus the research had the imprimatur of the top level of government. The entire report can be accessed on www.grattan.edu.au but I shall trace its major findings, especially its examination of Hong Kong school reforms. Jensen et al. assert that the explanation for Hong Kong's success has not been more spending on education but better targeted spending; a relentless emphasis on improving student learning; a constant focus on teacher performance by mentoring, peer review, and continuous professional development; the elevation of the status of teachers; the reduction of teacher hours spent on extraneous tasks to allow instructors more time to reflect and improve; and determined leadership to ensure implementation (18-25).

The impetus for school reform in Hong Kong was driven by the handover to China and the report makes fascinating reading as it describes the move away from

²⁵ The Grattan Institute describes itself as an 'independent think-tank focused on Australian public policy.' It counts among its sponsors the Australian Government, the Victorian Government, the University of Melbourne, and bhpbilliton.

rote learning and drilling, reliance on examinations, standardised textbooks²⁶ and traditional pedagogies to a greater focus on individual students, the inculcation of critical and creative skills, originality and imagination, reading for literary and not just functional purposes, and formative assessment to enable teachers to monitor student progress cumulatively. The aim of the system is to develop twenty-first century skills, create national and global citizens, and secure the economic future (12-22). One presumes that these reforms were politically motivated since there were fears that mainland China would attempt to dismantle Hong Kong's democratic freedoms (as it has done) and a more open and inclusive education system is one way to resist control. Ironically, curriculum reform in Hong Kong seems to have learned from the best systems in the West since the changes outlined have long been normalised features of curricula such as Australia's. Therefore the aims of education in general and curricula in particular do not differ significantly across the two jurisdictions. I also assume that Hong Kong did not go through the great debates over progressive pedagogy that convulsed systems in the UK, America and elsewhere in the 60s and 70s and thus the Australian educational experience has been different from Hong Kong's. And though the best systems in Asia are performance driven they are not necessarily fuelled by naked market forces (for example, Korean student teachers are paid as civil servants). What seems to be a strong point of divergence from Australia is the way that teachers in Hong Kong are central to success and are in theory given sufficient time and enough professional development to improve student outcomes. Notwithstanding, it is legitimate to worry about 'relentless' improvement since it may imply relentless pressure on teachers. Nor is there much hope that in Australia teacher loads will be reduced or that teachers' status or salaries will be raised. Nevertheless the fact that Australia is looking to Asia for clues to enhance outcomes is one strong indication of the importance of global comparisons to national systems, including Australia's.²⁷

²⁶ According to the American Academy of Science, around the USA schools are abandoning textbooks because they don't arouse students' interest in science. Textbooks can also be a hindrance in other areas, such as English.

²⁷ Diane Ravitch in 'The Myth of the Chinese Super School,' casts doubt on Chinese test results, which are often the product of fraud, and indeed she wonders whether international and national tests are of any value whatsoever.

Thus Australia's development of a national curriculum cannot be viewed in isolation but rather must be examined as a component of a 'global trend towards policy convergence, however mediated by [national] politics, history and culture' (Rizvi and Lingard 233). Hence it is no surprise to learn that the design brief for Australia's National Curriculum included the consultation of state and territory curricula from other high-performing and comparable jurisdictions, such as England, America, Singapore, New Zealand, Ontario, and Finland, and an examination of these curricula soon confirms that they have much in common with each other in their overall aims and rationales, their emphasis on the formation of the national, ethical, civic and functionally competent subjects, down to specific details of learning areas and programs. For example, Ontario's suite of English subjects, identified in the Curriculum Mapping Report as closest to Australia's English learning area, exhibits strong family resemblances in theoretical concepts such as context, purpose and audience, a focus on critical thinking and higher order, metacognitive skills, the importance of literacy and literature, the need to address a linguistically diverse culture, and the necessity for valid and rigorous assessment (*Ontario Curriculum: English*, 2007). In my opinion the Ontario curriculum is much superior to the new English Curriculum and is more welcoming of teachers' judgement and professional autonomy. Moreover, it is written in prose that is hospitable to and inclusive of students, teachers and parents. I invite the interested reader to test my conclusion by going to www.edu.gov.on.ca.

As Watt declares, speaking of the period of reform immediately preceding the development of the National Curriculum, '[i]n the information age, when the exchange of curriculum information between different countries has increased at an expeditious rate, it is likely that curriculum developers have solicited information from diverse sources' (58), although the AC:E and its associated documents do not explicitly and in detail declare what curricula have had the most influence on structure, organisation and concepts. For all the above reasons we can talk of curriculum as well as policy convergence because the goals, frameworks, assessment regimes and even content of national curricula can look remarkably similar across national borders. And the more standardised and homogenised curricula become, the more danger there is that curricula will seem at an ever greater remove from what goes on in schools, that a

gap may emerge between the mandated curriculum and the enacted curriculum (Levin, 'An Approach to Secondary School Improvement' 114-27; Ball, 'Big Policies/Small World: An Introduction to International Perspectives in Education Policy' 119-30; McKnight et al.). Indeed large stretches of Australia's curriculum documents sometimes read as if they had been outsourced to the private company that submitted the lowest tender.

Thus globalisation has effects on and implications for national education systems, whether viewed as opportunity or threat, and globalising these systems, in this case the curriculum, is regarded as vital if a nation is not to be left behind internationally. In Zajda's opinion globalisation in education has coalesced around 'national curricula, standards, excellence and quality, as well as outcomes-based curriculum reforms' ('Globalisation, Ideology and Education Policy Reforms' xiv). According to Wyse, 'education has been implicated in the discourse and processes of globalisation through the idea of the *knowledge economy*' (158 [italics original]), where knowledge is both a tradable commodity and the key to competitive advantage. Although the knowledge economy plays by market rules, it has led, as Wyse observes, to interventions by the 'regulatory state' (159) in order to raise standards, measure outcomes, influence pedagogy and monitor teachers. International competition is mirrored in the creation of internal education markets as the driver of performance.²⁸

Nevertheless, no credible researcher would deny that 'globalisation' is multifaceted and that globalisation's effects on education are manifold and not limited to economic imperatives, with their apparatus of efficiency, standards and international assessment. Indeed one unnamed professional association which responded to a survey for the *Framing Paper Consultation Report* perceptively stated that the English Curriculum

discusses globalisation only in the context of work and does not consider how globalisation is impacting on how students see themselves in relation to the

²⁸ Alan Reid, in his 'The Regulated Education Market Has a Past,' demonstrates, using nineteenth-century South Australia as his example, how the failure of the free market education system led to calls for state intervention, which regulated the market to exert class control, centralise pedagogy, lift teacher standards and introduce efficiencies. This was not wholly successful in getting poor students to school and actually increased inequities.

world, the role of English as a global language and the place of Australian literature in a global context. (21)

The challenges posed and opportunities offered by globalisation in the education arena are increasing mobility (including refugee flows), multiethnic states and ethnicities that cross national borders, a digitally saturated world, multilingualism as the rule rather than the exception in many societies, with the proviso that not all languages possess equal status either nationally or globally. These aspects of globalisation are encapsulated in Appadurai's phrase that the global is characterised by 'the movement of texts and populations' (qtd. in Hull and Hernandez 334). The benefits of globalisation, however, are unevenly distributed, and neo-colonialist domination by former imperial powers maintains the gulf between rich and poor nations and runs counter to any easy celebration of diversity, hybridity or multiple identities (Shin and Kubota 212).

Despite high-minded rhetoric about 'new times' and 'futures-oriented' learning, international competition has resulted in a reversion in Australia to older paradigms of curriculum: a renewed emphasis on subject- and discipline-based curriculum models, especially in areas that are considered vital to competitiveness, such as English, a compulsive concern with literacy and numeracy, and an emphasis on cultural heritage views of nationhood. Not that this observation exhausts the nation's curriculum conversation or excludes the counter pressures exerted by a multicultural world, but it is undeniable that Australia, like England, has opted for a conservative model of curriculum that for many marks a reassuring return to the past, what Ball dismissively labels 'a curriculum of the dead' ('Education Markets and Professionalism' 60).²⁹ Above all, it is meant to signal that governments have (re)gained control of educational agendas after past excesses and mistakes and that they are capable of responding adequately to the multiple and destabilising forces exerted by globalisation. It is no accident that calls for a return to standards and rigour is suffused with the gendered language of phallic potency, instanced by media critics who disdainfully dismiss 'soft options,' 'soft marking,' 'soft-headed' progressivism' and

²⁹ A conservative approach to curricula does not mean that individual learning areas are necessarily conservative. Historians run into trouble when they mandate the discussion of indigenous history in Australia because of entrenched discrimination.

even 'soft literature,' which have allowed educational agendas to be hijacked. In addition, more homogenised curricula are supposed to ensure that all students receive a demonstrably high quality education whatever their background and personal circumstances. Nevertheless, Rizvi and Lingard are blunt in their observation that the Australian curriculum is 'located within a neo-liberal imaginary based more on the values of the market and system efficiency than on goals of democratic equality and community' (114).

Recent educational reform is mobilised and energised by narratives of crisis and decline--a conviction that education has somehow 'failed' the nation in an unforgiving global environment. One measure of success or failure is young people's preparedness for work and their rates of workforce participation, with alarm generated over a residual group who possess poor skills and poor attitudes to work. Somehow schools have not done their job in giving these students adequate training and the correct compartments to enable them to make the most of their opportunities and to cope with structural changes in the workplace. One answer to these problems has been to aim for ever higher retention rates in school and to get more students into university and training, thus raising the educational level of the population in order to increase national productivity, to compete in global markets, and to make up for the loss of jobs in traditional areas such as manufacturing increasingly exported off shore. But despite greater investment in education, gains in student performance have not seemed to follow for a stubbornly resistant but significant group of students clustered at the bottom end of the socio-economic scale (Bonnor and Caro 210; Jensen et al. 5).

Yet narratives of educational decline require sceptical scrutiny. No question that advanced economies demand well-trained workers, especially in emerging areas of the economy and given the controlled transfer of labour across borders. But we would do right to remember that mass secondary and higher education are relatively recent developments even in 'advanced' societies and thus comparisons across decades can be flawed because cohorts are not identical. In addition, global measures of educational achievement are also relatively recent. Moreover groups of so-called 'under achieving' students are the subject of intense scrutiny, disengagement from school a matter of on-going anxiety, especially when they end up in the unemployment statistics. If there has been a decline in standards, or at least no

substantial increase in standards, the causes may not be down to teachers or schools but to wider systemic problems. Students may have been failed by education but not necessarily because of wrong or bad teaching or inadequate or misguided pedagogies.

The Aims of Schooling: Altered Priorities Ahead

The aims of education bring about, and this is a political matter, a situation in which every citizen of a democracy may or should be . . . expected to take an interest.

John White, *The Invention of the Secondary Curriculum*, 22

One crucial element of internationalisation has been the development of *national* statements of educational goals and priorities. Lo Bianco declares that [e]ducation systems are principally the property of states. Even if authority is devolved to semi-autonomous bodies such as religious, ideological, regional-ethnic, or other parent-controlled agencies for the delivery of schooling, or higher or specialised education, states typically licence, authorise, fund, or certify educational practices. . . . The overarching interest of states for what happens in education is therefore long-standing. (113)

This being so, an essential move towards an Australian national curriculum was the release of the *Hobart Declaration of Schooling* (1989), the first Australian effort to formulate a set of national goals for education, updated in the *Adelaide Declaration* (1999) and culminating in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2009), which now guides the development of the Curriculum and is embedded in *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum*. Along with other high-performing jurisdictions, Australia is thus ‘explicit about the practical and functional contributions that education makes to national development’ (*The Framework of the National Curriculum: A Report by the Expert Panel, England* 15) and, as one might expect, the aims across these jurisdictions do not vary significantly. They encompass--and are meant to give equal weight to--the economic, cultural, social and personal dimensions of schooling (15). In the *Melbourne Declaration* the core goals of education are to support students to become ‘successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens’ (8) and it is hard to quarrel with these sweeping and ambitious goals (which are almost identical in wording to the aims in

the 2007 version of the English (and Scottish) national curricula [White 129]). The *International Curriculum and Assessment Comparative Table for National Education Aims*, by cross-referencing data from twenty-one advanced economies, shows that twenty-two common aims of schooling can be identified, and, like most countries surveyed, Australia ticks the box for all twenty-two. However, aims do not always capture or foreground the agenda that underlie them. As Brennan notes, education reform since the 80s was driven by the perception that Australia needed a more efficient curriculum with an emphasis on outcomes and assessment (259-80), leading to questions such as: will standards and assessment end up driving the curriculum, as happened in the United Kingdom during the 90s? Will the intense focus on literacy and numeracy as the benchmark for success dominate the Curriculum, to the detriment of students and without significant gains in performance?

In the introduction to a collection of articles on the Australian Curriculum, Atweh and Singh isolate the rationales given for a national curriculum--a world-class curriculum, efficiency, consistency and transparency. The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* offers a summary of the central changes that have occurred since 1989 which have made the argument for a national curriculum more persuasive: global pressures, such as climate change and economic integration, the rise of Asia, and growth in information technologies (6). Nevertheless, contributors are not always convinced that state curricula are second-rate or lack cross-state consistency and are agnostic about whether a national curriculum can fulfil its stated purposes. It seems almost heretical and now pointless to question the usefulness of a national curriculum in 2014 (Atweh and Singh 190).

Neoliberalism and Globalisation

America's technological future hinges, say the rigorists, on whether our student population can plug-and-chug the binomial theorem better than, say, Korean or Finnish or German or Chinese students. The childishness of this hypernationalistic mentality depresses me, and I want it to end, and I am not alone.

Nicholas Baker, 'Wrong Answer: The Case against Algebra'

If we assume there is one curriculum, the questions become who decides what it is? On what authority? Whose interests does it serve? And most importantly, what knowledge is of most worth?

Phillip Roberts, *The Conversation*, 7 December 2011.

As many commentators have noted, it was no accident that the period of the late 80s, when the idea of a national curriculum was being seriously promulgated in Australia, coincided with the global intellectual advance of neoliberalism, leading to its inevitable influence on education policy and funding. Indeed Clements, in his detailed history of the Dawkins period, accuses then state curriculum directors of adopting a ‘narrow and instrumentalist’ view of education (61). In Campbell’s words, neoliberalism

[is] characterised by the desire to cut back the welfare state as having produced welfare dependence and crippled individual initiative, to increase the sphere and power of markets to regulate social and economic activity, and in so doing, to increase choice and competitive individualism as a means of making a competitive economy and more self-reliant citizens. (‘School and School Choice’ 290)

Or as Giroux puts it, ‘neoliberalism, with its emphasis on market forces and profit margins, narrows the legitimacy of the public sphere (‘Curriculum History, “English” and the New Education . . .’ 111) by redefining it around issues of privatization, deregulation, consumption, and safety. The belief is that the efficiency of market forces creates social mobility through better educational performance and thus contributes to economic growth. Inevitably this long-term trend has attracted scathing criticism from many educationalists:

[t]he schooling agenda [has] been ‘captured’ by the corporate managerialist agenda, with strategic planning and accountability now very much in evidence in the educational lexicon. (Cranston, et al. 186)

Or as Allan Luke trenchantly observes:

[w]e now live in an era when schooling and education, teaching and learning have undergone a wholesale redefinition by reference to a culture of

accountability, performance and measurability . . . ('Generalizing Across Borders . . .' 370)

Welsh links neoliberalism and education reforms to the introduction into the public sector of 'corporate management practices such as program budgeting, strategic planning and measurement using performance indicators' (7) and to international policy trends already noted, which demanded greater program accountability for and measurement of the outcomes of schooling (7). Howard Lee, in a helpful overview of the twentieth-century quest for a 'scientific' curriculum adequate to the soul-searching demands of the modern state, bears out Welsh's conviction that the neoliberal agenda and educational trends were closely aligned during the 80s (61-62). For example, in the USA both Democrats and Republicans have been supportive of performance indicators to decide on teachers' salaries and tenure and whether schools remain open or not. This trend continues whatever new programs are introduced (such as 'No Child Left Behind,' 'Race to the Top,' or 'Common Core State Standards' (Delbanco 6). One Australian response to the challenges for Australian education of the new millennium is the collection of essays entitled *Beyond Nostalgia: Reshaping Australian Education* (2000) in which contributors explored the relationship between education and government, specially the marketization of education and thus the redefinitions of the roles and subjectivities of students and teachers that result (Seddon and Angus 197-98). The *Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians* predictably speaks the language of global competitiveness, the securing of national prosperity, the application of international data for comparative purposes, and the development of a world-class curriculum. The stated goals, though, conceal a sense of internal crisis (are standards falling, are students failing?) that lies behind the *Declaration*, though these are certainly not new anxieties and certainly not confined to Australia (John Dawkins also used a perceived crisis as his rationale for school reform). As noted in the Jensen report, the educational rise of Asia has provoked another round of introspection in Australia as we appear to slide down the scale of international achievement. International benchmarks, which measure literacy, numeracy and science, are coming to dominate national education debates, one instance of which is former Prime Minister Julia Gillard's declaration to Federal parliament on 20 August, 2012, that 'we are slipping behind the educational

race,' as if our education system mimicked the poor performance of our Olympic swimming team.

Consequently, as an essential element of the neo-liberal agenda, there has been intense emphasis placed on national, standardised testing programs to monitor student progress in the acquisition of basic skills. In the words of Rizvi and Lingard, 'the focus on human capital formation has created a demand for more robust regimes of testing' (114). This process began in Australia during the 1990s through state-wide testing of literacy and numeracy, which has now morphed into NAPLAN (Collins 189). However national tests now form part of international testing regimes such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS. Whatever their value and accuracy as instruments of assessment, such tests can cause (sometimes entirely misplaced) national panic as the report card usually reads: could do better. Australia's recent results in PISA aroused predictable dismay and defensiveness. Hence the embarrassment in Australia over the success of Asian nations such as Singapore and South Korea on international tests. Not only are Asian nations our best customers but our international rivals in the 'Asian century.'

Thus a national curriculum is seen as crucial to achieving centralised control over education through systems of accountability and performance-led measures in order to promote efficiency in a time of financial constraint and to mould a population able to rise to the economic, entrepreneurial, innovative and social challenges of globalisation. Australia's Curriculum has been sold to the electorate as core to our educational success and therefore is unlikely to be overturned by any Coalition government because governments now place a high premium on global comparisons and benchmarks and respond to externalities, such as global economic forces and power shifts.³⁰ Cummings argues that the language of educational reform is hyperbolically inflated and that reforms tend to be smaller and more incremental than governments claim; older models persist whatever the intent (20). To illustrate this point, Cummings establishes how similar the concerns of modern nation states are when it comes to education and Levin, drawing on a World Bank report, brings to our notice 'the extraordinary homogeneity in secondary schooling around the globe, and

³⁰ However, using a wide range of international comparisons in his research, Cummings warns us that nations are inclined to default to 'indigenous [institutional] patterns of education' (20) even if they pay lip service to international models.

the equally extraordinary stability in basic areas such as curriculum and school organisation' ('An Approach to Secondary School Improvement' 114). If this is the case, it is reasonable to expect that Australia's Curriculum will not be ground-breaking and that there may be few significant conceptual differences among global curricula in particular learning areas. Moreover, the Australian Curriculum as a whole necessarily owes a great deal to already established state curriculum patterns, as a close reading of state curricula in the English learning area reveals.

One of the government's boasts is that the Australian Curriculum will deliver a world-class curriculum to students.³¹ How can such a claim be established? An obvious strategy is to examine a wide range of curricula and decide a) which ones best align with national educational goals, and b) which ones ensure that international standards will be met or exceeded. The two aims are not necessarily at odds. Yet comparison among curricula demand yardsticks by which to measure success, and if the measure of success is how well individual countries do on international tests such as PISA, we cannot assume that simply copying curricula from elsewhere will ensure excellence. As Lefstein maintains, broader historical and institutional factors such as the mix between private and public schooling and systems of funding may be at work ('The Great Literacy Debate as Television Makeover' 136-56). And in any case, as Levin and Cummings have pointed out, there are now significant overlaps in curricula across international jurisdictions. However, it would also be foolish to imagine that the writers of the Curriculum sat down in a spirit of disinterested enquiry and performed rigorous evaluations of comparable curricula around the world before designing their own even if they did consult those curricula, even if the *National Curriculum English: Initial Advice* provides links to state and international curricula, That, surely, is not the way in which curricula are written. The process tends to be far messier, to be criss-crossed by tensions and contradictions and competing interests and takes as a point of departure already existing curricula.

ACARA wisely carried out a curriculum mapping exercise, outsourced to Laulon Management, Education and Technology Solutions, to compare state, territory and

³¹ The Australian Association for the Teaching of English, in its response to the draft English Curriculum, states categorically that it is not a world-class curriculum because it is backward looking, overly prescriptive, and devalues teachers.

international curricula against the Australian Curriculum in order to review alignments among curricula in English, Mathematics, Science and History. The exercise was also meant to identify areas in which teachers required more professional development. The comparison was based on the draft 2010 Curriculum (Jane, Wilson, Zab 4). Curriculum experts from the states and territories worked on the mapping process and teachers from each jurisdiction were given the opportunity to participate in the exercise of mapping the enacted curriculum in order to determine alignments between the intended and enacted curriculum and to rate the cognitive demands of curricula. The international comparisons for English were based on Ontario (Canada), New Zealand, England, Wales and Northern Ireland because these countries use English as a first language, have comparable school systems, universal education and a compatible pedagogical language to express concepts and standards. Some difficulties were experienced in recruiting and training teacher participants--none from South Australia or the ACT was involved. I will have more to say about this report in appropriate sections of the thesis, except to note at this stage that there was an especially high degree of alignment in English between state and territory curricula and the Australian Curriculum and an especially close fit between the latter and the Ontario curriculum. Obviously the Curriculum Mapping Report was not intended to evaluate the soundness of theory or content in curricula but to note similarities and differences, rather like the curriculum mapping undertaken by John Dawkins and installed in most state curricula through Statement and Profiles, which will be discussed later. The process may result in qualitative judgements on curricula but that is not its primary purpose. The high degree of alignment among curricula prompts several reflections:

- Whatever the rhetorical claims of the new Curriculum, it is unlikely that there is anything particularly new about it in broad terms.
- There is enough professional agreement about what constitutes an English curriculum today, despite any sniping of critics on the sidelines.
- The current (2015) review of the Australian Curriculum will not lead to major reforms to the Curriculum in the short term.

Towards a National Curriculum

Tracking curriculum change in Australia since the 80s therefore involves a consideration of global as well as national imperatives since the push for a national curriculum is itself a consequence of globalising tendencies. The first concerted and concentrated effort to install a national curriculum occurred between 1988 and 1993, significantly at a time when the UK had moved to a national curriculum. That process ended in deadlock when the states refused to come on board, to the frustration of the Federal Labor government, which had felt confident of prevailing. The Australian Labor Party was quick to revive the idea of a national curriculum when it won office in 2007. However, as Brennan explains:

[t]here was a long-standing interest from the AEC [the Australian Education Council]³² in 1986, continuing from the ALP Dawkins and Beazley ministries of education through to the Coalition Howard ministries, in gaining consistency in curriculum across the states, rationalising, and a focus on outcomes that could be measured. ('National Curriculum . . .' 262)

It is thus better to regard the period from 1993 to 2007 as a continuum rather than a complete hiatus. Writing in 1996, Clements observed that 'tagged federal funding initiatives continued to support curriculum restructuring' despite the 1993 setback (61). He also considers the late 80s to be the period when curricula became intensely politicised after what many conservatives regarded as a time when teachers had lost their way by generating 'inclusive curricula that emphasised child-centred pedagogy, and teacher autonomy but failed to deliver on fundamental skills' (61). 'Politicisation' tends to become visible when politicians gain more centralised control over curricula through funding arrangements and bureaucratic and policy initiatives. Politicians must and have every right to take positions on education, but in recent years, in an Australia seemingly more sharply divided along ideological and party lines, there is a danger that evidence, expert opinion or even common sense may gain little purchase on debates.

³² The Australian Education Council was formed in 1986 and was made up of ministers of education from all states and territories and the Commonwealth. John Dawkins, Commonwealth Minister for Employment Education and Training, used the AEC to reach agreement over the ten common goals for schooling, the construction of a national curriculum, and the formation of the Australian Curriculum Corporation.

Education has been one of the arenas in which the culture wars³³ have been fought in Australia since the 90s over issues such as the supposed steep decline in standards--the result of pedagogical fads and lunatic theories that have taken hold in the academy and schools--the weakening of traditional disciplines, and the spread of moral relativism and 'political correctness,' leading to the erosion of values and standards. Children are usually cast as the victims here, indoctrinated by and experimented on by left-wing teachers, academics and radical unions. Children by this account have little agency of their own. These arguments are so familiar in the pages of, say, *The Australian* or *Quadrant* as to acquire almost the status of a liturgical rite. However what is at stake in the Curriculum is not so much a division between left and right in Australian politics but the desire of governments, Labor and Coalition, to reshape education by exerting more centralised control over funding, curricula and assessment and promoting their seamless integration. And as Sophia Rosenfeld in her prize-winning book *Common Sense: A Political History* declares, claims about 'common sense are, in public life, almost always polemical: statements about consensus and certainty used to particular, partisan, and destabilizing effect' (15). Thus it is obvious that children need direct instruction, that standards are declining, that speaking and writing 'correctly' is imperative, that literature is good for children. These 'common sense' views are so self-evident that those who espouse them wonder why they need repeating, were it not for partisan elites. I am not for a moment suggesting that educationalists are never prone to fashion or mistaken enthusiasms, but, rather, that common sense frames and constrains educational discourse in the public sphere. Gerald Graff argues that the 'culture wars' are a problem of cultural authority and that teaching these conflicts is the only way to be rigorous in the 'teaching of texts and textual systems' (qtd in Frow 4) at least in tertiary institutions.

³³ The term 'culture wars' was popularised by James Hunter in *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (1992) and imported into Australia, although 'culture wars' here have not acquired quite the same messianic fervour and rancorous tenor as in the USA. Wilfred McClay, in labelling the 'culture wars' as possessing 'many of the qualities of confessional struggle,' highlights their religious dimensions: sacred/secular; modernisation/backwardness; science/religion. Such clashes are more muted in Australia but still present, especially with the growth of faith schools and the appointment of school chaplains.

Overview of Curriculum Reform in Australia since the 80s

Nonetheless, despite the growing influence of neoliberalism on educational policy in Australia its supporters could not carry out some kind of educational coup. There are always difficult negotiations and compromises, and the need to engage with already established institutional and curricular patterns. Experiments with curricula since the 80s are tricky to evaluate reliably along a spectrum of progressive and conservative since developments are interrelated although they may spring from widely divergent philosophical assumptions about the value, nature and role of education. As Vickers remarks, 'it is difficult to make sense of how the various curricula across Australia's states and territories are currently constituted without looking back to some of the earliest waves of curriculum reform' ('Curriculum' 325). Nevertheless, there are generalisations that can be made about the aims of curriculum restructuring which are helpful in grasping its complexities. In general terms, then, these aims may be put as follows:

1. To 'open up' the curriculum in order to give all students (not just those headed for tertiary entrance) opportunities to learn effectively in order to make education more relevant and thus to increase retention rates in post-compulsory schooling.
2. To develop curricula which address the perceived challenges of national and global competitiveness, the growth of information technologies, and the need for a highly-skilled work force.
3. In line with aim #1, to rethink curricula by identifying the skills, knowledges, understandings and values that all students should possess when they exit the school system in order to compete in the employment market and to take their place as informed and ethical citizens of Australia and the world.
4. To guarantee equity, so that all students, regardless of economic and social status, receive an education that enables them to flourish.
5. To reappraise the relationship between discipline- and subject-based expertise and the mastery of central and overarching skills and knowledges.

6. To centralise curriculum planning, including assessment, organisation and content, to promote quality, consistency and efficiency.
7. To use outcomes to construct and measure the effectiveness of curricula by linking curricula to reliable and detailed reporting methods in order accurately and in detail to assess student performance.
8. To integrate curricula across Kindergarten-12, also called Foundation-12 or Preparatory-12, through a common curriculum framework.

This list is by no means exhaustive and education professionals, governments, media, interest and advocacy groups have not invariably agreed on whether these are the aims that ought to be prioritised, or, if so, how they should inform curricula, and whether particular aims are compatible with each other. Still, the list provides a means of situating and scrutinising particular developments. For heuristic purposes Deng provides a useful summary of the four curricular ideologies that now govern the aims of schooling:

- academic rationalism--the passing on of disciplinary knowledge
- humanism--self-actualisation
- social efficiency--providing future workers
- social reconstruction--ameliorating social problems. (86-87)

He argues that these four ideologies underpin current curriculum discourses across the globe and are 'employed as rationales for changing curriculum content' (87). The list outlined above, which attempts to capture curriculum reform in Australia, can be mapped onto these four ideologies, with the caveat that they do not all receive equal prominence even when policy and curricula documents appear to allot them equal weight.

Dawkins Makes a Move

The story of curriculum in Australia since the 70s can support a number of plausible and competing narratives although there are clearly discernible trends. Barcan, in his analysis of the period 1987-1993, what we might call the Dawkins period, outlines these trends by citing Garth Boomer:

[t]he period since 1960 was one of ‘systemic schizophrenia in which official curriculum statements and actual curriculum practice in schools [became] progressively more incongruent.

Barcan goes on to add:

[t]he sixties brought a breakout, the seventies an expansion of choice, but the eighties sought more emphasis on performance and accountability. The 1990s promised to be a decade of reconstruction and curriculum frameworks, as the systems reclaimed the curriculum control which they had lost to the schools in the seventies and early eighties. Both the ‘hard Right’ and the ‘hard Left’ saw this as in the national interest, for different reasons. (109)

Barcan regards both extremes as containing their own blind spots. For example, he notes that Bill Hannan, the radical firebrand whose illuminating memoir I drew on in the Introduction, chaired the Victorian State Board of Education that produced a *Curriculum and Standards Framework* in 1988 which incorporated outcomes, something the younger Bill Hannan might have rejected (118). It is in this context that we must appraise the initiatives of John Dawkins, who became Federal Labor Minister for Education, Employment and Training (DEET) in 1988 but who was hardly the first to initiate a wide-ranging reassessment of school curricula. As we shall see, one can point to many curriculum developments which originated in Australian states and were consequential in producing change. Michael G. Watt provides a formidable overview of curriculum reform in Australia from the late 80s to 2006 (*From National Curriculum Collaboration to National Consistency . . .*). By his account, governments ceaselessly tinkered with curricula during this time. Nor was Dawkins the first to envisage a national curriculum, a move that began in the early 80s (Yates, Collins and O’Connor 10). However, Dawkins’ intervention came to be regarded as decisive and agenda-setting. It also marked a moment when the desire of politicians, both Federal and state, to exert increasing control over education became visible and therefore

highly contested. Clements explains how the Australian Education Council, through State and Territory curriculum directors, moved towards curriculum collaboration on the grounds of efficiency, homogeneity and consistency, influenced by events in the United Kingdom (63), which had moved to a national curriculum in 1988. The reforms of the 80s however were not lost because KLAs and OBE allowed a rethink of how to structure a national curriculum, although there has also been a return to standards-based curricula. It is no surprise that the reform of education under Labor also envisaged a national testing program (NAPLAN) that would allow governments to gain information on the achievements of students against international benchmarks. Julia Gillard was very impressed by the work of Joel Klein who set out to raise the achievements of 'failing schools' in New York through incentives such as rewarding teachers, for example, with increased salaries if students performed better on tests. This triage system has not fundamentally improved student achievement over the long term but it is very seductive to those who see 'performance' as one item in a neo-liberal agenda.

Among Dawkins' initiatives that came out of his paper *Strengthening Australia's Schools* (1988) was to map curriculum overlaps among state and territory syllabi, the identification of eight Key Learning Areas (henceforward KLAs)--English, Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society and Environment, Languages other than English, the Arts, and Health--and the development of a common curriculum framework (Collins and Yates 91). This process was followed by the development of Statements, which outlined the shape and rationale of the KLAs, and Profiles, that specified the outcomes students should achieve as they progressed (at their own pace) through learning levels in each area (Collins and Yates 92). What made the National Statements and Profiles so controversial was the fact that they were based on Outcomes-based Education (to be considered later), which appeared to privilege skills and understandings over disciplinary knowledge.

Dawkins linked his reforms to the desirability of regular nation-wide assessment standards with results to be reported regularly to parents and the public (Marsh, 'A Story of Collaboration . . .' 285; Welsh 10). According to Watt, states and territories moved to implement national statements and profiles from 1993 onwards through the development of curriculum frameworks which were generally endorsed by

teachers, as surveys in the 90s reported, and he notes that their use ‘endorsed a trial of outcomes-based education’ (16) which was, in different ways, to have profound and controversial effects on curricula. Barcan notes that the Australian Curriculum became contentious when Labor adopted social justice policies which did not go down well with Coalition governments in NSW and Victoria (112). To some extent, and despite the appearance of ‘equity’ in the Australian National Curriculum documents, social justice and equity issues still remain a source of friction in Team Australia. As one respondent to the *Framing Paper Consultation Report: English* astutely remarks: [a] commitment to equity and equality is essential but also needs further articulation in order to move beyond rhetoric’ (21).

It is possible to detect in Dawkins’ attempts at by no means radical reform the trajectory of future curriculum developments and debates, tensions and inconsistencies, achievements and failures. Under Australia’s constitution, education is the responsibility of states and territories, which have jealously guarded their prerogatives, and gaining their co-operation was never going to be an easy task, as Dawkins discovered. States and territories, moreover, have inflected curricula differently because of their regional histories, quests for innovation and ideological preferences, and treated Federal initiatives with suspicion as signalling the start of what became an increasingly more ‘aggressive stance in seeking control over the school curriculum’ (Brady 12). In other words the lead up to the national curriculum was a site of struggle between Federal and state governments, and thus a reflection of other conflicts between the two levels of government that are ongoing, although one must be careful not to overlook the cautious collaboration that enabled Dawkins’ initiative to get traction. Today it is easier to secure co-operation through funding arrangements that trade off state independence and autonomy for Commonwealth cash with strings attached (Harris-Hart 301).

As Dawkins’ portfolio title indicated, the Hawke/Keating governments moved toward curriculum centralisation as their response to what they perceived to be the new educational challenges posed by globalisation and the attendant need for a highly-skilled work force, the requirement for greater efficiency and rationalisation in education and training, and the usefulness of education as an instrument of national cohesion (Harris-Hart 301). In thus reframing education as a national project of urgent

economic, political and patriotic concern Labor was hardly alone. Yet it is important not to attribute the growth of a corporatist managerial model of education obsessed with standards, performance, accountability and targets as the sole or sinister reason for curriculum change in Australia.

The expansion of mass secondary education³⁴ during the 60s, the rise in the school leaving age and the drive for ever higher retention rates among students in the light of a rise in youth unemployment impelled the re-evaluation of curricula. Between 1975 and 1995 more than half of full-time jobs for teenage males disappeared, as did more than two-thirds of jobs for teenage females. Retention rates rose from 34% to 75% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002b; 2007a qtd. in Vickers, 'Youth Transitions' 45). There was genuine concern that large groups of students were being inadequately catered for and that the elitism that hierarchised students and subjects according to post-school destinations was inherently inequitable. There was also agreement that schools should provide students with workplace skills that helped them to gain meaningful jobs, although educational professionals resisted calls to reduce education to a mere function of the market. In 1988 the abolition of the dole for under eighteens meant that more students stayed on to Year 12 (Barcan 110). The 60s and 70s were, as Vickers reminds us, 'an era of optimism and rising expectations' (325). In 1973, the short-lived but energetically reformist Whitlam government commissioned a report that argued for a more diverse curriculum and granted more autonomy to teachers and schools to develop curricula, while the Whitlam Schools Commission channelled funds to the Disadvantaged Schools Program to support these initiatives. Curriculum reform in the 70s, now labelled 'progressive,' was vigorously teacher-led, prioritised equity and was preoccupied with providing inclusive curricula (Vickers 311).

'Progressive' pedagogies, which have been traced back to the ground-breaking work of John Dewey (Vickers 311), avowedly 'student-centred' and student-directed, as we have encountered with Hannan's reforms during the 60s in Victoria, enable students, as far as possible, to reach their individual potential and are concerned with social justice. Many English teachers in particular see themselves as on an emancipatory and liberatory mission to empower students, not just by harnessing

³⁴ See Bill Hannan, *The Best of Times*, on the subject of the Great Expansion.

their creative and empathic capacities, but by providing them with the intellectual and linguistic tools to critique their society. Many of today's influential educational leaders and thinkers were formed by and started their training during the 70s and early 80s and thus it is unsurprising that progressive curricula have left their mark on this generation, whatever the fluctuating fortunes of particular pedagogies or developments in disciplinary knowledge.

On the face of it, the Dawkins KLAs 'continued to embody important elements of progressivist practice' (Yates and Collins 4) but they were to lead in quite different directions, despite their emphasis on inclusive curricula. The Dawkins review acknowledged the tension between traditional, content-based school subjects and new ways of envisaging learning (such as life skills, environmental understandings, and responsible citizenship) beyond what could be considered narrow 'school knowledges,' although KLAs did not fundamentally undermine subject-based models. The need to provide curricula relevant to students' lives, their future workplaces and their different abilities reinforced the need for greater flexibility and the valuing of a range of skills. The integration of work experience and VET (Vocational Educational Training) into schools (Keating 94) during the 90s (an initiative supported by the Commonwealth government) was also an acknowledgement of the different career pathways of students and an attempt to undermine the distinction between highly valued school subjects for the 'best' students, headed for universities, and those deemed appropriate for the 'rest.'

Lingard et al. trace the messy negotiations and political power tussles that characterised the period between 1987 and 1993 during which Dawkins sought to reach agreement with the states on the adoption of National Statements and Profiles, which failed in the short term when, during a meeting of the Australian Education Council in Perth, 1993, the states balked at accepting them ('Federal/State Mediations in the Australian National Education Agenda . . .' 19-20). However, this seeming defeat did not put an end to the matter. That there needed to be a new form of federalism which redefined the relationship between the states and the Commonwealth in many areas of government, not just education, was a strongly held Labor belief in the 80s. From the perspective of 2015, the power balance between the states and the Commonwealth has been adjusted in some areas in favour of the Commonwealth. In weighing up the

Dawkins' era and its aftermath Welsh concludes that there was considerable collaboration between states and the Commonwealth, sweetened by funding initiatives. However, the momentum towards more centralisation and Federal control over education has continued unabated and is unlikely to be halted by squabbles over the Australian Curriculum.

The 'Traditional Curriculum,' Curriculum Reform and the Idea of a National Curriculum

In *The Invention of the Secondary Curriculum* White explains that twentieth-century struggles over the shape of curricula have deep historical roots. The orderly disposition of knowledge organised into taken-for-granted subject areas, emerged, according to White, by a gradual and by no means uniform process during modernity (1-20), influenced in different ways by confessional and institutional loyalties and by the desire of emergent nation-states to expand and gain control over education as an instrument of cohesion and modernisation. The so-called 'traditional curriculum,' a curriculum that encompasses a broad range of subjects from science to the humanities, was the result of an 'opening up' of education beyond a focus on what came to be regarded as a narrow, elitist and stifling Classical curriculum, although in the Renaissance such a curriculum looked anything but restrictive and stifling and there were often reform-led movements, such as Ramus's re-envisioning of the rhetorical curriculum (Mack 82-99). These changes were partially driven by the development of printing (see Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries educational reformers wanted, in White's words, a 'curriculum based on a comprehensive range of academic disciplines' (3), an 'encyclopaedia-based, practically oriented, middle-class education' (67). Cummings traces the appearance of systems of mass education in modern nation-states and demonstrates how national differences continue to affect the contours of curriculum. The modern curriculum, as we have inherited it, is also tied to the gradual expansion of education to include formerly excluded groups, bringing its own challenges in its wake, such as the felt need to differentiate curricula along class lines and the emphasis on useful knowledge. Obviously, what constitutes 'useful'

knowledge is culturally and historically specific, unstable and contestable. As Thomson et al., in the context of education, observe:

[k]nowledge is a social construction, which is built collectively in often unpredictable interactions among teachers, children and young people, family members, media and objects, and through events and experiences. (Thomson, Lingard and Wrigley 2)

Moreover, there were inevitable tensions between an emphasis on practical or professional training and religious instruction, signified by the culturally-inflected meanings of 'vocation': a religious calling, a professional career, or apprenticeship in a guild system. These tensions are still present, though 'vocational' education is a term now generally applied to trade-based preparation, widened to include service industries.

Thus a 'traditional curriculum,' as we know it, was a response to the pressures exerted by the advent of new kinds of knowledge, and new educational cohorts and priorities, including that of patriotic indoctrination and service to the nation-state.³⁵ The 'traditional,' subject-oriented curriculum is now the norm across the globe, but there have been challenges to its dominance over the last decades, as we shall see (White 141).

Encyclopaedic education, as White, following Durkheim, calls it (76), seems so self-evidently the right and proper method to systematise curricula, especially at the secondary level, that to interrogate its principles appears heretical, even when the goals of education are redefined according to current needs. Attempts to alter this structure are thus inevitably fraught, regardless of what are looked upon as the ultimate purposes of education in a secular, democratic society such as Australia's. One problem with the encyclopaedic approach or the broad, general, subject-based curriculum is the exponential growth of information and the multiplying learning areas that need to be covered as schools take on increased responsibilities for preparing students for life. This 'crowded curriculum' effect has been tackled, with

³⁵ David Pan, in his landmark book *Sacrifice in the Modern World*, notes the development of *Bildung* as a concept that emerged in German states during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an education that combined Enlightenment theories of individual development and the formation of national identities, which was to have a profound effect, and not just in Germany (142).

mixed results, in Australia, by trying to identify the key knowledges and skills (sometimes called 'essential learnings') students must acquire if they are to take their place in society as employable, informed, active and ethical citizens in accordance with the aims of schooling identified in the *Melbourne Declaration* and in remarkably similar statements generated by other nations.

In the context of the development of a national curriculum in the United Kingdom, White makes the entirely logical point that the best way to proceed in creating such a curriculum is to start with the aims and work backwards without too many presuppositions about what curricula *ought* to look like (141-60). That seems like a nice plan but it was not the plan followed either by England or Australia because it underestimates the difficulties of aligning aims and curricula and the apprehension produced by the unfamiliar, together with the role of a national curriculum in giving government greater control over all aspects of the curriculum and hence making education subject to the whims of politicians keen to make their mark. White argues very persuasively that the 'traditional' curriculum hampers the development of inclusive and relevant curricula for the twenty-first century and Australia has on occasion experimented with approaches that attempted to circumvent the traditional curriculum, as will be outlined in due course. Yates and Collins note that 'traditional' academic subjects have been seen as a stumbling-block to full retention, and as a socially discriminatory force in upper secondary schooling (qtd in Vickers 332).

In an interview with Geraldine Doogue on Radio National's *Saturday Extra* program (19 December 2013) several curriculum experts were asked to comment on curriculum developments in the last thirty years. They made the point that all curricula are carefully chosen since they must reflect what knowledge is considered important at a particular time in the life of a nation and pointed to significant changes, for instance the expansion of the curriculum to incorporate subjects that would once have been beyond the scope and needs of the curriculum, such as legal studies. They also drew attention to the varying fortunes of individual subjects. One commentator observed that, whereas in the 90s elementary ICT skills were seen as vital, recent student cohorts had mastered those elements and special ICT units

needed to become more specialised.³⁶ Hence, although there is a sentimental desire to return to the supposed integrity and comforting familiarity of the traditional curriculum, that curriculum has been substantially altered.

Basing his remarks on the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (National Curriculum Board, a precursor to ACARA), Professor Alan Reid makes some penetrating observations on the process of creating the National Curriculum ('Exploring the National Curriculum: What are the Problems and Possibilities for Schools?' 30-35). While he enthusiastically supports the idea of a national curriculum, he notes that the National Curriculum Board in its specifications offers no overall view of curriculum--it does not answer the following questions: what is a curriculum? What types of knowledge and what theories of learning should inform it? These are serious deficiencies. Reid argues that the Curriculum seems to be the sum total of what is contained in the stand-alone subjects of which it is composed, subjects drip fed to schools as they are written. The piecemeal approach to the Curriculum defeats the purpose of integrating aims, rationale and syllabi. Thus the avowed goals of schooling are not reflected in the syllabi developed for subject areas. Reid is critical of the cross-curricular priorities and general capabilities because he is uncertain about how they are to be incorporated and assessed and he wonders how consultation can be effective given the lack of a 'big picture'.³⁷ In addition, he laments the NCB's failure to bring the profession with it and to be unambiguous about how state curricula articulate with the National Curriculum. This is a problem I identified earlier when I remarked that, despite substantial commonalities between state curricula and the Australian Curriculum, commonalities easily pinpointed in the English Learning Area when placing these curricula side by side, the reader has to infer influence. Granted these defects, any claim that the Australian Curriculum aspires to be world-class is unsupportable and places obstacles in the path of designers. Reid's view of curriculum supports White's position that curricula should be written backwards, starting from

³⁶ The interviewee may be a little overoptimistic here. In my experience as a teacher of first-year undergraduates I have found students to be adept at using social media but less able when it comes to creating, editing, and laying out documents.

³⁷ I agree with Reid about the consultation process. Consultation Reports show that only minor alterations were accommodated. There was no place where 'big picture' issues, such as the tripartite division of the English Curriculum, were up for real discussion.

aims and without too many presupposition as to the shape of curricula. Not coincidentally, in 2005 Alan Reid had himself suggested a curriculum model that he believed would forestall the problems he anticipated with the National Curriculum. He advocated for a capabilities-based curriculum, properly theorised, informed by a strong research base, with teachers and educators playing a central role and thus backed by a constituency of support. Reid rejected mandated content and argued the case that content in each jurisdiction should be taught through the capabilities (Watt 14).

Therefore before embarking on any detailed narrative account of curriculum changes that emerged during the 80s commentators must always be wary of oversimplification. It is difficult to appraise straightforwardly or objectively the complex syllabus reforms initiated within state jurisdictions in the period covered by the Federal push for a national curriculum. Nor should reform at state level automatically be attributed to a Commonwealth agenda or initiatives. Indeed there remain tensions over curricula between the states and the Commonwealth despite the gradual roll out of the Curriculum. States also responded to international curriculum trends, significant social changes, their own curriculum histories, and local conditions. Neither should we neglect the influence of educational bureaucrats in influencing policy or the omnipresent constraints of state politics.

While a history of education during the last century can be scrutinised to discover any number of crises, renewals and reforms, those who have been involved in education over the last thirty years often justly feel that they have lived through relentless cycles of change because 'change,' like 'reform,' is discursively constructed in a neoliberal market economy as inherently desirable and necessary. Those who do not address the future (that is, those who are not 'futures-oriented') will be left behind in its tumultuous wake. Moreover, the language of change does not necessarily anchor itself to urgent educational problems that need remediation (a current example might be the skills shortage) but tends to float free of particular conditions and becomes self-justifying on its own terms. Change is a value in itself since it signifies the will to continuous improvement in performance that is supposed to animate all sectors of the state and the economy and motivate practitioners in every field. Thomson acutely comments on the all-pervasive use of the word 'new' in educational circles, which

immediately consigns previous practices to the dustbin of history (15). Moreover, the demands made on today's educational institutions to be at once relevant, equitable, aspirational, accountable, transparent, creative, innovative, responsive and economically efficient exert their own multiple and contradictory pressures. Identical policies can appear at one and the same time wildly utopian or sordidly pragmatic.

However, anyone reviewing the Melbourne Curriculum Project or Watt's exhaustive summary of curriculum reform since the late 80s must come to the conclusion that change has been ongoing and to some degree relentless and has generally followed the trend set by KLA's through national statements and profiles, though with different nuances and influences in each state. In 2005 a National Approaches to Curriculum Forum was held to survey curriculum frameworks across the nation, which had been preceded by the development of national statements of learning across selected areas, and was followed by a new Federal schools funding initiative that required agencies to report on progress towards consistency, transparency, greater school autonomy and more parental involvement in schooling (Watt 13).³⁸ One can therefore reliably conclude that they prompted curriculum reforms that have continued up to the present and that the National Curriculum, while not inevitable, was the culmination of a process, not a fresh start.

New Curricula for New Times? Outcomes-based Education³⁹

One result of Dawkins' intervention was an outcomes-based approach to generating new curricula, an approach which, if fully implemented, supposedly requires a complete reworking of curricula away from the mastery of syllabus content towards an

³⁸ One of the beliefs that has animated school reform since the 90s is that there are gains to be made in performance and efficiency if public schools are granted greater autonomy. In Western Australia there are now independent public schools and in England so-called academies have been increasing in number. Whether the gains have materialised is a matter of bitter dispute in England. There are ongoing problems in recruiting head teachers because many do not want the responsibility and are afraid of constant performance reviews. Involving parents in schools is now regarded as vital to success, to the extent that there are consultants in America whose task is to advise on how to do this. However, the jury is still out on the effectiveness of these strategies, but we can be sure that early intervention to address problems in poor families and areas pays off.

³⁹ William Spady, who developed outcomes-based education, calls it *outcome*-based education. However, since an overwhelming number of documents use the term 'outcomes-based education,' I have decided to adopt the latter expression to avoid confusion. When OBE became controversial it often appeared as Outcomes-focused Education in order to seem less radical.

emphasis on the acquisition of skills and understandings (Millett and Tapper 3). As Brennan reminds us: ‘the evolution of an outcomes-based approach to education in Australia had its genesis in 1988, with . . . John Dawkins (‘Western Australia’s “English” Course of Study’ 51). Therefore OBE deserves and demands sustained attention because:

- OBE became influential in shaping curricula in the late 80s and during the 90s.
- OBE proved tricky to put into practice and caused some turmoil in state systems.
- OBE became the subject of fevered media attention during the increasingly bitter ‘culture wars’ of the 90s.
- While OBE as an educational philosophy is now downplayed, as a reporting tool it has persisted in syllabi.

Whatever the educational visions that lay behind curriculum restructuring in various states post-Dawkins, they tended to be caught up in the outcomes-based approach embedded in the KLAs. In Yates’s judgement, the ‘audit culture’ that became associated with OBE thwarted the radical overhaul of curricula by the demands of accountability and ‘reliance on pre-specification of standards and outcomes’ (‘Curriculum as a Public Policy Enterprise . . .’ 7). The ‘audit culture’ has proved extremely durable. Moreover, for better or worse, OBE is associated with Dawkins’ era initiatives, although whether Dawkins encouraged the adoption of OBE on pragmatic or ideological grounds and whether he saw OBE as a practical means for a complete overhaul of Australia’s education system is difficult to determine at this distance.

Michael G. Watt’s study of OBE in Australia is invaluable in establishing timelines and sourcing crucial developments and has the additional merit of being based on interviews with educational bureaucrats and policy makers. As he shows in his table of state and territory syllabus frameworks (17-21), which maps the structure and format of each syllabus, all but South Australia and the ACT incorporated outcomes into their frameworks and syllabuses. Thus Watt testifies to the fact that outcomes became ubiquitous in Australia, even though OBE is not the only lens through which to scan curriculum reforms over the period. Furthermore, outcomes were in some states linked to essential learnings and to interdisciplinary and non-disciplinary understandings as a way of moving beyond traditional subject areas. Nor

can we maintain that outcomes had identical effects in each state, since individual jurisdictions combined outcomes with other modes of assessment and different organisational models.

It is with these caveats in mind that we need to examine OBE. Outcomes-based education was the brainchild of William Spady, who promoted it as a cure for the ills of the American education system, as the title of his 1998 book *Paradigm Lost: Reclaiming America's Educational Future* implies.⁴⁰ Ironically Spady's book is a requiem for a lost cause since OBE encountered vigorous resistance in America itself, leaving Spady bruised and indignant (Tucker 5-18).⁴¹ Apart from the merits or demerits of OBE as a curriculum model, its significance also lies in the fact that it was a foreign educational import. Of course Australia, as an imperial offshoot, originally borrowed its version of the traditional curriculum from the British Empire⁴² as did so many former colonies. Nor has Australia ever been isolated from curriculum developments elsewhere. For example, Green and Cormack note the transnational movement and flow of educational discourse and practices even in the nineteenth century (338). However, OBE could be represented by its critics as a relatively untested American fad which Australia and other countries had incautiously adopted. In this sense OBE became an unfortunate corollary of educational globalisation, indicative of the fact that globalisation, for all the hype surrounding it in educational circles, need not be an unmitigated good. However, Watt urges caution when it comes to attributing too much direct influence to Spady, even if he consulted with curriculum designers and teachers in several states (58). Designers tend to cherry pick sources and may be swayed by a variety of considerations when adopting strategies and pedagogical philosophies. Welsh attributes the growth of outcomes not just to ideological shifts but to economically stringent times, a greater focus on outputs and performance indicators and the Commonwealth government initiatives ('Inputs to Outcomes?

⁴⁰ Incidentally, the book emerged from a series of lectures Spady delivered to Australian teachers and educators in 1993: 'Outcomes-based Education.' Notes provided for an Australian Curriculum Studies Association Workshop.

⁴¹ For a feverish American response, consult www.ourcivilisation.com, which accuses OBE of, among other charges, undermining religion.

⁴² For an account of this process, see Bill Green and Alan Reid, 'A New Teacher for a New Nation? Teacher Education, "English," and Schooling in Early Twentieth-century Australia' (361-67).

Perceptions of the Evolution of Commonwealth Government Policy Approaches to Outcomes-based Education') (n pag.), that is, to neoliberalism and globalisation.

Outcomes are supposed to measure what students can *do* at a particular developmental level in a key learning area (Collins and Yates 92) instead of what content students have mastered. It is thus more process than product oriented and, since, theoretically at least, identical outcomes can be demonstrated and achieved without being attached to specific syllabus content it potentially breaks the nexus among syllabi, pedagogy and assessment. OBE calls for assessments that reliably measure the achievements of individual students against predetermined outcomes, in contradistinction to norm-referenced and summative assessment, which ranks students against their peers. It is meant to demystify knowledge by making explicit the bases for assessment. One overriding source of disquiet was the sheer slog involved in developing such outcomes (Donnelly, 'Australia's Adoption of Outcomes-based Education: A Critique' 5) as teachers quickly discovered. OBE was installed in various educational jurisdictions during the 80s, such as South Africa (where it was dismantled in 2010), Canada and the USA and brought with it a history of controversy, upheaval, dismay and retreat.

According to Spady's own account (Tucker 5-18), OBE, when it was first adopted, raised test scores, proving his point that schools should be inspired by the belief that all students can succeed and that schools are able to create the right conditions for success, thus breaking the cycle of self-reinforcing failure for low-achieving pupils. But Spady came to feel that overlaying outcomes on already-existing curriculum and subject templates sold out OBE. In 1991 Spady noted with approval that OBE '[was] evolving from a microcurriculum and instructional design approach to a more comprehensive approach (Spady and Marshall 67). To be truly transformative curricula ought to 'work backwards' from the overarching skills, understandings and dispositions students are required to demonstrate when they exit school, what Spady labels 'outcomes of significance.' These qualities include, for example, 'higher order thinking skills, syntheses and applications' (Spady and Marshall 67). Spady regarded what he designated 'transformational outcome-based education' as a potent remedy for the deterioration in the public school system in America. What was required was

a new, restructured system of education--a necessity if either the United States or public education is to survive the flood of internal and external economic, social, and political problems making daily headlines. (Spady and Marshall 67) Thus education needed to 'shed its archaic, Industrial Age assumptions and structures and, as modern corporations have done, find a new way of doing business' (67).

These observations are revealing on a number of counts. Firstly, they demonstrate that OBE was, in the designer's mind, meant to inaugurate a new dispensation for 'new times.' Secondly, they indicate that concerns cluster around the tax-payer funded public school system, the usual hotspot for educational crises. Thirdly, they suggest that educationalists can learn from the corporate sector about how to operate successfully in a postindustrial, late capitalist society. In a modernist gesture, though, Spady constructed a set of binary oppositions (Spady and Marshall 68) to distinguish OBE from traditional curricula in order to guard the ontological purity of his vision, but it is scarcely surprising that opponents and supporters have interpreted his innovations differently.

The Australian educational consultant, educational researcher commentator and reviewer of the Australian Curriculum Kevin Donnelly gives a scarcely impartial but nevertheless useful overview of OBE in its various guises. He regards OBE as fatal for standards and disciplinary-centred learning because it is infected by a 'new age' philosophy based on the belief that knowledge is socially constructed and therefore that students should engage with knowledge through the interplay between their own contexts and experience in dialogue with others and with the teacher ('Australia's Adoption of Outcomes-based Education: A Critique'). Personally I doubt whether Spady would regard his method as 'new age' or constructivist but constructivism invites Donnelly's scorn because he detects in it a suspiciously relativist strain since it encourages the capacity to learn through enquiry-based methods instead of mastery of subject skills (2). In the context of the curriculum review, David Zingier defines constructivism thus:

simply put constructivism is the theory that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences of the real world with

others and their own ideas and is supported by learning psychologists as diverse as Dewey, Piaget, Bruner and Vygotsky. I seriously doubt that Wiltshire and Donnelly rank in their league! (*The Drum*)

For Donnelly OBE fails the pedagogical test--it prevents students from learning by the tried and true method centred on the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student--and it fails the ethical test because it invites students to interrogate what knowledge is and whose knowledge is deemed authoritative and legitimate, though Donnelly does not quite put it like that. Donnelly was involved in a 2005 study on the quality of outcomes, funded by the Australian government and entrusted to his Melbourne consulting group. Its report, hostile to outcomes, showed variability across states and did not meet the criteria of 'rigour, detail, clarity and ease of measurement' (Watt 25).⁴³ Donnelly also accused some states of moving towards a 'transformational' and thus more radical model of OBE (Watt 25). Donnelly's report was not universally welcomed (see Derewianka, 'Questioning the Credibility of the Donnelly Report: Benchmarking Australian Primary School Curricula'). Vocal opponents at the other end of the political spectrum condemned OBE for enshrining a post-Taylorist, post-Fordist, pseudo-scientific method of measurement that played well with bureaucracies attuned to accountability and control (Josephine Anderson 1-3). Therefore OBE capitulated to the values of the market and applied inappropriate and indeed damaging corporatist models to education in the true neoliberal manner. It is no wonder, then, that OBE became part of the educational culture wars in the 90s even if OBE was often imperfectly understood and differently interpreted.

On both sides, OBE has now become an almost legendary example of 'breaking bad' when it comes to educational innovation even if has not been discarded. Why, then, did OBE seem so attractive and so potentially transformative in the 80s and 90s, aside from educational fashion? There can be no one, clear-cut, unambiguous answer to this question, although, with increasingly top down driven change, teachers often felt that curriculum reforms seemed to drop from the sky onto an unsuspecting, poorly prepared and overburdened profession. Berlach and McNaught (4) detect in

⁴³ The fact that Donnelly has conducted another review at government expense seems to many in the profession to be a cynical move.

Spady's work a link with the utopian 'deschooling' movement of the 70s in that it calls for no less than complete institutional reform. Therefore OBE can superficially resemble the progressivist tenor of the 70s, during which secondary schooling was opened up to more students. OBE's utopian zeal seems admirably egalitarian: informed by a desire to democratise education by allowing all to achieve, regardless of economic or social status, and to individualise programs in order to offer students the opportunity, within limits, to proceed at their own pace according to their own capabilities. Moreover, OBE made a snug fit with the opening up of the curriculum to value different kinds of learning, not just high status subjects and skills, and to promote mastery of core understandings across the curriculum and within subject areas. OBE has the additional advantage of using a curriculum framework that governs each designated learning area from kindergarten to Year 12, thus rendering it intelligible to all teachers, whether early childhood, primary or secondary.

Since schools and teachers were, in theory, given the opportunity to develop their own outcomes, OBE could be regarded as endorsing teacher professionalism, autonomy and independence. However, the onerous demands of rewriting curricula from top to bottom and the lack of clear guidelines or support became major obstacles for many teachers, who were left floundering (Donnelly, 'Australia's Adoption . . .' 4-6). In addition, and as critics never tire of pointing out, there were immense practical difficulties in introducing OBE to schools, which are part of intricate bureaucracies with well-established rules and protocols. In fact, the bureaucracies charged with implementing OBE became part of the problem, since a crusading zeal is often required to generate change in the face of entrenched interests, which can easily resemble bullying to those unwilling to engage or to those who feel that their legitimate concerns are ignored.

Consequently the story of OBE as it unfolded in Australia is far from straightforward and the term has been discursively deployed in different contexts for different rhetorical and pedagogical purposes and in ways that might astonish Spady himself. Even though Spady has declared (Spady and Marshall 70) that OBE in its conception was ideologically neutral, the history of OBE reveals that it is impossible to separate ideology, pedagogy and curriculum.

Show Us the Instruments: OBE and Assessment

Student assessment, as we have learned, is now central to governments' control over the process of measuring national and international success and it is based on the assumption that there should be a professionally mediated but seamless relationship between learning and assessment, however that relationship is facilitated. According to Au, during the twentieth century (at least in America) the dream of a scientifically-designed education system along Taylorist lines has been deep rooted (27) and motivated by the goal of accurately measurable results, to which all other aims must be subordinated. Of course, schools see their role as much wider than this, but governments have regularly been gripped by the fantasy of totally objective measures of student performance. Echoing Au, Allan Luke et al. forcefully critique OBE as a technocratic model, industrial-era curriculum because it breaks down learning into atomised fragments and sacrifices the richness of educational experience (*Development of a Set of Principles to Guide a P-12 Syllabus Framework*). Thus OBE need not encourage so-called 'progressivist' pedagogies. Moreover, the aim of broader-based curricula can be at odds with the principle of devising such objective measures. For example, the obligation to widen the curriculum to cater for the needs of all learners led to the abandonment or partial abandonment of Year 12 public exams in favour of moderated, school-based assessment (Collins, 'The Tail Wagging the Dog? Assessment and Reporting' 95). Queensland eliminated external examinations in favour of school-based, moderated assessment in 1973. Victoria in the 80s instituted reforms to secondary certification that eventually led to the Victorian Certificate of Education, which created multiple pathways for students and additional subject areas approved for study using school-based assessment. By contrast New South Wales still has external assessment at Year 12 and the Higher School Certificate is primarily designed for tertiary entrance, which may explain why NSW boasts of the high standards of its system (Vickers 328-29). Predictably, the status of Year 12 school certificates has never been uncontroversial among those who long for the supposed strictness of external exams, despite the fact that certificates were meant to break universities' stranglehold over post-compulsory schooling. As Collins forcefully argues, governments 'have largely failed in the attempt to take the strait jacket of reporting for university entrance off the school curriculum' (192). Hence the tension between

external and school-based assessment is part of a long-running debate about standards, the abolition of a two-tiered system of knowledge, and the retention of students. OBE appears to afford a reporting model that fits well with school-based assessment while being reassuringly 'objective' and exact. Yet Howard Lee, in his summing up of OBE, quotes Elley, who observes that standards in OBE can be subjective and that a division into levels is not straightforward. Lee wonders why, when there is little support for OBE in the research evidence, it is still deemed credible (95).

What cannot be overemphasised is that at the heart of OBE are two key requisites: firstly, the stipulation that students should not be ranked against each other but measured according to their own mastery of skills and understandings; secondly, that outcomes must be detailed and specific, more specific than the information contained in a grade, letter or percentage. OBE demands a curriculum framework model that provokes teachers to think deeply about what they want students to learn and to devise matching assessment tasks which will measure their degree of mastery. Outcomes are thus designed to be measurable, agreed on and comprehensive. The influence of this model has been pervasive though, one can argue, not scrupulously applied, given the practical difficulties of implementation. With increasing levels of accountability demanded of schools and teachers and the time-consuming effort required to develop new instruments and reporting structures, OBE came to seem oppressive, especially for those teachers not intellectually convinced of its worth.

Not Waving but Drowning

The case of Western Australia and OBE is instructive, not least because it became notorious nationally and even internationally. Against a background of earlier reforms, in 1998 the newly-constituted Western Australian Curriculum Council (now the WA Curriculum and Standards Council) approved and published a Curriculum Framework document for K-12, followed by Student Outcome Statements that closely followed the Dawkins National Profiles model (Leggatt 249). It contained an overarching Framework, seven key principles and thirteen learning outcomes, with specific learning statements for the eight learning areas. The roll out of the new

Curriculum Framework was poorly implemented, placing unreasonable pressures on teachers, and proved a political liability. For example, some teachers mistakenly regarded each learning outcome as entirely separate, requiring separate assessment, when teaching and assessment programs are used to demonstrate a number of outcomes simultaneously. Teachers felt the need of extensive professional development and a great deal of guidance. By 2005 the curriculum had been revised to reflect National Profiles and became the Outcomes and Standards Framework. Some of those involved in the process, this writer included, felt that there was not only a degree of missionary zeal in OBE's promotion but also that it was imposed by fiat, based on the assumption that OBE was a *fait accompli* and that therefore opposition was pointless and in fact vexatious. The breaking point came with the implementation of post-compulsory courses of study. Public and professional concerns about OBE led to a damaging media campaign,⁴⁴ which in turn led to compromises that retained the status quo for tertiary entrance subjects at Years 11 and 12--school-based assessment moderated by external exams (Leggatt 24).

Thus in Western Australia the prospect of the adoption of OBE for post-compulsory schooling created a political crisis for the state government, resulting in the Minister for Education losing her job. It even led to a public clash between the minister and Brendan Nelson, her federal counterpart, over his opposition to OBE (Watt 53). The case of WA is a cautionary tale about the time and effort needed to embed new curricula and shows that Alan Reid was right in his conviction that teachers need to be brought along with major reform.

As we have noted, the issue of post-compulsory schooling remains so closely linked to university entrance and high value subject areas that it is still one of the most irksome causes of curriculum disputes across Australia. Though Western Australia quietly dropped OBE in 2007, the Curriculum Framework document still underpins WA curricula (and remains useful) while outcomes have not gone away--they have become pervasive in Australia even if OBE has been watered down and its more onerous demands circumvented (Rod Gilbert, 'Social Context and Educational

⁴⁴ It led to the establishment of PLATO (People Lobbying against Teaching Outcomes), which conducted an effective campaign against OBE at senior levels on the grounds that subjects were being undermined and dumbed down, and that knowledge as valuable for its own sake was being destroyed.

Change: Innovations in the Queensland Curriculum' 163-81). Thus the stark difference between dream and reality--teachers became curriculum writers without sufficient training, and produced mountains of paperwork in the form of ever-multiplying outcomes in each learning area at each level. Teachers felt disempowered, bullied and blamed and students and parents confused. For example Griffin argues, after surveying the implementation of OBE in Australia, 'perhaps OBE cannot be fully implemented system wide. The changes needed are too radical and disruptive for whole systems of education to accommodate' (qtd. in Marsh, *Becoming a Teacher* 120). OBE began to appear constraining, excessively bureaucratic and hence a disciplinary tool in the hands of bureaucracy. Hargreaves and Moore, writing in 1999, noted that 'teachers feel overwhelmed by the prospect of mastering the number and complexity of outcomes' (qtd in Marsh, *Becoming a Teacher* 200). The problems of levels, specification and sequence, and assessment standards have not disappeared in the Australian Curriculum but have been transported from state syllabi and curricula into the national arena

Therefore anyone bold enough to evaluate OBE as a curriculum strategy confronts a dilemma: outcomes have become not only a kind of pedagogical common sense but at the same time a symptom of all that is wrong with recent educational trends. As Brennan remarks: 'Spady's broad OBE principles were adopted [in Australia] as the interpretative lens for instigating future education and training' ('Western Australia's "English" Course of Study' 51). In other words, there has been a convergence of curriculum over the last twenty years such that, though there remain sharp differences, state curricula 'speak' to each other. In 2006 the Commonwealth and states agreed to implement Statements of Learning across six domains, to be tied to common testing standards and linked to Commonwealth funding (Marsh, *Becoming a Teacher* 17), an important step towards a national curriculum.

This goes some way to explaining why OBE has been condemned by progressives and conservatives alike. To progressives it signals the triumph of a neoliberal orthodoxy that seeks to constrain students more subtly but just as effectively as traditional curricula and to deprofessionalise teachers (Josephine Anderson 3) by denying them autonomy. Moreover, whatever the original aims of new forms of assessment under OBE, it has become a devil's bargain between 'progressive

school leaders . . . corporate managerial politicians and the whole attendant industry of economic think tanks, consultants, measurement experts and monitoring mandarins' (Collins, 'The Tail Wagging the Dog?' 190). For conservatives it is the rot that has set in. It undermines traditional disciplines, dumbs down syllabi, is imprecise in its assessments, and devalues essential skills and content (Donnelly, 'Australia's Outcomes-based Education' 1-11). OBE is thus an egregious example of the faddish, modish educational theories of deluded leftwingers, along with postmodernism and political correctness (Berlach and McNaught 1-14), although Spady himself is far from a left-wing figure. However, the split personality of OBE is not as inexplicable as it first appears. OBE does not mandate particular forms of assessment--these issues are left to education authorities, schools and teachers--so its implementation and the purposes it serves can vary enormously. Nevertheless, Dellitt (157) believes that outcomes were a product of conservative governments, not progressive educators, and it is true that these educators viewed OBE with suspicion. Although detailed outcomes are invested with an aura of quasi-scientific authority, largely owing to the 'performance culture' that originated in managerialist discourse (Ball, 'The Terrors of Performativity . . .' 215-28) opponents have argued that outcomes can lead to curriculum fragmentation, and the proliferation of detail at the expense of intelligibility and simplicity when its purpose under Dawkins was to streamline and rationalise curricula. Moreover, OBE did not resolve issues of subject content, or discipline-based syllabi versus key, broadly conceived areas of learning.

In the Australian Curriculum outcomes are firmly in place, though they are now called Achievement Standards, and the principle of working backwards by identifying key skills, capacities and proficiencies students need to master and then asking how these can be delivered and tested in syllabi remains a compelling method. Nevertheless, we will need to ask later in the thesis whether outcomes have been modified or combined with other methods of pedagogy and assessment. John White, in *The Invention of the Secondary Curriculum*, is a strong advocate for a non-traditional curriculum and no fan of conservative curricula. He regards the working backwards from aims to method as utterly persuasive since it banishes a whole set of outmoded historical assumptions about curricula and content. However, this does not necessarily turn him into a supporter of outcomes since outcomes can end up being

too detailed and prescriptive. The aura of scientific authority that sometimes envelops them is also illusory since there is no completely fool proof scientific form of assessment, which is as much an art as a science and a matter of teacher judgement.

The introduction of NAPLAN tests only raised the temperature of debate. Given that OBE is meant to assess students developmentally and cumulatively against pre-set outcomes, high stakes national testing appears to work against the spirit of OBE since it ends up ranking students (Bonnor and Caro 54-73). Moreover, the individual items in the tests must be carefully selected and are highly selective. They can be matched to content and achievement standards but can only test a fraction of the skills and knowledge. Such testing has had a controversial history in the UK and US (see Goodwyn, 'Informed Prescription'; Booher-Jennings). In Australia the move towards a national testing program began after the *Adelaide Declaration on the Future of Schooling* (1997) and was in place by 2008 (Luke et al. 28). National tests, and the accompanying My School website, inevitably become more than guides and snapshots: they become league tables. And there is always the danger that tests will drive curricula (Collins, '“The Tail Wagging the Dog?”' 99) and that teachers will tailor their material (or be compelled to tailor their material) to them in order to improve student performance on crucial tests, since NAPLAN has the effect of disciplining teachers as raising educational standards, and about setting schools against each other in the competition for resources, although these are not its stated aims. Whatever caveats are issued on the My School website (not the Ourschools website, it should be noted) warning against oversimplified interpretations of the statistics, the figures accrue significant authority. Australia, along with other countries strongly influenced by neoliberalism, has adopted national testing as a means of privileging parental choice and promoting accountability, the internal markets that complement external measures of success such as PISA. Hanauer outlines the history of standardised testing in the USA and argues that, although testing as 'a solution to perceived low literacy levels seems plausible' (49), it is fundamentally mistaken because language is not an object devoid of context, a theme that will be taken up later. He traces the roots of standardised testing back to structuralist linguistics (associated with the work of Saussure) and the psychometric tradition. He damningly concludes: '[i]n practical terms the standardised test accepts the general structuralist definition of language'

(54). This definition of literacy is at odds with the explicitly social and contextual theories of language and literacy the English Curriculum, in the *Framing Paper* (#25) supports but does not successfully define. One respondent to the *Consultation Report* rather grumpily notes: '[a] coherent model of language is strongly implied and it should be explicitly stated that the understandings here are based on a functional model of language . . .' (26). By 'functional' I assume the respondent means 'systemic functional linguistics.' The test, Hanauer adds, must attain the status of a 'stable, autonomous object' (55). Hanauer concedes that standardised tests can achieve a high degree of reliability but their validity is weak because they come up against the 'hermeneutic problem of method' in 'objectifying literacy knowledge' (56). Pasi Sahlberg, Finland's director of education, who now lives in Australia, is scathing about testing regimes (he has no objection to diagnostic testing for purposes of research) while Singapore is moving away from such tests. In Australia some have labelled it a 'failed policy' and Sahlberg is on the record as saying that the Gonski Review is the best document of its kind he has read (Bonnor and Caro 220).

The United Kingdom's *National Curriculum 5-16 Consultation Document* states that national testing will 'enable teachers to be more accountable for the education they offer to their pupils individually and collectively' and that 'parents . . . will be able to judge the effectiveness of their school' (qtd. in Ball and Bowe 57). Here in Australia NAPLAN is already creating a small industry, with tutors offering their services to improve results, and textbooks supplying handy guides to its mysteries in local newsagents. The most recent round of NAPLAN testing in 2013 was accompanied by warnings from the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority that parents did not need to buy materials or pay for expensive tutoring in order to prepare their children for NAPLAN, and a denial from independent schools that they were using NAPLAN results to help select students. It was fanciful to imagine that widespread testing would not create these conditions.

It is within these contexts that a national curriculum must be analysed and evaluated. On the one hand, since 1997, outcomes, in whatever form, have been an essential tool in 'thinking' or 'doing' a national curriculum. They have compelled educators to (re)define the goals of education, isolate fundamental areas of learning and the skills they should foster, and identify the attributes students should develop in

order to contribute to the making of a good and prosperous society. On the one hand, they have also been crucial to the attempt to adjust to new (or imposed) market realities and the need to obtain a return on investment for the growing costs of education. On the other hand, the relative failure of outcomes to effect promised transformation, the criticism they attracted and the money expended on revising curricula will (one assumes) inevitably have made those charged with development of the Australian Curriculum more cautious in their approach. Then Prime Minister Rudd, in his speech to the National Press Club, 27 August, 2007, hailed the arrival of an education revolution that would be instigated by the Labor Party, including the provision of laptops for all students. The global financial crisis saw the government institute an expensive school building program--Building the Education Revolution (\$14.7 billion)--that was understandably welcome to many schools but severely criticised for waste and inefficiency. Welsh adds a sobering note of caution about Labor's revolutionary credentials: Rudd did not commit to investing in professional development for teachers or target the poorest schools, and was wholeheartedly persuaded that raising the performance of schools was best accomplished through mandatory testing, although such measures have had only limited success in the USA and UK (Wyse 256-7; Luke et al. 131-34). Despite the hyperbole of the 'Education Revolution,' it seems revolution was not really on the cards.

Who's for Equity?

Can it be denied, that to be heavily overshadowed, to be profoundly insignificant, has, on the whole, a depressing and benumbing effect on the character?

Matthew Arnold, *The Popular Education of France* (1861), qtd. in Sutherland 66

Equity was high on the list of priorities when the new curriculum was being developed and one of the stated goals of the *Melbourne Declaration* is to develop students who are 'committed to national values, democracy, equity and justice,' presumably values that should be embedded in and taught across the curriculum. The *Comparative Table of International Aims*, already cited, includes equity and justice as national values singled out in other curriculum frameworks across modern democratic societies and, as Deng has reminded us, one of the global justifications advanced for educational reform is social amelioration--the containment of social problems. The

Melbourne Declaration is explicit about governments' obligation to improve outcomes for those who are disadvantaged by poverty, disability or membership of marginalised groups, and identifies Indigenous students as especially at risk. As we have noted, reducing inequity has for decades been a passion of reforming and progressive educators in Australia and elsewhere but understandably there has not been total agreement about how to achieve equity or what indeed constitutes equity. Marsh defines equity in education in terms of 'provisions that are fair to persons of all backgrounds' (*Becoming a Teacher* 26), which includes education that leads to 'employment and lifelong learning' (NSW Education Department, qtd. in Marsh 27) and addresses the need to close the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged. Indeed, Dubet and Duru-Bellat believe that schooling, to be fair, must attend to the needs of the weakest, poorest and most disadvantaged students first and foremost (27).

Globalisation and Equity

In a culturally diverse society such as Australia there will be tensions between the negotiation of national and transnational identities. The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* identifies an 'international mobility-sense of global citizenship,' 'Asia literacy,' and 'international issues related to sustainability' as cross-curricular understandings to be promoted in the Australian Curriculum through subject-specific content. Global citizenship therefore seems to be restricted to a nimble ability to adjust to global markets, not a commitment to human rights based on a global civic society. Ball and Levin are two theorists who question whether neoliberal education (Levin, 'An Approach to Secondary School Improvement' 155-66; Ball, 'New Class Inequalities in Education' 114-27) is compatible with the achievement of equity and justice nationally and globally and whether equity, whatever lip service is paid to it in policy documents, is as high a priority on the government agenda as is proclaimed. Zajda, in his Preface to *Globalisation, Ideology and Educational Policy Reforms*, brings into sharp relief the tensions between 'neo-liberal ideological imperatives of education and policy reforms, affecting schooling globally' (vii), and the social justice and cross-cultural values (xix) that ought to inform schooling.

The Federal government considers that the provision of a world-class curriculum will assist all students to ‘reach their potential’ (as the jargon has it) as opposed to ‘knowing their place.’ And, yes, it would be splendid if all schools, regardless of postcode, resources, teacher quality and student cohort could achieve good outcomes for their students. Teachers have long realised that low expectations, under provision and entrenched disadvantage shrink the opportunities for poor and marginalised students to succeed. In the 60s and 70s class divisions were seen as barriers to achievement, as they still are, although class is rarely named in Australia for fear of arousing the ‘politics of envy.’ ‘Disadvantage’ and ‘low socio-economic status’ are the preferred ways of describing class distinctions. As Campbell contends, Australians are for many reasons uncomfortable with the language of class despite the fact that class is resurfacing in some form after the Global Financial Crisis, for example, in disputes about the minimum wage in America and the shrinking of the middle class (‘Class and Competition’ 93-129). Nevertheless, he argues for the continuing relevance of ‘the material effect of social class on the lives that Australian people lead’ (96).⁴⁵ The middle classes, according to Campbell, are more likely to feel ‘at home’ in school, and are better able to maximise their economic and cultural advantages in the school system (see Ball, ‘New Class Inequalities in Education’ 215-28) even if those advantages may be diminishing in tight economic times. Moreover, minorities, the disadvantaged and the disabled are more likely to be found in low socio-economic areas served chiefly by public schools. Both sides of politics in Australia are hospitable towards individualist, competitive models of education although it is the aggregation of educational disadvantage that worries many educators. Wrigley et al. are apprehensive that social justice will be reduced to ‘closing the performance gap on high-stakes, standardized texts’ (201).

Their fears are not unfounded. The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* asserts that the rationale for introducing an Australian Curriculum is to improve quality, equity and transparency in the education system (5). The positioning of the word

⁴⁵ Christopher Tsiolkas’s book *Barracuda* directly addresses the problem of class and Tsiolkas, in an interview with Michael Cathcart on Radio National’s *Books and Arts Daily*, suggests that class is now becoming a renewed focus of debate because of Australia’s widening income gap. That there is now a widening income gap between rich and poor in developed economies is not disputed but governments are nonplussed about how to address it. Or even whether it should be addressed.

‘equity’ next to ‘quality’ and ‘transparency’ in a Holy Trinity should send out danger signals because it suggests to the reader that ‘quality’ (read: Curriculum informed by rigorous standards) and ‘transparency’ (read: high-stakes testing, published results, detailed specification of outcomes) will ensure equity, a concealed argument that itself needs interrogation. There is an argumentative sleight of hand at work here since constant assessment and standardised curricula may not compensate for disadvantage and in some cases may actually increase it. In any case, according to John Goldthorpe, a UK expert on social mobility, there is an inconvenient truth at the heart of social mobility: post-war British society created ‘room at the top’ for a new generation--and it worked. However, the growth in absolute mobility does not mean that *relative* rates change. As he asserts of education:

I’m not at all against efforts to raise standards of educational attainment, especially among children from disadvantaged backgrounds. I’m just sceptical about how far that is going to make especially relative mobility chances more equal. (qtd. in Philip Collins 35)

It seems that, unless governments really try to *reduce* the inherent advantages of the already advantaged in favour of those with fewer opportunities, there can be no major shifts in mobility, an unpalatable argument for both sides of politics.

Gonski Reviews *Summer Heights High: Review of Funding for Schooling--Final Report*

The release of the admirable Gonski Review into school funding (now christened the Better Schools Program) in 2012 to fulfil a promise that Labor had made before it was elected exposed the unease surrounding the discussion of class in Australia. The review argues for a needs-based model of funding, guaranteeing a flat rate dollar funding for all students, with loadings for disadvantage. The Gonski Panel clearly identified the growing inequities in school funding that had been allowed to develop over the last few decades with the help of Federal government policies that favour independent schools (for an account of these inequities see Welsh 264-71). The Senate inquiry into school funding (2004) ‘concluded that funding arrangements had continued to benefit wealthy schools disproportionately’ (Maddox 74) under the Socio-economic Status (SES) model, which is both a very blunt instrument when it

comes to identifying disadvantage and largely impenetrable to the lay reader. The prospect of such schools losing funding alarms vested interests and leads to assertions by Christopher Pyne, the then Minister of Education, that Australia does not have an equity problem (Riddle, 'Australia's PISA Slump . . .'): 'we [the Coalition] simply do not accept that the current funding model for schools is broken' (qtd. in Maddox 84). Though Christopher Pyne said, before the Coalition came to power, that it would honour any funding arrangements made with states and sectors, that has now been thrown into doubt by later events that show the government backtracking on these commitments and rewarding states who did not sign up to Gonski with compensatory funds. Former Prime Minister Gillard broadly accepted the recommendations of the Gonski Review but reassured voters that no school would be worse off under the new dispensation. She committed her government to over \$6,000,000 in new funding, to be provided partly by the Commonwealth and partly by the states. However, the Gillard government was accused of reckless spending promises. As Megalogenis tartly observes:

[t]he states run government schools, while the Commonwealth undermines them by helping private schools. This is the ironic part of middle-class welfare which actually widens the gap between rich and poor, without protecting the middle. (*Weekend Australian*. September 8-9, 2012. *Inquirer Section*: 24)

In OECD (2006) data Australia emerges as a high quality/low equity system (see Hardlow; McGregor et al.; Schleicher) and the gap seems to be growing. According to Savage, PISA data show that there is a large gap between the bottom and the top ('FactCheck: Is Australian Education Highly Equitable?'). In the framing document of the Australian Curriculum, the writers talk of schools that 'beat the odds,' that is, those which defy their destiny as concentrations of educational failure (*Shape of the Australian Curriculum* 19). The quest to find the secrets of these schools and to reproduce them is keen. For example, the recent Teach for Australia program (modelled on a USA equivalent and enthusiastically promoted by Christopher Pyne when he was Shadow Minister for Education) seeks to recruit the brightest graduates for disadvantaged schools. But its success so far has been modest (Bonnor and Caro 165). The Teach for America program is now the subject of questions about lobbying and private funding and the long-term effectiveness of such programs ('Susan

Ohanian's Testing Outrages'). Educational gaps often prove stubbornly resistant to intervention unless the underlying causes are addressed and quick fixes avoided. Nevertheless, then Prime Minister Gillard was very impressed by the work of the former Chancellor of the New York City Board of Education Joel Klein, who recruited top graduates to work in poor schools, set high performance standards (using high stakes testing), with rewards for those teachers and principals who met or exceeded targets (Salvio and Boldt 119). However, educational experts, for example, Dianne Ravitch, author of *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools*, remain sceptical about the hype surrounding these interventions, and regards them as forms of magical thinking because they take as their model a relentlessly performance-driven corporate culture. This culture does not align well with how schools operate and how students learn best, issues that will be dealt with in the section on pedagogy later in the thesis. As Ball forcefully argues:

[p]olicies which focus on schools to both raise achievement and close achievement gaps are looking in the wrong place and that perhaps is not a matter of simple chance or error. Secondly, policies may actually, as a result, be making things worse. Those in England aimed at schools and intended to 'raise standards' also work to exacerbate the external inequalities that I have been outlining through emphases on setting, differentiation, and arrangements such as gifted and talented programmes. ('New class Inequalities . . .' 157)

Cranston et al. succinctly describe what they regard as the causes of the high quality/low equity model of Australian schooling: 'the privileging of the private (social mobility) and economic (social efficiency) purposes of schooling at the expense of the public (democratic equality) purposes of schooling' (182). Obviously, poverty and disadvantage are the result of complex social factors that can be mitigated but not cured by better educational provision. And schools have only limited resources to achieve better results. No curriculum, whether national or not, can of itself reduce inequality, although Philip Roberts, for one, does not discount the fact that curricula can *contribute* to inequity ('Curriculum, Equity and Resources . . .') by privileging particular forms of knowledge. Moreover, a system that makes public schools the destination of last resort for poorer students risks entrenching a cycle of disadvantage (Lamb 1-28; Teese, *From Opportunity to Outcomes . . .*). It is worth noting that Teese is

critic of high stakes testing in the Victorian curriculum. In the interests of ‘parental choice’ schools are forced to compete against each other and transparency and accountability in the form of national tests and league tables are supposed to guide that choice. The imperatives of competition are meant to weed out the worst schools or make them lift their game, though, for example, rural and remote schools cannot be made to disappear if they are ‘failing.’

Thus the fundamental causes of and cures for educational inequity lie largely outside the control of teachers and schools and beyond the reach of curricula, though teachers and schools can mitigate inequity. Riddle and Cleaver have studied a small, alternative school in Australia (‘Harmony High’) which experiments with democratic schooling meant to work for the most disadvantaged and disengaged, those that other schools reject as undisciplined ‘losers’ (367-78), so it is possible to envisage other forms of school organisation. Nevertheless, it is hard to restore jobs in manufacturing that once absorbed young men entering the workforce even if the unemployed are seen to be at fault and to be punished by withdrawal of benefits. The increased retention of students to Year 12 has highlighted the ways in which curricula enable the unequal distribution of social power (Hayes 16-17) through favouring those who bring ‘cultural capital’ to their education such as enriched language skills or familiarity with the behavioural norms of schools. There is vigorous debate in Australia (for example, see Bonnor and Caro, *What Makes a Good School?*) over the relative role played by principals, teachers, parents or resources in helping students to succeed and these debates are so thoroughly politicised that one despairs of nuanced discussion. Christopher Pyne wanted a ‘robust curriculum’ (for which read rigour) and a ‘focus on teacher quality’ (qtd. in Philip Roberts, ‘Curriculum Equity and Resources . . .’), which deflects discussion of resources. To some extent these debates are always fruitless and unresolved because all four are important, but focusing on one element (such as raising the university scores for undergraduates who wish to study teaching) will never be a sovereign remedy since causes are multifactorial. Kostogriz sums up the problems with national curricula and equity. He traces the emergence of

the mobilisation of the New Right alliances in influencing public opinion about quality teaching and in defining ‘problems’ in education, and, second, the use

of media space to ascribe authority to neo-conservative pundits as experts who supposedly know what and how teachers should teach. (205)

He goes on to argue that the government has neutralised the professional response to the *Shape of the Curriculum* documents and ignored socio-economic and other differences in favour of 'assimilating differences' (205). Phillip Roberts, Assistant Professor in Curriculum Studies at the University of Canberra, sums up the difficulties concisely:

[t]his is where Pyne's mantra of a robust curriculum and teacher quality comes in. Such statements assume a single and universal curriculum, and positions teacher quality in direct relationship to teaching that curriculum. Previous generations of equity thinking, and decades of educational sociology, show us that in fact this view of curriculum is a big part of the equity problem. ('Curriculum, Equity and Resources . . .')

Thus the Australian Curriculum, despite its claims to provide equity, is designed to circumvent discussions of equity and to offer a very narrow, politically convenient and oversimplified definition of it. And lest this assessment of equity provision seems paranoid or overstated, consider the title of the 2005 Schools Assistance (Learning Together--Achievement through Choice and Opportunity) Act. Once again 'choice' is preferred, as if choices in education were available to all regardless of income, buttressed by an assumption that all parents are equally capable of making and acting on informed decisions about school performance (for example, choices for disabled children are limited). But the word 'opportunity' must also be regarded with suspicion. Former Treasurer Joe Hockey talked up the need to replace 'equality' with 'opportunity.' He is hardly alone. Like other neoliberal conservatives, including the former chairman of the American Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan,⁴⁶ who presided over the global financial crisis, Hockey believes that redistributive justice and the welfare state are outdated notions. He too thinks the age of entitlement should be over since it leads to a loss of productivity. Hence it is no

⁴⁶ His recently published book *The Map and the Territory: Risk, Human Nature and the Future of Forecasting* (not a modest title) regards the existence of an underclass as inevitable and attempts to ameliorate market forces as false and misplaced compassion. At least he is prepared to articulate and support his arguments in ways that politicians are reluctant to. Clearly Australia's 'budget emergency' was the excuse to promote neoliberal policies which, when spelt out, are not appealing to electors.

wonder that in an age of fiscal austerity ‘equality’ might seem a quaint concept and that ‘opportunity,’ which individuals can create or take advantage of, suggests rugged self-reliance and individual initiative.

However, lest the story of equity in Australian education resemble a narrative of good versus evil, of progressives pitted against conservatives, it is wise to revisit curriculum reform in NSW when the Liberals came to power in 1988. The government initiated a comprehensive review of curricula on the grounds that basic skills had been neglected in favour of an inclusive social justice agenda and identity politics (Barcan 117). Arguments opened up about Key Learning Areas and subject- and discipline-based knowledge, the supposed threats to the Judeo-Christian tradition, and ‘politically correct’ stances. According to Barcan, the struggles between the government and its bureaucratic arms and the teaching profession were protracted and bitter (116). It crystallised around whether the coming of whites to the continent should be described as ‘settlement’ or ‘invasion’ and foundered, not surprisingly, on the new English syllabus. Alan Tudge, the current minister, is still troubled by anything that undermines ANZAC day and invasion narratives that reflect badly in Australian history. around indigenous Australians. Pyne regarded the Left’s obsession with social justice as an impediment to sensible discussion, but he also identifies outcomes and the integration of subjects under the umbrella of Learning Areas as problems (117) because they led to a ‘proliferation of confusing and sometimes conflicting aims’ (117). In other words the issues that still trouble curriculum discussions today were very much alive in the late 80s and early 90s and, furthermore, it is difficult to separate equity from other aspects of the curriculum. An education professional who responded to the *Consultation Report* said bluntly: [a] commitment to equity and equality is essential but also needs further articulation in order to move beyond rhetoric’ (21) and it is certainly a weakness of the Curriculum that we do not discover exactly how these commitments are to be honoured. By way of contrast, the Ontario Curriculum, closely aligned with Australia’s so we are told, makes explicit its aims to uphold equity, reinforced throughout documents: in English courses, students are to look beyond the literal meaning of texts ‘and to think about fairness, equity, social justice, and citizenship in a global society’ (*The Ontario Curriculum. Grades 11 and 12*, 26).

Bourdieu and Equity

It is worthwhile pausing to consider Pierre Bourdieu's influence on debates over equity since his work continues to be extremely influential among educational theorists (see, for example, Luke; Albright; Hayes; Kramsch; Apple; Thompson; Lingard; Waters). His significance for education lies not only in his contribution to theories of social and cultural reproduction in an unequal and unjust society but in his extensive examination of how education is fundamental to the reproduction of inequality. Trained first as a philosopher, he turned to sociology, which allowed him to theorise the conditions that had led him from a poor provincial background to the highest echelons of French intellectual life. Rather than regarding himself as proof that the system 'works,' Bourdieu contends that 'the controlled mobility of a limited category of individuals . . . is not incompatible with the permanence of structures' ('Cultural Reproduction . . .' 258). Central to Bourdieu's theory of cultural transmission is the concept of 'habitus,' which he defines as the 'system of dispositions that acts as a mediation between structures and practice' and which individuals adopt, not necessarily consciously or with a grasp of the system, becoming agents 'capable of engendering practices adapted to the structures and thereby contributing to the reproduction of the structures' ('Cultural Reproduction . . .' 258). Bourdieu's most celebrated concept is that of 'cultural capital,' described as 'a capacity to exercise control over one's own future and that of others through economic or symbolic (i.e., social or cultural) means' (Kramsch 40).

If we apply Bourdieu's theories to education--and Bourdieu himself wrote widely on the subject--we can observe that students bring to school the dispositions of their habitus or social world in 'structurally marked practices' ('Field . . .' 93) that reproduce, for example, class inequality even if they appear to breach or overcome these differences. Thus schools tend to reward behaviours that conform to middle-class expectations and values, so that some children bring with them cultural capital accrued because of their parents' education and/or economic status. Naturally children can themselves accrue and acquire cultural capital by learning the rules of the game--an obvious example in Anglophone societies being some acquaintance with Shakespeare's plays--without fundamentally changing the game.

Waters, as we saw in the Introduction, goes one step further, using Bourdieu's theories to demonstrate how mass schooling by its nature is dedicated to the production of compliant and docile adults who learn to adopt the habitus or durable dispositions required for the efficient functioning of the corporate and bureaucratic state (*Childhood, Schooling and Bureaucracy* 1-12). Thus one can comprehend why Bourdieu's detractors have found his work overly pessimistic on the grounds that it is rigidly structuralist, denying agency to individuals, and hindering the possibility of social change. Frow, by contrast, detects an essentialist tendency in Bourdieu's argument which reifies class distinctions and equates 'high' culture with the aesthetic itself; he argues that the distinction between high' and 'low' culture and its alignment with class has become increasingly irrelevant and out of date (35-37). Still others deny that his theories exclude political interventions and argue for the 'generative possibilities' and continued relevance of his work (Albright and Luke 1-30). For example, Apple claims that

[b]y focusing on schools only as reproductive institutions, we may miss the dynamic interplay between education and the economy and be in danger of reducing the complexity of the relationship to a bare parody of what actually exists at the level of practice. (*Education and Power* 63)

But Bourdieu's ideas are a warning to those who think inequality can be straightforwardly remediated, especially by an increased concentration on performance and standardised testing routines. Bourdieu clearly believes that inequity is stubbornly resistant to these and other forms of amelioration. However Apple in his recent book *Can Education Change Society?* still has faith in the ability of teachers/scholars/activists to resist and turn back the neoliberal tide and with it neoliberalism's own desire to transform education along its own presuppositions about the market economy, which, in Apple's view, makes us forget that other ways of imagining the world are possible. His many books dating back to the 80s, on education and power, critical literacy, and the struggle for democracy in schools make Apple a voice for the oppressed or the excluded and also a voice of teachers.

Curriculum has tended to reflect and reproduce the cultural capital of those in power in our society and a program designed for the 'losers' will inevitably be seen as a second-class curriculum in every sense. Nevertheless, researchers and educators

believe that it is possible to modify curricula to encourage higher retention rates. Following Yates and Collins, Vickers argues that it is feasible to devise curricula less tied to 'inherited cultural capital' and 'traditional academic disciplines' ('Youth Transitions' 332). This is clearly not an idea that informs the Australian Curriculum, since traditional academic disciplines are firmly entrenched and inherited cultural capital on show, although, as the interviewees on Geraldine Doogue's *Saturday Extra* made clear, neither individual curricula nor the scope of the curriculum have remained unchanged since the 70s. For example, the English Curriculum's insistence on the importance of the aesthetic, which is equated largely with literature, is, I believe, a testimony to the desire to contain the threat posed by the leavening effects of mass media, which entered curricula during the 70s. The insistence that all students must study literature can be seen in some lights as the democratic extension of elite knowledge to everybody and, interestingly and ironically, in the 60s it was precisely the hope of offering all students the riches of literature that animated progressive English teachers, myself included. However a conservative interpretation of the Curriculum could equally insist on the heritage value of literature and literary criticism as elite knowledge in need of preservation. Before the rapid expansion of secondary education, many issues relating to the democratisation of the curriculum could safely be ignored as they cannot be today.

Curriculum and Equity

As we have already grasped, the story of curriculum reform across Australia is complicated and nuanced, but there are central questions educators have consistently framed around the relationship between equity and curriculum:

1. Should there be a core curriculum which all students must master whatever their background, interests or capabilities and regardless of their choice of specialised subjects?
2. Should all students be offered the full range of subject choices in a broad-based academic curriculum, whatever their individual abilities?
3. Should curricula be differentiated? That is, should curricula, wherever feasible, be tailored to students' individual capabilities, interests and rates of progress?

4. Should curricula take into account ethnic and cultural diversity in order to achieve equal outcomes for students regardless of background?
5. Does catering to cultural diversity undermine or question the value of a core curriculum?

Before the expansion of secondary education in the 60s in Australia students' employment destinies were more predictable. Technical schools provided vocational training and relatively few poor students went on to post-compulsory schooling, which was dominated by the needs of universities. Nevertheless, high school students were generally taught a common curriculum in each subject on the assumption that, other things being equal (which they weren't), this would produce equality of opportunity, although students still had some choices, for example whether to pursue foreign languages or advanced mathematics. During the 60s and 70s the expansion of secondary education was itself an important step towards greater equality. According to Keating, in Victoria during the 70s the push for higher retention rates in a period of high youth unemployment and the work of activist teachers (90) led to a drive to incorporate all subjects under a common framework, as demonstrated by the work of Bill Hannan discussed in the Introduction. No longer was there to be a tiered system of secondary education divided between university-controlled tertiary entrance subjects and senior secondary subjects. All were to contribute to the Victorian Secondary Certificate of Education.

South Australia was one jurisdiction which, under Don Dunstan and the inspirational leadership of Garth Boomer, took equity and social justice very seriously (Dellitt 153) but with a different approach. As Dellitt puts it: '[f]ocus shifted from the collectivist benefit of equal access to common knowledge, to a differential treatment of students to achieve equal outcomes: affirmative action for social justice' (153), or as the *Ontario Curriculum* succinctly puts it, 'sameness is not fairness.' This meant a differentiated curriculum responsive to local needs and sensitive to the diversity of students.⁴⁷ Hence equality, it was firmly believed, could only be achieved by attention

⁴⁷ As Barcan notes, by 1991 Garth Boomer had backtracked on some of his views, seeing an overemphasis on social justice as an impediment because it ignored the problem of how to improve outcomes for disadvantaged groups (117).

to diversity and there was an acknowledgment that equality of opportunity may not automatically lead to equitable outcomes. Kostogriz, for example, is cutting about the failure of the English Curriculum to deal with cultural and linguistic difference except by inflated references to world-class curricula ‘in a subject that seems ideally placed and even compelled to address diversity issues’ (208).

Richard Teese, an internationally recognised scholar in equity and schooling, and its relationship to curricula, is a vigorous and unrelenting critic of what he sees as Australia’s failure to deliver equity. He was commissioned by government education departments across states and territories (except New South Wales) to report on public education in Australia ‘in the context of the Australian Government Review of Funding for Schooling’ [the Gonski Review] (ii).⁴⁸ Its release was delayed, the implication being that its findings were uncomfortable. Teese regards the present model of funding and the distribution of resources, financial, intellectual and cultural, as advantaging the already advantaged, which residualises public schools and brings into sharp focus the question of whether any national curriculum can make good on its promises of equity unless there is an appreciation of the broader social, economic and cultural contexts of education (*From Opportunity to Outcomes: The Changing Role of Public Schooling in Australia and National Funding Arrangement; Undemocratic Schooling: Equity and Quality in Australian Secondary Education* [2003]. Teese is also critical of the Victorian Curriculum because it includes high stakes testing.

The Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority specifies on its website the following cohorts of students who should have their needs specially catered for in order to achieve equality of outcomes: low socio-economic status students, students with a disability, Indigenous students, gifted and talented students, students from marginalised cultures, students whose first language is not English (*Student Diversity in the Australian Curriculum*). Of course student profiles overlap and providing support for these students has multiple curriculum and pedagogical challenges. For example, Indigenous students may require culturally appropriate curriculum materials and particular pedagogical methods to help them overcome educational disadvantage, still a matter of acrimonious debate (Foley 168-204; Sarra 61-70). Indeed sometimes

⁴⁸ He has presented a report to the Western Australian government on schools resourcing in which he argues for more resources for primary schools, given their role in early intervention. The WA government has accepted his recommendation but has taken funds from secondary schools in order to do so, which was not in Teese’s recommendations.

bitter disputes over how to redress Indigenous educational disadvantage often serve as proxies for literacy and numeracy debates in the non-Indigenous community: Indigenous students should be 'mainstreamed,' the inference being that all students should be taught using identical methods or, conversely, that what works for Indigenous students will work for all. The *Curriculum Design Paper* includes instructions to curriculum writers to avoid stereotypes or biased language and to respect students' cultural knowledge, including their language background (12). One education authority faulted the English Curriculum for its failure to define Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' identities and cultures (*Consultation Report* 21). The *Design Paper* is right to warn against discrimination but inevitably risks being accused of political correctness and fostering division.

There has been understandable concern that differentiating curricula may undermine rigour, which potentially denies disadvantaged students the same opportunities to access what Allan Luke et al. call 'rich' and 'powerful' curricula (80), especially in subject areas that are considered intellectually demanding. This has caused concern about curricula that emphasise vocational, workplace skills and competency-based education, once regarded as the way of the future, which break down skills into smaller units that can be individually tested and discourage higher level thinking skills in favour of educational efficiency and measurability (Dellitt 156). For others, taking account of the needs of particular groups threatens to undermine the quality of education in general. An interesting and characteristic slant on the relationship among equity, standards, curricula and subject content can be found in Frank Furedi's opinion piece in *The Weekend Australian* (April 28-29, 2012: *Inquirer* Section 24). Furedi, a well-known British sociologist, has been taken up by the right-wing commentariat and appears frequently in the columns of *The Australian* newspaper and other forums. He argues that redistributing educational funding to the disadvantaged (and increasing funding to education in general) runs the risk of lowering high intellectual standards and debasing the curiosity-driven enquiry that makes education a good in itself, with the result that traditional subjects are condemned as elitist. Furedi is plainly concerned to preserve the cultural and symbolic capital that is put at risk by inclusive curricula and thus to reinforce the dominance of the 'traditional' curriculum. It is an argument that has partly been won in the

Australian Curriculum, with its emphasis on literacy and numeracy, but not entirely since in the English Curriculum is informed by theoretical paradigms of recent curricula. Furedi is implicitly critical of OBE and the concept of essential, cross-curricular knowledge. His plea for fiscal responsibility is welcome to conservatives, though in this opinion piece he does not advocate the ruthless educational efficiency model also favoured by some conservatives, even if both models generally coincide (or collide). Moreover, Furedi may have put his finger on a real problem: spending on education in Australia has increased 40% in the last decade but with no significant gains in performance as measured by international data. Blair's government increased funding to education in the UK, also without achieving noteworthy improvements (Goodwyn, 'The Status of Literature in a National Curriculum' 18-27).

OBE and Equity

A temperate view of OBE can be found in Millett's and Tapper's account of the Western Australian experience. The authors refuse to demonise OBE and resist the almost pathological reactions against it, but, after a review of the relevant literature, both national and international, conclude that there is no convincing evidence that OBE either significantly improves or diminishes student performance (51-70). Their argument suggests that there is probably no ideal curriculum model that is totally transformative, since transformation relies on so many externalities. However one aspect of OBE that needs to be taken seriously is the contention that it promotes equity, since outcomes embrace students' positive achievements across a broadly-defined range of learning areas, and thus that OBE is designed to undermine deficit models that expect failure, a belief at the heart of Spady's utopian vision for America's educational future. It was intended to 'democratise' education by offering equal opportunities to all and to encourage in students the belief that they can succeed.

Experiments with Inclusive Curricula 1: Tasmanian Essential Learnings (2002)⁴⁹

In the context of equity, it is instructive to examine, however sketchily, the history of curriculum innovation in Tasmania dating from the 80s because it was the result of high hopes and good intentions that went seriously wrong, despite reformers' desire to make education more relevant and equitable. As Connor explains regarding Tasmania:

[m]atters of equity were at stake. In the late twentieth century and around the world there was a search for a curriculum that might engage all learners in successful learning and prepare them for a fast-changing living and working environment. (264)

In the 80s Tasmania sought to create a broad-based curriculum informed by the best international research on effective learning (Connor 262). Research suggested that disengaged learners, especially from poor backgrounds, needed curricula more relevant to their daily lives but it also sought to address seriously the challenges of the future. In Connor's words, 'the new curriculum set out to be ideas-based, inquiry-driven and world-related' (265). These developments date back to the 70s, when the dominance of certain subjects, such as mathematics, was being questioned and the emphasis shifted to identifying skills in a more holistic attitude towards curriculum design (Penny Anderson and Oerlemans 72). In 1994 Tasmania adopted the Dawkins model of Statements and Profiles in what became the Tasmanian Essential Learnings Project. As a guide to curriculum development, it was meant to identify skills, understandings and capacities all students should master (tailored to students' individual capabilities), and use them to develop key learning areas agreed on by the community and sensitive to the challenge of 'new times'; it promoted values such as equity, diversity and responsible citizenship as the basis of curriculum planning and as vital educational outcomes students should be able to demonstrate on exit. The curriculum was meant to shift power from teachers to students through student-centred learning and authentic assessment and it was bold in its vision when it aimed

⁴⁹ Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory, and the Northern Territory also incorporated essential learnings into their frameworks and syllabi (Watt 17-22).

to abolish subject-centred curricula. In 1999 a policy document was released called *Learning Together* meant to be a twenty-year plan for Tasmanian education. It contained statements of values and purposes that became, after trial and refinement, the *Essential Learnings Framework* based on outcomes and standards (Watt 41-43). Tasmania hosted two international conferences (2002 and 2005) on the new curriculum and in 2004 developed the curriculum for post-compulsory education. There was extensive consultation with the profession and the public. The Essential Learnings Project seemed to take seriously the need to plan for 'outcomes of significance' rather than tinkering around the edges of curriculum reform.

Alas, it proved almost too easy to caricature the new curriculum framework, and the utopian language of innovation employed by new curricula ('learnings,' 'student-centred') grew threadbare through corporate and managerial overuse and encountered resistance among teachers and the public. Rodwell gives an acerbic and lively account of how, despite extensive community consultation, the Essential Learnings Project came up against political feuds, budget cuts, media hostility and professional resistance (110-34). Connor relates the story as a cautionary tale: noble goals and ambitions can too easily fall prey to pragmatism and politics, and major curriculum reform should be undertaken slowly in order to bring the public and the profession with it. One of the difficulties of 'selling' Essential Learnings to the media and the profession proved to be exactly the identification of key learning areas that cut across traditional disciplines. Brennan, in her closely argued assessment of the Australian Curriculum, lays out the methods of structuring curricula in Australia (265), demonstrating the tensions between discipline-based organization and the key learnings approach. Indeed she makes a telling point when she observes that content is an issue that has never gone away, despite the fact that outcomes identify central *understandings* that need to be demonstrated and not specific *content* that must be mastered (279), thus reducing the 'crowded curriculum' effect.

In a state that had and still has some of the poorest educational outcomes in the country, the Essential Learnings curriculum was designed to free teachers and students from the straitjacket of content-based curricula and strictly policed disciplinary divisions and thus to make schooling more relevant to students' needs. Hence it was intended to prepare students for contemporary post-school destinations,

new forms of knowledge and the latest technologies and to give them the capacity to adapt to shifting economic and informational contexts. There is no doubt that the curriculum was a gallant effort to create greater opportunities for disadvantaged students and that it was meant to result in higher retention rates but it proved too radical a reform. As Connor, in a balanced overview of the whole sorry business, observes,⁵⁰ ‘the change literature suggest that a curriculum reform of this magnitude takes at least ten years to implement; the political turnaround is three years and politicians seek to make their mark quickly (272).

Experiments with Inclusive Curricula 2: Queensland, the ‘New Basics’ and Productive Pedagogies (2002)

Lingard, whose work on globalisation we have already encountered, was a chief researcher in the Queensland productive pedagogies research (Rizvi and Lingard 104), which constituted an attempt to reconceptualise the curriculum and align it with assessment and pedagogies in the context of globalisation’ (103). Drawing on the insights of US researchers, the project adopted the notion of ‘authentic pedagogy’ based on notions of intellectual rigour, supportiveness, connectedness and valuing difference (104). Apart from socio-economic background, the project’s researchers concluded that teacher pedagogies and assessment practices made the greatest difference to student performance (105).

In 1973 Queensland abolished public examinations and moved to moderated school-based assessment in order to offer a wider range of subjects to students and allow schools increased flexibility in the provision of courses (Rod Gilbert, ‘Social Context and Educational Change: Innovations in the Queensland Curriculum’ 173) This was partly a response to the state’s scandalously low rates of participation in secondary schooling in a widely scattered, mainly rural, population which had been neglected under the long reign of the National Party. Outcomes were installed in QLD

⁵⁰ For another, more cynical, view of the Tasmanian Essential Learnings curriculum and similar experiments, such as the Queensland New Basics, discussed below, see Wayne Sawyer, ‘English in Australia: Complying or Disappearing?’ He argues that the new emphasis on interdisciplinary skills was a move to deal with shortages of English, Maths and Science teachers in the middle school (17). The debate over generic skills, interdisciplinary skills and cross-curriculum skills versus subject- and discipline-specific skills is ongoing.

in 1987 (Watt 35) and in the late 90s Queensland redesigned its curriculum in line with the Dawkins' learning areas and outcomes assessment (Rod Gilbert, 'Social Context . . .' 173). By 2005 the Queensland Studies Authority had produced revised English and Mathematics syllabi. Now overtaken by the Australian Curriculum, these initiatives had lasting and beneficial effects. When Professor Allan Luke was appointed Deputy Director General of Education he began rethinking the curriculum in order to address perceived weaknesses in current syllabi, including the so-called 'crowded curriculum' and the numerous and confusing outcomes embedded in it, in favour of a curriculum model that came to be known as the 'New Basics' (Education Queensland, *New Basics: The Why, What, How and When*). He inherited a curriculum based on OBE but still subject- and disciplinary-focused. Queensland, like WA and Tasmania, found itself bogged down in and overwhelmed by curriculum detail (Rod Gilbert, *Social Context . . .' 173*). Luke is a passionate and articulate advocate of high quality/high equity systems and a severe critic of neoliberalism and the corporatisation of education. Along with conservatives, he wants education to rise to the challenges of 'new times' but not by neoliberal methods. To this end, Luke et al. use Nancy Fraser's distinction between 'redistributive justice' (equal access to resources and civic participation) and 'recognitive justice' (recognising non-mainstream histories, backgrounds and culture, and the needs of marginalised groups). The authors understand that recognitive and redistributive justice can trigger sharp debates over curriculum content (Luke et al. 41) because they emphasise the allocation of more resources to the disadvantaged and admit that the marginalised require special curriculum provision.

For instance, colonised peoples were often, in the past, excluded from education, or only offered an education that reproduced their inferior status. My analysis of Friel's *Translations* and Davis's *No Sugar*, which have pedagogy at their heart, demonstrate that education can only be offered to the conquered on strictly limited terms, sometimes at the price of the loss of their own language. By contrast in *Dead White Males*, also pre-eminently a pedagogical play, the young heroine is corrupted intellectually and sexually by her male tutor, while her boyfriend, who opts for a decent trade, represents the voice of common sense.

QLD syllabi defined the nature of each key learning area and how that area fitted into the entire curriculum. The curriculum was organised into three elements: core outcomes common to all learning areas, those specific to a learning area, and discretionary outcomes (Watt 35). In 2006 the Queensland Studies Authority released a draft essential learnings document. Luke et al.'s detailed, closely argued 2008 report *Development of a Set of Principles to Guide a P-12 Syllabus Framework* surveys current theoretical approaches to curriculum design and identifies the methodology for devising syllabi that the authors believe will result in high quality/high equity outcomes, drawing on models from Finland and Ontario. However, they recognise that no curriculum, syllabus template or pedagogy is sufficient in and of itself to guarantee equity. The authors argue that poorly resourced schools and teachers cannot produce either quality or equity and emphasise the importance of building on and enhancing teachers' professionalism and trusting that professionalism. Therefore Allan Luke is against highly prescriptive and lengthy curricula, constant monitoring of teachers and students and intense, high-stakes testing. He wants a common framework for curriculum design without undermining the autonomy of teachers or imposing pedagogies on them: what he calls 'informed professionalism' (Luke et al. 12). His outlook can be described as teacher-centred in the sense that, without ownership of the curriculum, clear guidelines for assessment, and professional confidence, teachers cannot be student-centred. Luke's 'New Basics' (borrowed from the USA) eventually fell by the wayside in Queensland but his work offers clear guidance to curriculum writers and is an inspiring vision for those who are serious about equity and diversity.

In this context, it is enlightening to examine issues of equity and the Queensland curriculum. Queensland developed equity policies in 2001 which are in line with the aims of Productive Pedagogies and New Basics. The following passage from the *Literacy Short Course* states firmly that subject matter chosen should include, whenever possible, the contributions of all groups of people' and that teachers 'can introduce and reinforce 'non-racist, non-sexist, culturally sensitive and unprejudiced attitudes and behaviour' (33). These types of statements should be included in every curriculum document since it licenses teachers to discuss, model and include topics relevant to equity.

Gifted and Talented Programs

A contested area of equity and diversity and one which highlights the contradictions and conflicts in equity provision is the growing influence that gifted and talented programs have gained in schools. While in the USA gifted and talented programs are mandated, in Australia they are optional, though another small industry has grown up to encourage teachers to acquire qualifications in this area--there are seven such diplomas listed on offer in universities around Australia--and schools see specialised programs for gifted and talented students as an important means of gaining market share. Many middle-range private schools are fearful that, without such programs, they will lose out to expensive private schools or specialist or selective public schools, while public schools also fear losing their best students, particularly as parents are turning to private schools as a matter of routine. (As of March 2013, of Australia's 3.5 million students 700,000 went to Catholic schools and 500,000 to independent schools [qtd. in Maddox 87].) Campbell argues that selective practices such as gifted and talented programs advantage middle-class families (107) and he identifies gifted and talented programs as one of the ways in which schools improve their market position (288). Nevertheless there is an argument to be mounted that flexible programs and good teachers can deliver curriculum enrichment without the need for special provision, but that appears to be an argument already lost.

Gifted and talented programs can be delivered in a number of ways: curriculum enrichment by participation in extra-curricular activities; allowing students to skip an entire year; rapid student acceleration through curricula; differentiated curricula within the classroom; the grouping of gifted and talented students together in separate classes. Nevertheless, there are questions that hang over such programs: do they advantage the already advantaged, who possess the cultural and economic capital to improve their position? Do they divert resources from the neediest students? For example, will students in the poorest schools even be identified as gifted and talented let alone be offered specialist programs? (Campbell 106). Just as the nation has a two-speed economy, it has a two-tier education system with, to alter the metaphor abruptly, a very long tail. It is going to take a lot more than a lorry load of laptops to alter that reality (Bonnor and Caro 156). In the Australian Curriculum the states are

left to adjust programs for gifted and talented students, on the understanding that they will promote higher order cognitive and creative skills (of course) and be infused with rigour (that word again).

What does it mean to incorporate diversity into the curriculum?

As already noted, the ACARA website identifies the different cohorts that need to be catered for by special provision, covered by the term 'diversity,' which has emerged in some circles as an innocuous notion unlikely to offend. For example, it erases more contentious terms such as 'multiculturalism,' a word that is still contentious because of its supposed 'failures' and tainted as by 'political correctness' and deep divisions around immigration and Indigeneity, even though Australia's record on integration is one of our proudest national boasts and one of our supposedly foundational values. As Collins and Yates observe:

[m]ulticulturalism [in the 70s and 80s] was not just about whether students from immigrant backgrounds were getting sufficient support to pass the important examinations, it was about what all students were actually learning about who made up Australia, and about the respect and stereotyping that was encapsulated in various history, social studies and English subjects.

('Confronting Equity, Retention and Student Diversity' 117-18)

Given the Federal government's stated aim of reaching out to Asia, of respecting and acknowledging Indigenous cultures, and appreciating 'Australia's social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity' (*Melbourne Declaration*), it is legitimate to ask how such diversity is to be reflected in curricula, if at all. It is also legitimate to ask whether the Federal government is really serious about incorporating diversity into curricula. It is too simple to regard equity purely as a matter of enabling students of different backgrounds and with different needs to succeed. Success may require distinct pedagogies, curricula and content as well as additional resources, the model adopted by Garth Boomer in South Australia. Collins and Yates indicate that a commitment to equity must engage with issues of how difference is represented, whose voices are heard, who has the power to represent the nation to itself, whose histories are taught and who writes the curriculum. Rod Gilbert is critical of the tokenistic use of 'diversity'

in policy documents without the attempt to think through the implications of the term for theories of knowledge and values ('Can History Succeed at School?' 245-58).

Nowhere is this problem more sharply illustrated than in debates generated by the teaching of history in Australia. While OBE approaches do not require specific syllabus content, it is hard to imagine any Australian government welcoming a history curriculum that does not include Australian history, however defined. The Howard government believed passionately in the need to reassert national pride by opposing what Howard personally felt to be a 'politically correct' version of the nation's history which propagated a 'black armband' view of Australia's past (McIntyre 119-41).⁵¹ In 2006 Howard convened the National History Summit in a centralising move to gain more Federal leverage over the history curriculum by mandating the teaching of Australian history in Years 9 and 10, a move to which teachers and students proved resistant. Anna Clark's⁵² *Teaching the Nation* reports on interviews with many students and teachers across Australia, and the problem of content duplication and student disengagement, and she highlights the fact that many students found the teaching of Australian history extremely boring. Much depends on how it is taught, of course, but the curriculum clearly failed to capture the imagination of teachers and students. Her work also illustrates the difficulties of recognising 'diversity,' since teachers confront still-current problems such as colonial dispossession, the place of Australia in global and regional contexts, and the nation's history of immigration, all of which would seem essential to any sincere recognition of diversity.

The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History* was released in 2009, but the problem of content remains, if the Queensland Education Authority's detailed response to the Senior History units is any guide (*Queensland Response to the Draft Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum: English, Mathematics, Science and History* 2012). It criticises the rationale, aims, content, and assessment of the units, detects

⁵¹ The term 'black armband' history is a coinage of the greatly respected historian Geoffrey Blainey, who courted controversy when in the 80s he urged the government to reduce the amount of Asian immigration to Australia, a view that John Howard supported at the time, to his electoral cost. Blainey's resignation from Melbourne University was felt as a grievance by conservatives, who believed that it had been engineered by left-wing historians such as Stuart McIntyre and Henry Reynolds. For an excellent overview of the controversy, see Tony Taylor's *Denial: History Betrayed*, Chapter Six, 'Failing the Scholarly Test: Australian Denial and the Art of Pseudohistory, 174-211.

⁵² Anna Clark is the granddaughter of the controversial Australian historian Manning Clark.

constant redundancy in the units, and crowded subject content. Rod Gilbert, in his acute analysis of the Australian History Curriculum, 'Can History Succeed?', identifies three essential requirements for a successful curriculum of any kind: namely, clarity of purpose and intended outcomes; an effective rationale for selecting knowledge content; and a central explanatory framework that gives the curriculum its instructive power (246). He argues that these three requirements have only patchily been addressed in the new history curriculum, one reason (but not the only reason) being the conflicts between 'expert' opinion and political agendas. It remains a problem for the Federal government now, if Alan Tudge's recent comments on the history curriculum are anything to go by.

The same criticisms can be levelled at the Subject English curriculum. For Howard and others a structured narrative of Australian history celebrating the nation's accomplishments is self-evidently a matter of common sense, uncontested information and national benefit. Yet, as Rod Gilbert reminds us, without an explanatory framework the selection of information, the establishment of cause and effect, and the grounds of disciplinary knowledge are absent. He asks basic questions such as: why teach history at all? Why teach Australian history? (assuming we can define what it is). Clearly he would agree with Michael Cathcart's observation in the epigraph to this chapter that it rather depends on whose perspective is being privileged and how disciplinary knowledge is linked to the very core understandings that are to be encouraged across the curriculum and within disciplines. What do we teach Indigenous and non-Indigenous students about Aboriginal history? Foley and Muldoon fault the history curriculum for its patchy treatment of Indigenous history and lament the absence of land rights issues, such as Mabo, from the highly selective segments on Indigenous history. They are correct in seeing this silence as suspicious ('Pynning for Indigenous Rights in the Australian Curriculum'). Should we include in our national narrative the White Australia Policy? How do we talk about multiculturalism, now so discredited in some circles but so vital to how Australia managed diversity in the 70s and 80s? How do we include the history and cultures of Asia in the 'Asian century'? These types of problems will not go away and they are not confined to the history curriculum. And they are deeply connected to issues of equity in our schools, for to produce critical and informed citizens who respect diversity

schools and teachers should do more than make empty gestures that ignore conflict, difference and contestation as long as it is done respectfully. As Roberts bad-temperedly remarks: quarrels about what content is in and what [ends up] with 'endless debates about "the classics" or the "history wars" ('Curriculum, Equity and Resources' 430).

Chapter Two

Troublesome Terms: Pedagogy, Curriculum, Syllabus, Subject, Discipline

In the way that critics of contemporary English teaching seek to argue for what they call a 'traditional' English curriculum and pedagogy, they might be said to champion Plato's account of knowledge. That is to say, they might be said to subscribe to a belief in ideal forms . . . one true English--a timeless, unchanging subject, which exists beyond the shifting world of sense experience.

Doecke, Howie and Sawyer, 37

One of the obstacles to a sensible discussion of the Curriculum is the shifting, imprecise and inconsistent use of terms such as 'pedagogy,' 'syllabus' and 'curriculum' in the literature and thus the semantic confusion that surrounds them. Not that consulting a dictionary or a glossary is the infallible answer since terms are discursively constructed, and are constituted through/by areas of knowledge, the theoretical objects they name and their associated practices (Foucault, *The Order of Things* 41). However, it remains important to distinguish among these terms and to be sensitive to their historical and contemporary inflections in order to carry out any assessment of the Australian National Curriculum in general and the English learning area in particular.

In 'From Curriculum to Pedagogy and Back Again: Knowledge, the Person and the Changing World' (17-28), Yates captures the connection between the formation of subjectivities in a world in which knowledge is being transformed by a networked society. Jane Gilbert, among many others, points to the idea that knowledge, as it has been understood in the West, is of something separate from individuals, and above 'values and emotional investments, making it objective, apolitical, universal and eternal' (67). Borrowing from Castells, Jane Gilbert argues that knowledge in the twenty-first century, rightly or not, is conceived as something dynamic or fluid, something that *does* things or makes things happen' (68) and that changing theories of knowledge inevitably produce different concepts of the 'knower' (69).

Thus at the centre of the pedagogical world is, or should be, the learner. Educationalists began talking of child-centred learning at least as far back as John Dewey and one can find examples of pedagogy that emphasise the need to align

education with children's natural tendencies toward imagination, curiosity and play (Brown 76-104). Focussing attention on the student, not the teacher, seems a self-evident piece of educational wisdom, although a handy definition of 'student-centred' is not always forthcoming and it has now become a glib phrase constantly invoked but not always thought through. Effective student-centred learning only occurs when teachers have an excellent disciplinary knowledge, are able to scaffold learning, and thus engage students so that they are eager to take responsibility for their own learning. If 'student-centred' simply means offering students 'choices' in their learning pathways, or prepackaged computer programs that they can use at home, or standing back and hoping students will be self-starters, then disillusionment awaits.

Nevertheless, Yates makes a useful observation about the word 'pedagogy' which calls attention to the fact that, today, in any definition of 'the instructional act' [that is, pedagogy], 'there is a much stronger emphasis than there might once have been on the nature of the learner' ('From Curriculum and Pedagogy' 17). Indeed it is possible to argue that twentieth-century educational theory--whether psychological, sociological, philosophical, or cognitive--is a record of increasing awareness of the developmental needs of children and a search for effective learning strategies in tune with their nature, although such an inquiry can be traced at least as far back as Rousseau (Cox 6), a Romantic view of education which involved 'balancing the two poles of authority and liberty through the 'artifice and manipulation of well-regulated liberty' (Donald, qtd. in Green and Cormack 262). One must also take into account the twentieth-century desire to discover the most effective scientific pedagogies in order to produce the optimally educated citizen. Obviously strategies always imply theories of knowledge and are similarly dependent on what is thought to constitute *human* nature. However, as Yates argues (20), educational debates are not framed solely in terms of effectiveness (the best pedagogical method to teach a particular body of knowledge) but also by assumptions, implicit or explicit, about the relationship between education and society, whose discursive interaction produces 'the learner' and 'the teacher.' Hunter's work on schooling and pedagogy identifies the 'pedagogical state' in the nineteenth-century adoption of mass schooling whose aims were to produce loyal and well-educated citizens to serve the state (*Rethinking the School*. . . 38-39).

Bernadette Baker, in 'Child-centred Teaching, Redemption and Educational Identities: A History of the Present,' has produced a finely nuanced overview of the historical shifts that have (re)constituted the child in modernity so that childhood became a developmental phase requiring separation from the adult world, special pedagogical techniques to accommodate the nature of children, psychological theories of child development, and the careful management and cultivation of children so that they could become effective, well-rounded adults and loyal national subjects (155-70). This process realigned the teacher-pupil relationship so that teachers in their professional role seemed less remote from their charges but were also entrusted by child experts and educators with the prudent and watchful monitoring of students to ensure they developed correctly. According to Baker the child becomes an Other to the adult while, simultaneously, the teacher sympathetically enters the space of the child (65). Thus, although child-centredness seems an advance over less enlightened approaches of the past, the child and the teacher are still subject to the constitutive inscriptions of power. Whatever 'student-centred learning' means--an alternative to chalk-and-talk, a focus on independent and/or collaborative learning, the incorporation of technology into the classroom--it therefore gathers into itself a whole range of historical discourses on the child as an object of study and management.

Classical Pedagogy

Paul is thus acting as the wise steward of the word

Origen, *Against Celsus*

A useful strategy for thinking around the topics of pedagogy and subjectivity is to be reminded of the history of pedagogy in the Classical world, not because this history supplies us with answers or guides but because it illuminates contemporary concerns, if only by contrast. In ancient Greece, instruction of the young (and the ever-present danger of *corruption* of the young) had political and public consequences, as the famous case brought against Socrates on just such a charge demonstrates. *Paideia*--the Greek term for the instruction of the young, primarily the *ephebe* or adolescent male--became essential for entry into full citizenship and the conduct of civic virtue (Winter 3-5). Hence *paideia* qualified the elite male citizen of the Greek city-state and its successors, the Roman Republic and Empire, for *politeia*, a

privileged position in the life of the state (Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* 13). Marrou makes the point that in the ancient world it was the education of the *man* and not the child that mattered, so that accommodating the psychological and cognitive needs of children was an alien concept. Moreover, Marrou tellingly observes: '[n]othing could be more unlike the modern "progressive" school methods than the system of education that was practised in ancient Greece' (296).

For Plato, as Gurley argues, *paideia* is far wider than formal instruction and is part of a cultural system that does not distinguish 'scholarly knowledge from cultural practices--from the processes of personal and textual interaction in which knowledge is produced and reproduced' (7). This apt definition of pedagogy applies well beyond its Platonic context. It recognises that the relationship between the teacher and the learner is framed by the conditions of knowing, how knowledge is constituted and the teacher's and learner's orientation to knowledge constituted in particular contexts, including those outside the school. In Plato's metaphysics *paideia* is the means of reproducing the noblest form of the city by inducting the young male citizen into the highest form of knowledge--philosophy. Education for Plato was not divorced from politics--after all, he wanted to transform Dionysius the Elder of Syracuse into a philosopher king--and was an act of moral and intellectual self-cultivation which moved through stages from the elementary to the most refined (Marrou 95-118).

This notion of self-cultivation and ethical self-development was characteristic of philosophy and learning in the ancient world, importantly the Stoics, who wished to be indifferent to fortune (see Foucault, *The Care of the Self: History of Sexuality Vol. 3*) and has persisted, even if philosophy during the Enlightenment seemed to part ways with it, in favour of establishing the grounds of knowledge through rational autonomy in a world of intelligences. Yet according to Hunter, whose long-term project has been to interrogate the Enlightenment's own philosophical projects, particularly that of German idealism (see Fillings on the relationship between Greek tragedy and German Idealism), the objective of ethical self-refinement, or moral *paideia*, still continues the endeavour to establish knowledge on the principles of pure rationality ('The Morals of Metaphysics: Kant's *Groundwork* as Intellectual *Paideia*' 928). Hunter asserts that Kant's categorical imperative, 'postulating a morality completely separate from religious authority (though compatible with it) chiefly anchored . . . in "duty" and

“feeling” instead of social utility or human happiness’ (Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment* 725) remains ‘an exercise in self-transcendence’ and ‘an exercise in self-transformation promising access to a spiritual elite’ (923, 924). Thus Hunter regards the categorical imperative as a ‘version of the long-standing Christian-(neo)Platonic spiritual exercise whereby, abstracting from merely spatiotemporal knowledge, the metaphysician activates the higher intellect he shares with God . . .’ (‘The Morals of Metaphysics . . .’ 923). Hunter detects a continuity between the Christian (Neo)-Platonic legacy of self-transformation and a pastoral pedagogy inherited from the Protestant pietistic tradition that grew up during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and was adapted by bureaucratic state systems (‘After English: Towards a Less Critical Literacy’ 321). The teacher as ‘sympathetic yet vigilant soul mate’ (320) led to a progressive, child-centred pedagogy and to its special location in the English classroom devoted to emancipating the child’s potentialities yet encouraging ethical development through self-scrutiny. Though supposed to be a practice devoid of elitism, it retains the whiff of exclusiveness. Hunter thus finds the project of English as self-deluded in its claims to emancipation and its refusal to acknowledge its ‘disenchanted’ history. He has both followers and critics among English educators, as will become evident later.

Plato’s hostility to his rivals, the Sophists, is well known through Plato’s dialogues *Phaedrus* and *Gorgias*. They instituted a system dedicated to training statesmen and they charged for their services, in Plato’s view a sure sign that they lacked true philosophy since they [the Sophists] ‘teach only means to ends: [that is] developing in their students speechmaking skills’ (Gurley 29), thus adopting a more instrumentalist view of learning and pedagogy. Plato condemned the Sophists’ concentration on the arts of rhetoric and dialectic, accused them of seeking only knowledge that was useful in influencing others, and viewed rhetoric’s persuasive power as inherently deceitful.⁵³

Plato’s was an unjustly harsh verdict on the Sophists who, as Wilken maintains, linked *paideia* to ‘moral training, self-analysis and spiritual direction’ (qtd. in Kovacs

⁵³ Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* was in some sense a reply to Plato’s distrust of rhetoric and will be considered later. But Turner maintains that Isocrates (436-338 BCE) was far more influential than Aristotle in rescuing ‘the teaching of public discourse from the calumny of his contemporary Plato’ (6).

11). Turner also supports the view that the Sophists were not contemptible or ethically bankrupt (6). The Second Sophistic (first to third century CE) makes an appearance in 1 Corinthians (attributed to Paul) in which the apostle claims that he does not employ (by implication empty) skills in oratory or philosophy when seeking to convert because 'faith should not depend on human philosophy but on the power of God' (*Jerusalem Bible* 1 Cor. 2:5). Early Christianity had to treat with Greek rhetoric and philosophy since those disciplines constituted the intellectual framework and cultural capital of the age, and had to be reconciled with the teaching of the Word or *logos* and *sophia* or Wisdom. One can detect here the distant precursor of those struggles between faith and reason, theology and philosophy that were to convulse Christianity right up to the Enlightenment and beyond. Clement of Alexandria (CE 150-CE 215?) in his *The Instructor: Book 1* theorises the role of the Christian teacher in the milieu of Greek *paideia* (*Early Christian Writings*). Unsurprisingly, Christ and Paul turn out to be the role models as teachers and they inaugurate a Christian pedagogical genealogy chosen presumably by God through his deputies. Nevertheless Clement has a care for teaching methods. Curricula should be arranged in order of difficulty and adapted to the learner (Kovacs 7) and he recognises that truth must be calibrated according to the individual spiritual needs of the learner, even, ironically given his view of the Sophists, to the point of deceiving the simple in the cause of a higher spiritual truth (Kovacs 25). We are all children under divine tutorship and thus can be fed only the milk of the Word.

It is possible from the distance of 2,500 years or so to state that Plato won the philosophical argument but that the Sophists won the pedagogical one, since useful knowledge attuned to the needs of the nation-state remains highly valued and the arts of rhetoric are still alive in other guises, in English curricula, for example. Marrou traces the legacy of Classical *paideia* in the transition to a world in which the Church became dominant and was understandably concerned with the education of a clerical bureaucratic caste that required at least a minimum of education to carry out its tasks, such as conducting services in Latin and learning the elements of doctrine (Weisheipl 525-58). Moreover, without Classical learning Christianity could not have developed the sophisticated theology that helped to guarantee its reproduction and police, sometimes brutally, its intellectual boundaries (Marrou 421-30).

The Greek and Roman curriculum fed into the medieval curriculum based on the Seven Liberal Arts: the Trivium--grammar, rhetoric and dialectic; and the Quadrivium--arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. They served as the basis of the early medieval curriculum but, as Turner contends, the triumph of Scholasticism in universities favoured dialectic, philosophy and theology rather than grammar and rhetoric (28). The Renaissance university revived the study of Classical rhetoric and the careful examination of ancient texts, increasingly in their historical context (Turner 37-64; Grafton 1-37), until, in the view of one of today's pre-eminent scholar of the Enlightenment, Jonathon Israel, the humanistic curriculum came under severe challenge from radical critics (*Enlightenment Contested* 409-35). What has emphatically survived from the combination of Greek and Roman *paideia* and Christian instruction is the emphasis on the cultivation of moral virtue, the pastoral cure of souls⁵⁴ and the reverence for the legacy of European Renaissance humanism.

Whatever its practical applications, ancient *paideia* was in no way 'vocational' as we understand the term and the long-held preference for elite learning continues, however much the content of curricula has changed over the last few centuries and indeed in the last few decades. The competency-based approach which emerged during the 90s saw training students to be work and market ready as paramount and vocationalism as common sense in a world where the needs of business should come first. The competency approach has left its mark on English curricula.⁵⁵ There also remains the tension between authority and unconstrained enquiry, which can be traced in the protracted struggle between theology and philosophy in the West, for example in the severe quarrels that ensued over the accuracy and authenticity of Biblical texts during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* 409-35). John Witte, in a detailed study of law and the Protestant Reformation, demonstrates how education in German lands became increasingly laicised and secularised, providing models that were eventually to become widespread.

⁵⁴ Peter Brown, in his monumental study *Through the Eye of the Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West 350-550 AD*, cites a recently published series of College de France lectures by Foucault in which Foucault defines pastoral power in the early Church as 'significantly different from political power,' and 'more than usually insistent, wide-ranging and absorptive' (504).

⁵⁵ I have memories of sitting on the TEE Subject English Curriculum Committee when the Committee (briefly) included a business representative. The move had no effect on the Curriculum that I could see.

Education was adapted to the needs of the state and civic bureaucracies, was to be subsidised from one source or another including civic institutions, and offered--in elementary forms at least--to the poor. As Witte observes, '[e]ducation was to remain fundamentally religious in character. But it was now subject to broader political control and directed to broader civic ends' (291).

We can thus conclude that pedagogy from its Greek inception was inseparable from the reproduction of a virtuous order regardless of the utility of knowledge and that it gradually became the right and duty of the nation-state to support and oversee education in order to fulfil the state's civic, economic and patriotic goals. For Plato, 'truth's pedagogue,' to borrow a phrase that Geoffrey Hill applied to Charles Peguy, *paideia* was aimed at those who were prepared to go 'the long way round' (*Republic* Book vi: 504). The question of how different groups of children should be taught and *what* they should be taught remain lively issues given that educational goods were and continue to be unevenly allocated. Although pedagogy cannot be reduced to formal instruction, formal instruction is central to pedagogy. Bourdieu is helpful here in exploring this conundrum:

[a]n education system which puts into practice an implicit pedagogic action, requiring initial familiarity with the dominant culture . . . offers information and training which can be received and acquired only by subjects endowed with the predispositions that are a condition for the success of the transmission and of the inculcation of culture. ('Cultural . . .' 267)

The 'implicit pedagogic action' referred to is the process by which formal instruction assumes that the subject possesses the habitus required in order to transform education into cultural capital. However, Apple maintains that Bourdieu's picture of schools as allocators of resources oversimplifies their role. He contends that schools produce capital of a particular kind: the technical/scientific high status knowledge essential to capital accumulation for which state intervention is deemed essential (*Education and Power* 39-54) and he further insists that a degree of inequity is tolerated in the system as long as that knowledge is efficiently transmitted (46).

Wrigley, Thomson and Lingard, writing from a perspective that values the possibilities for positive social change, confidently assert that pedagogy is not just

a method or instruction. It is not equivalent to curriculum or assessment, but rather [it is] the need for alignment between knowledge, curriculum, assessment, institutional mores framed by understandings about the nature of knowledge, of reality and human society, of human capacity for learning and growth and of aspirations for a better future. (11)

If this definition seems almost too broad, idealistic and humanistic at least it avoids being reductive and recognises that learning is never conducted in a social, ethical or intellectual vacuum or absent a theory of knowledge, however tacit or unstated. It also assumes that an ideal pedagogy will be an engaged pedagogy empowering for students (and with any luck for teachers) and capable of expanding students' critical and emotional capacities.

The definition glances at the fact that 'pedagogy' is often used to denote a particular *method* of teaching, though the authors believe it should not be confused with such methods. Not that it is 'wrong' to employ the term interchangeably with 'instructional method' but rather that the researcher should be alert to its use in different contexts and lexicons. One controversial example of pedagogy defined as 'instructional method' is phonics, controversial because there is an ongoing debate over how best to teach reading to young children (Wyse 163-4). 'Synthetic phonics'⁵⁶ was adopted in the UK in *A Framework for Teaching English* (Ellis, Fox and Street 34) as the most effective method for increasing literacy skills in young children, although experts remain divided over its value as a method (see Wyse 127-36) while the media are convinced that it is the answer (see, for example, Lefstein 136-56; Sawyer and Gannon n.pag.).

There is no single instructional method that is universally successful for all cohorts and in all circumstances, but there may be better or worse methods, depending on the skills and abilities teachers wish to cultivate in their students and the experiences and capacities children bring to the classroom. Again, the English

⁵⁶ Bethan Marshall distinguishes between analytic phonics and synthetic phonics thus: the former identifies phonemic sounds but 'relies on the pupil's propensity to make analogies (e.g., the cat sat on the mat). The latter teaches students all 44 phonemes in the English language before allowing them to progress to two-letter sounds ('sh' or 'th') and then three-letter sounds and so on. Obviously educators are conflicted about which brand of phonics is better and whether phonics should be combined with other teaching methods.

experience is illuminating. In 1998 the Labour government introduced a National Literacy Strategy (NLS) to primary schools. This was in response to a perceived literacy crisis in the nation when measured against international standards (Goodwyn, 'Literacy Versus English' 117-35). In order to raise performance standards in literacy the government invested heavily in its strategy by mandating certain pedagogical approaches and imposing them on teachers. These included phonics, the now infamous Blair's Literacy Hour, and an emphasis on prescriptive grammar teaching. Teachers were compelled to undertake in-service training and abundant support materials were provided. As Roger Beard, in his evaluation of the NLS, makes clear, all this renewed and feverish attention to literacy did lead to some improvements (63-86), but gains seemed to have plateaued (Goodwyn, 'Literacy Versus English' 6) and many teachers and students found the teaching methods arid and alienating (Ellis, Cox and Street 27-44).

The issue of phonics brings into sharp focus the link between pedagogy (and for that matter curriculum) and research into child development and how those links can best be transformed into effective techniques to help children to learn. In Rousseau's *Emile* nature itself, free of the corrupting ills of modern society, becomes the guide for the education of the young. However perverse and flawed Rousseau's model of education or jaundiced his view of society, his was not the only theory to invoke a philosophical system that grounds human nature and thus childhood in a Romantic perception of nature. Steiner schools, for example, have now become more popular in Australia despite his strange anthroposophical model of child development, but at least he places the arts at the centre of children's learning and social maturation, a status that is welcome now that curricula seem increasingly focussed on maths, literacy and science, with the danger of pushing other disciplinary areas to the margins of the curriculum.

We need not survey in detail all the cognitive and psychosocial theories of child development that emerged during the twentieth century because they are generally familiar to informed readers. They tend to accentuate:

- The cognitive aspects of growth--for example, Piaget's theory of cognitive development.

- The social contexts of development--Vygotsky's emphasis on social interaction, imagination and children's play as the determinant of development.
- The psychosocial--Erikson's focus on the search for identity as the engine of development.
- Moral growth--Kohlberg's theory that children gradually move from purely egocentric beings to becoming independent moral agents.
(Marsh, *Becoming a Teacher* 16-33).

All theories are bound to contain flaws and limitations but the critical mass of research into child development has given educators an insight into how children learn and thus points to pedagogical methods that might be employed to engage and motivate students in line with their stages of development. However, theories of child development do not automatically and infallibly indicate pedagogical methods and may be used to support all manner of educational systems. It may support, for example, direct and explicit instruction (the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student), more student-centred and independent learning, immersive approaches to language learning, learning through 'authentic' tasks, learning through play and creative projects, and so on. In the Introduction we glanced at the experiences of two 'progressive teachers' in the 70s--Alan Reid and Bill Hannan. It is clear what they meant by child-centred pedagogy--more independent learning, less emphasis on breaking up the curriculum into 'boxes' created by timetabling and subjects, more independent and group learning allowing students to pursue their own interests, encouraging self-expression, questioning, and initiative. These progressive strategies (which are of course older than the 60s and the 70s) largely remain in place but have been challenged by a call to return to more explicit and direct instruction. The Australian Curriculum certainly does not decree specific methods. However, there is some understandable confusion around pedagogical terms. Freebody et al. in *Language, Literacy and Literature* encourage pedagogical experimentation and a multi-faceted approach to delivering the Curriculum. Nevertheless, media commentary on the Curriculum is haunted by the fear that the lack of direct teaching has undermined literacy and literature. Australia has fortunately not succumbed to the highly scripted, overly prescriptive lessons that were a feature of England's National Literary Strategy

and are endemic in the USA, heavily promoted by educational publishing companies and private academies and forced on teachers (see Goodwyn, 'Literacy Versus English'; Ravitch; Ramey). Even though the rationale for an Australian curriculum acknowledges the 'changing ways in which young people learn' (*Shape of the Australian Curriculum* 7), there seems precious little acknowledgment of these 'changing ways' in the English Curriculum. If one can venture any generalisation about pedagogy it is that any pedagogy, if uncritically and rigidly imposed, is malign and certainly does not advance general capacities such as creativity, critical understanding and innovation.

One of the shortcomings apt to reduce the explanatory power of major cognitive, behaviourist, and psychosocial theories of child development is their tendency to produce essentialised accounts of the child and the learner. Hence they tend to downplay the role of culture as a meaning-making system which produces both the subjects and objects of discourse and hence the 'child' and the 'learner.' Waters, in *Childhood, Schooling and Bureaucracy*, exposes the ways in which childhood, as constituted by the state, not only creates the 'child' as an object of attention and management by the entire school apparatus, but also the 'adult' who will become serviceable to the state.⁵⁷ His work also highlights the fact that theories of child development, when they are enacted pedagogically, are constrained or enabled by and must work within the bureaucratic structures of the school. For instance, literacy, which, like mathematics, essentially marks the success or failure of an education system nowadays, is such a locus of anxiety, intervention and misgiving that the acquisition of literacy seems fraught with peril (Hull and Hernandez 336). It hardly needs stating that what constitutes 'literacy' has varied over time according to whether literacy was a majority or minority practice, the shifting technologies of writing, the relationship between reading and writing and even children's confessional affiliation. Moreover, cultural differences are often ignored when it comes to 'learning from the best systems' of education in order to improve Australia's performance on

⁵⁷ Alison Lurie, in a review of books on the history of school architecture, remarks that 'continually, though silently, a school building tells students who they are and how they should think about the world. It can help to manufacture rote obedience or independent activity; it can create high self-confidence or low self-esteem' (31).

international tests since one system may not easily 'translate' into another, systems being dependent on national values, the homogeneity or heterogeneity of populations, and the intellectual and other qualities that are considered essential. For example, Shanghai came out on top in reading in PISA results, which aroused the disquiet about the rise of Asia, and what Australia is doing wrong. However, as Ian Johnson points out, the Chinese model of pedagogy, for example, is not one easily emulated or one that is unequivocally endorsed, relying as it often does on rote learning, extensive sudden-death testing, expensive out of school tutoring for the fortunate and ambitious and a high degree of student compliance.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Although the Chinese education system is not monolithic, it has been critiqued for its heavy emphasis on political education and for being 'trite, empty and deadlocked' (Ran Yunfei, qtd. in Johnson 'Class Consciousness' 35).

Curriculum

Virtually all public and political debates over education and its policies ultimately become curricular.

Allan Luke et al., 66

The term ‘curriculum’ is equally as slippery as the term ‘pedagogy,’ even if it has been employed up to this point as if it were unproblematic. Australia is instituting a ‘Australian Curriculum,’ not an ‘Australian syllabus’ or an ‘Australian pedagogy,’ even though all three are connected and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Yates, Collins and O’Connor offer a deceptively simple definition which is as good a starting place as any: ‘[o]ne important curriculum agenda is always *what is to be taught*, taking curriculum as a selection or construction of what is important that we set up to form our next generation’ (8 [italics original]). Peter Roberts’ definition also captures the breadth and significance of the concept ‘curriculum’:

[c]urriculum is a consensus about what we as a nation, at this point in time . . . want to pass on to future generations. In the end it is only ever a representation of our world--time does not allow us to pass on everything. (‘Curriculum, Equity and Resources . . .’ 421)

Thus, like pedagogy, it is inseparable from theories of knowledge and the production and transmission of knowledge. White’s history of the secondary curriculum takes curriculum to be precisely that: the suite of subjects considered essential knowledge and skills to be passed on to the young through schooling. As White has demonstrated, these vary over time, so that what is taught and the areas into which the curriculum is divided are matters of history, consensus, debate and sometimes accident. We have seen this played out over attempts to divide up the curriculum in novel ways, such as the Tasmanian Essential Learnings Project (which threatened to undermine subject-based areas), to incorporate new areas into the curriculum, such as information technology, or to define cross-curricular objectives. In addition, curricula indicate the developmental stages of learning students are expected to move through in the course of their education.

Curricula ideally should align with the aims of schooling broadly understood and the aims of schooling, whether spelled out or not, certainly influence curricula even if there are mismatches between them. Hence Alan Reid’s critique of the

Australian Curriculum, which he faults for its failure to spell out its aims and rationale. These aims, expressed in syllabi, standards and assessment, are part of the curriculum, but the balance between the educational goals of curricula and their embodiment in syllabi is precisely one of the matters with which designers of curricula must and should grapple.

Connelly, He, Phillion, and Schlein, in the *Sage Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction*, register how difficult it is to map precise meanings for 'curriculum,' since the term can be used widely to describe all the interactions between students and teachers in the school setting, narrowly to characterise a set of materials, and broadly to include sites of informal learning. Fundamental to the curriculum are the specified knowledge and skills students must acquire in designated programs of learning and the generic skills to be fostered across all areas. Educationalists have consistently resisted the assumption that curriculum involves the transmission of knowledge to a passive learner. Like Luke, in the epigraph to this section, Alison Lee reminds us that curriculum cannot be isolated from its political contexts:

[s]chool curricula can be understood in part as interested selections from available versions of disciplines, selections that are exercised in a highly political climate of competition and exchange among different participants, some located within the discipline, others within other institutions such as ministries of education and professional associations. (418)

Luke et al. define curriculum as

the sum total of resources--intellectual and scientific, cognitive and linguistic, textbook and adjunct resources and materials, official and unofficial--that are brought together for teaching and learning by teachers and students in classrooms and other teaching environments. (11).

Reid and Scott summarise the work of curriculum scholars by stating that 'the curriculum represents a specific social organisation of knowledge' and distinguish its roles as reflection of the dominant culture, the interests of a particular subject (such as mathematics), a particular cognitive style and pedagogical orientation, and self-image (how children see themselves) (186-87).

It is possible to gain a purchase on the broader meaning of 'curriculum' as an orientation towards knowledge by looking at curriculum reform in the Renaissance

university. Aristotelian scholasticism, which had dominated universities since the twelfth century, seemed worn out by the fifteenth, although Aristotle was not simply abandoned and the trivium and quadrivium continued to be taught. What changed was a greater emphasis on Classical texts, and a closer linguistic attention to the analysis of such texts (Mack 82-99; Grafton 1-62) together with a greater scholarly apparatus of research brought to bear on texts, and a felt need to clarify and simplify aspects of the curriculum.⁵⁹ For example, Petrus Ramus's educational reforms were highly influential. A victim of the Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572 because he converted to Protestantism, Ramus wished to redefine the relationship between logic and rhetoric, simplifying Aristotelian logic and separating it from rhetoric, which has had an effect on the teaching of rhetoric into the present day ('Rhetoric'). He streamlined the acquisition of skills by providing summaries, examples and citations and has been credited with contributing to Cartesian's. Ramus was also accused of being a religious sceptic, an *academicien nouveau*, foreshadowing the tensions that were to erupt within the university between sacred and secular knowledge and the domains that it was thought proper each should occupy.⁶⁰ Religious and moral formation remained the concern of schools and universities

In the context of university reform Ian Hunter makes a case for the largely forgotten work of Christian Thomasius (1655-1728), whose 'desacralising' of philosophy maintained a distinction between revealed and natural knowledge and stressed the importance of civic communication and thus the importance of 'secular' knowledge ('Christian Thomasius and the Desacralisation of Philosophy' 595-616), which embraces the teaching of rhetoric as civic communication, a practice that continued in Italy (Turner 42). Hence Thomasius's curriculum was to be serviceable to the nation-state, avoid confessional conflicts and maintain civil peace. His two volumes *How a Young Man Should Be Educated* and *Practice of Ethics* argue that ethics should be concentrated on keeping the passions within the bounds of civil order (Hunter, 'Christian Thomasius . . .' 608). Thomasius is attractive to Hunter because of the

⁵⁹ On this point consult James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (33-65).

⁶⁰ Europe developed a university system with standardised curricula that could be transmitted (and disputed), independent of individual scholars and their disciples.

relative modesty of his educational aims and his rejection of Aristotelian metaphysics given its lack of practicality and its emphasis on self-discipline and 'reflective self-governance' (608). Both Ramus and Thomasius, in their different ways, exhibit the impulse towards curriculum renovation--streamlining and simplification, a fresh orientation towards knowledge, the development of clear curriculum aims, and a greater focus on the needs of students.

Ramus, though reforming, was not a 'progressive pedagogue' as we have come to understand the term. But as long ago as 1902, the philosopher John Dewey in *The Child and the Curriculum* argued that children learn best through cooperative interaction rather than passive absorption. Curricula are not 'delivered' in 'packages' as the current jargon has it, and enthusiasm, spontaneity and humour are underrated as teaching tools when they should be at the centre of pedagogy. Allan Luke et al. observe that curriculum 'is made in different places in the system: in schools, in boards of education, and in government departments of education.' They add that curriculum is made in public discourse and party political platforms (129), plainly demonstrated in the development of a national curriculum in England during the 80s. But however explicit, informative or compulsory curriculum documents and government mandated curriculum statements are there is always a difference between the intended, the official and the enacted curriculum (Vickers 324). Curricula are documents that are interpreted and adapted by teachers, and that is as it should be, although if there is a vast difference between the intended and enacted curriculum, then something has gone wrong either with the teaching or the curriculum (or both). Teachers should be able to make professional judgements about how and what to teach in order to adjust to local conditions or different cohorts, in which over-prescription, according to many, is counter-productive.

Then there is the so-called 'hidden curriculum,' 'the tacitly taught important norms and values' (Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* 18) that are conveyed to students without being overt, such as class structures or gender relationships or who belongs and who doesn't, the assumption being that the 'hidden curriculum' is an instrument of social control and hegemony which allots students their destined roles regardless of the claims of education to promote individuality, equity and mobility. Teachers and students can attempt to subvert the hidden curriculum and frequently do, though how

effective such subversion is depends on the situation. Apple considers the influence of the workplace, with its corporate logic, in influencing 'the differentiated hidden curriculum' (*Ideology and Curriculum* 66) which reproduces the norms of the market so that students are disciplined to become compliant workers. If schools are to be run more like businesses, then the curriculum itself and its apparatus of standards and performance indicators conveys its messages to students and staff without concealment.

Marsh distinguishes among the 'planned curriculum,' the enacted curriculum,' which is mediated by teachers, and the 'experienced curriculum'--how it is taught--with all the contingency and spontaneity that involves (91). Marsh notes that, in a world in which knowledge is less restricted and more in the control of the individual (91), it is difficult to draw a line around 'school knowledge.' Marsh rejects definitions of curriculum that reduce it to subjects and content. Marsh's own definition of 'curriculum' is as follows: 'an interrelated set of plans and experiences which a student completes under the guidance of the school' (93). He acknowledges that a curriculum is (and should be) fluid and that curricula are delivered by schools, not just by teachers. He identifies several core elements in curricula: integration of skills and understandings; sequence--the division of curricula into manageable parts and the sequence in which content and skills are delivered and revisited; and the relevance of curricula to various cohorts and levels of development (94-95).

In any discussion of curriculum one cannot neglect the general capabilities and cross-curricular priorities that are built in to the Australian Curriculum, an inheritance from OBE and other experimental curricula both in Australia and overseas. General Capabilities are generic skills that students must demonstrate and that need to be embedded across all areas. The reservations expressed by educators and teachers about how to incorporate and assess these capabilities have already been canvassed. When it comes to cross-curricular priorities, Alan Reid and Scott remark that they remain a contested concept (184). They make the point that cross-curricularity is not identical to inter- or transdisciplinarity, that cross-curricularity may be expressed as subject content, process, objectives, themes, competencies and experiences and have a complex relationship to subjects, teachers and managers, all of which may enable or subvert that relationship (184). Reid and Scott go on to remark

that cross-curricular objectives often constitute ‘dangerous knowledge’ which challenges traditional values. They cite education for sustainable development as one example, which aligns with sustainability in the Australian Curriculum, and one can include Indigeneity as another contested area that arouses passions and disputes. It is possible to object to cross-curricularity as a distraction in a crowded curriculum but such objections may disguise political objections to the named priorities.

It is impossible to leave the topic of curriculum without some account of the work of the sociologist Basil Bernstein because his research into the nature of a curriculum has been so influential. According to Bernstein, curriculum consists of the sum total of selected knowledge and skills we think should be passed on through pedagogical transmission to the next generation through formal structures like the school, where it is recontextualised in “official” discourses (Macken-Horarik, ‘Building a Knowledge Structure for English’ 197). Disciplinary areas, such as geography or chemistry, must also be recontextualised, integrated into school curricula through the knowledge structures of each subject.⁶¹

Bernstein’s central concept is the distinction between ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ discourse, not always an easy distinction to grasp. They represent two different forms of knowledge, the first segmentally organised and more connected to life worlds, the every day, and common sense knowledge, the second a systematically principled structure that is hierarchically organised (Bernstein 158-9). Horizontal knowledge is associated with ‘sites of primary enculturation like home and community,’ while vertical discourse contains more specialised forms of knowledge usually found in universities and schools and attracts official recognition (161). Vertical discourse can itself be subdivided into the hierarchically organised discourses of science and the ‘horizontally organised methods of the social sciences and humanities, which are serially ordered and grow as new specialised languages are added’ (161-3).

Vertical discourse has an obvious though not exclusive relationship to disciplines as they have developed over many centuries, but horizontal discourse tends to the localised and the intimate, though horizontal discourse can be inserted into

⁶¹ Bernstein has theorised the intrication of curriculum, pedagogy and school knowledge and his work has a close connection with Systemic Functional Linguistics, the New Literacies, issues of equity, and recent disputes over the nature and shape of the AC:E.

vertical discourse. However, this delocation and relocation always engenders alterations in the knowledge structure because of the institutional and social relations in which they are legitimated (Macken-Horarik, 'Building a Knowledge Structure for English' 197). Bernstein does not suggest that horizontal discourse is not rule governed, but vertical discourse is more disembedded, with 'strong distributive rules regulating access, regulating transmission and regulating evaluation' (159). It is not hard to detect where this is leading. Though horizontal discourse is basic to socialisation, vertical discourse can accrue enormous power, whether individually or socially. Thus individuals and societies who are skilled in manipulating vertical discourse have an advantage. For example, working-class children may be less adept at manipulating vertical discourses than middle-class ones. Vertical discourse is distributed by explicit (rather than informal or communal) forms of recontextualising. School knowledges, whatever their disciplinary bearings, must be recontextualised in the school and the classroom through specific pedagogical practices appropriate to those contexts, which differ in their practice and effects from other forms of pedagogy (Basil Bernstein 166). A propos of this topic, Rex and Green note that

[a]cademic, or official institutional, verbal and written school genres were observed to serve gate-keeping functions through which those in power made decisions. For example, by bringing Bernstein's theories together with the Systemic Functional Linguistics of Halliday (1985), researchers engaged in genre studies to explore how classroom exercise of socially dominant language structures marginalised some students and privileged others. (579)

Genre-based pedagogy has had a strong influence on writing across the curriculum and has helped to shape the English Curriculum but has been a subject of some controversy. Reference to it appears in the Aims of the Curriculum (*Shape 3.0*) where the document specifies that students will 'master the written and spoken language forms of schooling and knowledge,' though how one determines what the forms of knowledge are in general, unless this refers to disciplinary knowledge, is baffling. But those familiar with Bernstein's and Halliday's work will recognise the reference to the importance of students' mastery of the genres of schooling through explicit instruction in those genres and their associated grammatical, lexical and syntactic structures.

How is Subject English situated within the Bernsteinian model? Horizontal discourse allows life worlds to enter the classroom and this permits marginalised voices to be heard. Bernstein affirms that this 'pedagogic populism' became a feature of literature/English during the 70s but he regards it as inadequate since it 'avoids the issue of pedagogy itself'--'the appropriate framing and classification modality' (172). Bernstein is obviously suspicious of this shift since he observes how 'the confessional narratives of a variety of Feminist and Black Studies privilege the new horizontal discourse or 'voiced informant' (169) and, following Maton, provoke a shift of legitimation 'from knowledge to knower' (169). Furthermore, English, though a vertical discourse within the pedagogical reconceptualization of schooled knowledges, is segmentally organised, a 'series of specialised languages with specialised modes of interrogation and specialised criteria for the production and circulation of texts, as in the social sciences and humanities' (159). These sometimes incommensurable languages are not easily organised into a vertical discourse of knowledge that gives rise to law-like generalisations yet that is precisely what renders disciplinary and school knowledge powerful according to Bernstein's model.

Bernstein also distinguishes between horizontal discourse with weak and strong grammars: those with strong grammars 'have an explicit conceptual syntax capable of "relatively" precise empirical descriptions' (164) whereas those with weak grammars lack these qualities. Mathematics, logic and transformational grammar contain strong grammars while cultural studies, sociology, social anthropology and Hallidayan linguistics (which emphasises the social dimensions of language) possess only weak grammars. Undoubtedly English, whether literature, cultural studies, or knowledge about language emerges here as segmented and loosely integrated. Perhaps the study of language and literacy, which are certainly the concern of English, can supply some of the virtues of a vertical discourse. Macken-Horarik, in her 'Building a Knowledge Structure for English,' draws in detail on Bernstein's model to help decide what 'counts' as knowledge for schooled English, faulting Subject English for its incommensurable models, its inattention to cumulative learning, its incoherence, and its lack of a metalanguage to talk about language. Macken-Horarik plainly believes that Systemic Functional Linguistics (even if it possesses a weak grammar according to Bernstein) is one model that offers coherence in the teaching of grammar and genre

(understood as the mastery of school text types) but that a ‘unified account of disciplinarity in English must be found across the different ‘languages’ that comprise the discipline (203).

Macken-Horarik believes that the hostility of English teachers to the new Curriculum stems from their partiality for the ‘knower code’ above bodies of disciplinary knowledge, which mystifies knowledge and impedes students’ access to its codes. She is supported in her criticism by evidence from the *Consultation Report*, in which some respondents resisted references to ‘body of knowledge.’ She observes, correctly, that many teachers feel inadequate when it comes to grammar and their knowledge about language, deficiencies highlighted by the Curriculum. She, entirely sensibly, wants knowledge to be portable across the school years and across learning areas (‘Building a Knowledge Structure’ 205). She provides a perfectly acceptable heuristic for an integrated knowledge structure that incorporates both process and content, metaknowledge and practice (209) but recognises that any model must be acceptable to teachers and the profession (what is called ‘face validity’). Macken-Horarik is a strong advocate for the English Curriculum, though she does not believe that it settles all disagreements or covers all the heterogeneous areas of the Curriculum. Here she highlights a significant problem that confronts curriculum writers. The metalanguages of English now derive from linguistics, including strategies for early reading, the discipline of literature, including rhetoric and aesthetics, and cultural and media studies. Whether the *Shape of the Curriculum: English* or particular syllabi can fulfil the demands for an effective knowledge structure that satisfies English’s inherent heterogeneity is one that needs to be explored.

Syllabus

Every syllabus constitutes an argument . . .

Rita Felski, 33

Luke et al. make the somewhat surprising remark that ‘curriculum theorising [is] a relatively new field of inquiry and that the ‘relationship between a syllabus and its curriculum is not well understood’ (201). Bernstein’s model of vertical and horizontal discourse has implications for all the four terms ‘discipline,’ ‘curriculum,’

‘subject’ and ‘syllabus.’ First of all, a distinction must be made between a curriculum and a syllabus. The simplest version of this relationship is that the syllabus embodies

- a) The curriculum goals of a particular subject, learning area or course of study.
- b) The content that needs to be taught.
- c) The outcomes that will be assessed and
- d) The assessment practices used to measure performance.

Luke et al. adopt Dewey’s metaphor of the syllabus as ‘an official map of a school subject’ (15) and argue forcefully that teachers should be entrusted with the responsibility of determining pedagogy, programs and assessment and that syllabus documents should be relatively brief, non-technical and not overly prescriptive (15-37), what Luke et al. describe as ‘informed prescription and informed professionalism (13). They specify that syllabi must employ a common and transparent professional vocabulary’ (13), an issue that has instigated an animated debate over both the English Curriculum and the syllabus for particular units of study. Moreover, they highlight that a syllabus must cater to the needs of marginalised and disadvantaged groups, a point of possible disagreement with Bernstein when we note his discomfort with identity politics. These factors, taken together, are ‘common elements of a high quality/high equity system’ (13). Luke et al. add that syllabus documents perform both a practical and political function: they become instruments of government and attract the attention of advocacy groups, at the same time serving as guides to teachers and policy makers (131-32). And as we have had occasion to emphasise, ‘pedagogy,’ ‘curriculum’ and their related terms are discursive, not neutral or objective, however they are represented or deployed.

Luke et al. argue that little attention has been devoted to the technical form of the syllabus (34). They note the tension between the technical/accountability aspect of syllabi (the *stakes* in high-stakes testing) and the generic skills supposedly required by ‘new times,’ which are harder to measure (34). The integration of these two features of contemporary curricula remains a source of strain. The authors are absolutely confident that ‘[l]onger, more detailed and extensive syllabi are not the answer’ (19) and deplore the fact that ‘one of the collateral effects of attempts in Australia to manage increased curriculum prescription since the *Adelaide Declaration* . . . has been

an incremental expansion of the volume and contents of syllabus documents' 19). I agree with this assessment.

Millett and Tapper, in their judicious and clear-eyed article on the OBE crisis in Western Australia, remark on the syllabus versus curriculum debate that galvanised the state. Initially under OBE and the Curriculum Framework, teachers were to develop syllabi guided by the Framework. This proved challenging and onerous. But the argument turned rancid when those who felt that OBE constituted the devil and all his works demanded a return to a syllabus 'with prescriptive and detailed course content' (54). This quarrel is still with us in the national arena, with the Australian Curriculum Review authors Kevin Donnelly and Ken Wilshire calling for a return to a 'traditional syllabus.'

Subjects and Disciplines

Today's humanities disciplines are not ancient, integral modes of knowledge. They are modern, artificial creations . . .

James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities*, 232

Deng employs the metaphor of translation to explain the relationship between curricula and subjects. The latter must possess a theory of content--a particular way of selecting, organising, framing and transforming the content for curricular and instructional purposes' (91). Deng's third item in the theory of content, the organisation of content, demands that writers and teachers reflect on whether to adopt chronological, topic-based, thematic, or other approaches in order to systematise material.

It is worth noting that ACARA, in its specifications for the Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum, defines 'subject' as: 'a set of specifications for content and achievement standards developed by ACARA' (*Overview of the Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum*). The problem with this definition should be obvious since subjects must possess a *theory* of content related to the curriculum, not simply content itself or specifications for content, which simply mandate particular topics (Marsh, *Becoming a Teacher* 92). The definition seems designed to hand ACARA a great deal of power in determining content and a high level of prescription in setting achievement standards.

We have already explored experiments with curriculum that support or undermine or otherwise re-imagine the corpus of knowledge that students should master. Subjects are frequently synonymous in people's minds with 'academic' disciplines and the traditional curriculum: sciences, languages, humanities. But that list excludes the vocational areas that have long been part of secondary curricula, and ignores relatively new subjects that have been added to the curriculum such as media studies, legal studies or hospitality. Naturally such 'novel' additions can attract the usual censure that they lack rigour and intellectual integrity and that they are 'soft options.' On the other hand, curriculum reform since the 80s has been about offering more choices to students in the hope that choice will aid retention, address the needs of industry and training and break the nexus between secondary schooling and university entrance. There seems to be a perpetual tension in schooling between vocationalism and high value subjects that is never resolved. One of the challenges for the Tasmanian Essential Learnings Project was that it cut across subject areas (more acute in secondary schooling) in order to reconceptualise school knowledge for new times, and failed. There will always be wrangles, it seems, over the goals of making students 'work ready' and thus immediately useful to business, industry and the professions, and valuing 'rigorous' subjects that are self-evidently good for the nation and the individual, and there are often complaints that students who have chosen demanding subjects are still not able to function in the workplace without additional training.

The Key Learning Areas developed by Dawkins are almost identical to the KLAs in the Australian Curriculum, except that the area Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE), which was criticised because it lumped together history and geography, has been reconstituted as Humanities and Social Sciences, another catch-all category. Deng draws attention to the fact that school subjects 'need to be formulated according to the interest, attitude, and developmental stages of individual students' (88) and therefore that subjects obey directives stronger than their inherent clout or legitimacy. He labels them 'distinctive purpose-built enterprises constructed in response to different social, cultural and political demands and challenges' (84-87). Do subjects derive from academic disciplines? Yes, but there are differences between them, though subjects draw on disciplines and fields of practice and both subjects and

disciplines are historically constituted. For instance English as a subject and a discipline has its roots in grammar, rhetoric and Classical and biblical philology, as Turner skilfully demonstrates.

By necessity academic disciplines and school subjects should possess what Rod Gilbert identifies as ‘clarity of purpose and intended outcomes; an effective rationale for selecting knowledge content; and a central explanatory framework that gives the curriculum its explanatory power’ (‘Can History Succeed?’ 249). Given that we cannot pass on everything to the next generation and given that theories of knowledge are fluid, a subject or a discipline that is conceptualised as fixed and immutable is one that is in decline. Turner concludes his detailed study of philology with observations on the rise of academic disciplines in the nineteenth century: ‘the invention of the modern *idea* of an academic discipline, the *principle* of disciplinarity fractured learning (83). And this occurred ‘just when colleges and universities were shedding their Christian ties and axioms’ (382), a gradual secularisation demanded by the growth of the research university. The word ‘discipline’ with its religious overtones of spiritual self-formation and submission to the ‘rule’ could be transferred to an area of rational investigation that required pedagogical modes of discipline.

Green, in ‘Knowledge, the Future and Education(al) Research: A New-Millennial Challenge,’ acknowledges the historical specificity of disciplines, which rise and fall, form and (re)form (50). Disciplines become naturalised, common sense, the way knowledge is organised in schools and academies. Yet the production of disciplines requires the hard work of classification, boundary setting and establishing authority (50). The Australian Curriculum wants a renewed emphasis on disciplinarity and therefore on the integrity of school subjects.⁶² The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* sees logical thought as the result of studying ‘fundamental disciplines’ (8), which presumably are English, maths science, history and geography. Green puts his finger on one of the disputed areas of curriculum, to which the Australian Curriculum is in part a response: the conviction that progressive pedagogies and postmodernist theories have led to an ‘undervaluing of knowledge’ in favour of the *process* of

⁶² Yates and Collins suggest that there has been return to a focus on discipline knowledge in the Australian Curriculum (‘The Absence of Knowledge in Australian Curriculum Reform’ 14).

knowing (470). Green traces the new focus on knowledge/disciplinarity to the 'social realist' school of sociology influenced by Bernstein and Durkheim that 'reassertion of disciplinary knowledge as crucial to curriculum and schooling' (48). For a contrary view of this knowledge-making Gallagher argues that the idea that 'disciplinary knowledge is made only by "theorists" and then trickles down to teachers and students is constricting and that 'pedagogy and curriculum should be considered acts and sites of disciplinary knowledge making (146), which goes to valuing teachers' autonomy and skills.

Such disputes trouble the waters in Subject English. The Curriculum sets great store on students' acquisition of knowledge about language--grammatical, syntactical, lexical and generic--in a logical, cumulative fashion and this has led to disquiet among some English educators that it is too heavily skills based and too restricting and restrictive. Green reminds us that knowledge itself is being transformed through digitalisation--increasingly at one remove from the individual, commodified in its circulation through computer systems, transmuted into information--'knowledge becomes a practice without a subject' (47). This ontological split between knowledge as personal possession and as sheer quantity of information is registered in the English Curriculum as the division of texts into categories such as informational and interpretative, creative and functional but without activating a theory of knowledge for English in the new digital order.

Chapter Three

Part One: Devising the Australian Curriculum

Although this text [the National Curriculum Consultation Paper] purports to be a consultation document meant to elicit feedback from the teaching profession and other stakeholders, a glance shows that the terms for discussing a national curriculum have already been set.

Doecke and Parr, 3

The necessarily concise and brisk account in Chapter One of the curriculum contexts in which the first national curriculum emerged demonstrates the tension between the idealism and the pragmatism that underlie it. To date, the development of a National (now an Australian Curriculum) has led to more federal control over education, driven by the conviction that standards have been under threat because of diluted responsibilities among states and territories, that curricula lacked consistency across states, and that some schools were an example of market failure, in that they did not adequately prepare students for workforce participation in an increasingly competitive employment environment (Harris-Hart, 'National Curriculum and Federalism: The Australian Experience' 305). As we have seen, the Coalition's comprehensive loss to Labor in 2007 only temporarily halted the impetus towards a national curriculum. In 2008 Julia Gillard, then Minister for Education, announced that the Labor government had reached an agreement with states and territories over a national curriculum, to be implemented within three years as part of the Rudd 'Education Revolution.' The process of devising and designing this National Curriculum is revealing since it set the terms for curriculum development and ensured that a quite conservative view of curriculum that attempted to satisfy competing interests would result. The Curriculum retains the futures-oriented notion of cross-disciplinary learning and generic skills, while reinstating subjects and disciplines, and underscoring 'basics' and standards. The Curriculum is ambivalent about 'progressive' pedagogies, diversity and equity, whatever its rhetoric.⁶³

⁶³ Jane Gilbert in 'Equality and difference: Schooling and Social Democracy in the Twenty-first Century,' notes how 'equality' is being replaced by 'diversity' in policy documents. (73).

In 2008 the government legislated to establish a new agency, ACARA (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Agency), which replaced the National Curriculum Board. ACARA was entrusted with the development of the national curriculum, including the generation of aims, guidelines for curriculum writers, technical specifications and design, research, drafting, consultation, and review. Thus this body has general oversight and carriage of the Australian Curriculum. Significantly, its remit also includes responsibility for ‘collecting, managing, analysing, evaluating and reporting statistical and related information about educational outcomes.’ In 2010 ACARA was allotted the task of administering the National Assessment Program--Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests, designed to measure levels of student achievement against literacy and numeracy benchmarks and provide transparent information on student performance to governments, schools, parents and the public. Thus there is to be a seamless relationship among curriculum, assessment, standards and reporting across the nation under the umbrella of ACARA. Resource allocation will be the key to ensuring the states’ compliance, with Canberra increasingly holding the purse strings through agreements over school funding mechanisms, thrown into sharp focus by the Gonski review. Harris-Hart regards this trend as a form of coercive rather than co-operative federalism (‘National Curriculum and Federalism’ 300) and questions whether a national curriculum is the panacea for educational ills (313), especially when educational debates are so often couched in the language of ‘mistrust and crisis’ (313). Lingard is another who believes that the Australian Curriculum is an attempt to create a ‘national system of schooling’ more radical in its effects than that envisaged by Hawke and Keating, accomplished through high-stakes testing (‘Policy Borrowing, Policy Learning’ 5-7) and frameworks of accountability and performance, all of which he regards as essentially deleterious.

English, History, Science and Mathematics curricula from Foundation to Year 10 were developed and circulated for comment in 2009 and have received extensive feedback from stakeholders and interested groups. Draft curricula for Years 11 and 12 are now embedded in the Curriculum. Some state/territory curriculum authorities have already begun to implement the new curriculum but the 2011 deadline for the staged roll out to Year 10 proved wildly ambitious. The *Australian Curriculum Implementation Survey*, released in February, 2012, contains a timeline for the roll out

of the entire Curriculum, which was supposed to be completed by 2014, but that timeline did not take account of altered political realities with the election of the Coalition government. It has been in the Coalition's interest to represent the Curriculum as fatally flawed and hastily imposed but the federal push for control over curriculum is non-negotiable, whatever the position of individual states, who may retain their own goals and nuances.

In 2010 the Australian Curriculum Coalition circulated a paper entitled 'Common View on the National Curriculum' which already expressed reservations about the Australian Curriculum because of its lack of a clear rationale, its failure to identify its conceptual models, the three-stage process of its roll out, and its lack of internal consistency. The paper also faulted the Curriculum for its failure to address twenty-first century learning, its overcrowded nature, its lack of clarity around the function of cross-curricular priorities and general capabilities, and serious inadequacies in its treatment of equity issues. Some of these criticisms are echoed by other teachers and professionals in consultation documents and other sources. This is a long list and, whatever the truth of some of these criticisms, is perhaps too harsh, given the timelines and the amount of work that had to be done to get the Curriculum up and running.

Because of the typically uncooperative nature of party-political debate in Australia the Australian Curriculum has been thoroughly and damagingly caught up in polarising struggles over aims, content and method. Yet, as I have already observed, Federal Labor and the Coalition agree that a national curriculum is highly desirable in that it will contribute to producing a highly skilled workforce, define and help to achieve key national goals, and improve Australia's global competitiveness through promoting 'world-class curriculum and assessment' (*Melbourne Declaration*). It is also true that both major parties share a preference for standardised testing and both sides are convinced that there is a national crisis in education confirmed, in part, by the widely reported fact that Australian students are slipping behind their Asian counterparts. Australia's poor performance has been couched in quasi-apocalyptic terms and has led to calls across the political spectrum to improve teacher quality through a cycle of constant monitoring and mentoring (Salvio and Boldt 119) which creates 'docile subjects' (120). Considered essential to the relentless assessment of

teacher performance is the push for greater financial and bureaucratic autonomy for principals, on the grounds that autonomy leads to improved outcomes (Pyne, ‘Increasing School Autonomy the Key’). The push to create ‘independent’ public schools has been around for a while, and principal autonomy is supposed to produce efficiencies and innovation and lift standards. However, giving principals more tasks for which they may be unprepared may not work--in the UK there have been severe problems of recruitment, with senior jobs unfilled. Pyne believes that what schools need is more local control, not more resources, to avoid rigidity, bureaucracy and overcentralisation, although this position sits uncomfortably with the increased growth of federal control over education. If teacher quality is the key to improvement then increasing it may be a better use of resources than installing a national curriculum. We have also learned that politicians of different stripes do not necessarily disagree on the diagnosis of, or solutions to, educational crises and challenges.⁶⁴ However, they disagree over funding because they disagree over the level of support needed for public schools. Pyne accuses Labor of promoting union control, secularisation and homogeny [sic] by arguing for more funding for government schools (‘School Funding Review’). Nevertheless, as I noted in Chapter One, exposure to internal and external market forces does not lead to less control and more choice but rather their opposites.

The official rationale for a national curriculum in the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* is easily stated: students will be able to cross state boundaries without interrupting their education in a nation of increasingly mobile workers (compelling all students across the nation to start high school in Year 7). The core skills and understandings will mandate what all students need to know in order to succeed educationally and vocationally in a globalised world and will generate greater homogeneity among curricula, enabling increased efficiencies and information sharing. There will still be room for states, regions and individual schools to inflect curricula to suit local needs and cohorts and to align existing programs with the new

⁶⁴ In Ontario students are tested for literacy and maths at age nine and twelve, maths again at age fifteen, and literacy again at sixteen as a graduation requirement. The tests are not used in league tables, their primary function being to inform parents and teachers. Standardised tests began in Ontario in 1996/7 (*National Education Aims: A Curriculum Specification in Seven Countries* [INCA], 18).

curriculum. The argument is that a national curriculum will help to create students capable of meeting the economic and global challenges of the twenty-first century as well as participating as informed, ethical and equal citizens in political and civic life, regardless of their cultural background or economic circumstances. Peter Garrett, then Minister for Education in the Gillard government, in his 2011 press release, promotes the Australian Curriculum as a form of enfranchisement because it is a tool of equity and inclusivity and prepares students for a challenging and rapidly evolving world. Thus it will prove a nation-building project for Australia by providing equal educational opportunities for all, while installing national values such as equity and respect for diversity at the heart of curricula. Each student has a learning entitlement, regardless of background or ability (*Student Diversity and the Australian Curriculum* 5).

If plans for implementation and the draft curricula themselves have encountered political difficulties, this fact does not constitute an argument either for or against nationalising the curriculum. Peter Garrett claimed that

[i]n a country with 22 million people, having eight different curricula is absurd. Nevertheless, each jurisdiction was defensive of its own material and unwilling to change unless it was to a better curriculum. And the Australian curriculum improved significantly on existing state and territory syllabuses. It will underpin teacher training and professional development, it'll mean that teachers or students who travel interstate will have a clear understanding of where they're up to and an expectation of the content to come. (Press Release: 'Progress in Education Reform,' 17 March, 2011)

New curricula may be, as Peter Garrett asserts, superior to existing state-based curricula--an assertion easily made but less easily demonstrated. And some may find the argument from practicality, efficiency and streamlining less than convincing because the process of creating a national curriculum has been unwieldy, costly, time-consuming and often rushed. The assertion that states have traditionally been defensive about their own curricula is true but it is fudging the issue to say that states have been persuaded to throw in their lot with the Australian Curriculum because of its excellence. Nor did the decision to install a national curriculum automatically dictate its form or level of detail. A national curriculum always posed the danger that

teachers could experience a loss of connection and control since teachers, whether they like it or not, are always on the frontline of educational reforms. They regularly develop 'reform fatigue,' a disorder that produces symptoms such as early retirement, passive resistance to change, and quiet subversion of institutional goals. Brennan, in her finely judged observations on the Australian Curriculum, feels that it has been developed in an atmosphere of politicisation that is inimical to a good curriculum. Her evaluation of the four curricula released by 2011 is that they lack a strong conceptual and research base, clearly articulated rationales, fail to engage teachers, have cloaked the development and consultation processes in secrecy, and do not take into account the inequities in the delivery of education (262-72). But despite reservations, educators and teachers are hoping that the Australian Curriculum will outweigh the costs of the reform by delivering its claimed benefits.

Chapter Three

Part Two: Designing the Curriculum

The *Curriculum Design Paper* (2009), informed by the *Melbourne Declaration*, provides strict guidance to curriculum writers--or constraints on their imagination, depending on one's point of view--and lays out the elements of curriculum design, assessment and reporting that must be adhered to. The curriculum identifies teachers as its audience and aims for straightforward, non-technical language, a goal worth supporting as Luke et al. have argued. Although the curriculum document in each learning area is of modest length, the supporting documentation is, as expected, formidable when General Capabilities, Cross-Curricular Priorities, work samples, Achievement Standards, Consultation Reports, syllabi, scope and sequence tables, etc., are taken into account. In the English learning area, the *National English Curriculum: Framing Paper*, which sets out the scope of the area, key concepts and the social contexts in which the curriculum will operate, is translated into a modest document in the *Shape of the Curriculum: English*, which translates the framing document into usable guide to writing syllabi. Obviously, the writers of the Australian Curriculum did not begin with a clean slate: decisions were taken before the drafting of curricula could even begin in order to establish consistency across all domains. According to Donnelly and Wiltshire,

curriculum shaping involved the development of a paper for each learning area which set out a broad outline of the proposed curriculum. Expert advice was sought in the development of an initial draft shape paper for each learning area that was released for wide public consultation. Following modification of the draft after consultation and feedback, a final shape paper was published on ACARA's website. (90)

The ACARA curriculum secretariat 'manages the learning area projects' (*Curriculum Development Process Paper*). Each learning area has a writing team (2-3 for each major stage of learning) and an advisory panel (8-12 members) accountable to the Curriculum Secretariat, which is responsible for consulting experts and stakeholders (6). Writing teams are selected via expressions of interest. In addition, there are subject/learning area panels of experts (up to 50 members) called in to comment on

drafts and give advice. Extensive consultation was undertaken and feedback incorporated into final versions. A trial review was conducted in 2010.

However, while the Australian Curriculum is necessarily an arduous and ambitious undertaking, with many teams and working groups reporting to ACARA, there was never likely to be a fundamental, root and branch rethink of curriculum design. The Curriculum is meant to establish consensus, walking a careful line between satisfying conservatives, progressives, experts and interest groups as far as possible, at the same time, so Kostogriz argues, trying to impose a ‘common sense’ view of the curriculum that is in line with conservative thinking (206). Therefore it was bound to disappoint many and runs the risk of being a bland, even timid amalgam or distillation of state curricula.

It is worthwhile at this point to summarise the issues with which the writers of the Australian Curriculum had to contend, in accordance with the terms of reference laid out for them by ACARA:

1. What is the relationship among subject areas, core understandings and skills, and cross-curricular priorities?
2. What forms of assessment are to be employed across F-12?
3. What is the relationship between compulsory and post-compulsory schooling in the Curriculum?
4. How will university entrance requirements be satisfied in the Curriculum?
5. What is the relationship between existing state curricula and the Australian Curriculum?
6. What principles should govern the choice of subject or learning area content for the Curriculum?

The early pages of the *Curriculum Design* document make clear that the year level is the organising principle of the curriculum and that there is to be a distinction between compulsory and post-compulsory schooling (5), whether students proceed to a school certificate through moderated, school-based assessment or external examinations (or, as in Western Australia, a mixture of both). This approach allays the concerns of those who want to ensure that standards, rigour, and traditional school subjects remain intact, particularly at Years 11 and 12. ACARA draws a sharp distinction between F-10

and senior years, leaving accreditation, examination and assessment at Years 11-12 to the states and territories, although designing the aims, content and achievement standards of units to be undertaken in the post-compulsory years. Thus ACARA has drawn back from the most contentious issues raised by post-compulsory schooling and university entrance, which provoked an uprising in Western Australia, giving some discretion to the states in Years 11 and 12. Another striking feature of the new curriculum is that it firmly reinstates subjects (and by extension disciplines) as the basis of learning even though it divides the curriculum into broad learning areas. Consequently it calms the kind of fears aroused by the Tasmanian Essential Learnings Project, which set out to undermine traditional subject divisions and by implication much that was invested in them in terms of training and expertise. However, the concept of integration across learning areas has not been abandoned, with three 'cross-curricular priorities' identified: Indigenous histories and culture; Australia's engagement with Asia; and Sustainability (*Cross-Curricular Priorities*). But these priorities are not, as in the Tasmanian Essential Learnings, outcomes around which a syllabus is built. Rather, they must be integrated into subject content and achievement standards across learning areas in order to avoid appearing mere 'add ons' that must somehow be incorporated into what is already quite a crowded curriculum landscape (there are support documents that detail achievement standards for priorities). ACARA emphasises the depth and rigour of the curriculum, perhaps because OBE and its curriculum offshoots have been excoriated in the past for superficiality and because experimental curricula were seen to undermine disciplinary and subject knowledge. In addition the Australian Curriculum is supposed to foster a range of general or generic capabilities: literacy, numeracy, ICT competence, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical behaviour and intercultural understanding (*General Capabilities*). Curriculum writers had much to bear in mind.

As Rod Gilbert observes of the new history curriculum (254-58), content still remains at the heart of learning areas, posing distinct sets of challenges and consequences for each one. The *Design Paper* states categorically that each learning area requires a rationale (of no more than 200 words) that explains the choice of curriculum content (17), absolutely necessary but not necessarily adequate. There is the problem of which and how much content to include at different stages:

disagreements have already emerged around this troublesome issue (see the 2010 *National Curriculum Review* on the ACARA website). Teachers in primary schools have expressed concern that they will have to become omnicompetent in order to fulfil expectations in all learning areas. Cross-curricular priorities and general capabilities pose another tough problem--how to ensure that teachers have enough competence, confidence and time to address them. In order to head off this problem, ACARA's website contains helpful examples, using hyperlinks between learning areas and capabilities to demonstrate how they may profitably be integrated. Ball ('Big Policies/Small World . . .' 119-30) interrogates and investigates the nature of cross-curricularity as it has been embedded in the England national curriculum and demonstrates that it is far from easy to integrate such outcomes into learning areas and balance the needs of the subject with those of the priorities. There are separate documents that explain the meaning of each General Capability, how it should be integrated into learning areas, and suggested Achievement Standards for each general capability in each learning area. Then there is the thorny question of how to stage content sequentially and developmentally (that is, scope and sequence), and to decide which concepts and bodies of knowledge remain essential to the mastery of a subject, precisely the topics considered by Macken-Horarik's article on the English Curriculum. Mathematics and science teachers in particular are vocal and divided on this score (Atweh and Singh 189-96).

ACARA is keen to accentuate inclusivity and to cater for students who need special attention and increased resources, such as Indigenous students, low SES students, those with a disability, ESL students and isolated students. The *Design Paper* accepts that such students may, but not invariably, require special provision but insists that difference and diversity will not be accommodated 'by setting different expectations for different groups, since that reinforces differences and creates inequitable outcomes' (11). This statement takes us back to the days when equity basically meant delivering the same curriculum to all students regardless of class, ethnicity, etc. (Maribyrnong in the 60s!). But decades of research into equity (see Garth Boomer's reforms in South Australia [Dellitt 148-62]) have questioned whether identical curricula *can* deliver equitable outcomes for all students. Nevertheless, there is a point to be made here that low expectations of certain groups can be self-fulfilling.

ACARA developed a briefing paper that argues for an expansion of the national testing program, to be rolled out, if approved, in the next few years (Ferrari, 'New Tests to Assess "Modern Skills" '). It will include the General Capabilities outlined above, with the proviso that the test may not be applicable to all learning areas equally. A representative sample of students in Years 6 and 10 are already being tested in science literacy, civics and citizenship, and computer literacy on a triennial basis. Undoubtedly English will be in the eye of the storm since it takes in literacy, ethics, critical and creative thinking, and intercultural understandings almost as a matter of course. One might wonder how testable some of these capacities are and indeed whether it is desirable to test for them at all in the limited form of a NAPLAN model. These are 'twenty-first century skills' and therefore essential to a 'futures-oriented' curriculum, foreshadowed in the failed Tasmanian Essential Learnings Curriculum. They can best be understood as part of the drive to globalise and internationalise schooling in order to prepare students for a competitive future while managing internal diversity and encouraging national cohesion. Hipkins et al., in their response to an issue of *The Curriculum Journal* (20.3) devoted to the Curriculum, note that the emergence of neoliberalism has resulted in opposition to 'cross-curricularity and integrated learning, which had been a reaction by progressive educators to the challenge of educating for "new times"' (116) and conservatives view them as 'politically correct' additions by the Labor government. Thus not everyone is happy with all of the cross-curricular priorities and general capabilities in the Curriculum since they can appear like distractions from core subjects in a curriculum that has enough distractions already. As I have argued there is nothing intrinsically wrong, for example, with defining the ethical goals of education and difficult to imagine an education system or national curriculum without them. However, whether these aims are implicit or explicit, if ethical understanding is one of the General Capabilities it can be critiqued by conservatives as woolly and no business of a curriculum, or best assured by giving greater prominence to the Judaeo-Christian tradition. By Foucauldians it can be critiqued as one more addition to the repertoire of technologies of the self the state employs.

In the Australian Curriculum outcomes or achievement standards measure the skills, understandings, knowledge and values that students should exhibit at each level

of learning in each subject area, and therefore they require detailed specification and reporting, and are accompanied by work samples and some sample teaching programs to guide teachers. The achievement standards--and the choice of the word 'standards' is meant to be comforting and calming--are developed concurrently with the curriculum (*Curriculum Design Paper*) and are linked to content. Naturally the same dilemmas that confronted the writers of outcomes statements in state curricula arise here--how much is too much? How detailed, specific and explicit do standards need to be? And how closely linked to particular content? Drafters of achievement standards must take into account what research tells us about student development, pay attention to careful sequencing of tasks, avoid unnecessary repetition across years, and concentrate on depth rather than breadth (19). Content Elaborations are supplied but are not intrinsic to the Achievement Standards--they are additional teaching points and illuminating examples that help teachers to fill out their program. Issues such as content and achievement standards will be addressed in the final chapter of the thesis.

From kindergarten to Year 10 teachers must use A-E grade reporting, with accompanying generic grade descriptors--developed by yet another group--to explain the meaning of grades to parents. A D level indicates that a student has not performed adequately and requires help to progress further (*Curriculum Design Paper* 21-22). In senior years student achievement will be reported on a 5-point scale designed 'to be applicable in jurisdictions with external examinations and with school-based assessment' (6). Hence a) the task of writing 'achievement standards' to Year 10 has been centralised, and b) rankings have been firmly embedded in the Curriculum. Of course, letters and numbers may come to dominate the minds of teachers, students, parents and employers even though descriptions of achievement standards are meant to make the grades meaningful. Adoniou, in recent interviews with beginning teachers, is unequivocal about how difficult it is to achieve consistency in A to E grades in literacy in the absence of moderation within and across schools and with the use of levelled readers to assign grades ('Autonomy in Teaching Going, Going, Gone . . .' 81). But there must be a sigh of relief that reporting in the Curriculum seems intelligible and utterly familiar, reassuring the public that measurement will be 'objective' and 'transparent,' and therefore aligned with the twentieth-century dream of 'scientific' assessment expressed in the word 'standard' and presumably less

vulnerable to the vagaries of teacher judgment. Thus the Curriculum in its very formulation is meant to resist in what many minds is postmodern scepticism and relativism in its view of knowledge, whatever the theoretical and philosophical orientations of its writers. Thus the Australian Curriculum has to address 'new times' as they are found in the aims of many national curricula around the globe yet at the same time to soothe the disquiet aroused by globalisation by returning to older models of curricula.

Chapter Four

‘Thank God for English Teachers’: The Shape of the Curriculum--English⁶⁵

*A bird sang on my windowsill
Its song got into my dream⁶⁶*

Six-year-old's poem in a collection of poetry by children

Key documents relevant to discussion of the English Curriculum

Teachers and professional associations were not whole-hearted in their approval of the Curriculum and did not see it as an example of a world-class curriculum (a claim not always easy to prove) nor necessarily superior to existing state curricula, nor particularly new or ground-breaking nationally or globally. Whoever thought it would be? The design guidelines for the Australian Curriculum demonstrate that the Curriculum aspires to what is regarded, at least by politicians and bureaucrats, as reasonable consensus, and the account offered so far of the emergence of the Curriculum demonstrates how standards and performance have come to dominate curriculum discourses, whatever countervailing forces are at work. And though curriculum documents in general rarely make for exciting reading, the documents for English, taken as a whole, are not exciting reading, but that is unsurprising since these documents need to be precise and measured. Curricula and subjects are not after all simply organised common sense. One overriding impression is one of control, or rather the fear of loss of control. Although, as Yates observes, the aim of the National Curriculum Board (as it then was) was to ‘bring simplicity and clarity to the overarching documents and framework’ of new curricula, she detects an ‘imperative to want to specify everything in detail’ (‘Curriculum as a Public Policy Enterprise . . .’ 41) at work in the Curriculum. Such an apprehension is certainly present in the content and achievement standard specifications for each year level of the English Curriculum.

⁶⁵ ‘Thank God for English Teachers’ is a throwaway comment taken from an interview on Radio National’s Indigenous affairs program *Awaye*. The interviewee, an indigenous singer, praised her English teacher for believing that she could achieve in a society that dismissed her. Many of us, indigenous or not, have had an English teacher in our lives that we remember with gratitude. I certainly do and mine was a German immigrant!

⁶⁶ I read this poem in the 60s. It was taken from an anthology of children’s poetry whose details I do not recall but it was an inspirational anthology in that it demonstrated what children were capable of if they were encouraged to create and value their own writing.

In this respect it does not differ from state curricula, which have lengthy and elaborate content and achievement standards, the result both of the growth of outcomes and the requirement for meticulous and precise assessment. Given that the English Curriculum is organised around language, literature and literacy, superimposed upon which are the modes of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and creating, together with the cultivation of generic capabilities and cross-curricular priorities, the possibility for density and over complication of outcomes and tasks is almost unavoidable.

The *Shape* document and the Senior Secondary units are accompanied by a *Glossary*, meant to be read in conjunction with the documents, which includes grammatical and other specialised terms that are in some cases a repetition of what appears in the documents and in other cases defines terms that remain undefined in them. The *Glossary* is extremely useful, and curriculum documents routinely include them, although what terms are considered necessary for a glossary to define varies. But a glossary by itself does not by any means solve all the theoretical problems in the *Shape*. The relationship between the curriculum documents and the *Glossary* needs to be spelled out and key definitions should appear in the *Shape*. The *Glossary* and the documents ought to be consistent with each other. Perhaps some cross-referencing would be helpful.

However, anybody who has worked with English teachers cannot doubt that they will make the best of any curriculum and try to transform it into what Doecke, Parr and Sawyer call a 'living document' (2). In the words of Beavis:

'[a]n important component of the work of English teachers has always been to interpret policy documents and requirements and to remake the curriculum in ways that accord with their own histories, contexts and priorities, and the National Curriculum is no exception. ('Paying Attention to Texts . . .' 22)

Nevertheless, responses to the English curriculum from educators, academics and professional associations (through official ACARA consultation or major professional journals, such as *English in Australia* and the *Australian Curriculum Journal*) have been less than enthusiastic about some aspects of the new Curriculum, especially the three-L division into strands, and they have been apprehensive about the prominence accorded grammar and literacy in the Curriculum (see, for example, Brennan, Sawyer,

Comber, Watson). Respondents to the *Consultation Report* believed that no rationale had been provided to justify the threefold division (7). Respondents also felt strongly that students seemed to be absent from curriculum documents, as indeed are teachers. I share their reservations but I am aware that these are not universal opinions. By way of contrast the Ontario English curriculum draws students and teachers into the curriculum space. Take this quote, which is entirely typical:

[i]mplementing this curriculum, teachers will help students to see that language skills are lifelong learning skills that will enable them to better understand themselves and others, unlock their potential as human beings, find fulfilling careers, and become responsible world citizens. (*The Ontario Curriculum Grades 11 and 12: English 30*)

The tripartite division of the curriculum into Language, Literature and Literacy introduces substantial problems into the structure, conceptual framework and assessment tasks of the English curriculum but at least we have isolated the sources of the division--the knowledge about language emphasis, the overwhelming concern with literacy and the desire to maintain the importance of literature.

To be fair to the Curriculum, it does not fundamentally alter the established theoretical bases and assumptions of English curricula as secondary teachers at least have known them since the 80s or 90s, although it does not improve on them and in some cases enfeebles them. There are no unpleasant shocks or complete changes of direction, as will become evident in a detailed examination of the curriculum documents. For this English teachers must be grateful. The Curriculum reinforces the already existing theoretical bases and scope of pre-existing state and territory curricula as a survey of these curricula amply demonstrates. In 2002 Sawyer took a snapshot of English curricula around Australia and noted a high degree of commonality ('The States of English in Australia' 13-19). A curriculum mapping exercise, already alluded to, undertaken in 2006, recorded a high degree of alignment among English curricula around the nation and concluded: 'the two major overall variations between the Australian Curriculum and state and territory curricula [is that] the Australian Curriculum is somewhat stronger in 'Analyse/Investigate,' and 'Evaluate.' It is somewhat weaker in 'Generate/Create/Demonstrate' and 'Perform Procedures' (Jane, Wilson and Zbar 13). I am unsure what to make of this information, or even whether

the information is useful, though it seems to suggest that the Australian Curriculum leans heavily towards higher-order thinking skills. The *Report by the Expert Panel of the National Curriculum Review* (England) also conducted a curriculum mapping exercise for the purposes of the National Curriculum and reached a similar conclusion: that English or native language curricula do not vary significantly (76).

The Curriculum concentrates on the core abilities of writing, reading, listening, speaking and viewing. In this it does not differ from state or from relevant international curricula, such as England, Finland and Ontario. The Curriculum and syllabi all distinguish between knowing how and knowing about, and provide meaning-making maps to assist teachers and students to make sense both of the concepts and skills students should develop and their interrelationships, again, a feature of state curricula. By way of example, the NSW Board of Studies *English K-6 Syllabus Overview of Language and Learning* (updated in 2006) offers an admirably clear diagram of these relationships and then goes on to explain and illustrate key terms. Perhaps the *Overview* is a bit longer than the national English Curriculum but it is a model of clarity and good sense in comparison to the equivalent passages in the English Curriculum. Whatever their differences of emphasis and approach, existing state and territory curricula:

- Are organised around the concepts of texts, contexts, purposes, audience, and intertextuality in the production and reception of texts.
- Acknowledge the importance of genre as a form of textual organisation.
- Include a wide range of texts for study, encompassing the digital, multimodal and literary.
- Emphasise the centrality of the development of argumentative skills.
- Encourage creativity and imagination.
- Stress the importance of acquiring increasing control of and mastery over language.
- Recognise that values, beliefs and attitudes are embedded in texts and their contexts.
- Reinforce the importance of Australian texts and texts from diverse cultures.

The mystery is: why, given the fact that curricula around the nation have not substantially altered since 2002, and when there is a high degree of theoretical, assessment, content and skills overlap among Australian English curricula, was it thought necessary to re-invent the wheel? Existing curricula do not lack rigour, do not ignore literacy, and give generous space to literature. New South Wales curricula indeed boast of their rigour and in all probability had a major influence on the Australian Curriculum.⁶⁷ Hence the supposed defects in present curricula are, I believe, largely illusory. Indeed it would have been helpful to identify and summarise the key insights of English curricula around the nation that readers could quickly master, and then perhaps single out any significant differences. That way any new emphasises or departures could be highlighted. Whatever the differences among state curricula because of institutional history, any one of these curricula is superior to the new Curriculum--better argued, more coherent, better written, more theoretically nuanced, whatever criticisms one might mount of them. As Australia moved towards a national curriculum in the late 80s, with the installation of outcomes in some version, the disciplinary developments in Subject English over this period became embedded in curricula across the nation. Internal debates certainly did not cease, such as: what is the relationship between English and literature? Was Subject English becoming too 'theoretical'? What are or ought to be the essential differences between Subject English and, say, vocational English? These problems are not absent from English units. English, though, was more likely to be attacked from the outside. Was there insufficient emphasis on literacy and literature? Was English becoming too 'politically correct' and left wing, the pedagogic popularism of which Basil Bernstein speaks? Were media texts appropriate subjects for analysis and assessment? The Curriculum answers critics by centralising literacy and literature and retains digital and multimodal texts because a 'futures-oriented' curriculum would be diminished without them, given that the growth of new communications technologies is precisely one of the global contexts that justify a new English curriculum (*The Shape of the*

⁶⁷ The Australian Curriculum is unclear about what curricula, national or global, have exerted a *direct* influence on learning areas although a painstaking reading of state and representative international curricula show that there are many consistencies, as a reading of the *Framework for the National Curriculum* in England demonstrates.

Australian Curriculum 4). Nor could ACARA be seen openly to privilege one state curriculum over another without causing a fuss. But it should have been possible to create an amalgam of state curriculum documents by isolating their strengths and weaknesses. It would have been helpful to know exactly what aspects of state curricula the writers found praiseworthy or wanting.

Complaints in consultation documents that the Australian Curriculum is inferior to existing curricula are well-founded, I believe. Politicians must puff their policy initiatives but, after all, Dawkins' KLAs were meant to identify commonalities in order to create a national curriculum. If globalisation, new international testing regimes, concern to improve standards and retention, and a desire to increase equity are the contexts of the new English curriculum, then surely it should be possible to identify in what ways the Curriculum in its goals and theoretical and pedagogical paradigms hopes to achieve those ends. I take it as read that NAPLAN is not the answer since it tests so little of the curriculum (Riddle, 'NAPLAN only Measures a Fraction of Literacy Learning').

Many of the problems I go on to detect in the curriculum are the result of

- The three-strand structure.
- The absence of any clear theoretical framework for the Curriculum, leading to the confusing and under theorised notions of key concepts such as 'text,' 'textuality,' and 'genre,' which introduce conceptual incoherencies into the documents.
- The inferior quality of some of the editing (not easy to forgive since the Curriculum is all about standards).
- The uneasy relationship of the Curriculum to creativity and imagination.
- The insistence on standards and rigour.

And despite the instruction to curriculum writers to produce simple, clear, jargon-free documents easily accessible to teachers⁶⁸ and the non-specialist the documents require a great deal of reading between the lines and should have been accompanied by a more generous explanatory framework, as the Victorian consultation document

⁶⁸ In consultation documents respondents complain of too much jargon. The problem I have with the documents is not that they contain too much jargon but that theoretical terms are ill-defined and that theoretical underpinnings are not identified.

response to the draft senior secondary units argues (10). In my commentary on the Curriculum I aim to tender both a critique and contextual reading of it and provide the kind of insights required to inform such a framework.

Globalisation and the English Curriculum

English has become a 'global' language (Dendrinios 241-54) while, conversely, linguistic diversity is now the hallmark of immigrant societies (Polish is now one of the most common languages spoken today in Britain, for example). But although Australia is linguistically diverse, this diversity is seen as a deficit, not an advantage, even in the Asian century, when Asian immigrants bring with them their multilingual abilities (Kostogriz 206). The *Ontario Curriculum* acknowledges and celebrates the multilingual classroom (6). Furthermore, the internet and social media have transformed the communicative and therefore linguistic contexts in which students operate. One example that comes easily to mind is the relative decline of newspapers and magazines, with implications for the practice and profession of journalism, and the undermining of some of the authority that print media have traditionally bestowed and enjoyed. Blogs and 'citizen journalism' are filling cyberspace as jobs in 'old journalism' dry up and the need for gatekeepers in the free for all of the world wide web has never been more urgent. Therefore it really does matter that English curriculum writers place at the forefront of their thinking what Snyder calls 'the new communication order' (*Tasmanian Curriculum . . .*).

Yet the meaning of globalisation uppermost in policy-makers' minds is, according to Wyse, 'the *perception* of risk' (158) [*italics original*]. This has led to increased regulation because there is less trust in professionals' autonomy and judgement. Pat Thomson, always a fascinating contributor to education debates, compares England's national curriculum with Australia's later but parallel development of its own national curriculum in 'Lessons for Australia? Learning From England's "Black Box".' She observes that the Thatcher government offered a 'conservative restorationist approach to knowledge and basic skills, in concert with a marketised school system' (16), a trend that New Labour continued. One of the results was an almost feverish attention to literacy, driven by national and international testing. The National Literacy Strategy led to the installation of a whole apparatus of

new curricula, pedagogical approaches, testing and assessment regimens. One of the aims of such programs is to make them 'teacher-proof,' thus, in Thomson's words, rendering teachers 'proxy administrators' of programs designed elsewhere (21). Teachers and schools in England are still recovering from post-traumatic literacy disorder, as the recent book *The Great Literacy Debate: A Critical Response to the Literacy Strategy and the Framework for English* candidly and refreshingly reveals. In fact Anglophone countries can seem in danger of losing all sense of perspective on matters literate, as if students, teachers and schools can be bullied into improving test results.

Hence literacy and globalisation are strongly connected and go hand in glove, but literacy is not the only aspect of the English Curriculum driven by global trends. There is a good argument to be made that outcomes, whatever they are now being called, have influenced assessment procedures, in that detailed specification of skills to be mastered, usually though not invariably tied to each year level, governs what tasks teachers set and what material they cover. This specification is justified under the rubric of offering clear guidelines to teachers. Outcomes are also intended to be developmental, so that students progress from simpler tasks to more complex ones and so that curriculum material is neither random nor replicated (not the Ancient Egyptians again!), cumulative and valid in what it tests. There seems nothing self-evidently wrong with this logic but critics (for example Thomson 18) argue that it has led to fragmentation of learning, and a focus on isolated tasks, as well as restricting teachers' autonomy. A special difficulty for the English Curriculum is that its tasks are not easily or reliably allocated along a developmental spectrum. Of course young children need to be instructed in reading and writing in a developmentally calibrated manner, but it is not always easy to decide, for example, the optimum point at which students should be introduced to the term 'satire' or to subordinate clauses. Teachers frequently introduce concepts as they arise in discussion or through the study of particular texts, mandatory or non-mandatory, and groups of students differ in their ability to master content or skills or master them at the 'right' moment.

Another issue that consistently surfaces in global not just national debates (and invariably in the media) is the role of phonics in early literacy. I do not intend to 'solve' the question of phonics--whether it should be taught, taught to the exclusion of

other pedagogies, or taught alongside other pedagogies--since it lies outside my area of expertise, except to note that there is a debate that all participants believe should be over but apparently never is. The contest between 'whole' language and phonics is vigorous and fuelled by partisanship (Lefstein 136-56; Cummings 109-130; Gannon and Sawyer n.pag.). Kress is scornful of phonics for another reason, arguing that the relationship between sound and its transliteration into writing is so fluid, so subject to global forces, that the 'logical' link between sound and letter is a 'forlorn enterprise' (*Literacy in the New Media Age* 26) and Adoniou points out that spelling is not just about phonics but morphemes ('Why Some Kids Can't Spell and Why Spelling Tests Won't Help').

Given the pivotal role accorded literature in the Australian English Curriculum the place of literature in global curricula deserves some consideration since the Australian Curriculum is clearly informed by the belief that literature is being restored to its proper place. The *Review of the Expert Panel* on England's national curriculum notes that all the jurisdictions the authors surveyed include literature as an area of the native language curriculum and an object of analysis. Literature has never lost its privileged position in the study of language which it gained in the nineteenth century, though why, when and to whom it is taught has fluctuated, especially with investments in national canons. Norway presumably wants its students to study Ibsen, France, Moliere, just as Britain wants everybody, everywhere to study Shakespeare (Shakespeare is the only mandated author in England's national curriculum). Yet while students are able to study literature in various curriculum contexts during the years of schooling, and undertake specialist study of literary texts at senior secondary level should they wish, there is no doubt that literature's theoretical and interpretative paradigms have shifted.

Even what constitutes literature, as Moon reminds us, has altered over time-- 'literature' once referred to a broad range of written texts whereas today the term 'literature' is irretrievably caught up in questions of aesthetic value, the result of Enlightenment and Romantic aesthetic categories and the heritage of philology and rhetoric bequeathed to it by humanistic learning. Moreover, literary criticism and literature are mutually reinforcing categories (Moon, *Literary Terms: A Practical Glossary* 79). Turner outlines how the connexions between literary and theological

readings of the Bible became a model for the readings of secular works and how sympathy, creativity and imagination entered into the interpretation of literary texts--readings that responded to the 'specific interiority' of the work under discussion (162).⁶⁹ 'Literature' over recent decades has come to be regarded by many critics, following Bourdieu, as an ideological, value-laden form of 'cultural capital' which reinforces the hierarchisation of subjects, a phenomenon that demands an understanding of 'the social processes which determine (and contest) cultural value' (Burn 11). Therefore some respondents to the Draft Senior Secondary Curriculum questioned whether too much emphasis is placed on literature, though there is no opposition to the teaching of literature as such nor to a designated literature unit at senior secondary level. It has been at least thirty years since debates over the social value of literature emerged and in the academy and secondary school literary study has adapted to its postmodern condition. In Tim Dolin's words:

no one approaches a text anymore with an unconsciousness of (or indeed unself-consciousness about) its problematic status as 'literature.' More recently we have witnessed the handing over of literature to the market, where it is a form of genre fiction denoting a category of populist contemporary 'fine writing' and where Shakespeare or the Brontes occupy a new space: 'classics.' (Personal Communication 22 September 2014)

Nevertheless, this shift has not always been understood or welcomed outside the profession, and there can still be hand wringing over the loss of the canon or the threat posed to literature by fashionable theories and new communication technologies. Goodwyn, in 'The Status of Literature in a National Curriculum: A Case Study of England,' takes a measured approach to the teaching of literature in schools. He resists 'the inflated claims made for Great English Literature' as 'long since discredited' (25) but wants literature teaching to remain vital to English curricula. Goodwyn recognises that helping students to engage with literature requires time and that the national literacy strategy distorted literature teaching because of the relentless assessment regime (26). As of the time of writing (2010) he worried that

⁶⁹ The reverse can also be true. Herder's reading of the Old Testament as a literary text, *On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (1782-83), produced new insights ('Herder,' *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

Australia's English curriculum would take the same path, despite the fact that the Curriculum wants students to engage with literature personally, reflectively, intellectually and aesthetically. Literature may fight to sustain itself against other curriculum imperatives.

One reason why literature has had to be 'restored' in the Curriculum is precisely because the scope of instruction in English curricula in many jurisdictions has understandably widened since the 80s to include media texts and new communication technologies that have nevertheless been admitted to the sacred grove reluctantly (Burn 8-26). As the New London Group, a group devoted to the exploration of new literacies, argued, education must account for the 'burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies,' leading, among other outcomes, 'to cultural and subcultural diversity' (Burn 9). Of the six Anglophone jurisdictions surveyed in the *Review of the Expert Panel* in England, 'viewing' is identified as one of the domains of learning and digital texts, linked inaccurately only to information genres, are incorporated but literature and other print texts are given the lion's share. In Ontario media studies units are compulsory in secondary programs and are tightly theoretically linked to other areas of English as well as marking the different skills thought necessary to analyse media texts effectively (*Ontario Curriculum English Grades 9 and 10* 14). The inclusion of media and digital texts not only raises time allocation issues, and requires additional pedagogical and analytical skills of teachers, but has fundamentally transformed concepts of texts and textuality. State curricula in Subject English have long included media and popular culture texts in their curricula⁷⁰ and assessment. and the Australian Curriculum is no exception. English teachers trained any time since the 80s are less likely to have taken 'English' or 'literature' courses, as these have gradually disappeared in Australia or at non-elite universities, and more likely to have graduated in cultural, communication or media studies, or some combination of these that may include literature. Nevertheless, as Burn observes, in England there is still some uneasiness about these changes, particularly their theoretical implications, and this uneasiness is evident in

⁷⁰ In the 60s, as my experience at Maribyrnong shows, media texts were being incorporated informally into classrooms before they made it into official curricula.

the English Curriculum since literary texts are felt to require a distinct method of analysis which distinguishes them from other media and genres (Beavis 21-30), a product of literature's inception as a discipline in the nineteenth century. The *Senior Secondary English Curriculum* states that the four Senior English units 'articulate principles and expectations that serve to define who we are and what we value as a nation in our literature and language.' It adds: '[e]ach subject [surely this means unit] promotes the study of literature, particularly Australian literature, and encourages the use of digital texts' (*Australian Curriculum Information Sheet*). Literature is to be studied as an act of national solidarity and an induction into 'our' heritage, but digital texts are to be *used*, not studied. At this point, it is pertinent to ask: what kinds of digital texts? Traditional texts in digital form or natively digital texts? While digital texts are regarded as informational and functional, literature's national mission is now globally projected in curricula.

Disciplining English: Themes and Variations

It is the very nature of English that it constantly needs to re-invent itself to stay in touch with the times and the current needs of students.

Ray Misson, 'Understanding about Water in Liquid Modernity: Critical Imperatives for English Teaching,' 30

In Australia at the present time English teachers (and I continue here to refer to both secondary and tertiary teachers) are being required variously to provide training in the use of language and knowledge about language, support for all other language-based areas of the curriculum, technical and vocational training in a range of linguistic and textual skills for use in the workplace, and a usually unacknowledged aesthetic and ethical training designed to produce the citizens of a democratic society.

Terry Threadgold, 'The Teaching of English,' 355

Developments and debates always need to be understood historically, within the larger context of the history of education and schooling and the politics of nation and empire.

Bill Green and Phil Cormack, 'Curriculum History, "English" and the New Education'

A national English curriculum must perforce instantiate a concept of what 'English' is as a discipline recontextualised as a school subject, to borrow Bernstein's term. Threadgold's shrewd summary of the demands made on 'English' are not demands that have necessarily arisen from the ranks of English teachers themselves, notwithstanding any protectionist tendencies. Threadgold succinctly summarises the internal disciplinary and external social forces that now bear down on English curricula: new literary and cultural theories, workplace demands, information and media technologies that themselves require a pedagogy, and the changing demographics of schooling (354). Threadgold crisply sums up the difficulties that beset any attempt at a definition of school English: the mismatch between secondary and tertiary literary studies, the gulf that can open up between curricula and what goes in schools, and the different kinds of economic, political, ethical and theoretical underpinnings of the discipline of English (354). In the following pages I attempt to trace the many ways that 'English' means or has meant

The disciplinary connection of English with literary studies at tertiary level is self-evident, bringing along with it the challenge of justifying the place of literary

studies in the Curriculum when it is increasingly marginalised in universities. English has always been about teaching children to read and write, the task initially of non-specialist primary teachers. Both in primary and secondary school students have long been encouraged to produce their own creative work, especially under the Personal Growth model. I remember setting these creative tasks myself in the 60s classroom, and proudly displaying the results on classroom walls. Urszula Clark comments that the *Language in Use* materials provided as part of the National Literacy Strategy in England did not sit well with English teachers because English ‘was centred on a growth model of English, focussing on literature and creative writing’ (192), especially in the primary and middle school. Creative writing courses are readily available at universities, but it does not follow that students are eager to enrol in literature units, however much tutors believe it would be to their benefit. Given, as Dolin declares, that literature has been handed over to the market, students are understandably more interested in producing genre fiction than engaging formally with literary traditions.

The vital role of English in supporting literacy across the curriculum is not in dispute but the *Consultation Report* registers the discomfort of some respondents about the role of English in ‘servicing’ other areas because English has its own disciplinary demands and distinctive responsibilities (26). Moreover, English teachers were not always expected to be responsible for literacy across all learning areas, except in the broadest sense of increasing students’ mastery of language. Alison Lee reminds us that language across the curriculum is associated with the language and learning movement of the 60s that resulted in, for instance, the Bullock Report *Language for Life* (1975) but had little effect on pedagogy (414). It is only since a theory of discursive practices related to systemic functional linguistics became available that there has been a persuasive pedagogy to support writing across the curriculum (Alison Lee 414). The is genre-based pedagogy is prominent in the English Curriculum. Its goal is to instruct students explicitly in the textual and linguistic structures that govern genres highly valued both by school and society, the so-called ‘genres of power.’ In the *Literacy across the Curriculum* section of the *General Capabilities* document teachers in all learning areas are charged with the task of increasing students’ literacy through inculcating in them the skills that enable pupils to become proficient in the text types relevant to particular learning areas, such as procedures or reports. Teachers are

sometimes reluctant to take on this obligation because of the substantial demands already made upon them. No wonder they often prefer to handball literacy to English teachers. The trend in the 90s towards vocationalism and competency-based training led to calls to concentrate on skills and genres essential to the workplace and everyday life, although school knowledges and genres do not always correlate with workplace texts. Once again curricula can feel the pressure of multiple and contradictory demands.

Understandably, curriculum writers may prefer not to raise disputes over the nature and legitimacy of the English learning area despite the fact that it has been faulted for everything from too little emphasis on basic literacy, too much focus on literature, too little focus on literature, too much in thrall to current theory. Yet the curriculum inevitably constructs a version of 'English' through its aims, rationale and pedagogy. Teachers and educators have regularly asked themselves: what is English? because 'English' has changed its character over time. Sawyer, in the Garth Boomer Address (2010) ('Writing [in] the Nation') records the 'forgetting of English's curriculum history' in the Australian National Curriculum, which he considers leaves the subject unanchored (18).

Any historical account of Subject English is vulnerable to the accusation that it is reductionist and overgeneralised since, unavoidably, there will be continuities and commonalities among curricular and pedagogical models--one model does not seamlessly displace another, with earlier versions expunged and totally discredited (Patterson, 'Setting Limits to English' 335-52). Patterson observes that over its history one of the continuities in Subject English has been the underlying concern with aesthetics, ethics and rhetoric, while Green notes English's long-held interest in the formation of the self ('Curriculum English . . .' 293). In the Classical world initiation into the techniques of writing and speaking well--rhetoric--was not divorced from spiritual and ethical discipline and self-fashioning, and while aesthetics did not emerge as a branch of philosophy until the eighteenth century, notions of what constitutes the beautiful, whether in the arts or in human and natural forms, was a preoccupation of Greek and Roman society. So for example, in the Hellenistic world great emphasis was laid on the aesthetic qualities of major religious festivals (Socrates in the *Symposium* postulates that earthly beauty should draw the observer to the

contemplation of a higher intellectual, for which read philosophical, beauty--sophia. Nor was style exempt from the claims of the ethical. A breach of stylistic decorum could bring with it moral deficits. For example, in *On the Sublime*, a handbook attributed to Longinus, the author delineates the stylistic elements that contribute to grandeur and nobility of expression, for which Homer's epics are the template. The dignity and worth of the subject must be matched by the grandeur of the style. Or take the King James translation of the Bible--which adopts a style, already archaic in 1611, of grand yet direct simplicity and precision that seeks to move beyond religious disunity and 'the drama of authority and legitimacy' (Nicholson xvi-xviii) which divided the period, a style that 'absorb[ed] the full aesthetics of the age, an atmosphere both godly and kingly' (Nicholson 146). According to Grafton, the writing of history from Classical times to the Renaissance was also governed by stylistic decorum: historical actors were given speeches by historians that reflected the actor's status and ethos (1-62). Because of its grounding in older disciplinary formations and traditions, English thus carries within it a Classical and Christian historical legacy that fuses the ethical, aesthetic and rhetorical.

English educators have long regarded their discipline as more than an induction into a particular form of knowledge or the acquisition of a repertoire of skills but as an opportunity for releasing pupils' creative energies, expanding their experience of the world, and enlarging their critical faculties. This can only be accomplished by a pedagogical relationship between teacher and pupil that relies not on a pure transmission theory of pedagogy but on 'the now familiar figure of the "sympathetic" teacher' (Green and Cormack 253-67) who, to employ a tired metaphor, goes on a pedagogical journey with the student and takes, in Plato's phrase, 'the long way round,' scarcely the prototype for an 'efficient' curriculum. The role of the English teacher today, more than any other type of pedagogue, has been associated with what Ian Hunter calls 'pastoral pedagogy,' a secularised version of Christian pedagogy, already discussed, that is 'a practice of conscience-formation involving unreserved communication between teacher and learner, mentorship, self-expression, and self-

doubt' (Threadgold 373).⁷¹ The Australian Curriculum as a whole is unabashedly based on ethical self-formation in the interests of the nation-state, individual self-fulfilment and social competence. Ian Hunter regards pastoral pedagogy as a manifestation, expression and refinement of these interests rather than constituting a realm of freedom outside of or opposed to bureaucratic systems or, one might add these days, globalised structures that maintain a market logic of their own. Patterson, in 'Teaching English in Australia: Examining and Reviewing Senior English,' agrees with Hunter that too much attention has in recent decades been devoted to the ethical and not enough to rhetoric and aesthetics' (314), though this supposed imbalance is partially being addressed in the Curriculum through greater emphasis on language features and aesthetic strategies. However, English teachers are not insensitive to their contradictory positioning within the curriculum and the school, because that is part of their lived experience. In a curriculum that now favours tough standards and constant monitoring, supposedly cherishes creativity and imagination, and demands critical reflection and argumentative skills, English teachers must constantly renegotiate their roles. As Goodwyn observes of the history of English in Britain, the subject is not really more than a hundred years old. What has rarely been contested, certainly not since the Newbolt Report of 1921, is both the centrality of English to schooling and its pre-eminence' (Goodwyn, 'Literacy Versus English' 119). That pre-eminence was never based solely on the inculcation of literacy, and hence the English/literacy/literature debate, in the forms in which it surfaced in the 80s and 90s, is unresolved. Is the function of English uniquely to furnish students with the literacy skills needed to cope with the demands of everyday life, the workplace and to a limited extent citizenship, bearing in mind that over that period new technologies have placed different demands on literacy and have conceivably increased those demands? I am old enough to remember the McGaw/Beazley report in Western Australia (1984), in which there were

⁷¹ Though pastoral pedagogy emerged during the seventeenth century as an evangelical and Reformation response to the challenges of religious training of the young, we should not allow the word 'pastoral' to conjure up a process that was entirely benign. As James Boyce in *Born Bad: Original Sin and the Making of the Western World* makes clear, because of the corrupted nature of the whole human race children must have their passions and desires disciplined and receive religious instruction at the earliest possible age (84-85). Pope Pius x in the early twentieth century also imposed religious instruction on pupils at an early stage when he changed the age of confirmation and first confession to seven. The Catholic Church is still working through the unfortunate educational side effects of this decree.

moves to reduce Subject English at post-compulsory level to a service function. Apart from the fact that fewer teachers would have wanted to specialise in English (no career path) and many students would have been resistant to English--or more resistant than they already were--teaching literacy to service the needs of other areas of the curriculum cannot be undertaken in a curriculum vacuum. It is also worth recalling that a preponderance of English teachers are women, the 'handmaidens of literacy' as Van Loon memorably dubs them ('The Handmaidens of Literacy'), so they are the ones who will 'service' the school population.

According to Alison Lee, 'genre' methodology seeks to supply students with an 'induction and apprenticeship [into writing] using the analytical tools of systemic functional linguistics and generic structuration' (416). She perceives this as a 'counterbalance to privatized notions of literacy as "personal voice," "authorship" and "self-realization" . . .' (416) that has dominated both the teaching of literature and creative writing in schools. Nevertheless, whatever the benefits of a genre approach, and there are clearly advantages for students in gaining greater control over dominant forms of knowledge, Lee warns of an unwelcome tendency to conflate 'functional' literacy, competency-based standards and genre pedagogy to produce a new version of the 'literate subject' amenable to the requirements of a neo-liberal educational agenda. Though sociolinguistics emphasises the social origins, function and nature of language, Lee argues that genre pedagogy forecloses on the critical scrutiny of the social and political contexts of genres and leaves unexamined the identities such pedagogies construct (429).

Thus there are internal strains in the Curriculum as it stands. The study of literature invokes a disciplinary history that accentuates self-formation and creativity, together with the analysis of literary texts and traditions through finely-honed attention to the aesthetics of literary language. Genre-based pedagogy is not about individuality or authorship so much as the social function of texts and therefore the homologies among them. Teachers resemble the scribes of old who were never authors as we understand the term. Sociolinguistics is part of the 'linguistic turn' in contemporary theory which regards language as a meaning-making system having its origins in culture rather than the individual. However, cultural theorists can be antipathetic to genre-based pedagogy because of its tendency to reify genres and

because they believe that students should be able to critique linguistic choices and generic strategies in order to understand their own positioning within language and culture.

Nevertheless the English Curriculum recognises that generating and interpreting texts requires judgement, the capacity to make informed and sophisticated choices, sensitivity to style and the aptitude to draw inferences. Take, for example, the term 'voice,' cited in the *Shape* document. In the *South Australian English 7-10 Syllabus* 'voice' is defined, firstly, grammatically (active or passive voice) but, more importantly:

[v]oice means the composer's voice--the idea of a speaking consciousness, the controlling presence or 'authorial voice' behind the characters, narrators and personae in a text. It is also described as the implied composer. The particular qualities of the composer's voice are manifested by such things as her or his method of expression (such as an ironic narrator) and specific language (83).

Here 'voice' encompasses style and register and is associated with the literary since the authorial voice becomes the sign of individuality. The definition is useful in correcting the tendency to collapse the composer's voice into the narrator's, a problem that creeps into Curriculum documents. The English Curriculum is concerned that students develop not only accuracy and correctness but fluency and style, especially through sensitivity to the aesthetic properties of language, especially literary language. Style is not so closely linked with the text types of genre-based pedagogy, such as the procedure, the report, the experiment. Yet no text of whatever kind is style free. The mastery of the languages of formal schooling is inevitably related to style since the lexical, syntactical and grammatical choices that govern particular text types, however formulaic, require a measure of stylistic control. On the one hand, the Curriculum is invested in a Romantic view of creativity and literature; on the other, learning to read, write and communicate effectively seems a rather arid and draining process despite the claims of the Curriculum to deliver mastery and control. Moon is excellent on the subject(ivity) of style:

[c]ontrol of style in writing is a separate and distinct skill. It requires attention not only to syntax and word-function but also to euphony, tone and balance--which are aesthetic and pragmatic considerations. Similarly control of form

requires attention not only to division, content sequences and topic sentences but also to the balance of reason and emotion, the mix of persuasion and proof, in a text. ('Remembering Rhetoric' 38)

Style takes time to develop. Nor is this a plea for students to find their 'own' voice, though some do. Students often wrestle with style in painful and tortured ways and their struggle is present on the page or screen--there are few short cuts.

So where else but in an English curriculum are students going to have sustained and close encounters with language and the opportunity to explore the full possibilities of English? The AC:E, to its credit, does not confine Subject English to a merely functional or service role, although the writers are apprehensive about grammar (have they highlighted it sufficiently?) and the *Framing Paper* (#18) is clear that out the role of digital and media texts are crucial in the Curriculum, even if media texts have been present in some form in English syllabi at least since the 60s.

The Newbolt Report was notable in that it 'presaged the ascendancy of literature as the cornerstone of the English curriculum' (Myhill and Stone 46), making it imperative to the formation of national and ethical identities. As Armstrong remarks, '[I]ike their Victorian forbears, the founders of English Studies in the early twentieth century sought to preserve traditional culture from both non-Western influences and the rapidly expanding mass media' (21). Subject English has never shed its association with the ethical and the national and in the Australian Curriculum literature is ineluctably and explicitly involved with the production of ethical and national subjects, as we shall see. Eagleton reviews the gendered struggles over English that turned it from a fatally feminised discipline studied by women (*Literary Theory: An Introduction* 27-28) into a suitably 'masculine' pursuit in universities and in *The Event of Literature* he demonstrates that literature contains no ontological essence, whichever theory one adopts (23).⁷² In the light of these remarks, it is illuminating to trace, via Turner's meticulous study of the origins of the humanities in philology, the emergence of the discipline of literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

⁷² In a witty, uncharitable but telling observation, Eagleton notes how Eliot, Pound and the Imagists rejected Romantic poets as a part of the ideal order of the European literary tradition: Poetry 'had fallen foul of the Romantics, becoming a mawkish, womanly affair full of gush and fine feeling. Language had gone soft: it needed to be stiffened up again, made hard and stone-like, reconnected with the physical world' (*Literary Theory* 41).

(254-73). He traces its sources in philology and rhetoric and its gradual but patchy establishment in universities through chairs and courses, and he distinguishes three areas of research on which it relied for its legitimacy: the study of literature in its historical context; literary editing; and literary criticism. Turner submits that philology, with its long history of the editing of Classical and biblical texts, enabled scholars to establish reliable editions of Shakespeare, for example, and recover for modern readers linguistic meanings rendered obscure by the passage of time. He also demonstrates the power of reading texts in their historical context that came to dominate the interpretation of texts, and the 'increasingly prominent . . . evaluative analysis of specific works of poetry, prose and drama' (267). Turner sketches the reshuffling of disciplines that took place as a result. The dominant role of Greek and Latin literature was under threat, while Classics itself became a separate discipline. Biblical philology was hived off to divinity schools. Literature used the apparatus of research and scholarship to claim an almost scientific rigour at the same time as the secularisation of the universities made of literature a 'spiritual' substitute for the loss of Christianity (270). Turner concludes his fascinating study of the humanities and the historically ingenious routes by which disciplines surface with some acute and acerbic remarks on the state and status of humanistic learning:

[t]he rise of modern academic disciplines in the nineteenth century--the invention of the *idea* of an academic discipline, the *principle* of disciplinarity--fractured learning. This innovation grew up alongside the modern research university. (383)

Hence disciplines are historically fluid and one should not be surprised that Subject English contains all the traces of its disciplinary and subject history but like the humanities in general will struggle to imitate the rigours of vertical discourse that Bernstein privileges.

Yet New Criticism, which became influential in the 1940s and 50s, brought a manly formalist rigour⁷³ to literary interpretation by concentrating on the 'text itself

⁷³ Professor Tim Dolin, in a personal communication, has drawn my attention to a poem of Auden's about returned soldiers studying at Harvard: 'among bewildering appliances /For mastering the arts and sciences/They stroll or run,/ and nerves that steeled themselves in slaughter/Are shot to pieces by the shorter/Poems of Donne.'

as an autotelic object and advocating ‘close reading’ of texts, the text’s self-sufficiency and organic unity, and therefore its timeless qualities. According to Dolin, ‘close reading is the one methodology that literary studies has uniquely contributed to the humanities’ (Personal Communication 22 September 2014). The subtle attention to the nuances of literary language (supposedly more intense, dense, and more highly patterned than ‘ordinary’ language) often went along with a conservative political agenda: a ‘decay of the West thesis, which saw literature as culturally redemptive’ (Moon 91-93).⁷⁴ The New Critical approach had and continues to have profound effects on how literature is taught in schools at the specialised senior levels and it suggests a pedagogy both in the wider ethical sense of an orientation towards knowledge and the self, and, more narrowly, a method of teaching literary texts that foregrounds the aesthetic and the meaningful as a balance of forces held in productive and refined equilibrium. No wonder that irony became the central trope of much New Critical analysis.

The ascendancy of ‘close reading’ has never entirely been overthrown but instead other reading practices derived from newer theoretical methodologies have been integrated into literary study, such as narrative studies. In order to defend the study of literature we need to acknowledge that aesthetic and cultural value can no longer be judged by norms that are held to be universal (Frow 15). Nevertheless, whatever the disciplinary developments in English as a school subject, literature is still regarded in the Australian Curriculum as uniquely capable of fostering certain qualities in students, such as ethical and aesthetic sensibilities, sensitivity to language and empathy.⁷⁵ Over the twentieth century theories of literature determined how literary texts should be read and analysed and were inseparable from the ideological investments of critics. Whatever the critical allegiances of individual practitioners the study of literature was seen as a way to address the spiritual crises of the modern era,

⁷⁴ Though nowadays literature’s resistance to the dialect of the tribe may not lie in the service of cultural redemption but in the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ that enables literary texts to question and undermine ‘congealed forms of language and thought’ (Felski 29).

⁷⁵ The idea that literature and other arts form moral character is very old but the emergence of aesthetics during the Enlightenment and the concept of *bildung* gave it fresh life. Herder in *On the Effect of Poetic Art on the Ethics of Peoples in Ancient and Modern Times* (1778) and *On the Influence of the Beautiful Sciences on the Higher Sciences* (1781) argues that works of art convey ethical principles implicitly as well as explicitly and offer a range of practical second-hand experiences unavailable directly (‘Herder,’ *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

to remediate a crass commercialism and an empty and vulgar mass culture and to renew language by connecting it to lived, sensuous experience (Eagleton, *Literary Theory* 17-54). This fact demonstrates that reading practices in the study of literature emerge from and carry ethical presuppositions about the worth and function of literature in the modern world. It is hard if not impossible to eliminate this history, which makes it crucial to determine how the Curriculum defines literature--it is not a case of mere semantic pedantry.

Literature in school curricula has long been associated not just with the interpretation of literary texts and the determination of aesthetic value but with creativity, a quality lauded by the English Curriculum but confined mainly to the literature strand, when creativity is a quality that is not confined to literary texts. 'Creativity' is one of the qualities supposed to be fostered across the Curriculum and not just relegated to literature and the creative arts but, like many terms encountered in Curriculum documents, it is free floating and devoid of context. What pedagogies nurture creativity? As Doecke and McClenaghan wittily remark, [creativity] is a bit like the Scarlet Pimpernel, everywhere and nowhere at the same time: as with other dimensions of the new English curriculum . . . it struggles for coherence at this point' (39). Webb astutely notes that creativity has shifted its meanings during the last few decades. It is being sundered from its connection to art 'and attached instead to best practice in any area of skilled activity.' The result is the 'disenchantment of creativity and its recruitment by professions and practices that are concerned with economic or scientific developments' (4). 'Creativity' is frequently coupled with 'innovation,' and has been assimilated into the knowledge industries, which may partly account for its unfocused character in the Curriculum.

Here a bit more history of Subject English is indispensable. The 1966 Dartmouth Conference, borne along by a wave of reform of school curricula in the UK and USA, tried to reimagine the English curriculum in ways that broke away from a rigid reliance on textbooks and exercises to a vision of English that was centred on the lived experiences of students and their 'intellectual, social and spiritual growth' (John Dixon, 'English Renewed . . .' 244). These reforms were influenced by the work of the renowned F. R. Leavis, who inspired a generation of scholars and teachers. They highlighted the importance of students' own creative writing and focused on a

process-oriented approach to writing. The reforms were teacher-driven and student-centred and aimed to engage the 80% of pupils, mainly working-class, who did not go on to advanced study. This movement was labelled the 'New English' (Green and Cormack 253). One result of this endeavour was John Dixon's influential *Growth through English*. There is much today that may appear quaint or out of date about the book and the movement of which it was part but they have had a lasting influence through the Personal Growth model of pedagogy. Salvio and Boldt record a sad aftermath of this movement. James Britton, a collaborator of Dixon's, was a proponent of the idea of English as a creative engagement with the world (122) but his work has been used and abused recently in New York under the regime of Joel Klein, supposedly forming the basis of a fresh approach to writing instruction but in fact mandating heavily scripted lessons with little room for initiative (117). Sawyer and Howie review the 1971 NSW English syllabus as an example of the Personal Growth model of English, with its tripartite division of the syllabus into use, context and language (120), and with its attentiveness to literature. Looking back at it after forty years, it remains coherent, persuasive and uncomplicated.

Personal Growth became a central but not exclusive form of what has come to be known as 'progressive' pedagogy in English. Subject English has been closely identified with progressive pedagogies and one of the effects of a progressive pedagogy in the 60s was the gradual incorporation of popular culture into the content of English syllabi. Indeed some version of media literacy has been around since the 1920s (Carmen Luke, 'Media Literacy and Cultural Studies' 21) and became a common feature of curricula during the 70s. In the first half of the twentieth century, mass culture, for example in the opinion of Leavis, was largely viewed as degrading, mind-numbing and a threat to civilisation, but the effects could be remediated through a study of literature, with its moral gravitas and ability to cultivate finely nuanced aesthetic and moral judgements. It is not an idea that dies easily: witness Alan Bennett's hugely successful play *The History Boys* and his novel *The Uncommon Reader*, both of which promote literature as life changing, even persuading the Queen (the novel's heroine) into abdicating in order to follow a literary career. However, in the 60s, as John Dixon testifies ('English Renewed: Visions of English among Teachers of 1966' 241-50) viewing began to be included in the English curriculum and popular

culture became a legitimate but often contested component of pupils' learning. In part this was an attempt to connect with students' lives, to acknowledge that TV, advertising, films, and popular fiction were woven into their existence and were not to be despised or dismissed. Moreover, the analysis of popular culture such as TV and film in the UK privileged programs and films that were both popular (attracting wide audiences) and high quality, such that their appearance in syllabi could be amply justified on aesthetic grounds.

This trend coincided with the rise of cultural studies, which, in Hartley's words, 'entailed attention to the historical development and forms of working-class culture, and analysis of contemporary forms of popular culture and media' (72), initially based on a Marxist analysis of class, ideology and the unequal distribution of social power. According to Marx, those who owned the means of production control the circulation of ideas and 'make the relations of domination and oppression appear natural and so mystify the "real" conditions of existence' (Gledhill 348). The return to Marx in the 60s and 70s (the New Left) demanded a redefinition of the word 'culture' to encompass not just 'high' culture and its troublesome other, popular culture, but culture as 'a whole way of life,' in Williams' words (41), which purges 'culture' of its elitist connotations and grounds it in material, social, and textual practices of everyday life, 'a determining and not just a determined part of social activity' (Hartley, 'Culture' 68-72). One result of this new definition of culture, the reverse privileging of working-class culture as organic and authentic, now seems like an impossibly nostalgic gesture given that such a culture, if it ever existed, was largely extinct by the 60s.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the concept of culture as the social reproduction of meaning in media and digital texts is firmly entrenched in the English Curriculum, though not necessarily for the reasons that inspired teachers in the 60s and 70s. Firstly, these texts are impossible to ignore and, secondly, new technologies are essential to the global workplace and to social interaction. There are many calls to make schools more 'connected' and to integrate technologies into the classroom so as to transform the teacher-student relationship by facilitating more independence among learners,

⁷⁶ Nevertheless, in 60s Britain novels and drama began to depict working-class culture sympathetically, for example in so-called 'kitchen-sink' dramas and novels such as *Room at the Top* (John Braine) and *The Loneliness of the Long-distance Runner* (Allan Sillitoe).

although progressive pedagogies have, at least in theory, always emphasised independent learning. Independence is not intrinsically a product of technology although technology can facilitate autonomy. However, Burn makes the point that there remains a Gadamerian ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ surrounding media texts, as if students must be inoculated against their effects (‘Beyond the Hermeneutics of Suspicion’ 8-26). He offers a sharply nuanced account of media texts in contemporary curricula, from Leavisite ‘cultural protectionism,’ to the Marxist unmasking of ideology, to the ‘institutional regulation of media texts for young people’ (8). He also critiques the way media texts are located, quite unfairly, across the fact/fiction; creative/informational divide so that literature tends to soak up the available creativity. The English Curriculum is vulnerable to the same criticisms.

Misson, in undertaking the difficult task of trying to encapsulate key developments in the Subject English curriculum, remarks that the 90s was the period of critical literacy, a result both of socio-linguistic theories and cultural studies, while the first decade of the twenty-first century has brought digital literacy to the forefront of thinking about English (‘Liquid Modernity . . .’ 27-35). Green, in an article on what he calls ‘changing the scene of English teaching,’ explores the relationship between cultural studies and Subject English that has been productive and generative since the 80s. Green acknowledges that ‘cultural studies’ is not easy to define and has a contested history that crosses various disciplinary boundaries. Frow remarks that ‘cultural studies exists in a state of productive uncertainty about its status as a discipline’ (7) but this has been the case with Subject English as well. The definition and curricular implications of cultural studies and critical literacy will be explored later when a closer analysis of the documents is conducted. However, for our present purpose both critical literacy and cultural studies are related to the so-called ‘cultural and linguistic turn’ in contemporary social sciences and philosophical enquiry, leading to an understanding that culture is an exchange of meanings which ‘organise[s] and regulate[s] social practices, influence[s] our conduct and consequently [has] real, practical effects’ (Hall 3). Language is the primary signifying practice in culture and, like culture itself, does not bear a fixed, determinate and absolute set of meanings. The relationship between words and things is in the strictest sense arbitrary and the effect of ‘social, cultural and linguistic conventions’ (Hall 23).

One of the most influential and productive theories in cultural studies has been semiotics, 'a science that studies the life of signs in society,' drawing on the Swiss linguist Saussure's theories, and popularised by Roland Barthes during the 1960s (Hartley, 'Semiotics/Semiology' 281-3). Saussure argued that language is a system of structural relations--signs (letters, syllables, words)--that create meanings through a set of internal differences rather than a relation to external reality. A tree is not a bush or a shrub, a 'b' is not a 'v,' although they are sometimes interchangeable in some languages. Saussure was not the first to explore the link between ideas, their representation in words, and the external world. During the Enlightenment Locke in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* argues that all complex ideas must derive from simple sense impressions to contain any empirical or metaphysical validity. Both Locke and Saussure, in very different ways, advance theories of language which have implications for both language and literacy. Neither Locke nor Saussure is primarily concerned with the social, historical and generic contexts of language but they acknowledge that there is no simple equivalence between language and the world it supposedly describes.

Its linguistic origins notwithstanding, semiotics has proved especially useful for the analysis of sign systems outside language, such as cultural phenomena (see Barthes' essays on fashion or wrestling in his celebrated book *Mythologies*) through the codes that regulate the combination of signs. Hence semiotics came to be applied to non-print media such as cinema and photography in that their individual signs and their combinatory rules (codes) came to be regarded as language-like. Semiotics thus became a valuable tool in the newly emergent field of media studies and especially useful because it seems to foreclose aesthetic judgments in that, although its system of distinctions may be studied for their capacity to allocate status differences (for example, in the field of advertising), such differences are studiously avoided in semiotic analysis and therefore semiotics looks more 'scientific' in its orientation, adding more of the famous rigour to textual and cultural analysis. One might add in passing, though, that it nevertheless remains difficult to abolish aesthetic or indeed ethical judgments entirely, since analysis tends to encourage critique. Saussure's linguistic theory has been faulted for its abstract formalism, its claim to scientific precision and its neglect of 'the more interactive and dialogic features of language'

(Hall 35) that foreground the speaking situation and the relationship between speaker and audience and writer and reader, but it remains powerful because it relates 'the production of meaning to other kinds of social production and to social relations' (Hartley, 'Semiotics/Semiology' 281).

For Subject English the implications of the cultural and linguistic turn⁷⁷ have been profound:

- If language does not allow unmediated access to reality, then close attention to linguistic choices and grammatical structures, such as the Curriculum encourages, will, as the student gains a sophisticated mastery of language, reveal and draw attention to that mediation.
- Concepts of literacy that regard literacy as a theoretical 'object' unrelated to social and historical contexts and practices are unsustainable.
- Therefore literacy is in some sense always 'critical' since literacy is always linguistically 'situated.'
- Texts emerge from specific social, historical, institutional and generic contexts that govern their production and reception.
- Given the above, meaning is negotiated and context-dependent, not unchanging. Hence any form of cultural exchange is capable of generating multiple meanings.
- Though societies make sense of the world 'in broadly similar ways' (Hall 2), meanings can be contested and interrogated, especially for the manner in which they connect to systems of social power through hierarchies of gender, class, race, sexual orientation, etc.
- Given that culture is about the exchange of meaning, not distinctions between 'high' and 'low' culture, literature now inhabits a greater 'democracy' of texts, where any text can be analysed employing similar methods and where literature need not automatically be given a privileged position.

⁷⁷ The 'linguistic turn' is linked to the work of the philosophers Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Rorty. Habermas describes the 'linguistic turn' as follows: 'If facts cannot be perceived independently of the propositional structure of our language and if the truth of opinion and statements can be corrected only by other opinions and statements, then any idea of truth as correspondence between sentence and facts 'out there' is misleading. We cannot describe nature in a language we assume to be nature's own language' (5).

Frow deftly sums up the kind of dilemmas that now confront the writers of English curricula (though he is here discussing cultural value in a wider context):

What do we teach? High culture, low culture, or some mix of the two? And what basis can there be for our decision? Do we teach a canon, or expand the canon, or dispense with a canon altogether--and how would this be possible? Are some texts better than others--is it possible for us *not* to believe this, but if we do, what grounds do we have for such a judgement? (15 [italics original]).

Overgeneralised as this account is of how Subject English has signified in its hundred-year disciplinary history, it affords an essential context for the reading and writing of the English Curriculum. It is not that older models of what constitutes English have been discarded. The close reading of texts, not just the exclusively literary, remains prominent but has been reframed and recontextualised. The pedagogical and developmental importance of students' experiments with creating their own texts in a whole range of genres and modes is not in doubt. But there has been a paradigm shift because of the cultural and linguistic turn, whose major elements are categorised above.

And how does digital literacy change the discussion on the English curriculum? First of all, if by 'digital literacy' we mean learning to use computers to generate and exchange texts or convey information then it hardly captures the insurgency of the world wide web. Kenneth Goldsmith's *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age* is a book, yes, *book*, that vertiginously explores the encounter of the literary with technology in the digital age. It leads the author to question notions of authorship, creativity and originality, and the poetics and materiality of language. He labels the new order 'the revenge of the text' and he welcomes it with almost rapturous elation. He is not just banally celebrating the amount of information available but how we negotiate it (1) and sees the literary and creative and their intersection at a crucial moment, leading him to question how creative writing is taught in the academy:

[i]n regard to the many sophisticated ideas concerning media, identity, and sampling developed over the past century, books about how to be a creative writer have completely missed the boat, relying on cliched notions of what it means to be 'creative.' (7)

Thus the digital world needs to influence what we mean by textuality in the Curriculum and not just through the lens of genre-based pedagogy.

The cultural studies impact on the lexicon and conceptual framework of English permeates the Curriculum but not consistently and is, of course, unacknowledged, part of that ‘forgetting’ of which Wayne Sawyer speaks.⁷⁸ In the first Senior English unit, where students can legitimately expect to encounter sophisticated concepts: **‘students explore how meaning is created through the relationship between [sic] language, text, purpose, context and audiences and the context in which they are created and received.** This sentence encapsulates the key insights that govern current English curricula as a whole and is therefore at first glance entirely uncontroversial. Perhaps it could be simplified to: **‘students explore how meanings in texts are created through the relationship among language, purposes and contexts.’** ‘Context’ as a term includes ‘audiences’ under its umbrella but, as Adrian Beard tells us in his book *Texts and Contexts* (6-8), one must carefully distinguish among different types of writing and contexts, which are not wholly captured by the term ‘audiences.’ The rest of the sentence--**‘and the context in which they are created and received’**--seems redundant. Why ‘audiences’ is pluralised is unclear, unless in the drafter’s mind there is an uneasy sense that the singular ‘context’ should also be plural. The pronoun ‘they’ seems to refer to ‘audiences’ but that cannot be right. At the risk of sounding pedantic I must register my disquiet with curriculum and syllabus statements that frequently contain too many key words and are not as precisely worded as they should be.

The unit outline also asserts that **‘[b]y responding to and creating texts, students consider how language, structure and conventions operate in a variety of imaginative, interpretive and persuasive texts’** (Senior English Unit 1). This wording also needs refinement: ‘Linguistic and other conventions’ is conceptually better since both language and structure obey conventions. The genre division into imaginative, interpretive and persuasive texts is pervasive in the English Curriculum and syllabi but is flawed. The phrase ‘interpretive and imaginative texts’ is prominent in the NSW K-6 syllabi, while ‘persuasive texts’ occurs across a range of state curricula.

⁷⁸ Curriculum and syllabus statements have been bolded from this point on for ease of reading.

The division may reference older rhetorical genres such as the epideictic, didactic, homiletic, and so on, but terms such as ‘persuasive,’ ‘descriptive,’ ‘imaginative,’ ‘interpretive’ may reference the text types that arise from Hallidayan classifications of texts according to ‘the semiotic function or range of functions that the text is serving in the environment in question’ (*Language as Social Semiotic* 145), but from the evidence of Simpson, White and Freebody in *Language, Literature and Literacy* the genres they identify, referencing Halliday, are ‘recount, information report, procedure, exposition, discussion, explanation, narrative response/review (66-67), which do not map easily onto ‘imaginative, interpretive and persuasive.’⁷⁹ Thus the division of texts into these three far from watertight and less than self-explanatory categories sows confusion. It imposes an unnecessary classificatory grid on the Curriculum and syllabi. Further on the reader notes that ‘[s]tudents also **‘apply skills of [textual and linguistic?] analysis and creativity’** (surely students *develop* creative skills, not apply them). We have said enough for the moment about creativity merely to note its routine appearance here.

The unit also calls for the use of **‘appropriate metalanguage: for example, personification, voice-over, flashback, salience.’** If this list of techniques and devices seems random, it is. Much has been made of the need to supply a coherent metalanguage that will facilitate the growth of teachers’ and students’ knowledge about language. The metalanguages at work here are drawn from rhetoric and the semiotic codes of media texts and are therefore examples of terms used in particular metalanguages. The unit mentions the term ‘representation,’ a key concept in cultural studies, and a metalinguistic term that can be employed to analyse the semiotic systems in any text. Hall defines meaning as dependent on the relationship between things in the world and the conceptual systems used to represent them, concepts organised, arranged into complex relationships to one another’ (18). Thus ‘representation’ carries a specific meaning in cultural studies. Under ‘Learning Outcomes’ students will by the end of the unit have learned **‘how text structures and language features are used to convey ideas and represent people and events.’**

⁷⁹ One bewildered mother interviewed on Radio National’s *Bush Telegraph* (9 November 2014) confided her difficulties about teaching her children by distance education. She briefly mentioned her struggles with the English Curriculum; ‘what’s a persuasive text?’ she asked plaintively.

Further down the page we encounter the phrase ‘**represent ideas,**’ so what does ‘represent’ mean exactly? Perhaps ‘convey’ and ‘describe’ would have done. Many secondary teachers will respond to ‘representation’ in a cultural studies framework because it is intimately connected to semiotics: the view that there is no one-to-one correspondence between signs and things. In Hartley’s words, representation is the social process of making sense within all available signifying systems: speech, writing, print, video, film, tape, and so on’ (‘Representation’ 265). For example, lighting is a signifying system in plays, at least when lighting of theatres became a safe possibility in the nineteenth century.

In the unit description of Unit 2 of the Senior Secondary English Curriculum students ‘**will analyse the representation of ideas, attitudes and voices in texts to consider how texts represent the world and human experience.**’ This sentence is foggy since a) the world surely includes human experience, b) systems of representation, that is, signifying codes, carry attitudes, ideas and values, and c) ‘voices,’ from the evidence of the document as a whole, seems to mean the style of address or tone--formal, informal, intimate, hectoring--adopted by the speaker/producer of the text, or perhaps the narrator or the characters, though how tone is connected to representation needs to be clarified and the application of voice to visual texts is hazy. But putting aside technicalities, English Curriculum documents as a whole convey the impression that terms are used almost randomly and extremely inconsistently and that there is a high level of redundancy in their occurrence. At the risk of being accused of introducing unnecessary jargon into curriculum documents, I believe that curriculum writers--and they need not be members of the Advisory Panel--need to convey a real sense of security about their understanding of key terms such as ‘text.’ ‘genre’ and ‘language’ even if the theoretical complexities that led to such understandings and definitions are not rehearsed in detail. If there are conflicting definitions of terms that arise from different theoretical models, then teachers should be made aware of them in supporting documentation and not left to guess.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Respondents in the *Consultation Report* complained that there needed to be greater clarity in the definition of terms (7).

Australian Curriculum Information Sheet F-10: The three Ls

One practical way in which to obtain an introductory overview of the English Curriculum, make some preliminary observations on it, and identify what is new about the English Curriculum is the information sheet that accompanies the Curriculum, provided on the ACARA website. This document:

- Identifies the features that distinguish the new curriculum from existing state and territory curricula and the international models that curriculum writers consulted.
- Highlights the emphasis on grammar and early reading pedagogy, such as phonics, and
- Establishes the importance of literature in the new curriculum.

The Curriculum is organised around the three Ls--Language, Literature Literacy--and since the strands are designed to be interrelated, the list is presumably not meant to be hierarchised. The document explains that the teaching of grammar is central across all the years of schooling and must be integrated into the three strands of English learning. The document stipulates that the teaching of grammar must be explicit, and that state, territory and international curricula can be faulted for their lack of systematic attention to this vital aspect of language, at least in their curriculum statements: **'students [under the new dispensation] will learn about the use of grammar and why it is used.'** This is, one assumes, the document's way of saying that students will be explicitly taught (and assessed on their mastery of) grammatical rules and instructed in why correct usage is important. Grammar is a system of rules abstracted and inferred from current usage and is a feature of all languages, and therefore it is meaningless to ask *why* grammar is used, unless it means to ask why particular grammatical rules (such as verb-subject agreement) exist, or to uncover the logic of grammatical systems. The prominence given to grammar is, in all likelihood, to counter the impression and oft-repeated assertion that grammar teaching has all but disappeared from schools, although the enacted curriculum presents a different picture (see Howie, '(Un)commonsense: A Case for Critical Literacy' 224-36). The *Information Sheet* adds: **'[s]ome [state and territory English curricula] that do deal with grammar do so by focusing more generally on the need for grammatical accuracy,'** an enigmatic sentence since grammatical accuracy is exactly what teachers

hope to encourage. And what is the force of ‘more generally’? That too little *specific* attention is given to teaching grammar in syllabi? Or that curriculum statements on grammar have hitherto been too perfunctory to compel teachers to attend to them? A professional association dismissed the claim that grammar ‘is a completely new area for teachers’ (*Consultation Report* 22). The updated English Curriculum will repair these pedagogical imperfections by reflecting ‘**some of the latest research and theory in the field**’ [of the theory of grammar or the pedagogy of grammar?]. It would be helpful to let teachers know somewhere in Curriculum documents what the results of this latest research are since there is a substantial body of work on the topic and we are given few clues as to its findings. Again the English Curriculum does not point to research findings, even though it claims to be based on them. The *Framing Paper* is explicit about the need for grammar teaching, not just for accuracy and correctness but for rhetorical purposes and structural frameworks.

The focus on the three Ls is the organising principle that supposedly distinguishes the Curriculum from existing state and territory curricula and international models, all of which tend to be centred on the modes of speaking, listening, reading and writing and viewing, as is the new English Curriculum. Most likely, therefore, we would expect the Curriculum to cover familiar territory and it does.

Accompanying the *Shape of the Curriculum* is a detailed year by year series of content descriptions and achievement standards which specify what is to be learned and assessed at each year level, including ‘**explicit content for early reading and writing acquisition.**’ Thus the *Information Sheet* signals that the teaching of phonics will be important, though not exclusively so. In any event, the new Curriculum will be more detailed in its specifications for early language acquisition. In a brief and rather dismissive statement that seems almost an afterthought the *Sheet* acknowledges ‘**the need to teach multimodal and digital texts as do all states and territories,**’ though, curiously, digital and multimodal texts initially appear in the document under the strand ‘literature,’ while elsewhere they are listed under ‘literacy.’ Here the renewed focus on grammar may render that association a little awkward, since literature and literacy are, rightly or wrongly, primarily associated with print texts, despite the fact that digital texts are often multimodal. ‘Language’ is also influenced by

its proximity in the document to 'grammar,' and thus coupled with print and oral texts rather than multimodal communication.

The *Information Sheet* then moves on to explain why literature has been included as a strand in the primary curriculum, a justification for its appearance at this early stage and perhaps a reproach for its absence as a specialised area of learning in comparable primary curricula, although it would be hard to find a primary teacher in Australia who was not also a teacher of literature by default. In primary school pupils will learn to '**appreciate literature and understand literary techniques.**' 'Literary techniques' seems to refer to rhetorical devices,' once taught as part of the Trivium but now indelibly associated with literature. The document acknowledges that, while literary texts are included in most native language curricula (and this seems to be the case in many international curricula if the England Report on the National Curriculum is anything to go by), the focus is generally (incorrectly?) on '**developing students' skills in reading and their understanding of the structures and features of texts.**' Perhaps this is also a reference to genre-based pedagogy, distinguishing literature from the indispensable but less elevating process of mastering school genres. There is a buried argument here which perhaps may imply that other curricula are more concerned with identifying the structures and features of *all* texts, rather than concentrating on literary texts in particular, or that 'appreciation' of literary texts is missing in primary (and secondary?) school curricula. This is not the moment to discuss in detail what 'appreciation' of literary texts means, except that it has been around since the late nineteenth century in higher education and is not to be equated solely with the forensic dissection of literary texts for their devices and the formation of evaluative hierarchies. Presumably 'appreciation' encompasses the informed enjoyment of such texts and by extension assumes that the more students know about how literary texts work the more they will appreciate them. Students presumably do not appreciate a film or a television program in the same way. The inclusion of 'literary techniques' supposes that, by learning to identify literary techniques (and to use them in their own work), students are led to a finer appreciation of literature and to a nuanced understanding of the power and possibilities of language itself. Or perhaps the term 'techniques' is merely invoked to give a 'technical' gloss to a banal observation.

It may seem cruelly pedantic and a trifle patronising to analyse the *Information Sheet* in such detail, but analysis and interpretation is what English teachers do and do well. Considering the cultural capital that the English curriculum invests in correctness, fluency, clarity and sensitivity to style it is not unreasonable to expect curriculum writers to demonstrate these same qualities, even within the necessarily restrictive and variant generic conventions of curriculum statements. At the very least curricula should strive for unity of purpose and conceptual coherence, whatever the compromises and tensions such texts inevitably embody. No surprises, then, when we discover that responses to the English Curriculum from educators, academics and professional associations, either through the official ACARA consultation documents or key journals, such as *English in Australia*, have been less than enthusiastic about the three-L division and apprehensive about the prominence accorded grammar and literacy in the curriculum (Davies and Bansel 20). The *Framing Paper Consultation Report: English* expresses these reservations, reservations I have included in relevant sections. Along with other critics, I submit that the tripartite division of the curriculum into Language, Literature and Literacy introduces insuperable problems into the structure, conceptual framework and assessment tasks of the English curriculum.

The Division of the Kingdom: The Strands

The national English curriculum aims to develop, [sic] students' knowledge of language and literature and to consolidate and expand their literacy skills.

Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English

There is nothing natural, God-given or self-evident about dividing the Curriculum into the three strands or elements as the *Framing Paper* argues calls them and no rationale in the *Shape* document is proposed for doing so. Brennan ('The Australian Curriculum: A Political Education Tangle') argues that the *Shape of the Curriculum: English* is not in fact a curriculum at all but a subject, one of her reasons being that it does not provide an adequate rationale for the division (259-80), a crucial task. The three strands govern the achievement standards and assessment tasks (with the exception of the General Capabilities and Cross-curricular Priorities) and language and literature are reported on separately in the Content and Achievement Standards for each year

level. Sawyer identifies the lack of a rationale for the division of the strands, the tendency for language to become merely a list of topics (in contradistinction to literature) (Introduction, *Creating an Australian Curriculum for English 9*).

A first move in any critique of the division of the English Curriculum into strands is to consider what discursive function each term performs, ignoring for the moment the complicated etymology and diverse uses of the terms. 'Literacy' denotes an ability people possess, attain, can demonstrate and can be taught, although it is possible to become literate without formal instruction in a society in which being able to read and write is rewarded and rewarding. 'Literature' is a term that defines a group of written texts regarded as possessing high artistic, cultural and social value. 'Language' designates a signifying practice that produces meaning. It is also a term used to denote a particular language, such as English or Hindi, and the relationship between these two significations deserves attention. Clearly language, literacy and literature do not describe three distinct objects that are or should be isolated from each other since literacy (reading and writing) does not exist independently of language or of particular languages. The definition of what constitutes 'literature' and the decision to afford it such prominence in the curriculum must be argued for-- though such an argument can of course be made.

The Relationship Among the Strands

In the *Consultation Report* respondents expressed disquiet that the three strands were insufficiently related (7) and this section of the *Shape* is designed to offer guidance and calm their fears. The language strand is related to literature because literature helps promote discussion about '**how writers use language**' (5.5.2) (**characters, setting, narrative, etc.**) and '**how written text interacts with accompanying visuals.**' Language works with literacy because knowing how language works helps students produce a wide range of texts with different purposes and audiences and in different modes. The Literature strand works with the Literacy strand because student capabilities are best developed by texts designed primarily for '**aesthetic purposes**' (a questionable claim). Literary texts can be '**reworked**' **in other media or with** '**additional commentaries from different perspectives.**' I cannot be the only reader that finds this section wholly unhelpful and unconvincing and very *post facto*.

Drilling (usually other) People's Children⁸¹

Before proceeding to analyse the three strands in detail, I feel that some introductory comments on the organisation of *The Shape of the Curriculum: English* are vital. The *Shape* begins with the purpose of the document and an Introduction that links it to the broader Australian National Curriculum--how it aligns with a diverse, democratic society in a futures-oriented world, how English has a particular responsibility for language learning as part of 'a renewed national effort' to improve quality and equity (2.4). Good English helps students to participate in society, understand their own cultures and those of others, including Australia's literary heritage and, some would argue, their Judeo-Christian heritage, though this is not named in the English Curriculum. Unexceptionable claims. But compare it with the opening statements of the Ontario English Curriculum. It begins with two quotes from UNESCO on literacy: 'Literacy is about more ore than reading and writing--it is about how we communicate in society. It is about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language and culture' (qtd. in *The Program in English* 1). It goes on to observe that many take literacy for granted, but only those excluded from it 'can best appreciate the notion of "literacy as freedom"' (1). Here literacy is firmly grounded in equity and justice and is located in wider social, cultural and linguistic contexts.

The Ontario Curriculum goes on: 'literacy is a communal project' [that involves teachers, parents, students and schools] but that English is fundamental to the development of these skills:

[w]hen students learn to use language, they do more than master the basic skills. They learn to value the power of language and to use it responsibly. They learn to express feelings and opinions and to support their opinions with sound arguments and evidence from research. They become aware of the many purposes for which language is used and the diverse forms it can take to serve particular purposes and audiences. (1)

⁸¹ A comment by Michael Cathcart on *Books and Arts Daily* on the ABC's Radio National (25 November 2014).

There is much more. As a reader and researcher I find the Ontario Curriculum statements more inclusive, more active, more welcoming, with skills embedded in a theoretical context that explains why students need them and how to develop them effectively--viz: '[r]eading is a complex process that involves the application of various strategies before, during and after reading (it goes on to specify what these are) (15).

The *Shape* follows the Introduction with the Aims of the English Curriculum (3.1), which focus on Standard Australian English and its role in creating social cohesion (Ontario does not need to emphasise this aspect of its curriculum because it acknowledges and respects linguistic difference, because Canada has two national languages, English and French). The Aims single out the 'informed appreciation' of literature for special mention and also the mastery of the written and spoken language forms of schooling and knowledge, which is presumably a reference to the 'genres of power' and genre-based pedagogy (3.1). There follows a list of Key Terms deemed essential for reading the Curriculum. As the reader will have guessed and as will be demonstrated, the key terms need some rewriting to be really helpful and conceptually sound. No rationale is provided for the division of the Curriculum into the three strands, a fact that respondents to the *Trial School Consultation Report* indicated (30). The attempt to clarify the matter in the *Shape* by adding a section on the relationship among the strands did not help. The rest of the document is primarily taken up with explaining the three strands but what is noticeable about the details under each heading is the repetition and intersection among the strands, the lack of a coherent sequence that joins the decimalised list together, often making each item seem randomly generated, and no clear grasp of what function the document wants to perform. Reading, speaking, listening, viewing, creating are skills that make their own demands and they sit awkwardly under the strands. Buried in the *Shape* are some general principles that are also meant to be directives to teachers: literature must be taught across all years of schooling; grammar and 'basics' must be taught cumulatively and explicitly and reinforced across all years of schooling; early reading strategies, including phonics, are vital to success; students must develop a metalanguage to talk about language in general and their own language choices. These are not only directives but in some cases reproaches since it is in these areas that teachers are

presumably lacking. Scattered among the points are rationales that say *why* grammar, literature and early reading strategies are important to learning but surely each principle needs to be separately identified and explained. The types of texts students will study and create are also distributed among the strands because there is so much commonality resulting from the three-strand division. The goals or outcomes of the English learning area are articulated under the strands but deserve a separate identity: students are to become fluent, flexible, critical and adaptable users of language. They need to be able to use language to sustain and evaluate arguments; they must be sensitive to the persuasive and aesthetic purposes of texts. And so on. Hence a theory of textuality emerges from the document, however obscured. The three strand structure is thus one of the causes of confusion and incoherence in the *Shape*.

The Three Strands 1: Language

[H]uman beings live within language as the air they breathe rather than as an instrument they deploy at will.

Fred Lawrence, writing of Gadamer's theory of language, 184

The first problem of the *Shape of the Curriculum: English* is that it fails to provide an adequate definition of language, which undermines the curriculum document. Indeed, the Key Terms list, which appears directly after the Aims, does not define language at all, although it offers definitions of grammar, texts, literacy and literature. 'Language Features' and 'Language Patterns' are entries in the *Glossary* (9) and describe both grammatical features and the language choices that are appropriate to genre, purpose, audience, mode and medium. These are crucial statements that need to be incorporated into the main document. Language in the document is both language in general and the transmission of Standard Australian English, which is meant to promote 'social cohesion' (5.0). In the Aims, students will learn to 'respect the varieties of English and their influence on Standard Australian English' (3.1). Urszula Clark, in her incisive review of England's national English curriculum, draws attention to the lack of a definition of Standard English in its documents and the absence of instructions about how to think of non-standard forms (478). The same is true in the Australian Curriculum, with the qualification that students must learn to 'respect' non-Standard English and to come to understand how its varieties have

influenced Standard English. It is unclear how variety is to be respected since the *Shape* is entirely concentrated on formal English and it requires some linguistic training to be able to evaluate how non-Standard varieties have contributed to SAE, surely the product of a lengthy historical process. Worth quoting are Uccelli's and Snow's questions on this vexed issue: *What is (are) the standard language(s) to be taught at school? What is the best way for students to have access to it (them) in harmonious co-existence with their primary forms of discourse?* (630 [italics original]). Linguistic diversity and flux, though acknowledged, are regarded more as a disadvantage rather than a resource. The Ontario English Curriculum, by contrast, deals with linguistic diversity head on:

Ontario schools have some of the most multilingual populations in the world. . . . [second and additional] language learners bring a rich diversity of background knowledge and experience to the classroom. These students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds not only support their learning in their new environment but also become a cultural asset in the classroom community. (*Some Considerations for Program Learning: Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 and 10--English* 31)

In the Ontario English Curriculum language as a meaning-making system, not just an isolated set of skills, is constantly foregrounded.⁸² If curricula require adequately theorised disciplinary concepts--and it has been argued that they do--then this constitutes a serious deficiency. Respondents in the *Consultation Report* highlighted the insufficiency of any definition of language that did not designate it as a (or the primary) meaning-making system (7): for example, 'Yes, phonics, spelling, punctuation are important but the prime focus for teachers and learners should be on meaning' (22).

The lengthy section on language (5.2 to 5.2.8) is organised around the so-called fundamentals of language: the teaching of phonemics and other early reading and writing strategies, spelling, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary. The document

⁸² The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 and 10 (English) in its introduction makes a clear if lengthy statement on the purposes of language learning that at the same time offers a theory of language and textuality. For example, students understand 'that all texts advance a particular point of view that must be recognized, questioned, assessed and evaluated' (4).

places great emphasis on providing learners with a technical language or metalanguage to talk about language ('how it works') in the conviction that this will translate into '**a capacity for effective listening, speaking, viewing, reading, writing and creating**' [bewilderingly, 'creating,' according to the definition of key terms, is the production of multimodal texts, while 'writing' is the production of print texts] (6). The language about language presumably includes grammatical, punctuational and lexical terms but must also, one assumes, embrace generic and rhetorical terms also, though these are not clearly signalled. It is hammered home that these fundamental skills must be inculcated systematically and developmentally and reinforced at all stages. Oral proficiency (speaking and listening) should also be developed, and the document assumes that a focus on fundamentals will provide the necessary capabilities for such proficiency (not an assumption that the Ontario English Curriculum makes since it includes a lengthy section on oral skills).

There is thus a strong emphasis on the decontextualised 'decoding' aspects of language but as one respondent put it: '[f]ocus on decoding and encoding needs to be augmented with a stronger emphasis on engagement in creative and critical textual practices' (22). Problems became increasingly evident when the document moves from the safe harbour of 'basics' to other forms of textual organisation. First of all, basics and fundamentals are not so basic or fundamental for anyone who has ever taught them or learned them. Because language is so multilayered, many-levelled and integrated, learners must employ many codes and make many choices simultaneously. Kress, in his extensive research into how children learn to read and write, has demonstrated that there is a fraught relationship between sound and image in alphabetic systems and that children do not encounter writing in isolated 'bits' but in meaningful units. This should make us cautious about regarding the acquisition of literacy as direct transcription of sound or as starting with small units (the syllable/the word) and progressing inexorably to more complex structures (Kress, *Literacy in the New Media Age* 61-83; Laura Paterson 480). Hanauer also critiques this division in 'The Problem of Method: A Philosophical Analysis of the Standardized Test of Literacy' (48-58). Seeing as the Curriculum is plainly based on the Knowledge about Language model of the England curriculum it is therefore worth probing what knowledge about language means. Myhill et al. give generous space to this problem in 'Grammar and

the English National Curriculum' (130-47). They distinguish between implicit and explicit metalinguistic knowledge and note that the curriculum values explicit knowledge, defined as 'knowledge that can identify and account for connections and distinctions between different examples of usage, enhance reading and improve writing' (143), or, as the Curriculum puts it, a 'consistent way of understanding and talking about language' (5.2). The authors are cautious about establishing a rigid position when it comes to the debate about whether metalinguistic knowledge actually improves students' reading, writing and speaking; that is, whether 'solitary demonstrations of knowledge' translate into 'linguistic performance' (Van Lier qtd.in Myhill et al. 143-44). Their observations on teaching and writing should receive a hearty welcome from English teachers:

[t]eaching is a complex, multifaceted and situated endeavour which resists simplistic causal explanations between pedagogical activity and learning outcome; equally, writing is perhaps the most complex activity learners undertake, drawing on cognitive, social and linguistic resources. (144)

Metalinguistic knowledge is often reduced to a mastery of grammar but linguistics takes in a far wider knowledge base such as language acquisition, bi- and multilingualism, linguistic anthropology, and so on. Ocelli and Snow proffer a useful list of what linguists think teachers should know about language: how to identify non-standard dialects, language disorders, and second language characteristics; the course of normal language development; the difference between oral and written language; the inevitability of language variation and its connection to identity; a grasp of etymology and morphology in order to explain the meanings of words to students (631-32). These skills seem especially relevant to primary school teachers in order to identify and help students at risk of falling behind but they are valuable across all years of schooling and legitimately constitute knowledge about language.

The difficulty of drawing boundaries around 'knowledge about language' (Myhill et al. 145) is not confined to technical mastery of correct grammar, syntax, semantics, orthography, and punctuation but the employment of this expertise for persuasive *effect* in different modes, contexts and genres for different audiences and purposes, and the ability to reflect on and explain those choices. (This sentence, by the way, cuts through many of the tortured subsections under the Language section.) To

those trained in literary studies knowledge about language must include rhetorical devices and terminology relevant to literature, and, given that English curricula have largely incorporated the disciplinary foci of cultural studies, should embrace terms such as ‘ideology,’ ‘representation,’ and ‘intertextuality’ at senior levels.

Given that curriculum documents claim that they are informed by key theories in the relevant areas, one must surely take into account the work of Halliday and his followers in sociolinguistics (they are listed in the brief bibliography included in the *Literacy across the Curriculum* document, part of the General Capabilities section of the Curriculum). Halliday makes the by now obvious point that language is social and cultural--obvious, but with significant repercussions. Language contains meaning potential and is a meaning resource (*Language as Social Semiotic* 12). He identifies three elements that link language to the social and to wider cultural functions: language as knowledge, language as behaviour and language as art (*Social Semiotic* 31-32) and states that ‘speaking and understanding language . . . always takes place in a context’: [w]e do not simply ‘know’ our mother tongue as an abstract system of vocal signals, or as if it was some sort of a grammar book with a dictionary attached’ (*Social Semiotic* 13). He calls his system *functional* because [m]ore important than the grammatical shape of what a child hears, however, is the fact that it is functionally related to observable features of the situation around him [sic]’ (18). He strongly rejects the idea that the process of learning language is ‘language acquisition’ since the phrase signals that language is some commodity to be acquired (16). And far from regarding language as a set of isolated components--syllables, words, sentences--Halliday sees it as working both upwards and downwards simultaneously from the social to the lexicogrammatical (48): ‘the linguistic system . . . is made up of a few very large sets of options, each set having strong internal constraints (such as an option in the semantic system) and weak external constraints (such as the social). Thus language is an interlocking series of functions. By this reckoning ‘text’ [his preferred term, rather than ‘texts’ or ‘a text’] is a semantic unit, not a grammatical one. The concept “text” has no connotations of size; it may refer to speech act, speech event, topic unit, exchange, episode, narrative and so on’ (60). It is a semantic unit realised in sentences (135). According to Halliday, texts are highly predictable because their linguistic components are correspondingly predictable, which makes them socially

intelligible. As we shall see, the *Shape* is not good on text although text in the *Framing Paper* is better on 'text.o Text takes in a wide variety of texts, complicated by the digital and multimodal, and thus it is useful in including the many different types of texts students encounter. For Halliday the situational and social contexts of texts are inseparable from texts themselves, since language is determined by the functions it performs. In order to capture this social function Halliday employs the terms 'field,' 'tenor' and 'mode.' The field refers to particular purposes language is serving in a given text; tenor refers to the interrelations between the participants; and mode refers to medium (e.g., spoken or written), semiotic function (e.g., persuasive, didactic), and genre (e.g., fabliaux, detective fiction) (61-4; 133-4).

Hence Halliday's social semiotic theory of language casts doubt on the concept of teaching isolated elements of language. Vocabulary is a case in point. According to 5.2.5, expanding students' vocabulary will develop their '**literal and inferential comprehension**' to enable them to cope with '**increasingly sophisticated meanings across various curriculum areas.**' True. A wide and expanding vocabulary that introduces students to new and unfamiliar words is a vital and useful resource and not just for comprehension, since having words at their command assists readers and writers to adapt their own language to particular social functions, 'voices' and genres, distinguish fine shades of meaning, to make the stylistic choices that are to be valued and encouraged in students and to build up a lexicon of theoretical terms appropriate to particular disciplines. But to link comprehension just to vocabulary is flawed. The entire teaching of language in all its aspects promotes students' comprehension and vocabulary is a part of that. And what is comprehension? Yes, it is the ability to decode texts, to draw argumentative inferences and to analyse style, although this, as we have demonstrated, hardly exhausts the functions of language or texts.

In 5.2.6, which begins with grammar (it's useful and important), the statement is made that '**students need to develop foundational knowledge about what constitutes appropriateness, accuracy, fluency, and confidence in understanding, speaking, reading and writing English.**' Apart from the fact that confidence can only be the consequence of *mastering* skills, what is foundational knowledge about such matters? And surely students need to *use* language

appropriately, not just develop knowledge *about* accuracy and fluency. We learn a few sentences later that appropriateness refers to audience and readership, though only in this instance to grammatical structures and word choices. In the same section reference is made to ‘**text patterns**’ but we don’t know what these are unless we consult the *Glossary*. Sentences and paragraphs surely, but are ‘text patterns’ a reference to genre or conventions or medium or patterns relating to grammar and syntax? In the *Glossary* text patterns closely relate to Language Features and Patterns. This should drive us back to the definition of ‘texts’ at 4.4. Texts use forms and conventions, we are told, to communicate effectively for different audiences and purposes. True. Although, as Halliday has demonstrated, writers don’t just choose a rigid, formulaic set of conventions to communicate. People *use* texts, and communication is far more dialogical than the statement suggests. Texts are written, spoken, multimodal and digital and provide ‘**opportunities for important learning about aspects of human experience and about aesthetic value.**’ Is this a veiled reference to literary texts? Or a frank acknowledgment that texts of all kinds can provide such learning? The next sentence tells us that student classroom and assessment tasks include literary, information, media, every day and workplace texts, which throws the net wider than literature, but is not an exhaustive list and one that leaves the reader puzzling whether all texts without distinction provide opportunities for learning about aesthetic values and human experience. And what is the distinction between media and information texts? ‘Information’ as a term applied to texts needs a cautionary warning attached, since ‘information’ is not a neutral term and the idea that some types of texts unproblematically convey information needs probing because cultural studies approaches regard texts as inherently mediated. ‘Information,’ as currently used, is a relatively recent formation, the product of a computer age and the tendency to reify ‘information’ as a distinguishing feature of some texts and increasingly to identify information with internet genres does not stand up. In a futures-oriented curriculum, information must be considered within the logics of technocapitalism and the network enterprise (Castells qtd. in Newton 6). The *Shape* document continually sets traps for itself that could have been avoided. Obviously Hallidayan linguistics is helpful here since it cuts through this confusion by emphasising the social and interactive nature of texts and thus undermines the

division of the Curriculum into strands. However, some of the wordy confusion in this section may also be a result of employing the text types based on Hallidayan linguistics and singled out as school genres, for example, in *Language, Literacy and Literature*. The Queensland Studies Authority K-6 English syllabus (2009) identifies the following list of factual text types: factual description, information report, procedure, procedural recount, factual recount, explanation, exposition, discussion (70), narrative, personal recount, description, book reviews, etc. These types correspond with those in Simpson et al. but are not completely identical with them. Are they identical with 'genre'? Obviously text types can occur in a range of genres, modes and media, so not really. And the types are defined in sometimes curious ways. Explanation's social purpose is 'to explain scientifically how technological and natural phenomena come into being' (70). But explanation can be logical and philosophical: for example, explaining reasons for an ethical decision, or is this better filed under 'discussion' or some other text type? A respondent to the *Consultation Report* cannily observed that the 'use of the term "text types" (which has specific connotations in some states) as opposed to "texts" suggests that students will focus on formulaic writing rather than subversions and experimentation in the construction of texts' (30). Another wondered whether 'those texts that are valued by one element of society [should] be mandated as the texts that are to be valued by all?' (27).

In the *Glossary* there are entries under Text, Text Navigation, Text Processing Strategies, Text Structure and Types of Texts. We are not offered a more convincing definition of 'text' but we learn how readers process texts and the '**ways in which information** [only information?] **is organised in different types of texts**' including layout, paragraphs, topic sentences, etc. Texts are classified into imaginative, informative and persuasive, although it is admitted that texts can inhabit more than one category. But this concession does not help to clear up the confusions that the tripartite classification helps to create. News bulletins, scientific texts, instructions and directions, and laws and rules are included in the *Shape* under the information category. One may reasonably question whether news bulletins are transparently informative, while laws set limits to and constrain behaviour and are constantly subject to interpretation by the highest courts in the land. Information is not a separate, isolated series of facts divorced from the contexts of knowledge.

Perhaps a better way to approach textuality is the Four Resources Model on the Education Queensland website under the Learning Place (www.learningplace.com.au). The Four Resources Model (Luke and Freebody) places what students *do* with texts at the centre of the model. They perform the roles of code breaker, meaning maker, texts user and text analyst. The emphasis on students in this model is welcome. The models are non-hierarchical and are used across all levels of schooling in all key learning areas and can be applied to multimodal and digital texts. It is the absence of active agents in the Curriculum that gives it such a lifeless quality. The Four Resources Model completely avoids the persuasive, informative and imaginative distinctions and focuses on the decoding of texts, the social and cultural production of texts, the beliefs and values in the text and the reading practices activated by the text and contexts. Texts, in this model, are not seen just as pre-existing social phenomena, but as the result of choices made by writers or creators of texts. In the Curriculum we lack any appreciation that texts are central to the generation and exchange of meaning and are governed, in Fiske's words, 'by a network of codes working on a number of levels and [are] thus capable of producing a variety of meanings according to the socio-cultural experience of the reader' (317-18), by these means creating the conceptual repertoire from which meanings are made. Luke and Freebody put it very well when they remind the reader that texts are always motivated--'there is no neutral position from which a text can be read or written' (193)--that reading and writing are social activities: texts are something written by someone to someone (193) and, we might add, for some purpose. Texts are institutionally and culturally located and generically coded and thus students need to gain, however gradually, an understanding of how texts work in order to be able to analyse and interpret texts and construct their own. Students also need to know that texts are intertextually related and thus cannot be discussed in isolation since they share generic conventions, narrative and linguistic strategies and shared ways of talking about the world. If students advance in such understanding, the issues of purpose, audience, stylistic and intellectual choices (such as order and structure), text patterns, and the selection of 'voice' will fall into place and the section on language will be rendered a great deal more cogent.

Some respondents to the *Framing Paper Consultation Report: English* rightly observe that the concept of language as a meaning-making system is notably absent in

the *Shape* paper and, as has been demonstrated, this deficiency vitiates the entire section on language, including the organisation of and encounters with language in texts and the cultivation of rhetorical choices that will enable students to write with ‘precision and imagination’ (5.2.6). Individuals are not the origin of language and texts, though they can operate upon them. Texts carry the values, attitudes and beliefs of a culture, which is why, for example, the words ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are not neutral descriptors but freighted with ideas about the nature of gender and what constitutes masculinity and femininity. Without a grasp of how language works that moves beyond what is regarded as ‘foundational’ in the *Shape* document students have no way to think about purposes, audiences, genre and rhetorical choices.

By way of contrast, take the *Victoria Certificate of English Study 2012-2016 Unit 1: Language and Communication: ‘Students learn that language is a highly elaborate system of signs and conventions, and that it is a meaning-making system both arbitrary and rule-governed . . .’* (14). Moreover,

[s]tudents learn that language choices are always influenced by the situational and cultural contexts in which they occur, and are based on the conventional understandings and traditions that shape and reflect our view of the world. They come to understand that language is never a neutral and transparent means of representing reality. (14)

There is nothing jargon-filled or new about the unit’s section on the nature and function of language. This being said, a reader is left to wonder why such statements or others like them could not have been employed in the key documents of the English Curriculum—the *Framing Paper* and the *Shape*.

Ironically, Kress, whose decades-long work on literacy in its many manifestations has been of major significance in the field, worries that ‘language’ as a concept has lost its usefulness, given its foundation in linguistics, which assumes a ‘stable (and largely autonomous) system of elements, categories, and rules of combination’ (*Multiliteracies* 155). He concedes that such an argument may seem eccentric but contends that it has real world effects, such as equating correctness with social order and authority (*Literacy in the New Media Age* 32), although he admits that we probably still need to retain some notion of ‘language.’ But Kress’s views do not excuse curriculum writers from the task of grappling with theories of language

themselves; nor must we accept the position that it is too difficult to incorporate subtle ideas in the simple, non-technical language which was stipulated in the brief for curriculum writers.

The term ‘multiliteracies’ emerged from the discussions of the New London Group in 1994, which aimed to comprehend the new literacy order and its effects: ‘the multiplicity of communications channels and media; and ‘the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity’ (Cope and Kalantzis 5). Multiliteracies is a concept posited on the ‘multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning-making’ (5). There is a danger that the metaphoric extension of the word ‘literacy’ to cover everything from visual literacy to emotional literacy can drain literacy of its meaning and be used both for conservative and progressive purposes. Consider the phrase ‘cultural literacy,’ which has been marshalled to argue that students need to be taught ‘our’ (read: Judeo-Christian and Classical literary and artistic) inheritance along the lines of Allan Bloom’s bestseller *The Closing of the American Mind*, a narrowing attributed by the author to trendy educationalist theories, yet another episode in the *trahison des clercs* which threatens to undermine the Western cultural heritage; this in a global era of increasingly multicultural states, states which provide the contexts in which new global and national curricula are being developed. ‘Media literacy’ has gained currency as a way of justifying the need for students to understand how media work or work upon them. The *Information Sheet* for English mentions that Finland includes media literacy as part of its curriculum (so does the Ontario Curriculum, which has a separate Media Studies series of units) and considering that Subject English has been teaching this skill for decades, it might have proved useful to consider multimodal texts under this rubric.

Literature: Understanding, Appreciating, Responding to, Analysing and Creating Literature

The teaching of English is too closely tied to the teaching of literature; too much emphasis is being placed on literary and creative objectives.

Discussion paper, McGaw/Beazley Report (1984)

Is a literature-based English program the best option for preparing students in the late twentieth-century for the range and diversity of literacy practices that will be demanded of them in higher education and in the workplace?

Annette Patterson, 'Occasions for Reading: Some Thoughts on Secondary English Syllabus Reform,' 2

In a recent visit to a local café I encountered a parent, engaged in animated conversation with the owner, who was making a passionate plea for children to be exposed to literature, especially the classics. I joined in the conversation and agreed that it is right that they should be, though I expressed my reservations about an excessively formal approach to teaching literature in primary school, as envisaged by Australian Curriculum.⁸³ It therefore comes as welcome news in the *Shape* to discover that enjoyment is one of the ways in which students will experience literature, as well as **appreciating, analysing, understanding and creating it**. The document notes literature's ability to create imaginative worlds and aesthetic and other experiences, such that literature becomes the realm of the aesthetic, the experiential, the personal, the enjoyable and the cultural whereas other texts presumably do not offer these pleasures or insights, or not to the same degree. The fusion of the aesthetic and the experiential may constitute an Eliotish longing for a lost unity of sensibility offered by literature in promoting an ethical and national vision (Armstrong 17-49). Literature also conveys '**information and emotion**' (5.1.1.). Well, Melville's *Moby Dick* offers an abundance and for many readers an overabundance of detail about whaling and such information is crucial to the novel's epic sweep and its sense that we are dealing here with a whole way of life, but information, itself a loaded term, is not the novel's primary purpose. Emotion goes without saying. Now that whaling is reviled around the world *Moby Dick* takes on fresh meanings--the *Pequod* up against *The Sea Shepherd*. The definition in 4.4 states: '**literature refers to the text across a range of cultural contexts and past and present works that are valued for their form and style and are recognised as having enduring or artistic value.**' A clumsy

⁸³ I may be doing the writers of the F-10 curriculum (Revised edition 2015) an injustice in the sense that the desire to be precise and specific at all levels and across Literacy, Literature and Language strands leads, in my view, to overly detailed tasks. I invite the reader to examine the Sequence of content under literature.

definition by anybody's reckoning. The distinction between enduring *or* artistic value is bewildering unless we assume that works can be enduring because of their cultural value, not necessarily their artistic mastery (for example, a rediscovered lost play or poem by Shakespeare might turn out to be inferior artistically but that would not diminish its cultural, canonical and economic value). The phrase 'cultural contexts' is employed but, puzzlingly, not in the section on language or in the definition of the word 'texts' already discussed. Later on (5.3.3) we are informed that students will reflect on the processes by which some works identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and contexts (3), but 'reflect on' does not necessarily imply that students will be encouraged to reflect *critically* on this process. Turner's and others' work on the emergence of literature as a disciplinary object of study in the nineteenth century is part of the process by which evaluative criticism of literary texts *creates* literature through the process of evaluating it. Literature is not a stable category. It is bracing to remember that dramatists in sixteenth-century London habitually avoided appending their names to such degrading hackwork as plays whereas today even mediocre plays from the period are canonical (though usually unread and unperformed). Much of the work on the history of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama conducted by critics since the 80s undertook to restore its performance and cultural contexts and uncertain textual history and practices, and to explore the contradictions between its once marginal status and contemporary canonicity. This was the background that informed my reading of *Dead White Males* and its gender troubles. Nor is it a historical mistake to value the plays now when certain elites and even the playwrights themselves at the time did not. And let's not forget that sixteenth-century curricula compelled schoolboys and undergraduates obsessively to analyse and imitate what in the twentieth-century West we now regard as literature--the Greek and Latin classics.

Of course literature is difficult to define because, as Moon remarks, with dry understatement, that [i]n modern Western cultures, what counts as literature is currently a matter of much debate' ('Literature' 79-81). McDonald charts the way in which literature as constituted in the earlier twentieth century can no longer be sustained as a 'clearly demarcatable object possessing a definable essence.' He calls this 'sceptical antiessentialism' (214) and traces its intellectual journey through the

work of Barthes, Derrida, Bourdieu and Eagleton. McDonald also labels debates over what is literature? sterile polemics, but not because antiessentialist critics diminish the power and possibilities of language but because the essentialist argument is so clearly obsolete, except in the minds of those for whom 'literature' is devoid of institutional, social and historical contexts. The Australian Curriculum: English is another site in which 'literature' is being constructed, protected, generated and reproduced.

McDonald acknowledges the pressures being placed on the concept of the literary by multiculturalism and 'new technologies of inscription' (226). These pressures are readily discernible in the English Curriculum; for example, the rise of so-called 'theory' roughly coincides with the advance of critical literacy as an overarching concept in English curricula. In some ways it might be better not to define 'literature' at all because the category is now so fluid, but if it is one of the three legs that support the English Curriculum, then an attempt must be made. What is included under the category 'literature?' **Novels, poetry, short stories, plays, fiction for children and young adults, multimodal texts such as film and a variety of non-fiction.'**

The list reflects the various iterations of state curricula for English and Literature which incorporate a wide variety of texts and modes. Morgan and Misson describe the present situation in Australia thus: 'what is meant by literature include[s] movies, TV programs, hypertexts, popular publishing (comics, magazines, newspapers) (xiii) and they refuse to become 'embroiled in the often pointless discussion of what might or might not be considered literature' (xiii). But it leaves the category 'literature' in the Curriculum indistinct. Film has achieved an almost canonical status because it is one of the major art forms of the twentieth century; however television may claim similar entitlements to artistic merit. Some non-fiction, past and present, possesses high artistic value and counts as literature: Montaigne's *Essays* or Capote's true crime masterpiece *In Cold Blood*, for example. In other words, many genres, modes and text types contain artistic value and there is no reason why, when considering the significance of digital and multimodal texts in the Curriculum, this cannot be acknowledged instead of making literature a catch-all term. Although Misson and Morgan believe what 'counts' as literature in the wider sense has been adopted by state curricula and now the Australian Curriculum, others disagree. Bantick, a senior teacher and frequent commentator in *The Australian*, complains that in literature

units students too often encounter only the film and TV adaptation of the book and not the book itself ('Open Book: How Reading Better Literature Makes Us Better Readers of People' 16). Considering that such an emphasis is placed on literature in the Curriculum as a separate strand and discipline, the writers should have addressed the issue even if the debate among teachers is muted. Respondents to the *Consultation Report* sought clarification on this point, not a mischievous request if the Curriculum seeks to revalue literature.

Beavis, in her perceptive account of the role of multimodal tests in the curriculum, observes: '[q]uestions about the place of literary texts in contemporary curriculum are at their most intense in relation to classic texts' ('English in the Digital Age: Making English Digital' 26). She sees the choice of literary texts, along with literacy, as shorthand 'for a whole set of public debates about the nature of the subject and its role in the production and maintenance of particular kinds of values, citizens and society' (26). For Beavis it also remains important for students to engage with texts beyond the Anglo-Celtic tradition and to pose critical questions of the (canonical) texts they read. She sees no reason to exclude them from the Curriculum but wants to re-examine their function in a digital age (25).

The two justifications given for studying literature are that it enlarges students' experience and enables them to gain a greater depth of understanding about how language can be used to '**create particular emotional, intellectual or [and?] philosophical effects**' (5.3.1). It is unclear in this rather pompous statement what intellectual and philosophical *effects* are but many texts can be used to advance arguments, if this is what is meant, or advance arguments persuasively. The section then goes on to outline the characteristics of '**distinctively literary approaches to texts**' (or perhaps the distinctive approaches needed to analyse literary texts).

Students must develop understandings about:

1. the social, historical and cultural contexts of texts.

Yes, they must, but why? And why only in the case of literary texts? This is not a 'distinctively literary approach.'

2. a text's formal and aesthetic qualities

Literary texts are designed to exploit the aesthetic qualities of language but formal properties are common to all texts. Does the phrase 'formal qualities' refer to generic

conventions such as narrative, dialogue, character, etc., and are formal and aesthetic qualities related? 'Aesthetic' has made something of a comeback in the *Shape* documents, perhaps because of the privileging of literature. The appearance of the aesthetic is welcome but ought not to be confined to literary texts. Halliday makes the point that language as literary text relates to a literary universe of discourse containing ideological and stylistic assumptions (*Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*.137-8) and he wonders how the teaching of literature can be divorced from the study of language in general. Halliday regards texts and literature in particular as a gift that enriches those engaged in the exchange--a form of potlatch (140), which nicely evades the market logic that seeps into the Curriculum in which being literate and numerate makes the student fit to engage in commodity exchange and to market themselves. In addition, following Halliday's lead, it is worth observing that good teachers see their work as a form of gift, not a commercial exchange, and if students achieve well, are enthusiastic and engaged then the gift is returned.

3. ways in which argument and viewpoint are presented and supported through a text

Does 'viewpoint' equal 'point of view' or does it mean 'opinion'? During their study of literature students are frequently called on to answer questions on point of view: the nature and choice of the narrative voice, the point of view of particular characters, and the distinction between the narrator and implied author, which cropped up in 'voice.' Since there is never a neutral position from which any text can be created and received, all texts must adopt a speaking position. Perhaps we could lose 'viewpoint' completely. 'Argument' is a term that floats around in all the Curriculum documents and '**arguing more convincingly and reasoning more carefully**' (5.2.6) is one of the assumed results of teaching grammar more actively. That students should improve their argumentative skills is incontrovertible. Without doubt, literary texts propound arguments, directly or indirectly--we have only to recall an eighteenth-century philosophical novel such as Rousseau's *La nouvelle Heloise*--and a literary genre such as lyric poetry, which is usually seen, falsely, as the pure expression of personal emotion, incorporates arguments, sometimes of an ironic and tongue-in-cheek kind, as in *carpe diem* poems, made hugely popular, for a brief moment, by *Dead Poets*

Society. However, care must be exercised when applying the word ‘argument’ to literary texts. For example, *Hamlet* contains arguments propounded by individual characters which are more or less persuasive and can be analysed using the techniques of formal argument or dialectic, especially since these were learned through rhetorical exercises, such as Cicero’s orations, and which would routinely involve young men being trained in taking one side or another in an example drawn from ancient history, as Shakespeare so brilliantly demonstrates in *Julius Caesar*. In fact the relationship between rhetoric and early modern drama is a topic much neglected in the literary analysis of Shakespeare’s plays in the classroom. Moreover, the beliefs, values and attitudes of a narrator or an implied author constitute a form of argument that connects them to cultural contexts and can be persuasive even if they are not explicit.

4. how a text’s features reflect the perspectives from which it can be interpreted

A sensitive reader may be tempted to give up at this point. Is ‘perspective’ a synonym for point of view? Do textual choices position the reader in certain ways? Is this an overdue admission that texts have multiple meanings and that individual readers or groups of readers can interpret them differently in different circumstances and times? Or that different groups of readers bring particular reading strategies and practices to bear on texts, also context dependent.

5. How different perspectives are associated with different uses of language

Does this mean that writers choose language according to purpose, genre, mode, medium and audience in order to create meanings? They should, and literature draws attention to the nature of these choices by its artful and self-conscious use of language and sometimes, in addition, by critiquing the dominant discourses at work in the culture and, where relevant, the impoverished, jargon-filled and facile uses of language encountered every day and everywhere. In this respect, Gadamer’s contention that the modernist lyric poem ‘operate[s] at a maximum distance from everyday meaning and language’ is surely suggestive (Baker, Jr. 153). Gadamer is not the only theorist to privilege the modernist lyric in this way but so-called ‘postmodernist’ poetry often appropriates wholesale the discourses that circulate in popular culture and on the internet in order to bring them into ironic focus.

Moving on, we discover that studying literature reveals **‘the imaginative potential of language including how that relates to cinema, television, and multimedia’** (5.3.2). The reader is unsure whether, as the definition of literature in the *Shape* document asserts, these media are to be filed under literary texts or whether the imaginative potential of language can be exploited in them. The uncertainty about what counts as literature is compounded, not clarified. Literature helps to develop **‘ethical and critical reflection’** (5.3.2) presumably because literary texts adopt ethical positions which can be analysed, evaluated or contested (is this critical reflection or does critical reflection extend to the analysis of the text’s formal, linguistic and aesthetic qualities?).

Literature is also explicitly the site where **‘personal, cultural and national identities are shaped’** (5.3.2) but the implications of this statement are not explored. However, there is a segue from national identities to the reading of Australian literary texts, mandated in the Curriculum, and the obligation that students acquire **‘an increasingly informed appreciation of the place of Australian literature among other literary traditions’** (5.3.2), so there is a clear link between national identities and Oz Lit. Of course students should read Australian literature, but, as Robert Dixon, in his comments on the place of Australian literature in the Australian Curriculum, remarks, it is no easy task to explain to students what constitutes an Australian literary *tradition* (n. pag.), let alone what constitute other literary traditions, such as, one imagines, the British tradition Australia inherited and by which it still in some sense defines itself, if only by contrast.

Nonetheless, a focus on Australian literature brings with it exclusions that must be addressed because of our ethnically diverse demographics and our position in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore students must engage with Indigenous oral traditions and contemporary Indigenous literature as well as fostering an interest in **‘literary traditions and expressions of other nations in the region’** (5.3.2). ‘Expressions’ is vague, but what are the literary traditions of our region and how can students engage with them? The word ‘literary’ may be inappropriate to all cultures at all times, but no one would deny, for example, that countries such as China, Japan and India have vigorous literary cultures that can be accessed in translation. However, it is not the work of a moment to incorporate these convincingly into an English curriculum,

though it is surely feasible to select the work of Australian writers from immigrant and Indigenous backgrounds, since there are plenty to choose from. The *Consultation Report* authors summarise the responses to the issues raised by Australian literary texts in the following terms: there is debate over what constitutes 'Australian literature,' especially contemporary Australian literature, and commented on how much of our traditional literature is in fact 'culturally outdated' (25). Noel Pearson, in his *Quarterly Essay*, gives an eloquent account of his reading of the canon as a child, Trollope, Dickens, Wells, and how shocked he was by their ruthless view of 'savages,' who must die out or be exterminated (9-12). He wants his own children to read the 'classics,' but recognises the challenges they now present when Indigenous people encounter such texts. Therefore one cannot talk of literary traditions without squarely facing these problems. 'Fostering an interest in' other traditions demands a re-evaluation of 'literary' and 'tradition' and the concept of authorship, since stories can be collectively owned and passed on through those culturally sanctioned to tell them. Kerry Mallan, in 'How Children's Literature Shapes Attitudes to Asia' (*The Conversation* 9 December 2013), speaks of the work of the Asian-Australian Children's Literature and Publishing project which 'documents the different ways in which Australian children's literature has dealt with Asia since multiculturalism became government policy in 1972.' There are resources for teachers to draw on but these are still limited because they so rarely include Asian characters in young adult fiction.

Christopher Bantick, a regular contributor to *The Australian's* commentary pages, outlines the issues that trouble those who worry about the place of literature in the Curriculum. In a recent piece in that newspaper, 'Open Book: How Reading Better Literature Makes us Better Readers of People,' Bantick makes a distinction between 'serious literary fiction' and airport fiction and even Australian young adult fiction, most of which he dismisses as 'reductive.' He argues that reading literary fiction creates more empathy and encourages emotional intelligence, and cites a recent study which shows that people demonstrate more empathy after reading literary fiction than they do after reading popular fiction, but without scrutinising the results of the experiment one is hard put to evaluate its worth. He also observes that many trainee English teachers are not wide readers and that they tend as a result to teach the books they studied as undergraduates. There is more than a grain of truth in this criticism.

Bantick's critique highlights the divisions that have now opened up between the 'classics' and genre fiction, divisions that Dolin identifies. But Bantick does not speak for all teachers, nor should he. He is a senior teacher in an elite school. His opinions are not just to be dismissed but they do not reflect the lived realities of English teachers in poor or marginalised schools.

Bantick then makes a distinction between 'reading' and 'reading well': reading well involves not only empathy but attention to style, symbolism, etc., and not the mere consumption of bestsellers. Again, a reasonable point, but a position that firmly reinstates the high/low culture divide. He believes that teachers who cravenly cater to the taste of their students are denying them the chance to enrich their lives. Bantick laments that in the AC:E children, especially in the early years, can get away with reading 'soft literature.' Here Bantick reiterates a belief that in Graff's dissenting opinion is demonstrably false--that 'only the best literature gives true edification, [which] has justified the privileging of canonical classics in the curriculum' (66). As evidence of the unsatisfied demand for 'good' literature, Bantick proffers as partial proof the fact that his new course on the Western canon, being offered to clever Year 10 students, is oversubscribed. Never mind that he is a senior literature teacher at a Melbourne Anglican boys' grammar school, whose students are hardly representative of the general secondary population. Bantick is particularly concerned that students do not have enough opportunities to study Australian literature and believes that at Year 8 pupils should read one Shakespeare, one Dickens and one nineteenth-century Australian novel, otherwise they will be denied their [whose?] literary heritage: the Australian literary tradition and Australian canon. Though he may find the English Curriculum wanting, I believe that curriculum writers have responded to calls for a renewed emphasis on literature and literary traditions, including the Australian literary tradition. While it is true that, as Robert Dixon observes in his remarks on the new Curriculum, that there may be less space in the content for the study of Oz Lit than at first appears, the rhetoric is in place in the *Shape*. But perhaps enough is never enough for some.

Speaking of the England national curriculum, Walsh sounds a warning note about allowing English curricula to become part of a nationalist project and also doubts whether gestures towards 'literature from other cultures' or respect for the

diversity of English(es) is anything more than a politically correct nod towards difference, something educators would do well to remember when reading Australia's Curriculum (qtd. in Doecke, Parr and Sawyer 65). For Bantick, literature from other cultures is clearly not a priority, which is why, unless teachers work hard to make it a one, it will seem another empty gesture.⁸⁴

Mention tradition and cultural heritage and canons are not far behind. According to the *Shape* 5.3.6, in senior years students will be able to analyse **'historical genres (plays? novels? poems? epics?) and literary traditions of Australian literature and world literature and contemporary texts,'** a wildly and foolishly ambitious statement. The artificial separation of contemporary texts from Australian and world literature is peculiar unless 'contemporary texts' hints at media texts, and the expansion of regional literatures into world literatures is bizarre and unhelpful to teachers. The insistence on 'literary traditions' demonstrates either that the writers have not thought intensely about what a literary tradition is or that the expression is simply a fancy way of saying that students should study canonical texts. Walsh demonstrates how in the UK cultural heritage approaches to literature cannot avoid the results of imperialism and cautions against trying to incorporate 'literature from other cultures' as mere gestures towards diversity, a trap into which the National English Curriculum promptly falls (60). Michael Gove, the ex-Tory Secretary of State for Education, who studied literature at Oxford, feels called upon to intervene in curricula and recently questioned text choices for middle school pupils, deploring the selection of American rather than British novels, one contentious example being his objection to Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. He disapproves of the absence on reading lists of authors like Pope and Dryden and seems to want curricula to pass the best-of-British test. Debates over reading lists never go anywhere much because no one agrees on what canonical texts should receive the nod while teachers are torn asunder by their instinct to choose texts appropriate to their students' ability and cultural background and their need to satisfy national directives.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ The Ontario English Curriculum has an optional unit on Canadian Literature, but the syllabus makes clear that the choice of texts must reflect the multicultural makeup of the nation.

⁸⁵ Canons, as we know, are constructions. For example, the canon of First World War writers was not firmed up until the 60s, particularly through Paul Fussell's volume *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Canons go back to biblical texts, of course.

It turns out that senior students ‘**will apply their knowledge of language to literary criticism, [literary?] history and informed appreciation as a means to understand what is important to them in their lives now and in the future.**’ As American soldiers used to say during the Vietnam War, when confronted by an impossible mission, good luck with that! Literary criticism has been central to specialised literature courses in high school, although one has to wonder whether all senior students need demonstrate their proficiency in it. As Misson and Morgan rightfully observe: ‘“literature” is dependent on literary criticism, which has created it, rather than criticism being the servant of literary texts’ (7), just as the philosophical discipline of aesthetics, developed in the eighteenth century, helped generate the category called ‘art.’⁸⁶ Once again literature is caught up in technologies of the self as it becomes a means by which subjectivities can be shaped ethically, emotionally and aesthetically.

The section on literature is therefore unconvincing and repetitive and veers from literature defined as works of enduring value (‘**why literature *in some form* [my italics] has persisted in mattering to individuals and cultures**’ [5.3.3]) and literature as incorporating media texts, possibly of enduring or aesthetic value. ‘In some form’ may be a phrase meant to signal inclusivity--for example to bring oral cultures within the definition of literature--but why not clarify these matters. Since literature is judged by its aesthetic qualities, it still leaves teachers to work out what texts to include for study, especially for younger students. Does the *Harry Potter* series fit the bill, even if some critics think the books shabbily written and therefore undeserving of the label ‘literature’? Christopher Bantick probably thinks not. Literature is thus something of a timeless pleasure dome, an opportunity to undertake ethical and critical thinking, a source of imagination, creativity and experience. There is no doubt that literature is all of these things and that consequently language and literacy seem dull by comparison, deprived of excitement and interest. There is a debilitating theoretical confusion between the analytical tools needed to appraise any text and those required to analyse a literary text, perhaps to police the boundaries

⁸⁶ For an overview of aesthetics and art see the *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, edited by Gaut and Lopez.

between literature and other text types because literature is granted such a privileged position. The section on literature is muddled and unbalanced and is also too long because of the writers' concern to cover all bases and constantly to remind readers how vital literature is to the Curriculum. Teachers understand that Australia is a multicultural society and can be professionally trusted to select texts that mirror that diversity if they are encouraged and helped to do so. Conceivably, though, teachers are not the principal audience. There is a reader over one's shoulder (Kevin Donnelly?): those who need to be assured that literature has reclaimed its rightful place at the heart of the English Curriculum.

In the finale to the literature section, the document asserts that the study of literature will better prepare those who wish to undertake literature courses at university because the English Curriculum '**will connect more directly with university studies,**' if universities still offer these courses, and increasingly literature courses in Australia are under financial pressure at universities, as are the humanities in general. The integration of literature into every aspect of the English Curriculum may be an acknowledgement that specialised literary study at secondary and tertiary level is under stress, with fewer students choosing to undertake it but it will not necessarily create new markets for tertiary literary study. Placing greater emphasis on literary techniques and traditions will not of itself turn this around. Literature has to come alive and English teachers are well-equipped to make this happen, though teachers, as usual, do not seem to be a resource for the Curriculum. The document thus makes a link between Subject English and the discipline of English as it has been understood in universities in the twentieth century but literature in the academy is now more likely to appear under other rubrics, such as cultural studies, or in combination with areas such as media studies or theatre studies. In fact the confusion in the *Shape* document over what is included under 'literature' is precisely because disciplinary boundaries have altered. Moreover, Subject English helps to prepare students for these areas of study, though curriculum writers have been compelled to adopt a narrow disciplinary focus on literature. In a recent issue of the *Modern Language Association* journal, Levine points out the 'social marginality of literary study' and finds that the decline in the market value of literary study is long-term (171). Regrettable or not, this renders the connection between Subject English and the

discipline of literature at universities more problematic, which also casts something of a pall over teacher training, since fewer English teachers will be able to undertake specialised literature units.

The question remains: will the spotlight on literature do literature or students any favours? In primary school young people should enjoy reading and writing stories and poems just as they enjoy a range of texts and activities, but a constant harping on literary techniques will soon take the fun out of it. Not that young students cannot be taught to think about the way language works--obviously they can--but a heavy-handed stress on 'literature' is entirely unnecessary. As students move into high school it is appropriate that they should encounter and enjoy literary texts, though not to the exclusion of other text types and with sensitive reference to the needs of particular cohorts. Nor should the impression be given that literary texts require such specialised reading techniques that they demand a separate pedagogy. I would deny that students have hitherto been deprived of literature in schools and I suspect that the ado about literature is more about its perceived loss of status in English curricula because a) there is competition from media and digital texts b) theories of interpretation have undergone disciplinary transformation c) a focus on workplace and vocational literacy during the 90s stressed competency-based standards, except for those elite students for whom literary study was felt to be suitable, a situation that the new Curriculum, rightfully, tries to remedy. Goodwyn notes that in Britain English teachers still prefer to see themselves as literature teachers, not drill sergeants, since one of the reasons they had entered the profession was to pass on their enthusiasm for the subject ('The Status of Literature . . .' 18-27). The same can be said of many Australian teachers even if they are quite prepared to see literacy training among their duties. The Australian English Curriculum has at least ensured that literature will be central to all English classrooms, though whether to the detriment or advantage of literature remains to be seen.

The conclusion to the Literature strand states this strand will furnish a **'systematic program of study in literature . . . and will 'engage students in an increasingly systematic understanding of the creative process of composition.'** In addition students will learn how **'those processes have come about and . . . why societies have recognised their value'** (8.3). These statements point to some kind of

historical induction into why cultures value the aesthetic in general and literature in particular, and the word 'systematic' implies that teaching literature is at present more of a hit and miss affair and that perhaps students require more explicit instruction in using traditional rhetorical devices, such as figurative language.

No reference is made in the literature section to the reading practices that have been brought to bear on literary texts in recent decades. We read not just as individuals but as members of community and we are taught to read in ways that become obvious or incontestable to us. However, many readings are possible, ones that read the text 'against the grain' (Moon, *Literary Terms: A Practical Glossary* 127). Levine captures this change when he says:

[i]n literary study now, many social problems are actively addressed by foregrounding a political thematic in the classroom and in publication--a thematic defined by the familiar categories of race, class, gender and sexuality. And of course this turn in the profession towards a politically valenced practice of literary study has elicited the familiar charge of 'politicization' by the media. (171)

Readers are thus invited to ask different questions of a text. In *Pride and Prejudice*, why is marriage the sole destiny for a respectable middle-class woman? In Dickens' *Hard Times* why are trade unions condemned? How do contemporary audiences cope with the anti-Semitism of *The Merchant of Venice*? The idea that the value of literature will be destroyed if readers ask such questions is illusory but threatening and why the word 'critical' is sparingly used in the document because developments *within* the discipline of literature must be carefully excluded from view even though they still inform the Curriculum.

The Three Strands 3: Literacy-- Growing a Repertoire of English Usage

There is no such subject as literacy.

Rodney Cavalier, Address to the Australian Council for Adult Education, May, 1994.

Given the amount of ground covered in the Language and Literature strands, what will distinguish the Literacy strand? In its definition of literacy the *Shape* document states that literacy '**conventionally refers to reading, writing, speaking, viewing and listening effectively in a range of contexts**' (4.6) and students must

learn to **‘adjust and modify their language to meet these contextual demands’** (4.6). There is nothing at all conventional about this definition since literacy has traditionally been and continues, in the minds of the public, to be about learning to read and write. If there is a widening of the scope of literacy to include other skills, such as speaking or viewing, and to embrace multimodal, multimedia and digital forms, then this needs to be made unequivocal. Multimodal, multimedia and digital texts need analysis on their own terms because of the distinct demands of creating and analysing such texts, whether they are subsumed by the literacy, literature or language strands. The *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum* document on *Literacy across the Curriculum* firmly states:

[t]he definition of literacy in the Australian Curriculum is informed by a social view of language that considers how language works to construct meaning in different social and cultural contexts. This view builds on the work of Vygotsky (1976), Brice Heath (1983), Halliday and Hasan (1985), Freebody and Luke (1990), Gee (1991, 2008), and Christie and Derewianka (2008), who have articulated the intrinsic and interdependent relationship between social context, meaning and language. (3).

However, this idea is not convincingly established in the *Shape* document, where it should unambiguously appear, although there is lip service paid to the relationship between context and meaning in the senior secondary units. If this relatively recent ‘social view of language’ (3) is definitive and consensual, then it should clearly inform the Literacy strand of the *Shape of the Curriculum*. Peter Roberts, in ‘Defining Literacy; Paradise, Nightmare or Red Herring,’ notes that the construal of literacy as being able to read and write is inadequate. He identifies three methodologies employed to measure literacy--the quantitative, the qualitative and the pluralist (414). The quantitative is expressed in years of schooling and/or reading ages; the qualitative is stipulative in character--what dispositions people require to master not just the basics but higher order skills. Roberts tellingly remarks that there is often an ‘ideal’ literacy subject in view here although not always named as such (419). Moreover, qualitative stances towards literacy take as given that literacy is plural, relative and historically and culturally contingent. Pluralism abandons the search for a single definition of literacy and defines it through how ‘literacy is practised, developed, expressed,

conceived, or manifested . . .’ (420). Roberts acknowledges that such lack of clarity is troubling for governments, policy makers and teachers but that we cannot return literacy to some prelapsarian paradise of simplicity and common sense (430). Yet literacy is too often spoken of as if it were a tangible thing we can hold on to for dear life.

Literacy Across the Curriculum moves briskly from the contention that there is an intrinsic relationship among language, context and meaning, to the issue of subject- and discipline-specific modes of communication. This means that **‘language use varies according to the context and situation in which it is used’** (3). The document then affirms that students **‘must learn to access and use language and visual elements in the particular and specific ways that are the distinctive and valued modes of communication in each learning area’** (3). This statement appears to be a reference to the genre-based pedagogy, based on Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics, which took hold in the late 80s and was meant to be an antidote to process writing and the dominance of narrative genres in English syllabi. This pedagogy constituted an induction into the ‘genres of power’ that allow students to access the specialised registers of English which lead to success at school (Alison Lee 416). Genre-based pedagogy challenges the view of the self-realising individual and the personal growth models on which such earlier writing projects were based. The *Literacy* document is not explicit about the fact that genre pedagogy is being referenced and does not mention the term ‘genre.’ It is not entirely clear how, apart from the teaching of school genres, literacy in Subject English differs from literacy across the curriculum, except that all teachers, presumably, should be teachers of literacy. It has long been a goal to get teachers across learning areas to pay attention to literacy and make all teachers in some way responsible for it, but that cannot be left to chance. In my long experience of university teaching, in which the same ideal has consistently been reiterated, little happens if it does not happen in communication units designated for that purpose, or in discipline areas, such as the humanities, in which literacy is highly valued. In communication units, genres relevant to ‘academic literacy’ are actively taught, such as report writing, but are often limited in their

efficacy if there are serious defects in students' writing.⁸⁷ Moreover, NAPLAN testing and the tendency to adopt more 'efficient' methods of assessment, such as multiple choice questionnaires, short answer questions, and so on, assessments that are easily marked, can narrow the opportunities to demonstrate linguistic competence (Sawyer, 'The Powerfully Literate Citizen' 44-54). In fact, as Sawyer maintains, 'there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that it is still the English Head Teacher who is called to account if test results are poor ('English in Australia . . .' 17).

A recent study using genre-based pedagogy to explore writing across the curriculum is Adoniou's 'Drawing Conclusions,' a study of the relationship between drawing and writing in young children's literacy learning. Adoniou centres her empirical research on getting children to explain how to do something, such as giving instructions for a procedure, using both drawing and writing. She avoided setting narrative tasks since these have been persistently privileged in English classrooms and chose the kind of exercise important in other areas of the curriculum. She analysed the resulting texts using a Hallidayan systemic functional linguistic grid. The assumptions behind her research are a) that many students fail to do well because they do not master the genres and registers that are valued in schools and the wider society and b) that helping students to do so will contribute to social justice. Genre becomes central to this project since in Halliday's system genre is one of the forms of cohesion in a text organised at a high level in the production of meaning. Adoniou defines 'genre' as a 'text identifiable by its purpose and the structure and language conventions which have been used to achieve that purpose' ('Drawing Conclusions' 36). One can, of course, argue that genre is not identifiable in a single text except as it is representative of a category of texts. Naturally the classification and boundaries of genres are always fluid and genres are historically constituted. However, her essential point remains: some genres, such as the essay, the report, the procedure, etc., are highly valued and the ability to employ them with skill can determine a student's success in other areas besides English. This is one point where Subject English meets literacy across the curriculum (though surely it should not be the only one). Genre-based pedagogy

⁸⁷ A friend of mine who teaches units in 'Business English' at a French university told his students that Business English is 90% English and 10% business. 'We call it Business English in order to get your parents to pay for it,' he remarked to his class.

emerged during the 80s and attracted funding from Australian governments. It was inherently integrated with systemic functional linguistics, despite the fact that it is obviously possible to teach genre without recourse to Halliday's system. Halliday defines genre in this way:

[t]he various genres of discourse, including literary genres, are the specific semiotic functions of text that have social value in the culture. A genre may have implications for other components of meaning: there are often associations between a particular genre and particular semantic features of an ideational or interpersonal kind, for example between the genre of prayer and certain selections in the mood system. Hence labels for generic categories are often functionally complex (*Language as Social Semiotic* . . . 145)

Halliday's definition of 'genre' goes beyond 'text type' since it is connected to his entire linguistic system. Halliday's virtue is that he does not reduce language to a series of propositions or statements or to the transmission of information, since he claims that 'many aspects of its organisation are ultimately derived from the functions or purposes that it serves' (Montgomery et al. 165). For Montgomery functional linguistics' 'main drawback is the difficulty of reaching rigorous definitions of the main language functions (165), which may account for the difficulties of classification in the Curriculum: which genres and functions are crucial and how do we distinguish among them? But regardless of the definition of 'genre' employed, genre pedagogy has had considerable influence in Australia, but not without resistance. Moon, in his balanced and even-handed summary of writing pedagogy over recent decades, recognises the literacy gains genre-pedagogy has achieved in primary schools through its 'insistence on explicit instruction' and its downgrading of process writing associated with the personal growth model ('Remembering Rhetoric' 44). He calls it 'perhaps the most sophisticated of the modern literacy pedagogies' (45). But while conceding these virtues, Moon detects problems with the pedagogy because it neglects style and aesthetics. He faults it for its over abstraction and its tendency to 'subordinate personal expression to social authority and a conception of agency as access' (45). Moon also perceives a second problem with the pedagogy: a purely linguistic conception of literacy rubs up against 'broadly progressive socio-political objectives' (45). Threadgold and Alison Lee are a case in point. Threadgold and Lee critique

genre-based pedagogy for its reductionist and reductive view of literacy, its tendency to reify genres not interrogate them and its failure to pay due regard to genre's political implications. Lee regards the relationship between disciplines and genres as far from self-evident because genres help to constitute disciplines and are not simply constituted by them. Threadgold and Lee also censure genre-based pedagogy for its failure to recognise the values and ideologies encoded in genres.⁸⁸ For example, in the findings of Lee's project on girls and the South Australian geography curriculum, Lee detected a bias towards certain forms of literacy, such as short answer questions, that favoured boys and were more highly valued by teachers than essay length tasks in which ambiguity and depth were unlikely to produce 'right' answers (421-29). Lee concludes that it is impossible to locate literacy pedagogy outside the politics of curriculum in which some genres are associated with 'masculine' disciplines, such as reports or experiments, and hence privileged. One should therefore be cautious when incorporating a genre-based pedagogy across the curriculum and in Subject English to guard against 'another form of inequitable selection . . .' (424). Wendy Morgan and Claire Wyatt-Smith undertook a joint paper on the subject of assessment and critical literacy in which they used their separate professional expertise, Wyatt-Smith in assessment practices, Morgan in critical literacy, to debate, among other topics, genre-based pedagogy and its pedagogical model of induction, apprenticeship and feedback through formative assessment. Both acknowledge the virtues of aspects of genre-based pedagogy, but Morgan argues that the master-apprentice model requires a particular model of teacher-student relationship that is limiting since it does not allow space for students to critique the very basis of the contract into which students have (unwittingly perhaps) entered (133). Here again questions of literacy and pedagogy rest on prior assumptions about what the role of the teacher and the student is in this exchange. To make this clear we cannot do better than think of ancient scribal cultures where the master-apprentice system is wholly in evidence and the notion of authorship inappropriate, although scribes could enlarge, alter and repurpose texts without being condemned for plagiarism.

⁸⁸ Threadgold studied with Halliday and was a supporter of his work but obviously has reservations about its application in classrooms.

The progress of the student through school entails the mastery of texts ‘that take on increasingly formal and academic features’ (*Literacy Across the Curriculum* 22). Thus there is a literacy narrative in place in the English Curriculum that constructs school literacy as a movement from the personal, everyday uses of language to abstract, rigorously structured, technical and ‘information dense’ texts. Whatever happened to the much-vaunted creativity? This is truly depressing because there are many different literacy trajectories--but pupils seem doomed to end up in the prison-house of language where no light shines. Ironically the observations in the document about students moving from writing that is speech-like to writing that obeys more formal rules seems to be based on Kress’s work (for example, *Literacy in the New Media Age*) but seems to misunderstand it, wilfully or not. Kress argues that the ‘informal’ and the ‘formal’ not only mark a difference in authority--the greater distance in address carries more social power--but that new technologies and social media, such as email, have heralded the return of more ‘speech-like’ language. Moreover, he maintains that speech and writing are distinctly different modalities and that it is a mistake to regard writing merely as transcribed speech (16-34). This position has many consequences, centrally concerning the teaching of reading, writing and speaking. Nor can a social view of literacy be reduced to genre pedagogy alone since, as will be discussed below, the Foucauldian theory of discourse sees discourse as operating cross generically and cross modally, and genre itself is a form of social action, not an inert placeholder.

Accordingly, the Literacy strand will help students to write with fluency, efficacy, confidence and appropriateness. But in fact by carefully cross-referencing the three strands an acute reader discovers that ‘literacy’ incorporates most of the points already made in the first two strands, a sure sign of its redundancy. Students will use their improved knowledge of English for ‘**domestic [!], civic and vocational purposes** (5.4.2) and will discover that they need ‘**more than one grammatical or textual pattern or one mode of communication**’ (5.4.5). The document states, verbosely, that ‘**the value of learning grammar . . . lies not simply in the ability to name a grammatical formation, text type or genre; rather, the educational questions to start with are ‘what is the purpose of this communication? And, ‘in that light, what grammatical formations and text types can best achieve it?’**

(5.4.7). Grammar is collapsed into text type and genre while the purpose of texts has already been dealt with (inadequately) under language and literature. The document then contends that learning to make appropriate choices according to purpose and audience contributes to ‘**imagination and creativity**’ in students’ work, which is both true and banal. This section is repetitive, incoherent, and badly expressed and serves no useful purpose. In other words, the entire section on literacy adds nothing to the Curriculum and could be dropped without loss as long as it is understood that they can be discussed under other rubrics.

Yet, despite the fact that literacy is poorly defined and imperfectly explained, omitting it would have been an act of edicide since the reason for its appearance is to show that the government is single-mindedly focused on literacy. Goodwyn (‘Literacy Versus English: A Professional Identity Crisis’ 121) talks of the way that England went in search of the Holy Grail of Literacy, forever elusive, naturally. Producing the literate subject is the chief goal and the overriding (but not the sole) responsibility of the English curriculum, the ‘literate subject’ being defined as one who can meet the demands of ‘school knowledge’ and the globalised, twenty-first century workplace, and participate as a citizen in a complex and diverse society. Poor literacy skills are seen as having individual and national consequences: unemployability and alienation for the individual, decreased productivity and reduced competitiveness for the nation. Moreover, literacy seems increasingly to be a precondition for the production of the proper ethical subject since to be insufficiently literate is to be a moral failure for which others, too, are held accountable, such as parents, schools, teachers, and teacher training institutions. The sense of moral outrage which pervades debates over literacy, and the blame game that ensues, points to far wider cultural fractures (Snyder, *The Literacy Wars: Why Teaching Children to Read and Write is a Battleground in Australia* 13-33). Sawyer and Gannon have written an amusing article that contains a list of people and movements that have been blamed for poor literacy, from John Dewey to postmodernism. The names change, but the accusations remain the same: ‘our’ children have been let down by the system (“‘Whole Language’ and Moral Panic in Australia’ n.pag.). And while plurality, diversity, difference and linguistic complexity are the very markers of Australian national identity (Aims, *Shape* 4.0) in a ‘democratic, evolving’ society, and the literate subject is one who ‘respect[s]

the varieties of English' (4.0), such a subject seems positioned to appreciate and master difference rather than being different. Respect seems purely gestural. Carla Shipp, in her insightful discussion of Aboriginality and literacy, explains why a single model of literacy is inappropriate for Indigenous students, particularly since NAPLAN tests are geared to Standard Australian English. Cahill and Collard note that in Indigenous communities Standard Australian English 'was called things like *'good English,' 'educated English' 'his best talk,' 'saying it properly,'* etc. These common terms implied judgements that position Aboriginal English as an inferior dialect' (qtd. in Wigglesworth and Billington 240). Riddle, commenting on a \$22,000, 000 Federal grant to provide a program of Direct and Explicit Instruction to Aboriginal communities,⁸⁹ wonders whether this will do any good if its aim is simply to drill students so they become more adept at NAPLAN tests and rightly observes that Direct and Explicit Instruction has never been absent from teaching. *The Australian*, true to form, hails it as a triumph of back to basics teaching (Riddle, "'Biggest Loser": Policy on Literacy Will Not Deliver Long-term Gains').

There is a mountainous secondary literature on literacy, its history, definition and pedagogies, of which educational linguistics and its application to classroom teaching is only a segment. No one could reasonably expect the *Shape* document to review even a fraction of this literature; however, a more nuanced definition of literacy would have benefitted all sections because it would have illuminated the distinction among the strands. The Queensland Studies Authority unit 'Literacy: A Short Course Senior Syllabus' (2010) provides an effective rationale for a unit on literacy: the authors argue against a definition of literacy where it 'becomes little more than the mastery of a series of sub-skills, rather than a genuinely transforming experience which current

⁸⁹ The program reflects the influence of the Indigenous leader Noel Pearson, who has long had the ear of government and the mainstream media. His *Quarterly Essay, A Rightful Place*, is a passionate and poignant plea to conservatives to support an amendment to the Constitution which will see Indigenous people take 'their rightful place' in Australia. According to Loudon, Direct Instruction is a teaching method developed in the United States in the 1960s, focused particularly on the needs of children with learning difficulties. Building on behaviourist learning theory, Direct Instruction breaks each learning task down into its smallest component and requires mastery of simpler skills before proceeding to more difficult skills. Students are grouped according to their achievement, teachers are provided with closely scripted lesson plans, students respond to the teacher orally and as a group, and the group does not move on until everyone understands the material. Not all educators are enthusiastic about this pedagogical method, finding it too constraining, resembling the atomised effects of OBE.

conceptions of literacy--as social practice, critical engagement, context-specific and multiple--suggest it should be' (Lonsdale and McCurry 4). Goodwyn accurately notes that 'there is one agreement about the nature of literacy and that is that there is no exact agreement about what it is' (Introduction, "Informed Prescription" . . . ' 1). Nevertheless we need not despair since there are broadly agreed scholarly propositions about the nature of literacy:

- 'Literacy' does not carry the same meaning at all times and in all places. ('Literacy' is a nineteenth-century back formation from 'illiteracy,' which meant 'unlettered' or 'uneducated' (Goodwyn, 'Informed Prescription' 1).
- 'Literacy' is not and never has been a personal attribute or ideologically inert 'skill' simply to be 'acquired' by individual persons' (Hartley, 'Genre' 170).
- The 'autonomous' model of literacy, which assumes that 'literacy in itself will have effects on other social and cognitive practices' is flawed (Street, 'NLS₁ and NLS₂: Implications of a Social Literacies Perspective for Policies and Practices of Literacy Education' 109).
- Literacy is a 'dynamic repertoire of social practices' (Snyder, 'The Stories that Divide Us: Media (Mis) representations of Literacy Education' 9).

In the European Middle Ages, the most powerful nobles were not invariably literate; they had others to do it for them, which did not mean that they devalued literacy. Charlemagne had the wit to employ Alcuin of York to advance learning in his court, for example. Krebs observes, of Charlemagne, that 'bad emperors fear those cleverer than themselves; good ones use them' (61). The invention of printing in the West increased the rewards of literacy since books were cheaper and more available. Printing inevitably changed the nature of literacy (see Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*) by, for example, encouraging more standardisation of conventions, including bibliographies, producing textbooks in quantity and the publication of editions of the Greek and Roman classics with fresh commentaries, expanding the reach of humanistic learning. It also played a vital role in the Reformation through vernacular translations of the Bible and the pamphleteering skills of Martin Luther and thus contributed to religious diversity and conflict. Grafton argues that the sixteenth century was the first age in which information management

became the preoccupation of scholars (45). In the nineteenth century, when literacy became vital to an industrialised society, literacy was gradually extended to the working classes, though they were thought to require only a certain minimum instruction in reading and writing in order to function in society but not enough that they forgot their place. Plainly modern societies as they become 'knowledge economies' call for high levels of literacy among populations, though it is not always possible to determine what constitutes an adequate level of literacy except that it is rarely achieved. In the following remarks, Cope and Kalantzis urge us to be more clear-eyed about literacy:

[t]his privileging of literacy is accompanied by all sorts of claims about what literacy does for people and their futures; claims that it is inherently superior as a representational tool to oral language and visual or gestural meanings; that it will bring about progress in the sense of an improvement in material well-being; that it is an instrument of cultural and scientific progress; or that it enhances cognitive development. Such claims range from the exaggerated to the just plain false. (217)

It is therefore unwise to conceive of literacy either in apocalyptic or utopian metaphors. The expansion of secondary education in the post-war period gave more opportunities for all students to develop literacy because they spent more time in school but there has never been a golden age of literacy in the recent past and it is difficult to measure earlier literacy standards; whether, for example, students were more literate in the 50s (or whatever period one nominates) than today. Moreover, it is hard to know whether a literacy blitz improves performance on tests. For example, a 1996 Task Force report in England charged with evaluating the Labour government's literacy strategy concluded 'that it was impossible to deduce any trend over time' (qtd. in Wyse 159).

Green, Cormack and Patterson contextualise reading pedagogy in a wider historical context, pointing out how 'the reading lesson' was, even in nineteenth-century schooling, never just the transfer of technical knowledge but involved the formation of the subject through a moral-ethical practice (331). They ask, not rhetorically: [w]hy indeed is reading seen, historically and institutionally, as *foundational* for literacy and schooling alike? (331). The authors note that reading

became in the 1930s a psycho/scientific discipline which has influenced the current industry of testing and measurement (341). At the same time the authors research the close relationship between the reading lesson and the literature lesson in the past and up to the present day, arguing that the two remain co-implicated.⁹⁰ Their investigation raises questions for the National Curriculum: is it possible or desirable to separate the reading lesson from the literature lesson? Should the curriculum be divided into the three strands of language, literacy and literature? How is the renewed focus on reading and writing pedagogy related to grammar and literacy? Do the curriculum writers assume that reading and writing can be acquired by an optimal tried and tested 'scientific' pedagogy separate from the inculcation of literary appreciation? Once again, the tripartite division of the curriculum is under strain.

David Crystal, regarded as a world-renowned linguist and one who avoids excessive prescription in his attitudes to 'correctness' and 'standards,' remarks that listening and speaking are natural behaviours in that, other things being equal, children acquire them as part of their development. Reading and writing have to be 'painstakingly learned' (133). Of course speaking and listening can be cultivated and improved and we must not assume that they are completely distinct from reading and writing. But leaving this aside, he asks whether there is any fool proof method for teaching reading and writing and concludes that there is not.

Testing and target-setting may not be the most effective method to raise literacy levels. According to Hanauer, in his review of the literature on testing, 'the standardised test of literacy cannot be scientifically shown to be a valid measure of literacy knowledge or ability' (56). The inference that must be drawn is that NAPLAN tests are fundamentally at odds with social and contextual definitions of literacy that appear in the documents and confer a quasi-scientific authority on such tests. Not only is the 'enacted curriculum' influenced by testing, connected to performance evaluations, but tests are restricted in what they can measure. In the USA there has long been a very prescriptive approach to teaching reading, with teachers compelled to keep to lesson plans that give them almost no flexibility in the way materials are

⁹⁰ David A. Lines, in *Rethinking Virtue, Reforming Society*, remarks that in schools during the European Renaissance reading was seen as a moral activity because it involved recollection and imitation (60) of past authors and exemplars.

introduced (Cummings 2-26). Not only has this approach been a goldmine for educational publishers, it has not resulted in literacy gains for poor students, who constitute the long tail of low achievement. Adoniou is biting in her assessment of how first year out teachers in the group she studied viewed the effects of NAPLAN on their curriculum and teaching. They were dismayed by the constant coercion that forced them to teach to the test, which undermined their autonomy, enthusiasm, commitment and sense of ethics ('Autonomy in Teaching . . .' 78-86). Lankshear points out to devastating effect how current 'reform' discourses around literacy are torn between what he calls 'lingering basics'--the fundamentals of encoding and decoding texts--and the recognition that the knowledge economy requires higher order thinking and problem-solving skills and 'elite' subject-specific academic literacies (4-5). The Australian Curriculum tries to address all these meanings of literacy, keen to underline the importance of the basics yet, in its emphasis on literature and academic rigour, clearly valuing higher order, meta level skills. However, these higher order skills are not easily reduced to standardised testing or prescriptive pedagogies.

Cummings argues that a literacy rich environment is more conducive to effective acquisition of literacy than prescriptive pedagogy (2-26). Deprofessionalising teachers is counterproductive. On the one hand, governments are keen to improve the standards of teachers and teaching; on the other, they are distrustful of teachers and are sometimes eager to curtail their power, however limited. Since literacy, mathematics and science are the benchmarks for success, these are the areas where teachers are most harshly judged. Shannon, in a depressing survey of attempts to make the teaching of reading fool proof during the last hundred years, shows that no pedagogy or method can guarantee major literacy gains. He points to the failure of 'scientific' pedagogy based on highly prescriptive and structured methods accompanied by relentless testing to produce significant gains in America, where it has been most heavily applied (157-69). This should make us wary of thinking that there is some solution, like phonics, that will be a magic potion.

Misson is one researcher who argues that the meaning of literacy inevitably changes over time partly because of changing technologies that allow portability, volume and speed. Despite new technologies, though, Misson contests the view of Kress, for example, that the visual is overtaking print and disputes whether the

function of literacy has altered in fundamental ways, which are still captured by the material (our relations to the physical world), the social (our relations to other people) and the personal (our relations to our self) ('The Origin of Literacies: How the Fittest Will Survive'.39). He also contends passionately that we cannot separate literacy from the affective and imaginative, despite the fact that in curricula literacy increasingly is reduced to technical mastery.

Despite the fact that disputes over reading and writing pedagogy appear to centre exclusively and reductively on phonics, this focus is at odds with the authorities cited in the *Literacy across the Curriculum* document, whose work on children's acquisition of literacy cannot be encapsulated under the heading of some phonics/whole language quarrel. Adoniou's unpublished dissertation 'Drawing Conclusions,' already mentioned, which investigates the relationship between drawing and writing in young children's gradual ability to master reading and writing skills, surveys the field of literacy pedagogy employing the research of precisely those authorities cited in the literacy document. Her methodology uses Vygotsky's influential theories of child development with regard to literacy, in particular his view that literacy is socially constructed. He argues against a purely developmental view of children's learning, promoting instead 'a social constructivist paradigm in which learning is always context-specific and happens in the company of others' ('Drawing Conclusions' 11). In linking visual literacy and the developing capacities of reading and writing Adoniou employs the semiotic concept of symbol systems--writing and drawing are two--which enable humans to make sense of the world and transmit meaning to each other ('Drawing Conclusions' 40). In the English Curriculum, writing is the privileged system, although theorists contend that all symbol systems, whether print, visual, audio, spatial, etc., contain 'equal potential' (40) and that all differ according to cultural context. Adoniou has conducted research with young children in order to demonstrate a) that drawing and writing are both vital to acquiring literacy since both emerge from 'scribbling,' according to Vygotsky, b) that they are mutually reinforcing, so that both can be used to improve literacy, and c) that the disappearance of drawing through the primary years is therefore regrettable. Adoniou employs studies conducted by Kress in *Before Writing: Rethinking the Paths to Literacy* to demonstrate how writing and drawing are intertwined and that consequently the

exclusive focus on writing is misguided. Her work has implications for the teaching of literacy and the way in which literacy is defined, for the place of multimodal texts in the Curriculum, to be considered later, the sidelining of arts subjects in the Australian Curriculum, and the role of speaking and listening in the skills set for English.

Adoniou argues forcefully that in-school literacies need to connect with out-of-school literacies if students are to be prepared for the twenty-first century (64).

A lively and illuminating book that rehearses all the major debates surrounding literacy by two well-known experts in the field of New Literacies is *Literacy: An Advanced Resource Book* by Brian Street and Adam Lefstein. Initially they address the vexed issue of the best way to teach reading and writing and (no surprises here) see the research literature as inconclusive whatever the confidence of the proponents of different methods (35-37). They quote approvingly the words of Olson who, like Cope and Kalantzis, believes that the benefits of literacy can be overstated:

[t]he use of literacy as a metric against which personal and social competence can be assessed is vastly oversimplified. Functional literacy, the form of competence required for one's daily life, far from being a universalizable commodity, turns out on analysis to depend critically on the particular activities of the individual for whom literacy is to be functional. (qtd. in Street and Lefstein 40).

Street's and Lefstein's operational method in the book is to place different views and methodological assumptions beside each other so they can be read against, through and with each other: cognitive versus social; phonics versus whole language, and so on, allowing the reader to adopt, adapt or argue positions, and demonstrating how these positions affect policy and, for that matter, the very definition of literacy itself. They locate literate practices within social and cultural contexts and are unequivocally opposed to views of literacy that regard it as set of skills to be learned in isolation. They are thus receptive to the work of Kress, Gee, Cope and Kalantzis on multimodality and multiliteracies. Street and Lefstein distinguish between the autonomous model of literacy, which sees it as a neutral set of competencies, and literacy as socially constructed.

Predictably the autonomous model is frequently yoked with school literacy because literacy is pedagogised in the school in ways that may not pertain outside the

classroom. Sometimes schooled literacy is seen as equivalent to literacy *per se*, but Street and other ethnographers of literacy have investigated literacy as local practice that ‘includes participants’ cultural models of literacy events, social interactional aspects of literacy events, text production and interpretation, ideologies, discourses and institutions’ (Baynham qtd. in Street and Lefstein 152).⁹¹ Much detailed research has been carried out on the interaction of literacy and culture, enough to make the savvy reader cautious about overgeneralisations about infallible methods and simple solutions.

An Excursus on Grammar

I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar

Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Gods*, 48

The fiercest debates in education circles are generally over the falsest of dichotomies.

Michael Barber, qtd. in Hardlow, 32.

Anyone bold enough to write to write on grammar in the English classroom and in the school system as a whole can sometimes feel overwhelmed and despondent. The media are littered with tabloid literacy crises which must be (re)solved to avoid catastrophe. Grammar bedevils discussions of literacy and in some people’s minds is what literacy really means. Alison Lee remarks that grammar is ‘perhaps the transcendental signifier of the moral panic around literacy’ (426), and Cameron ‘critique[s] the way policy makers conceive of grammar both as a “form of moral discipline” and as an ‘arbitrary assortment of technical terms”’ (qtd. in Myhill and Jones 49), an issue that I addressed in ‘The State of the Art’ papers. According to the *Shape*, grammar is fundamental to learning ‘how language works’ or ‘language about language,’ although learning about language is not confined to grammar. In the section on literacy under the General Capabilities grammar site alongside the other three ways of understanding and creating texts. The three are visual knowledge, word knowledge, grammar knowledge and text knowledge. All equally important. In most

⁹¹ One infinitely sad and touching ethnographic ‘literacy event’ can be found in Iranian director Samira Makhmalbaf’s modest film *Blackboards*, set among fleeing Kurdish civilians on the Iraqi border. There are teachers who carry blackboards on their backs and one ineffectually tries to teach Kurdish children how to read and write despite the gruelling and dangerous journey.

people's minds grammar means learning to speak and write correctly, the assumption being that schools play an essential role in ensuring that pupils are explicitly taught the rules of correct usage. It scarcely needs emphasising that children learn to use a language without formal instruction and much research has been devoted to how children do this, which ought to inform teaching. There is also an assumption that the more grammar children are taught, the better their literacy. Sawyer, in 'Writing (in) the Nation,' notes that for many critics of English teaching 'grammar and literature operate as a metaphysical correlate for a cluster of related moral terms: order, tradition, authority, hierarchy and rules' (8).

In England the National Literacy Strategy (NLS), so trumpeted by New Labour, has been declared a policy failure (Myhill and Jones 49; Ellis, Fox and Street 5) and its more prescriptive aspects muted. Inevitably, like narratives about literacy, the history of grammar teaching is embedded in narratives about its rise and fall. It is true that in the first half of the twentieth century a prescriptive formal grammar based on drilling and parsing persisted into the 60s (Laura Paterson 475). In the 70s the teaching of formal grammar gradually diminished, partly in response to the rise of progressive pedagogies, which saw prescription and obsessive concern with correctness as constraining on teachers and students. Moon deftly surveys the century-long investment in Romantic 'child-centred' pedagogies, with their resistance to 'traditional academic disciplines' as artificial and potentially repressive' (43). Consequently a generation of teachers lacked training in grammar and passed that ignorance on to their students. Thus students received 'just-in-time' grammar lessons as and when needed. It is telling that teachers, confronted with the NLS, were reluctant to return to traditional grammar instruction (Paterson 476). Whether this narrative of the rise and fall of grammar is true in all respects can be disputed, especially as debates tend to be conducted in a socio-cultural vacuum. In relating my own experiences of high school teaching, I commented on the Great Expansion in secondary schooling, leading to more working-class pupils in schools, meaning that class played a part in distributing the cultural goods of literacy. I don't recall a heavy emphasis on grammar (except in French!) but I know I taught *some* grammar and I was not frightened of it since I had lived through the 50s and therefore had been drilled for years in grammar, especially parsing. There were (rightly) higher

expectations in the 50s and 60s, but many students emerged with what we would now regard as ‘inadequate’ literacy yet still found jobs. I don’t hold myself entirely responsible for poor literacy outcomes since teachers were up against social problems and second language learners (some ESL students nonetheless became the best readers and writers, just as today Asian students are extremely high school achievers). A review of recent literature on grammar in curricula centres on a number of key questions:

- Is explicit teaching of grammar effective in improving students’ literacy?
- If so, what system of grammar should be taught?
- How do syllabi ensure that grammar is taught developmentally and cumulatively?
- How do schools ensure that teachers are adequately prepared for grammar teaching?
- What is the relationship between linguistic theory and grammar pedagogy?
- How does the pedagogy adopted for the transmission of syllabi guarantee that grammar is not taught in a decontextualized fashion?

Some brief contextualising comments on the history of grammar are apposite here but need not detain us long. Grammar took some time to emerge as a separate area of study in the ancient world (Turner 15) but gathered sophistication over the centuries. Turner boldly asserts:

Roman grammar mirrored the rapacious curiosity of the Hellenistic philologists who hatched its progenitor. The teaching of grammar fused into a unified pedagogy: textual criticism, analysis of language, and use of antiquarian data and historical writings to illumine works under study. And all the while *grammatici* sustained the seamless passage onward to rhetoric for the boys they taught. (17)

Grammar, mainly Latin grammar, was part of the Trivium and remained central to curricula for centuries (hence grammar schools). Watson observes that [i]t was rhetoric and dialectic, not grammar, that concerned the Ancient Greeks up to the time of Plato’ (32), and it was not until the Stoics (300 BCE) that grammatical

categories were classified, meaning that style and rhetoric were well understood before grammar and that grammar and rhetoric, then as now, cannot artificially be separated (32).

Crystal (*How Language Works* 230-36) and Halliday (*An Introduction to Functional Grammar* xvi-vii) chart the changing fortunes of grammar and its shifting connotations and disciplinary fortunes. 'Traditional' grammar, familiar to those who went to school before the 60s, was a Latinate grammar applied to English which emerged during the eighteenth century and taught students to parse or analyse sentences, for example identifying subjects, predicates and verbs. As Crystal remarks, not all the analytical categories of traditional grammar could be justified, particularly since Latin and English grammars are often a bad fit, especially considering the case endings of Latin and thus its different syntactical and prosodic rules (247). The Greeks classified grammar as a branch of rhetoric with its origin in the spoken, but Aristotle regarded it as a branch of logic (Halliday, *An Introduction* xxi). Both positions are plausible. Halliday notes that the Aristotelian system is more suited to written than to spoken discourse (xxiii), which suggests that speaking and writing are not identical, as Halliday cogently demonstrates (xxiv), in that writing is not simply transcribed speech. The *Shape* acknowledges that grammar can inhabit simultaneously the categories of logic and rhetoric since it can be employed for rhetorical effect, given that grammatical structures offer choices (within strict limits) that can be manipulated (Halliday, *An Introduction* xxiii)

It is certainly a fact that the teaching by rote of a Latinate grammar gradually declined during the second half of the twentieth century and that a generation of teachers may not have experienced intensive, formal grammar instruction, although hard to establish whether this has affected students' writing. Sawyer, for example, uncovers the fact that the 1971 NSW Syllabus 7-10 rejected the isolated teaching of grammar but it would be hard to prove that the strategy had some apocalyptic effect on literacy. Sawyer, reflecting on the Australian Curriculum, argues that a spotlight on grammar does not necessarily raise students' literacy levels or increase the effectiveness of their writing but must be seen as part of a much larger set of rhetorical practices' ('Grammar, Standard Australian English . . .' 231).

In 2005 Andrews et al. conducted two extensive systematic research reviews in England on whether teaching grammar improved the accuracy and fluency of 5-16 year old pupils' language. The authors conclude that there is little evidence to support the view that teaching formal grammar on its own is effective. They summarise their findings as follows:

- we should continue to ask whether the teaching of formal grammar is helpful in improving young people's writing (and not be side tracked by titles like *Not Whether but How*),⁹² taking into account the fact that there has been no clear evidence in the last hundred years or more that such interventions are helpful.
- we should look more closely at techniques of sentence-combining and other practical approaches, which appear--on the evidence to date--to suggest more positive effects on writing development.
- if we think that language awareness and other approaches to knowledge about language (e.g., rhetorical awareness, a focus on genre) are a useful part of the primary or secondary curriculum, proponents should specify more clearly what benefits might be had from such attention, and what this attention might mean in terms of both pedagogy and measures of writing quality.
- a review of the National Literacy Strategy in England, and more broadly, of the National Curriculum for England, should take place to identify which of the methods for improving the quality and accuracy of young people's writing are most effective. At present, we have an eclectic approach, patchily implemented. It is unlikely that real advances in written literacy will take place, particularly at the bottom end of the range in this particular capability, until such research is undertaken and its results transformed into effective and exciting teaching. (54).

Even if we accept that grammar teaching of some kind can be helpful (Andrews et al. think that practice in sentence-combining [that is, syntax] is valuable)⁹³ 'traditional'

⁹² Reference to a grammar guide by Beverly Derewianka.

⁹³ Sentence-combining, according to Urszula Clark, is 'widely used in the USA' (190).

grammar was being challenged by linguists and less prescriptive approaches adopted. Therefore a 'return' to grammar in recent times raises the problem of which grammar ought to be taught. Myhill and Jones state categorically: '[a] pedagogic rationale for the teaching of grammar would be founded on modern linguistics and would explicitly adopt a descriptive perspective . . .' (59). They also declare, alarmingly: '[w]e do not yet know enough about effective pedagogies for grammar teaching' (60). Linguistics in the twentieth century has, as we know, questioned the usefulness and theoretical justification of older grammatical categories. It appears, though, that, for many, grammar means the grammar that mature commentators remember with fondness or dread from their schooldays (if it was good enough for me it is good enough for them!). However, expanding research in educational linguistics means that the transformation of linguistic knowledge into pedagogical method remains unfinished business.

Crystal states that, in the linguistic study of grammar, the first step is 'to identify meaningful units or patterns and to name them--units such as *word*, *sentence*, *adjective*, and *passive*' (232 [italics original]). He goes on to say, [d]epending upon which units we recognise, at the beginning of the study, so the definition of grammar alters' (232). Crystal observes that some linguists take the word as the basic unit but most take the sentence as the fundamental entity of grammar: [i]n linguistics, a sentence is commonly defined as the largest unit to which syntactic rules apply. Halliday insists that sentence and word 'are not sharply set off from one another--both constitute units in the grammar (*Foundation* xxii).

Crystal identifies the immediate constituent (IC) analysis as one commonly adopted by modern linguists, in which the segments of a sentence are analysed using a tree diagram, with the sentence divided into smaller constituents, such as noun phrase, verb phrase, determiner, etc. (251-3). However, analysis of the sentence does not necessarily tell us how sentences relate to each other. Moreover, understanding how a sentence works may or may not contribute to correct usage.

Grammar is defined in the *Shape* document as the language we use and the description of language as a system. In describing language, '**attention is paid to both structure (syntax) and meaning (semantics) at the level of the word, the sentence and the text**' (4.3). The word, sentence and text level distinction became a

feature of England's National Literacy Strategy and was slammed because no rationale was provided for the organisation of teaching outcomes into these levels, since signification operates on all three levels simultaneously (Myhill and Jones 19; Wyse 161).

The twentieth century has, as we know, questioned the older grammatical categories, rules and lexicon (see *Cambridge Grammar*) and one type of grammar associated with Halliday's research, systemic functional linguistics, has had a significant influence in Australia both on curricula and on the concept of 'critical literacy' and 'genre pedagogy.' Urszula Clark notes that systemic functional grammar 'is particularly appropriate for pedagogical contexts, as one of its fundamental principles is that language, for it to make any sense at all, must be studied in context' (192) and adds that it takes grammar beyond the sentence. Nevertheless, SFL is quite technical and teachers generally have no expertise in it. According to Hanauer, it was structuralist linguistics (like Saussure's) that bestowed a scientific objectivity on language. Maton, defending a structural linguistic approach, nevertheless identifies weaknesses in the Australian Curriculum, in that fragmentation and a focus on narrow 'decoding' aspects of grammar impoverish students' ability to make connections across tasks and texts' (55). The *Consultation Report* shows teachers and professionals also conflicted about grammar. One hoped that the teaching of grammar 'will avoid favouring either traditional or functional approaches' (22). Another believed that the Australian Curriculum should avoid favouring one kind of grammar (23). A third did not want the decontextualized teaching of grammar (23).

Urszula Clark, citing the research of Myhill and Andrews, believes that grammar teaching is only successful when it is integrated with other English activities:

[t]he question to be addressed is not whether explicit teaching of grammar directly affects pupils' own command of language or interpretation, but what kind of teaching and what theories underpinning it have the greatest chance of success. (190)

She is an advocate, based on her extensive field research, for a developmental and holistic approach.' Such a pedagogy,' she remarks, 'does not automatically subscribe to the view that pupils need to learn about smaller units of language before progressing to larger ones' (193). She adds that '[de]velopment is viewed as both cumulative and

recursive, rather than linear' (193). What does Clark believe is essential grammatical knowledge that students should acquire over time? Word classes, both open (such as nouns) and closed (such as pronouns). Verb phrases, auxiliary and modal verbs, patterns of words, sentences, and texts in order to lend cohesion to texts: '[c]ohesion refers to the ways in which syntactic, lexical and phonological features connect within and across sentences in a text, whilst coherence is more to do with the way or ways a text makes consistent sense with or without the help of cohesion' (193). Above all, she is totally opposed to the teaching of grammar that isolates it from other language features and asserts that the relationship between the individual, text and society always gives rise to multiple interpretations (193).

There are new grammar books being published to fill a vacuum created by 'the return of grammar,' and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to review even a selection of them, except to note that the Australian Curriculum could make recommendations on the topic. Richard Hudson's *English Grammar* is by a well-known linguist active in research on teaching grammar whose book had its origin in an undergraduate course at the University of London. It is also part of a series called Language Workbooks on a wide range of linguistic topics, books meant to be of assistance to relative beginners. Hudson distinguishes his grammar from Chomskyeian transformational grammar and Hallidayan systemic functional grammar. He allows that his own system overlaps with traditional grammar but differs from it in certain key respects. Hudson provides a diagramming system that emphasises the dependencies between words rather than word-groups, which he believes is more elegant than other systems because it reduces the terminology required (96-98). His system is descriptive rather than prescriptive. All this means that it is difficult to come to a conclusion about what system of grammar teaching is optimal (for teachers as well as students) though researchers are unambiguous in their verdict that traditional grammar is not the answer, and that checklists and isolated exercises are largely worthless. Del Merrick's *Blake's Grammar Guide for Primary Students*, an Australian publication, introduces pupils to a basically traditional grammar, but includes a supplement on systemic functional grammar to reflect divergent practices across the nation.

In a significant contribution to the debate over grammar, Petraki and Hill surveyed a broad range of ESL teachers for their views about teaching grammar and

whether they felt confident, whatever theory they used, in their knowledge about grammar and able to pass on this knowledge to students. Many teachers believed they were unprepared for this task. Petraki and Hill also surveyed the current theoretical paradigms available to teachers: Traditional Grammar, Functional Grammar, Discourse Grammar. What functional grammars have in common is their attention to text in its social context and the function of grammar in particular texts or types of texts (genre) that gives coherence and cohesion to texts. It emphasises language as a meaning making and communicative process. Misty Adoniou argues that a traditional grammar was taught in isolated and rules-based way that alienated students (and teachers for that matter). We are left with the *Life of Brian's* grammar tutorial when Brian has daubed the graffiti a hundred times, Romans Go Home, on the palace walls and has to have his grammar corrected by a Roman soldier, who initially attends only to the poor grammar not to the defiant message it contains. One is reminded of the endless hours of Latin and Greek instruction posh English boys had to undergo in order to rule India.

Adoniou obviously supports some version of functional grammar because it improves metalinguistic knowledge and because it helps students to write for meaning and coherence. Adoniou understands that many teachers, whether primary, high school or university, are in need of training in grammar, because new models of grammar, such as Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics, require materials to help support them both as teachers and learners. Beverley Derewianka has written extensively on functional grammar and its place in the curriculum and has developed materials to aid teachers. Misty Adoniou sounds a warning note, however, about the teaching materials major publishers generate to fill a market gap and argues for the use of exemplary literature to teach grammar. That way students are better able to understand the creative as well as the formal functions of grammar.

It is worth noting that a cultural studies approach to text generation and analysis overlap with insights drawn from the field of functional grammar. Though I and others drew attention to the limitations of genre-based pedagogy this was not meant to disparage genre-based methodology as such. Its insights powerfully demonstrate how grammar cannot be separated from rhetoric and larger text structures. Above all Adoniou believes all English teachers should be given an

adequate knowledge of grammar as a central part of the curriculum. If I were to suggest what grammar teachers should learn I would adopt, as Adoniou does, an eclectic rather than a dogmatic approach that respects the multi-layered and rich complexities of texts and language.

This approach is echoed in the materials that the State Education Department in Victoria puts out in 'Grammar Matters.' The site identifies the weaknesses of traditional grammar—decontextualised, too focused on isolated rules, and failing to improve students' skills. The document argues for a functional grammar, which is based on the context and purpose of texts and places a high value on metalinguistic knowledge.

Multimodal⁹⁴ and Digital Texts in the Curriculum

Writing is such a potent metaphor for culture in general that the move in the current landscape of communication from the dominance of writing to the dominance of image in many domains has given rise, understandably, to much anguish, soul-searching and deeply pessimistic predictions about the future welfare of civilisation.

Gunther Kress, *Literacy in the New Media Age*

Technology will not allow you to remain on the sidelines. I can transmute into I must.

Bauman and Donskis, *Moral Blindness: The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid
Modernity*, 10

As we have outlined in the rise of the 'New English,' during the 60s media texts became an element of the syllabus and have grown in importance in a digital world. Information literacy is one of the general capabilities listed in the Australian Curriculum and, on the part of governments and educators, there is an inclination to believe that new technologies in the classroom will transform teaching and learning. Technologies certainly have the potential to furnish students with access to a world of information, enable them to generate texts in a wide range of genres and modes, allow them to work collaboratively and individually, make use of on-line learning, create

⁹⁴ Misty Adoniou, in 'Drawing Conclusions,' defines multimodal texts as those that employ 'multiple symbol systems to interact with the world' (36). Obviously digital texts contain these systems--although ancient texts integrate them: the spectacular elements of Greek tragedy--dancing, singing, costumes, etc.--were often conveniently forgotten down the centuries since the spectacle of Greek theatre seemed to breach the purity of the poetry and thus degrade the literary experience. Citharodes combined declamation and music.

digital art and performance, record and store their work, and so on. Teachers can facilitate this kind of learning with the use of programs to mark assessments and give feedback, to create an interface between home and school, and to incorporate visual and sound material easily into lessons. Students can also use laptops and tablets to practice skills at home. The Australian Federal government supported the provision of laptops for schools in order to 'close the gap' between those who have easy access to technology and those whose parents are financially stretched.

There can be no argument that students live in a digital world, that they love social media and smart phones, and spend a lot of time web surfing, gaming and watching YouTube, using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. #6.4 of the *Shape*, 'The Role of Digital Technologies,' acknowledges that Australians routinely communicate using digital technologies and that digital technologies have transformed *how* we communicate (incontestable) and that our sense of belonging to communities is dependent on how *well* we communicate. The argument here appears to be that globalisation places higher demands on communication skills and that digital technologies are a primary reason for this phenomenon (the sheer volume of communication has exponentially increased). Teachers and students should have access to these technologies because they present 'new teaching opportunities' (6.4). How digital technologies have transformed communication and how they should be integrated into the English curriculum is left open.

Cumming and Wyatt-Smith have conducted extensive research on digital texts and their relationship to the English Curriculum, especially its literacy requirements. They note that, while statements on literacy to be found in foundation documents, such as those in the National Statements of Learning (Literacy) (2005) are generous and flexible and welcome digital texts as essential to twenty-first century learning, in practice literacy is very much confined to decoding print texts (both in teachers' and students' minds). They attribute this partly to the influence of NAPLAN, which is restricted mainly to multiple choice questions and 'composition' (46). Given the tendency to 'teach to the test' students and teachers have fewer incentives to move beyond a narrow range of basic skills. But digital and multimodal texts have profound influences upon definitions of literacy and textuality, and the general capabilities the Curriculum mandates, such as ICT competence and critical thinking. Students'

experience of the digital world inside and outside the classroom are starkly different, and despite the welcome extended to multimodal and digital texts in the Curriculum the statements of learning for English do not appear to register the shifts new technologies produce or the new opportunities they provide.

Among educators and the general public, though, there is a conflicted attitude towards new media, from the neuroscientist Susan Greenfield's alarmist rhetoric that digital technologies are changing children's brains to the celebration of the transformational effects of digital media in creating new forms of knowledge and new identities. Now the toxic effects of social media have become apparent when they are used to abuse recipients. Thus digital media, like literacy, are routinely viewed through utopian and dystopian lenses, at once a problem and a solution. New media may distract young people from serious pursuits like reading, impair their imaginations, ruin their health and be held responsible for students' short attention spans--the Baudrillardian seduction of the image and the triumph of the ephemeral--and therefore become the source of uneasiness among educators and parents. Jim Collins astutely remarks: '[t]he conflation of reading, the book, and literary fiction into one indivisible union is indeed unravelling . . .' (207) and may account in part for the apprehension about the disappearance of reading as a private, absorptive, and uniquely meditative experience. Privacy issues and bullying are constantly in the headlines. The weight attached to grammar and literature in the English curriculum may be a corrective to the perceived deleterious effects of and threats posed by social media, with their 'debased' language.

The idea that students are 'digital natives' (a term coined by Prensky) (qtd. in Pegrum 7) is not invariably true or true to the extent that all are adept at making full use of the internet for a wide range of purposes. Pegrum, whose monograph on digital technologies in education is balanced, thoughtful and well-informed, assembles a series of telling arguments about the internet, centrally that it must be viewed through a range of pedagogical lenses, including the technological, linguistic, personal, sociopolitical and ecological (1-13). Pegrum delineates the 'digital divide' that exists between rich and poor, minorities and majorities, and demonstrates that this divide is not necessarily overcome by educational provision (78). For example, all schools need access to fast broadband but without undue restrictions on use. He recognises that

wealthier students who have home access are advantaged, which throws a light on Rudd's well-intentioned desire to supply (basic) laptops to all students, without fully allocating the money required to replace them and to keep them up and running.

Pegrum's most remarkable observation is that the internet creates new forms of knowledge: collaborative, participatory, provisional, and dispersed in authority (28-35). This view of knowledge rubs up against some traditional pedagogies and he argues forcefully that 'back-to-basics' agendas can be damaging, especially to the disadvantaged, who have fewer opportunities to acquire advanced digital literacies. He goes on to argue that the sort of affordances the net offers--blogs, citizen journalism, public forums, etc.--require a certain 'habitus' to be fully exploited. The volume of information and opinion on the web may require more critical skills, not fewer, since there is a shortage of 'gatekeepers.' It is no surprise that terrorists have sophisticated web presences. Pegrum is also highly critical of the commodification of education on the net and the marketing of prepackaged online courses by Western universities to the developing world.

Obviously Pegrum regards teachers as teachers *and* learners who are central to integrating digital literacies into classrooms. He realises that teachers have conflicted attitudes to technology and that there are both challenges to and prospects for using digital technologies effectively. Teachers must be reasonably adept at using digital and multimodal media in order a) to assist students to produce texts, and that means creative texts too, in multimodal forms, b) to teach *through* the use of digital media and c) to enable students to critique texts, including digital texts. Not all teachers are equally proficient in using digital media for pedagogical purposes (Jetnikoff 133), but neither, as we have remarked, are all students 'digital natives' (Bennett, Maton and Kervin 775-86). Technology means money in upfront costs and ongoing maintenance and pupils' use of the internet and social media must be monitored. Teachers require professional development to employ digital media effectively and, because there are time constraints in classrooms, sometimes setting up digital friendly lessons may seem just too much trouble. Moreover anyone who has taught in on-line mode will know that it takes time and effort initially to devise on-line lessons and even more time to monitor them. This is not a Luddite argument against new media technologies but a

warning that they require considerable investment to work as teaching and learning tools.

Jetnikoff, who has written extensively on new technologies and English pedagogy, is rightly critical of the anomalies created by dividing Subject English into the three strands, for example, classifying film under literature (or alternatively literacy, as we have already discovered). There is in the Curriculum an implied hierarchy of multimodal texts, with film as a quasi-canonised medium which has acquired a long history of critical interpretation, especially because of its integration with modernist avant-garde movements. Television, once regarded as the poor cousin (the ‘idiot box’), nevertheless became the object of much theoretical investigation in the discipline of cultural studies during the 80s and 90s, such as generic studies (news, soaps, advertising, and so forth) and ethnographic studies of audiences and subcultures. Such studies sought to engage popular culture on its own terms, to move beyond the caricature of audiences as passive, duped, narcotised or debased by mass communication to viewers capable of agency in producing a range of pleasures and meanings, including those that run counter to the meanings that seem to be imposed by commodity production. For example, the global HBO series *Game of Thrones* occupies the contested space between commercial media product and its knowing reception by fans. On one level a giant faux-medieval epic/soapie integrated into gaming culture, on another an expensive, well-acted, narratively sophisticated push-the-boundaries HBO production that makes no prudish concessions to American mainstream television. Thus cultural studies conferred legitimacy on mass culture as an object of study and provided a theoretical apparatus by which to conduct an analysis of it that has enabled it to be incorporated into English curricula.

Digital texts have little purchase on the new curriculum except as they relate to **‘research, communication and representation of ideas’** and **‘evaluating the choice of mode and medium in shaping the responses of audiences, including digital texts’** (*Senior Secondary Curriculum: Unit 1*). Given that the curriculum privileges literature the multimodal and digital texts seem like mere afterthoughts, with no attention paid to their materiality. The statements on multimodal and digital texts encourage teachers to treat them seriously (Beavis, ‘English in the Digital Age: Making English Digital’ 21-30) but the current Curriculum does not offer any real

justification for the study of multimodal and digital texts except in functional/instrumental or personal terms: the need to be able to use information technologies to produce the texts and genres of the digital world and to communicate (**'feelings, attitudes, relationships'** 5.2). Burn regrets the fact/fictional divide and the concentration of the England curriculum on 'how information is conveyed to citizens on electronic media, particularly on line' (9), accompanied by a suspicion of semiotic modes beyond language' (10). He also laments the way the aesthetic in the England curriculum has become the preserve of the literary (16) and what is true in the England curriculum remains mostly true in Australia.

Under the Content Descriptions for Senior Secondary English Unit 1 students will **'examine similarities and differences between imaginative, persuasive and interpretive texts'** and the fourth bullet point under this heading states that students will evaluate **'the impact of descriptions and imagery, including figurative language [in print texts?], and still and moving images in digital and multimodal texts.'** This nod towards the literary and the awkward incorporation of the visual sets up a confusion between imagery expressed in language (visual, aural, tactile, etc.) and visual images in film or, say, email (for example, emoticons). 'Description' is wholly misleading here and perhaps refers to descriptions of people and places in print texts. There has been enough said to indicate that the English Curriculum deals poorly with multimodal and digital texts and this fact vitiates the definitions of key concepts in the curriculum because it marginalises such texts, fails to recognise the skills needed to create them, assumes too often that digital texts are neutral media and that changing or recombining modes leaves meaning and knowledge untouched. Katsarou and Tsafos document identical shortcomings in the Greek K-10 curriculum (48-54), one proof that global curricula are similar and can manifest the same deficiencies.

Students have long had the opportunity in schools, finances permitting, to create their own visual and multimodal texts, such as short films or plays, through examinable subjects such as media studies or theatre studies, and curriculum options, such as photography. Cope, Kalantzis and Kress, however, are adamant that multimodal and digital technologies have fundamentally altered the ways in which societies, at least those with wide access to new technology, relate to the technology of print. Cope and Kalantzis note

[t]he increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning-making, where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioural, and so on. . . . Meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal. (6)

They add that ‘new communications media are reshaping the way we use language’ and that, as a result, ‘there cannot be one set of standards or skills that constitutes the ends of literacy learning, however taught’ (6). In addition Cope and Kalantzis maintain that new technologies have profoundly affected workplaces, citizenship and lifeworlds in ways that undermine older authoritarian, top down models of schooling and require new pedagogies that recognise increasing diversities of practice and multiple identities, a genuine pluralism. It is, of course, possible to overstate the transformative potentialities of new technology as a project for fostering greater equity and imagining learning as more collaborative and community focused. Snyder sounds a cautionary note when she remarks, ‘the reality, however, is this vision may seem like an update of older progressive, student-centred models with the addition of globalisation and fast capitalism’ (qtd. in Gee 60). However, it is also hard to believe that new technologies have had no effect on our relationship to language, writing, and reading, just as print also altered this relationship.

Kress is one theorist who has thought through in detail the implications of our new relationship to writing in its historical contexts, which he sees as inevitably implicated in systems of power and knowledge (*Literacy in the New Media Age* 1) and whose effects are unpredictable. The major change, for him, is the turn to the mode of the image and the screen. These changes make the creation of multimodal texts a few clicks of the mouse away (although Kress regards all texts as inherently multimodal) and encourage greater interactivity (see gaming, for example). As representational and semiotic resources, different modes have effects on each other and have distinct ways of making meaning (5). For Kress this multimodality and access to technology (we can be our own publishers, for example) places even greater strains on the notion of authorship, throws doubt on easy invocations of creativity and makes intertextuality the very condition of meaning and textual production (7). Kress’s 2010 book *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Resource* regards multimodality as questioning epistemological and ontological frames of knowledge, the blurring of genre boundaries

and the distinction between fact and fiction, knowledge and information. 'Mode,' for Kress, consists of its materiality and the culture's selection of ideas and representations (80). Kress believes that multimodality demands a rhetorical approach to communication that encompasses the audience, the semiotic resources required in the production and dissemination of texts (29) and he emphasises knowledge production rather than acquisition. His definition of 'convention' reads ironically in conjunction with genre-based pedagogy: 'the sedimentation of social power over time' (15), especially given his preference for 'critique over competence' (5), which questions the assumption that teaching 'genres of power' can ever be ideologically neutral.

Cope and Kalantzis, drawing on Kress, 'foreground interactivity and the logic of hypertext' (224) as characteristic features of multimedia. Yet they warn us that digital media are not automatically and by their nature interactive and hypertextual, since they do not always fundamentally alter dominant forms of representation (224). One way to illustrate this phenomenon (my example, not theirs) is the way that online publishing has influenced the layout of the printed book. Even in serious scholarly books we are more likely to find not just blurbs puffing the book but opinions sought from opinion formers in advance, not necessarily scholarly experts. For example, Simon Sebag Montefiore's recent history of Jerusalem included glowing reviews from Bill Clinton and Henry Kissinger. Pages may incorporate 'pulls' or text boxes highlighting important points or summarising content. Reader responses and questions to the author may be included at the end of the book, giving authors an opportunity to engage directly with readers relatively informally, which can lead them to author websites and blogs. Supplementary materials such as glossaries that clarify and simplify unfamiliar concepts are frequently included. In other words, books are made less 'forbidding' and their pages incorporate the kind of publishing programs one can purchase from, say, Microsoft, but their 'book-like' character is maintained. Notwithstanding this, as Baron explores in her article on reading and digital media, digitalisation is changing the ways we read, write and consume texts. One example is the way in which scholarly articles often include estimated reading times, so the reader can opt out if the reading demands are too high.

In 'Designs for Social Futures' Cope and Kalantzis propose the concept of Design as better expressing our relationship to and use of multimodal texts. Kress's

work on Design is referenced in the *General Capabilities* document but has had no discernible effect on the English Curriculum. 'Design,' say Cope and Kalantzis, is 'a process in which the individual and the culture are inseparable' (203). 'Design' includes both the common meaning of the word, designing a house, for instance, and the idea that 'we make and remake the conditions of our own existence, that is, what designers do' (203). Adoniou's study of children's early writing and drawing has interesting implications for multimodality, since it demonstrates that multimodality is there in the very origins of literacy. 'Design' (with a capital 'D') 'refers to structure and to agency.' Individuals draw on the meaning-making resources available to them. In order to do so, individuals employ Available Designs--linguistic, visual, spatial, gestural and audio modes-- but at the same time transform them ('Drawing Conclusions' 211). A website, for example, may be composed of print, pictures, diagrams, hyperlinks, video and audio, in a variety of spatial and other relationships, and one can argue that, as technology is updated, so is the materiality of the website, the way it looks or sounds, and therefore the meanings it can support. One exciting example of internet technology is a website that allows viewers to survey the architecture of Ancient Rome from the founding of the city through to the height of its power and influence. It is clear that archaeology is being transformed by computerisation and new visual technologies. But the internet can also narrow choice. It is no secret that Facebook, for example, monitors users' searches and 'chooses' news links for us we might want to view. The Scope and Sequence and Achievement Standards that accompany each learning area in the English Curriculum are careful to integrate digital and multimodal tasks into assessment but the Curriculum does not actively invite students to analyse and critique the role of digital texts in creating knowledge and identities.

Cope, Kalantzis and Kress regard the process of learning to understand, employ, and reflect on their use of multimodal texts as integrated, active and self-transforming. In fact, although they focus on multimodality, their theories more accurately constitute a fresh approach to textuality, pedagogy and the nature and identity of the learner, not just multimodality as such. In their preference for the open, over the closed, the plural over the singular, the hybrid over the pure, difference over homogeneity, Cope and Kalantzis may appear naively optimistic, given the general

commodification of all forms of knowledge and creative production in late capitalism, but that is better than ignoring the issues and avoiding the implications for the curriculum, as English largely does.

Burn, in his argument for the value of media literacy, argues that it has provided an understanding, previously lacking in English pedagogy, of the importance of institutional contexts (15). First of all technologies make new meanings and social practices possible; and, secondly, the study of media highlights the nature of audiences (16). However, Burn maintains that one of the weaknesses of media studies is the absence of the aesthetic:

[t]he media education approach to textuality has been essentially a semiotic one. Rooted in adaptations of 1960s and 1970s structuralist semiotics and narratology, most conspicuously those of the early Barthes, it has paid little attention to textual aesthetics. (16)

Although Burn admits that there is a risk of reinstalling the distinctions of which Bourdieu is so critical, he contends that, by making their own media texts, students learn about aesthetic choices and their effects, the 'poetics' as well as the grammar of media and multimodal texts. In harmony with the views of Cope, Kalantzis, and Kress, he vehemently asserts that the making of media texts involves 'playful, imaginative and creative production work,' in the process of which 'values are chosen, identities forged, pleasures enjoyed, representations understood' (23). Burn's preferred model of creativity is that of the psychologist Vygotsky, for whom creativity in children is linked to play, and for whom 'true creativity only develops when the imaginative transformations of play are connected with rational thought' (Burn 20). In the *Shape* under 7.1 'Pedagogy and Assessment: Some Broad Assumptions' teachers are enjoined to use explicit teaching 'and more discovery-based or exploratory approaches,' 'discovery-based' being associated with the work of Bruner, who emphasised active learning and the use of inductive reasoning (Marsh, *Becoming a Teacher* 23). The next sentence of 7.1 reads: '**The core of the English curriculum involves rules and conventions, as well as imagination, experimentation, judgement, and appreciation.**' The 'as well as' is telling since it makes every word after the phrase appear supplementary. An alternative explanation might be that rules and conventions are in danger of being neglected and that consequently teachers need to be reminded

not to ignore them in favour of more exciting goals. It is perfectly possible to teach rules and conventions or even experimentation, but imagination and judgement, like originality and creativity, can only be the *results* of pedagogy. Misson surveys the various definitions of imagination in pedagogy and concludes that '[t]he imagination is based neither in the realm of abstract intellect nor in the realm of the emotions, but sometimes as bridging the two' ('Imagining the Self' 25). For example, there are statements which assert that students will use word processing programs flexibly and imaginatively but no hint of what this might mean.

Approaching Critical Literacy and the Curriculum

Cope and Kalantzis integrate what they label Critical Framing into their pedagogical mode as one of its essential elements. Critical Framing encompasses the 'social and cultural contexts of particular Designs,' both the immediate contexts and the wider historical contexts, and, in addition, asks whose interests those Designs serve (247). Thus Designs embrace the purposes, audiences and structures of texts, and the systems of knowledge, social practices and relationships of power that inform them. (34). Hence a mastery of different Designs is insufficient--students need to gain a critical distance from their work to derive the most benefit from it. Cope's and Kalantzis's work aligns with that of Burn, who, inspired by the work of Vygotsky, links creativity and rational understanding, both equally required to develop critical literacy (13). Worth noting is the fact that the *Curriculum Mapping Project* ranked each area for 'cognitive demand,' with 'creating' being ranked fourth in the hierarchy of demands, below analysis, evaluation and application (7-8).

It is with trepidation that one raises the term 'critical literacy' in a discussion of the English Curriculum since the phrase is burdened with negative connotations. Yet critical literacy has been a concept implicit or explicit in English curricula since the 80s and is closely aligned with the New Literacy studies and social semiotics based on the assumptions that language is inherently social and contextual and mediated through systems of representation and connected to power. The *Framing Paper Consultation Report: English*, in a summary of its findings, comments that some English teachers were disturbed by the absence of references to Personal Growth, Critical Literacy and Cultural Heritage models of English, suggesting that they wanted

the Curriculum to be explicit about its own models or perhaps that it should acknowledge or orient itself around long-standing disciplinary patterns. The Personal Growth model is still present to some degree in the Curriculum in allusions to creativity and imagination, though it is much attenuated, and, as Moon remarks in an aside in 'Remembering Rhetoric,' 'the present generation of teachers will have little memory of it' (38). Cultural heritage is alive and well in the Curriculum but critical literacy has, if not disappeared, been discreetly left out of the lexicon. By contrast, the Ontario Curriculum embeds critical literacy in every syllabus. For example, under Oral Literacy (*The Ontario Curriculum--Grades 9 and 10 English*) the specific expectation under Critical Literacy reads: 'identify the perspectives and/or biases evident in both simple and complex oral texts and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values and identity.' Then follow helpful teacher prompts about the use of accents, the nature of the audience and how a different audience may require changes in the text, the use of generalisations, and so on (43). Goodwyn, in his nuanced account of literature teaching in England since 1988, casts a critical eye on (in 2010) the AC:E Goodwyn is an eloquent defender of the value of teaching literature in schools, though realistic about what it can accomplish. He notes that in the AC:E English Curriculum

there are four uses of the word 'critical' and two of 'critically,' but the phrase 'critical literacy' is entirely absent, airbrushed from curriculum history. This absence represents a fascinating and highly problematic moment in the history of Australian English teaching. . . . The proposed National Curriculum for English retains (without acknowledgement) some of the thinking of critical literacy but its emphasis is much more on a traditional conceptualisation of literature. ('The Status of Literature in a National Curriculum: A Case Study of England' 26)

Goodwyn's article therefore lends support to the view that 'critical literacy' has been sidelined in the Curriculum.

One major contribution to the discussion of critical literacy in Australian curricula and pedagogy was the publication in 1997 of a volume of essays, *Constructing Critical Literacies: Teaching and Learning Textual Practice*, which contains contributions by many of the significant theorists, practitioners and critics in the field

of the so-called 'New Literacies' and on whose work I have drawn quite extensively. The contours of many subsequent debates are limned in this volume. In his introduction to the book, Allan Luke observes how critical literacy

has gradually moved from the margins to become part of the official knowledge of state curriculum, a concern of teacher educators, professional developers and in-service educators, policy makers, regional consultants and school administrators. (13)

In 1997 the editors are already regretting that the Federal government is committed to national testing and a highly reductionist view of literacy (viii). The volume takes account of a range of views and is in fact constructed on the model of a position paper and reply that permits and encourages nuanced responses and subtly inflected debates. Many of the contributors come from a linguistic and literacy background; all are dismayed by definitions of literacy that fail to recognize its social dimension and none wants a literacy that is insensitive to difference and inequities. As one might expect, Allan Luke begins with the question: how is literacy social? And the answer to this question draws on a range of disciplinary fields and theoretical resources clustered around the 'material relations of discourse, power and knowledge,' literacy being one of the sites 'characterised by contestations over resources, representation and difference' (3). One of the chapters is co-written by Luke and Freebody, and Peter Freebody Head of the Advisory Board for the English learning area. For me, the most formidable contribution is that of Terry Threadgold ('Critical Literacies and the Teaching of English') because I am sympathetic to her critique of genre-based pedagogy and what she regards as the blind spots in Ian Hunter's criticism of Subject English in the same volume, in particular his patriarchal assumptions about teaching when English remains a 'feminised' profession and when teachers have opened up spaces for feminist discussion of texts and textuality.

Many teachers had a reasonable expectation that critical literacy would feature in the Curriculum, but being associated with an 'explicitly political dimension to the teaching of reading and writing' (Carmen Luke, 'Media Literacy and Cultural Studies' 13) has dealt a blow to its fortunes. It is tainted with 'political correctness' and 'relativism' and in addition is accused of compelling students to master obscure and obfuscatory, jargon-ridden theoretical language, summed up in the term

‘postmodernism,’ that places unreasonable obstacles between texts and students. This has created debates *within* the discipline as well as making English a very visible target of conservative wrath. The Curriculum cannot solve these problems

- because ‘political correctness’ is embedded across the entire Australian Curriculum in terms of Indigeneity, diversity, respect for difference, however token such rhetoric is. By the very nature of their discipline, English teachers have long been cultural mediators for such values.
- because it is almost impossible for many teachers to ‘unthink’ the disciplinary developments of the last few decades.
- because ‘critical literacy,’ as Luke and Freebody argue in ‘Critical Literacy and the Question of Normativity: An Introduction’ (1-18), is a theoretical response to changed conditions, such as globalisation, the rise of new technologies and workplaces, altered priorities in schooling, greater student diversity, the corporatisation of education, and so on. (12)

In other words, ‘critical literacy’ does not, in their view, signal some perverse esoteric speciality but is the consequence of and rooted in ‘current methodological and epistemological problems’ (14) which focus debate around knowledge, disciplinary boundaries, and cultural value, debates that the Curriculum hopes to avoid. Carmen Luke, in ‘Media Literacy and Cultural Studies’ (19), acknowledges that ‘critical literacy’ has been marshalled for a range of curricular and pedagogical purposes. Luke and Freebody single out for mention the ways in which it has been used to ‘promote textual expressions of identity and self-esteem,’ ‘to teach explicitly the rhetorical structures and linguistic features of conventional text forms,’ to teach ‘reflexive metacognition’ and ‘to teach students to identify emotive terms, bias, stereotypes, and other aspects of textual representation’ (14). There is nothing particularly frightening here. The Curriculum expressly raises issues of identity; it certainly promotes the explicit teaching of rhetorical features, and the Curriculum’s engagement with difference and ‘intercultural understanding’ (6) implies that bias and stereotypes are to be avoided.

However, the *Shape* is cautious in invoking the critical even if critical thinking is one of the General Capabilities. Critical thinking is regarded as essential in promoting innovation and creativity and enabling students to master the skills of

argument and persuasion. Critical and creative thinking are linked in the General Capabilities on the grounds that they are integral to learning but creativity is obviously the poor relation. The General Capabilities document defines critical thinking as ‘interpreting, analysing, evaluating, explaining, sequencing, reasoning, comparing, questioning, inferring, hypothesising, appraising, testing and generalising’ (53). These capacities should lead students to be ‘open-minded, seek alternatives, tolerate ambiguity, inquire into possibilities, be innovative risk-takers and use their imagination’ (54). Lists are rarely illuminating or exhaustive and this kind of accumulative rhetoric hardly results in a good definition of critical understanding. For example, Aristotle, in his analysis of metaphor and by extension analogy, comprehends its power as a trope and therefore as a method of reasoning as well as a rhetorical device.

Critical thinking is crucial, according to the Capability, in dealing with ‘complex environmental, social and economic pressures’ (53). So, how do we think critically about climate change when Australians are so bitterly divided on the subject? Denialists regard scientists as mistaken, involved in some kind of conspiracy, or professionally partisan. In other words scientists and those converted by them are insufficiently critical or sceptical. In this case being critical is a virtue. Opponents dismiss (sometimes well-funded) denialists and their right-wing friends in the media as anti-science, in the pockets of big money, and wilfully blind to ‘inconvenient truths.’ In this case the legitimacy of scientific consensus by scientists who have compared, tested, evaluated and analysed data is disregarded (not for the first time). Australians are still talking past each other on climate change, just as they talk past each other on education.

The absence of critical literacy can perhaps be attributed to an uneasy relationship with and perhaps repudiation of Subject English’s recent disciplinary history, centrally including cultural studies and the linguistic turn. As Allan Luke would be the first to admit, unpacking the term ‘critical literacy’ is no simple task and it can be tackled from different angles that activate different pedagogical and discursive histories. In *Pomo Oz: Fear and Loathing Downunder*, Lucy and Mickler speak of a ‘war on English,’ in particular because of its supposed infiltration by postmodernism. One way to begin is by examining the word ‘critical’ as it occurs in

the *Shape*. ‘Critical’ is employed in 5.3.2 under the section on literature, where it occurs in the phrase **‘ethical and critical reflection,’** a suitably vague expression--on what is the student being asked to reflect? The *Information Sheet* for Senior Secondary English states that Unit 1 is a syllabus in which **‘students critically and creatively engage with a variety of texts’**--in line with the general capability, though what ‘engage with’ means is vague. Yet two sentences later we discover that students **‘learn how to analyse different interpretations of texts.’** The word ‘interpretations’ seems to acknowledge that literary texts in particular are capable of multiple interpretations, though this may imply an act of homage to the richness of literary texts, not an invitation to rigorous critique. A better task might be for students to evaluate different interpretations of texts, providing evidence in defence of the one they prefer, in which case the ‘learn how to’ is redundant. By this account, students should be able to generate, evaluate for their adequacy, and compare different interpretations of texts rather than to analyse them. And let’s not underestimate the difficulty of this task. What will they conclude from their analysis of examining different interpretations? That texts are by their nature susceptible of multiple readings? That readers can choose to support some readings over others? That there are different reading practices that can be brought to bear on texts? That professional critics in the academy are to guide their own interpretations? The failure to specify what is meant by ‘critical’ seems to render ‘critical’ extrinsic rather than intrinsic to acts of interpretation.

A Necessary Detour on ‘Interpretation’

Our new national curriculum being delivered by our new National Curriculum Board won’t have anything postmodern about it.

Julia Gillard, Q & A, ABC TV, qtd. in Howie 67

It was in the nineteenth century that ‘interpretation’ migrated from Biblical hermeneutics and philology to the analysis of literature (Turner 269), where it has played a significant role. Clearly ‘interpretation’ generates conceptual difficulties in the *Shape* because the relationship between ‘interpretation’ and meaning(s) remains cloudy. Here again there is merit in taking the long way round. ‘Hermeneutics,’ the art or science of interpretation, incorporates the name of the god Hermes, messenger of

the gods, who is also--as Kermode in his brilliant *The Genesis of Secrecy* notes--a trickster figure whose announcements were often darkly ambiguous, rather like rhetoric itself (1). According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, hermeneutics can be traced back to Classical Greece but it is only 'with the Stoics, and their reflections on the interpretation of myth, [that] we encounter something like a methodological awareness of the problems of textual understanding' (2). Philo of Alexandria, in his defence of the ancient pedigree and superiority of Judaism in the face of Greek and Egyptian scepticism, offers his well-known allegorical reading of the Septuagint, an acknowledgment that (some) texts contain hidden meanings at odds with the literal which only the initiated can decipher, though of course the point of such hidden meanings is not to conceal them but to (ceaselessly) lay them bare.

Hermeneutics in the European intellectual tradition became indelibly associated with Biblical hermeneutics, the principles developed to interpret Biblical texts (although Midrashic traditions predate and continue alongside Christian hermeneutics). The texts of the Bible, since they transmitted the revealed word of God, had to be ontologically distinct from other fallible and mundane human texts, yet, ironically, the Bible still required and demanded interpretation to reveal its deepest truths, to solve the myriad inconsistencies in the manuscripts and to resolve the theological conflicts that arose in the early church. Indeed Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation was commissioned by Pope Damasus in order to quell disputes about translation (Ehrmann 101). But the fact that Biblical texts require translation for non-Hebrew and non-Greek speaking readers, to say nothing of the fact that different versions of the manuscripts and the passage of time have rendered the early texts obscure, means that interpretation has no terminus, except in the mind of God. Literary texts became linguistic objects equally demanding of interpretation and equally fecund in meanings.

Scholars, in their lexico-grammatical and philological work on the scriptures, especially since the seventeenth century, have been assiduous in trying to recover the 'intended' meaning of God's word (just as literary critics tried to recreate the author's meaning or 'intended meaning,' a phrase that still occurs in the *Shape*) and to establish reliable texts. Indeed MacCullough, in his magisterial history of the Reformation, regards this lengthy and patient work as one of the great achievements

of Western history and scholarship (704). Nor was the hermeneutics confined to the scriptures. Renaissance historians began to argue for a hermeneutics of reading when it came to reading Classical histories in order to transform history from a branch of rhetoric to a scientifically informed practise that took account of the customs of the time and place and the reliability of sources (Grafton 1062). Scholars and theologians therefore generated a hermeneutical apparatus to guide their exegetical commentaries based on agreed principles. For example, should we regard the Old and New Testaments as the gradual revelation of God's purpose in history, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles? In which case, how should we read the Old Testament in the light of the New? Is the Bible internally consistent and an organic whole? Or a miscellany? Do we read Biblical verses in context or in isolation, particularly in view of the fact that the New Testament quotes so many passages from the Old, though it often reframes them without regard to their original context? What is the relationship between part and whole? Cultural/historical analysis has long helped to guide the reading of scripture, for example, in understanding the concepts of priesthood, Temple worship, Jewish sects, and so on. Moreover, literary and generic analysis of the texts has yielded excellent results, demonstrating how generic features and rhetorical devices are common to books of the Bible. None is more striking than the use of chiasmus in the Gospels, especially the parables, which powerfully suggests that the words of Jesus obey subtle, highly patterned, cohesive literary rules and are not spontaneous utterances recorded or remembered by apostles.⁹⁵

Though the interpretation of scripture may now seem a harmless but irrelevant pastime, the application of increasingly refined methods to the analysis of Biblical texts became dangerous during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries since they appeared to call into question the authority of sacred scripture. Spinoza, whose works were vilified as atheist and who was excommunicated by the Jewish community, questioned, on internal textual grounds, whether Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. Lawrence describes Spinoza as the pioneer in the 'second great turning point in Western hermeneutics' (167), the first being the creedal and dogmatic

⁹⁵ Chiasmus is 'the ABBA pattern of mirror inversion ; for example: 'when the going gets tough the tough get going' (Lanham 33). For a finely-honed discussion of chiasmus in Mark's Gospel, see Michael Turton's line by line commentary on the Gospel (www.michaelturton.com).

developments of the ecumenical councils. By the nineteenth century the so-called German Higher Criticism (or The German Pestilence, as critics of radical scepticism labelled it) (Boer 33-56), which treated the Bible as a human text capable of being interpreted without divine aid, became less scandalous, and other principles of interpretation emerged. Thus interpretation was transformed from a hermeneutics of consent to a hermeneutics of suspicion (Lawrence, quoting Gadamer 167) and ushered in what Nadler calls 'modern biblical source scholarship' (107). To take one instance, the Old Testament scholar Thomas L. Thompson adopts as two of his foundational hermeneutical principles, first, the assumption that the Old Testament is not a collection of historical documents and, second, that the texts should always be subject to literary analysis since they are primarily literary documents (Thompson and Verenna, 1-26). Nevertheless, deciding what new (presumably sounder) hermeneutical principles to adopt brings its own unwelcome implications from the subsequent history of hermeneutics once it escapes the grasp of Biblical scholars. How can one secure the objectivity of *any* interpretation and how can one judge among competing interpretations? As the hermeneutic philosopher Gadamer powerfully contends, there is an interpenetration of linguistic meaning and objective reality and there can be no escaping the social nature of meaning and thought and the dynamic, recursive nature of meaning-making:

[w]hoever wants to understand a text always performs a projection. We project a meaning of the whole, as soon as a first meaning is manifest in the text. Such a meaning in turn only becomes manifest because one is already reading with certain expectations of a determinate meaning. (qtd. in Lawrence 187)

How contemporary philosophy resolves the conflict between the search for valid foundations for truth versus subjectivism and relativism and the historically located nature of human thought should not be the prime concern of an English curriculum, although its consequences are. Every reading is both an interpretation and a productive misreading: [a]s Wachterhauser, in his discussion of Gadamer's ideas, forcefully asserts:

[t]here is no value-free, context-independent ground on which to stand and in terms of which we can hope to adjudicate our disagreements. If 'relativism' or 'interpretation' is simply our intractable condition as knowers, then our only

hope we have for dealing with our disagreements in a rational way is to develop yet another interpretation from which (we hope) the dispute can be resolved (or at least softened). Of course those new interpretations will, in all likelihood, generate further conflicts and the need for still more relative interpretation.

(53-54)

Although Gadamer himself and other philosophers who attract the label 'hermeneutic,' such as Heidegger, Habermas, McDowell, Davidson and Rorty, propose their own ways out of this impasse, if contingency is our condition, then raging against so-called 'postmodernism' and 'relativism' is futile and unproductive. Not that these philosophers have bracketed off the critical, self-reflective and even emancipatory projects of hermeneutics. Habermas's theory of communicative action (a reading of and reply to Gadamer) (Warnke 79-101) attempts to ground democratic theory in an openness to dialogue free from the 'marketplace' of ideas and the instrumentalism of a modern, technocratic society. Gadamer himself, in the opinion of Rosenfeld, urged an 'epistemological modesty' upon human actors (247).

Therefore the history of hermeneutics is a welcome reminder that not all relativism can be sheeted home to the bogey man of postmodernism. Derridean 'deconstruction,' imperfectly understood, is frequently caricatured in the media as French gibberish, a kind of academic spoof, or a nihilistic descent into meaninglessness. Like Gadamer influenced by Heidegger, and a forensic reader of the philosophical canon, Derrida, whose disagreements with Gadamer are well documented, is also a thinker incredibly sensitive to language even if Derrida regards as illusory Gadamer's quest to discover unity and cohesion in texts or to seek interpretative accommodation or coherence through dialogic interaction (Richard Bernstein 277). Not only do texts contain irreconcilable contradictions, gaps, absences and silences and unassimilable differences that 'undo' their logic and consistency, they are constructed around binary oppositions that are constantly subverted or transgressed; that will not remain 'in place.' For Derrida philosophy is too wedded to an imperialistic logic of the Same and a metaphysics of presence that assimilates difference and erases otherness.

It is no easy task to offer a brief illustration of Derrida's method but a particular scriptural example provides a historically significant case in point. In the Epistle to the

Romans Paul tries to explicate theologically the traumatic rupture between Jew/Greek that is indispensable to creating a Gentile community from allegiance to a Jewish god yet needing to deny that any such fatal breach has occurred. Jesus is Jewish and Jews are heirs to the promise, adopted sons who have been given the Law and covenant (Romans 9: 1-5). God has kept His promise so the Law is not annulled nor God unfaithful to his people. But because they have rejected Jesus, who has brought the Law to an end and through whom both Jew and Greek are to be redeemed, they (the Jews) are cut off like an olive branch. However, the Jews can be grafted back onto the olive tree 'in your place,' a warning to the new gentile but undefined community to remain faithful otherwise God can also cut them off. Moreover, the author argues that Christ, though a Jew, predates the Law in that Abraham is the ancestor of pagans as well as Jews and thus pagans are also heirs to the promise like Jews, even if they have not been 'cut' (circumcised). Christ is both Jew and not-Jew, the Jews remain the Chosen People but the pagans now share in that promise if they believe. As in the Roman law code, they too are adopted sons and therefore legitimate heirs. It is not wrong to keep the Law but faith gives the Law its true value (3: 31). This laborious logic is meant to deal with the fact that the not-as-yet designated Christianity is a Jewish religion but not exclusive to Jews. To become a convert to Judaism or remain a Jew while becoming a Christian is not to *become* a Christian, since Christians are freed from the demands of the Law. Thus the Jew becomes a source of irreconcilable and unassimilable difference, with tragic consequences in history. It is pointless for Paul, the supposed author, to declare that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek since this difference cannot be erased even though there have been strenuous and constant attempts to reconcile the two. This crux continues to trouble Christian churches theologically and doctrinally to this day and is the source of endless interpretation since there can be no end to this process that will resolve the textual, dogmatic and ethical dilemmas it raises. It remains undecidable, yet the text's interpretation really matters. It is not a matter of indifference or inconsequentiality. Thus I argue that Derridean deconstruction is not some trivial language game but is central, though not exclusively so, to contemporary understandings of interpretation. Doecke puts it powerfully in the following observation:

[r]ather than seeing deconstruction as an act of destruction, as critics suggest it is, we might see it as an act of passion, which reflects an impulse to possess the text as much as it has possessed us and the desire to seek out other possibilities and new understandings. This is a motivation that is fully congruent with the primary driving force in modern Western thinking and Western culture: a suspicion of absolutes. (34).

This, perhaps protracted, detour on ‘interpretation’ has been rendered necessary because interpretation seems integral to literary criticism and thus to literature itself, as Turner has affirmed. Moreover, ‘interpretation’ is an activity students must engage in according to the Australian National Curriculum and to other state curricula, as in: ‘**students think in ways that are imaginative, interpretive and critical**’ (NSW Board of Studies, Outcomes for Stage 4 and 5, *English Years 7-10 Syllabus* 13). This objective then becomes an outcome: ‘**thinks critically and interpretively about information, ideas and arguments to respond to and compose texts.**’ This outcome prompts some queries. If multiple interpretations are a property of all texts, are we asking students to prove that they understand this? Are we asking students to provide and support their own interpretations of texts in order to evaluate ideas and information? What are the differences between ‘interpretive’ and ‘critical’ approaches to texts and what is an ‘interpretive’ text? Is it a text which interprets another text, like an essay on a poem? Is it a text that contains ideas and arguments that can be evaluated or contested?

Remembering Rhetoric

‘Answer me, how long, Catiline, will you abuse our patience?’

Cicero, *Against Catiline*, 70

In the final analysis, ‘style’ is art.

Susan Sontag, qtd. in Galef 246

One aspect of the English Curriculum that is consistent across F-10 and senior secondary units is the focus on audiences, purposes and contexts in the production of texts, though often expressed in a ham-fisted, clumsy and erratic fashion. In the Learning Outcomes for Senior English Unit 1 students ‘**understand the relationships among purposes, context and audience and how these relationships influence**

texts [their conventions and formal patterns?] **and their meaning.**' This statement would not have disturbed Aristotle and teachers of rhetoric since orators could be taught to praise Caesar in order to bury him, using appropriate *topoi* and *inventio*, with acute sensitivity to their audience. By appropriateness to audience and purpose Aristotle also meant that style ought to obey a sense of decorum: that is, be governed by the constitution and rank of audiences, the occasion, and the avoidance of extravagance and excess (*Rhetoric Book 1*) Rhetoric was also linked to virtue in that avoidance of excess should be a guiding principle of behaviour and disposition. However the rhetorical implications of purpose, audience and context can be used to short circuit any engagement with the critical. Under Literacy (5.4.4) the document states that '**students will acquire a 'growing understanding of how texts work, their structures, interpretation, and the effects of certain features.'** 'Effects' seems to point to rhetorical devices but 'interpretation' once again causes confusion.

Nevertheless, the declaration that students learn to create and make meaning in texts through their understanding of purpose, context and audience is a formula and mantra that needs much further theoretical refinement. The terms 'text' and 'textuality' are derived from cultural studies (and in a different manner from SFL as well) and have been embedded in English curricula, non-controversially, for decades, but they are not necessarily equivalent to older rhetorical categories. This may partly account for the fact that the definition of 'texts' in the curriculum is sub-optimal, and why context is left vague. Fiske reminds us that 'text' 'derives from the semiotic and linguistic school' and that therefore a text, however free-standing, monumental or universal it appears (like Shakespeare and the Bible), is composed of a network of codes that renders the text inseparable from its socio-cultural contexts ('Text/message' 317-18) and that contexts are *in* texts and not just outside them; it is precisely that awareness which is absent from the section on texts in Key Terms, with inevitable theoretical consequences.

'Context' also deserves some theoretical clarification. According to Fiske, 'it may refer to the immediate and specific features of a social situation' and be used to describe those wider social, political and historical circumstances and conditions within which certain actions, processes and events are made meaningful.' Brannigan, in a volume that lucidly explains the relationship between literary texts and new

historicist and cultural materialist theories of reading, notes that in this paradigm critics read literary texts as the 'material products of specific historical conditions' (3). One consequence of this is that literary texts do not constitute an isolated category but are read through contextual webs of linguistic and other symbolic and material traces. In addition, literary texts are 'an active part of a particular historical moment' (3). For Fiske the term 'context' therefore directs attention to the not necessarily visible but nonetheless determining forces which constitute and regulate social activity' ('Context' 63-65). The addendum is crucial, since the 'determining forces' may not be instantly discernible by examining the immediate purpose and audience of a text, important as these are. One illustration must suffice here. In early Christian apologetics we have (very artificial) speaking situations in which an educated Christian argues against an educated Greek or against an educated Jew or against a Christian heretic. These documents contain standard charges, standard defences and well-worn and florid rhetorical devices. The purpose of these documents is ostensibly conversion or defence (Christians do not worship three Gods in the Trinity, for example, but one; Christianity is superior to paganism; Christianity is older than paganism) but they also serve to convince through their mastery of style which puts them on a level with their opponents. Nevertheless it would be hasty to assume that the identification of speaker, audience and style are by themselves sufficient to understand context or purpose. To begin with, Christians and their opponents shared a common philosophical discourse, usually Platonist (Ando 171-207), and a common rhetorical heritage that made it possible to conduct such debates in the first place and which rhetors constantly practised. Secondly, dates make a difference. Origen writes his anti-pagan *Against Celsus* in the second century at a time before Christianity had achieved pre-eminence and toleration under Constantine in the fourth century, so the institutional and political contexts are very different and must be accounted for when reading the texts (Minois 11-13).

Moreover, the speaker and audience in Christian apologetic may constitute a fictional device in the sense that the 'educated Greek' to whom a polemic is addressed may be a proxy for wider cultural concerns, such as the writer's desire to establish a legitimacy for Christian uses of philosophy and rhetoric rather than a specific address from a named speaker to a named reader. It is important to distinguish between the

speaker and the implied author. Another telling example can be sourced from the fourth century. In his sermons, John Chrysostom ('Golden Mouth') charged the Jews with deicide, an accusation with terrible after effects, but comprehensible though not excusable in the context of the vicious conflicts over the nature of Christ among theologians. If Christ was fully divine as well as fully human then the Jews *had* killed (their/our) God (if we are letting Romans off the hook) (Jenkins 120-21). Hence, although texts adopt a speaking position, the enunciative contexts of texts are inherently complex and certainly not reducible to a direct interchange between author and reader or addresser and addressee, an intellectual problem masked by references to context and audience and one which brings institutional contexts into the discussion.

Thus one of the problems with the Curriculum is its troubled attempt to marry the language of rhetorical *devices* with terms derived from other models of language and textuality and other modes of encounters with texts, such as the experiential and emotional. This problem may not obviously declare itself in a superficial reading of the Curriculum documents but I believe that it has serious consequences for their consistency. The terms 'text' and 'context' are not part of the lexicon of traditional rhetoric, though the terms do not exist in contradiction with them. Nevertheless it will be worth exploring where the legacy of the rhetorical tradition in the document intersects with terminology accommodated in a concept such as 'critical literacy.' For example, Patterson points to the shift in the Western Australian senior English units from texts to contexts, where contexts tend to dominate in the interests of exploring the 'intersection of social values and texts' ('Teaching Literature in Australia' 318). Therefore it is helpful to investigate the connection between 'critical literacy' and rhetoric by beginning with an examination of rhetoric. Unit 1 in Senior Secondary English instances the word 'rhetoric' under Content Descriptions (#6 bullet point): students will [analyse] '**how vocabulary, idiom and rhetoric are used for different purposes and [in different?] contexts.**' Aristotle quite properly included vocabulary and idiom under style (*Rhetoric Book 3*) and consequently there should not be a false distinction among them. The context in which 'rhetoric' appears suggests a concept of rhetoric that may be limited to rhetorical devices, the tropes and schemes that were taught for centuries in rhetorical schools, but which were never the sole task of

rhetoric. One of the functions of rhetoric today is surely to bring together once more the dialectical and stylistic characteristics of rhetoric.

Critics have noted a 'return to rhetoric' in English pedagogy (Moon, 'Remembering Rhetoric: Recalling a Tradition of Explicit Instruction in Writing' 37-52), and Burn argues for a critical literacy model that combines the aesthetic, the rhetorical and the semiotic. He goes back to Aristotle's division of rhetoric into *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*, and argues that these equate to the production regime, the structures of texts and the reception regime (13). His argument is plausible because it firmly embeds texts in their persuasive and institutional contexts but great care is needed in making too easy an equation between Aristotle's rhetorical system and current uses of the term, not least because Aristotelian rhetoric formed part of public oratory. So it is worthwhile exploring the components and divisions of Aristotle's rhetoric before embarking on any attempt to assess its current relevance.⁹⁶

Aristotle understood by 'ethos' the character of the speaker created by his oratorical skills and the repute that the individual speaker possesses by virtue of his life and achievements in the polis: in Aristotle's words, the speaker 'must create an impression of good sense, good moral character, and good will' even if, in some cases, he does not possess these qualities (*Rhetoric Book 2*). By 'logos' he means the argumentative structure of the speech with *topoi* or topics used to generate argument by logical manoeuvres. Aristotle discriminates between enthymemes, which produce valid inferences, and what is probably true, the latter being, he avers, of a sufficient standard for public oratory since it deals with everyday situations and common opinions--*endoxa*. 'Pathos' consists of the emotions that can be drawn on to arouse and persuade an audience: 'the emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, and are also attended by pain and pleasure' (*Rhetoric 2*). However, not just any audience, because Aristotle calculates how to arouse *particular* emotions in *particular* audiences, such as the rich, the elderly, the young (*Rhetoric Book 2*). Aristotle acknowledges that the pens of the poets have offered us dazzling rhetorical examples, including splendid speeches in which characters debate with

⁹⁶ I am aware that Latin treatises on rhetoric were more influential than Aristotle's for many centuries because of the loss of the knowledge of Greek texts.

others the justice and merit of their own actions or cause. If an audience attends closely to the speeches of Jason and Medea in Euripides' tragedy *Medea* it can be swayed by the eloquence of each of the speakers in turn and it is certainly asked to evaluate the quality of the arguments each presents as well as the ethos of the character and the pathos of their appeals to the audience.

The *Rhetoric* goes a long way to explaining why, in the *Poetics*, Aristotle defines tragedy in terms of a *pharmakos* for the emotions the play arouses in the audience (chiefly, as we saw, the *ephebe*)--pity and fear--which are therapeutically purged by the tragic spectacle. The texts Aristotle discusses in the *Poetics* are multimodal ones, easy to forget when the *Poetics* is assimilated into literary history. They are also generic. Tragedy and comedy are genres in the category 'drama' and imitate actions by performing them in front of an audience with music and dance as essential components of the spectacle. We must frankly acknowledge that Aristotle's essentialist model of genre in which the boundaries and characteristics of genre are fixed is no longer viable except in the broadest sense since 'it is not possible to fix the meaning of particular generic signifiers' (Gledhill 157): 'they are the recognised paradigmatic sets into which the total output of a given medium . . . is classified (Hartley, 'Genre' 127). There is no intrinsic set of properties which defines one or all genres in any or all media all the time (Hartley, 'Genre' 128). Genres are never static and unchanging but historically fluid and intertextual. Nevertheless, despite their fluidity, they are necessary to the institutional production of texts and carry out various kinds of cultural work. They may reinforce conservative values since genre conventions reinforce normative meanings (Gledhill 353) but genres contain 'potential tensions between the different economic, professional, aesthetic and personal practices and cultural traditions involved' (Gledhill 353). In the *Shape* there is a reference to forms and conventions but no reference to genre as a means of textual organisation, a significant omission. Because 'text types,' following SFL and genre-based pedagogy, are predominant in the lexicon, it is easy for teachers to get confused between the two, and to regard text types as possessing greater fixity of conventions than they in fact do. In Unit 4 of the Secondary English curriculum students must '**convey perspectives through the selection of mode, medium, genre and type of text**' (Content bullet point #7). Here 'genre' is distinguished from Hallidayan 'text

types' though the reason why is not made plain. The reader gains little sense of the importance of genre in the production and reception of texts nor that genre performs a rhetorical function, as Aristotle grasps in the *Poetics* when he identifies the conventions proper to tragedy and its effects on the audience.

Which brings the analyst to the long-lived and vexed issue of the relationship between logic and rhetoric. The speeches in Greek tragedy often constitute exemplars of dialectic in action. Protagoras, the Sophist, is said to have been the first to teach dialectic: 'that for every argument there is a counter-argument' (Marrou 83), a practical skill that dazzled contemporaries. If the early Sophists are a shadowy company in that their ideas are preserved only in fragments, they were obviously brilliantly effective teachers and for this reason frequently controversial. For example, Protagoras of Abdera often turns up in histories of atheism (Stephens 29-30) since he is recorded as saying that it is impossible to determine whether or not the gods exist (he was indicted for impiety in Athens). The declaration may be nothing more than an acknowledgment that rhetoric is concerned with practical matters and common opinions--*endoxa*--not ultimate truths. But as his book *On the Gods* is lost it is now impossible to tell. As the unfair accusation against Socrates, that he made the weaker argument defeat the stronger, demonstrates, dialectic came to be regarded as a form of trickery that undermined comfortable, accepted convictions. Siedentrop sums up the Sophists' disquieting effect thus:

[t]he sophists fostered habits of thought which disturbed the assumption that nature and culture belonged to a single moral continuum, a hierarchical order in which the gods lay behind the laws on which society was founded. In this way they encouraged a kind of scepticism. (44)

Minois takes up this theme when he remarks that in Italy the dialectical method was kept alive in exercises that posed counterarguments against orthodox theological positions, a lively remnant of early Christian polemic. Riggs (77-96) also records this exercise as part of the university curriculum in England in the sixteenth century. But even to think in these oppositions was tantamount to heresy and reeked of fire and brimstone (Minois 57). Goldhill registers the alarm the Sophists might have caused in the polis since rhetoric 'challenge[d] the very basis of the city's institutions of power,

where the correct evaluation of the strength of competing arguments is the foundation of the democratic legal and political process' (134).

Hence rhetoric came to be associated with manipulation and deception, despite the fact that rhetoric was central to the Medieval and Renaissance curriculum. In the case of certain genres of speeches, such as elegy, eulogy, and panegyric, the exercise of clever rhetoric may appear a venial sin, but to Plato it appeared philosophically mortal. Both tricks of argument, such as those that gave dialectic a bad name, and oratorical flourishes were specious since they put obstacles in the way of arriving at truths beyond appearance. Yet anyone who has ever read Plato knows that he is a master rhetorician. Aristotle noted the disputatious power of metaphor and analogy (*Rhetoric Book 3*) and no one is likely to forget Plato's Allegory of the Cave or his image of the charioteer as a metaphor for the conflicting elements of the human psyche. Aristotle argues that valid proofs are a powerful form of persuasion so that rhetoric is not *ipso facto* illegitimate. In any case, argument and oratory were essential to Greek political life and since political life was the only way to conduct life for male citizens rhetoric had to be embraced. McElduff describes eloquence as 'an engine of social mobility' in the ancient world (xxi). It is no accident that the study of rhetoric in the twentieth century was frequently employed to demystify and unmask the political chicanery and demagoguery practised upon societies. It was no big step to extend the same skills to debunking advertising, a response to consumerism in an age in which advertising was becoming increasingly professionalised. Thus knowledge of argument and rhetoric *can* perform a critical function, the kind that Carmen Luke identifies in her article in the volume on critical literacy ('Media Literacy and Cultural Studies') just as Plato had feared when he, like Paul in Ephesians, was cast among the Sophists.

It is no part of the present project to recapitulate the history of Western philosophy and the efforts of philosophers to decide what can be known by reason, deductive or inductive, synthetic or analytic, to use Kant's categories in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The power of science to offer convincing explanations of phenomena is taken for granted, with the proviso that no absolute foundations for knowledge can be established, as philosophers of science such as Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn recognise. Not that this fact need lead us to epistemological despair. No one (I hope) is adopting a position that logic is unimportant, that facts as we ordinarily understand

them don't matter. As Habermas submits, [w]hat we call "the world" does not consist of the totality of facts. Instead, it is the sum total of the cognitively relative constraints to which our attempts to learn from, and to achieve control over, contingent natural processes through reliable predictions are subject' (6).

The government has announced that science will be the next learning area to be tested under NAPLAN, and Australia, like other developed countries, measures its educational achievements by its 'science literacy' and the quality of its scientific research, although the number of students taking the 'hard' sciences and mathematics at the highest level seems to be in radical decline at Year 12, to say nothing of the problem of recruiting science and mathematics teachers and the less than whole-hearted support of the Australian government for science research. *Pace* the Curriculum's respect for 'information' and 'research,' an obvious and ever present problem is deciding what counts as 'objective' knowledge.⁹⁷ To take an illuminating example, Gleeson-White may cause the reader mild astonishment when she asserts that 'medieval merchants used double-entry bookkeeping as a rhetorical tool of capitalist propaganda, to persuade their "audience" that their business was honest, morally sound and its profit-taking ethically justified' (172), given the Church's denunciation of usury. She goes on to argue, for sound reasons, that modern methods of accounting, inherited from the triumph of double-entry bookkeeping, have just as much to do with ethos and pathos as science or objectivity (172), especially in a world of 'creative accounting.'

The ambiguity and distrust of rhetoric--its marshalling of persuasive even if morally and intellectually suspect arguments and its deployment of the tricks of language--has persisted into the present. One has only to think of the way in which history was once regarded as branch of rhetoric in the classical world and the heated debates this provoked when, in the seventeenth century, historians began to worry about sources and cultural contexts and were less persuaded by history as a branch of ethics, full of moral exempla (Grafton 1-62). Often literature is left out of this discussion, since it is seen as legitimate and indeed essential that literature engage and

⁹⁷ Niall Lucy and Robert Briggs, in a recent article, offer an insightful critique of how 'research' has come to signify a very narrow and exclusively 'scientific' notion of what counts as knowledge, to the detriment of the humanities.

persuade its readers through language. Learning what techniques literary texts make use of to accomplish their aims is regarded as crucial to understanding not only their richness but also their connection to life--the experiential and emotional--although this would have been an enterprise unintelligible to Aristotle. The curriculum writers grant that literature contains arguments and philosophical positions that may be evaluated and presumably reflected upon, like Milton's claim that *Paradise Lost* hopes to justify the ways of God to man, but such speculation is safely contained.

Despite the fact that rhetoric as a discipline in the university gradually went out of fashion, leaving spectral traces, rhetoric returned earlier than some might imagine. In the Anglosphere one can point to the work of Kenneth Burke (*A Rhetoric of Motives* [1950]) and I. A. Richards (*The Philosophy of Rhetoric* [1965]), although Richards is more usually associated with 'practical criticism.' *Wikipedia*, in its entry under 'Rhetoric,' and in line with Hartley, notes that in the 60s

the new linguistic turn, through the rise of semiotics as well as structural linguistics, brought to the fore a new interest in figures of speech as signs, the metaphor in particular (in the works of Roman Jakobson, Group μ , Michel Charles, Gerard Genette) while famed structuralist Roland Barthes, a classicist by training, perceived how some basic elements of rhetoric could be of use in the study of narratives, fashion and ideology. (35)

There are many points that deserve to be unpicked in this quotation but a good place to start is with the contribution of narrative theory to rhetoric. Burn notes (8-26) the contribution of narrative theory and semiotics to media studies and there is no reason to suppose that narrative is not a branch of rhetoric since the organisation of the events of the story into the order of the plot is a form of persuasion, just as Aristotle's *topoi* form part of *inventio* in order to generate the optimum order for each stage of an argument.⁹⁸ Indeed Aristotle's declaration that plot is the soul of tragedy (*Poetics* 5) asserts the pre-eminence of plot, and his choice of *Oedipus* as the exemplar of faultless plotting, however unrepresentative the play is among extant Greek tragedies, unites the generic, aesthetic and rhetorical.

⁹⁸ Plato in *The Symposium* uses a metaphor based on the butchery of sacrificial animals to express the exact stages of an argument. Animals had to be cut up in an exact order and according to precise specifications (39).

Narratology is now an important area of research in literary, cultural and media studies and the secondary literature is substantial. It rests on the assumption that narratives are one of the primary ways in which societies make sense of the world. In narrative studies we can usefully distinguish between its anthropological turn, exemplified by the work of Levi-Strauss: for example, what are the cultural functions of narratives? and the Formalist turn exemplified by Propp and Todorov: how are narrative possibilities in texts generated out of a limited number of events and characters? The two approaches are not mutually exclusive and both have been criticised for their structuralist assumptions that narratives are historically stable, which effaces their institutional and social contexts. Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* crops up again and again in scriptwriting as if it were Casaubon's Key to all Mythologies and had exhausted most narrative possibilities. Nonetheless, narratological theories have drawn attention to the techniques of mediating stories through plot, the pervasiveness of narrative in ordering and making meaning in the world, and the complex methods of narration, including the various parties to the narrative transaction (Chapman 145-53). Thus narrative theory not only opens up a whole range of texts, not just literature, to discussion but carries both aesthetic and ideological significance. For example, the eighteenth-century libertine novel emerges from the greater availability of print texts, increased literacy, and the function of the novel as pedagogical vehicle that both warns its female readers of the dangers of unlicensed male sexuality and initiates women, through the seductive wiles of the libertine, into the world of illicit sex. Thus the 'seduction narrative,' with its focus on feminine subjectivity, became central to the eighteenth-century English and European novel and has had a long and vivid afterlife in many media up to and including *Fifty Shades of Grey* (Dabhoiwala 170).

If Sawyer is right about the current English Curriculum having 'forgotten' the history of English as a subject, it is also incontestable that the Curriculum bears traces, as it must, of how and what English has meant in the past, including the rhetorical, though the curriculum is neither explicit about these legacies nor fluent in the ways it deals with conceptual difficulties. The Literacy strand is, as we have remarked on, underpinned by a narrow concept of literacy, despite references to social definitions of literacy. There is an awkward match between literacy conceived of as the mastery of

‘fundamentals’ and basics,’ and other patterns of textual organisation, such as the generic, the stylistic and the rhetorical. There is, moreover, an impression that attention to purpose, context and audience, essential to the generation of persuasive texts, is instrumental rather than critical. In other words, much as the humanistic grammar school has down the centuries taught ‘the mastery of complex linguistic routines and formulae’ (Ian Hunter, ‘After English: Towards a Less Critical Literacy’ 326), so students can be instructed in the techniques of persuasion suitable to the texts that ensure participation in the workplace and civic life. Certainly the task of rhetoric was and remains to enable students to master genres, structures and language registers.

For Ian Hunter this rhetorical function should be front and centre of any English curriculum, and demands ‘a renovated rhetorical curriculum in the state school system,’ one that cultivates ‘the trained mastery of definite and limited cultural techniques and routines in a specific *regimen* or *habitus*’ (331). Hunter deplores the manner in which ethics, aesthetics, and rhetoric were integrated into the English curriculum from its inception, tracing this move back to ‘the marriage between pastoral pedagogy and bureaucratic social administration’ (321), as suggested in Witte’s analysis of Protestant reforms to education. The aims of such pedagogy, Hunter argues, is, through the reading of literature in particular, to cultivate the techniques of inwardness and moral supervision. Hunter links an emerging literary pedagogy not to a progressive freeing of student creativity or unconstrained experience under the sympathetic tutelage of the teacher, but a governmental technique relentless in its moral discipline (‘After English’ 324).

Ian Hunter is particularly harsh on Dixon’s Personal Growth model, which he regards not only as naïve but as a fundamental misreading of the history of Subject English, including its own ideological and institutional positioning within the discipline and the school system. Hence aesthetic appreciation does not offer access to a realm of freedom, and ethical formation should not be the primary role of the English curriculum. Hunter feels that Subject English is hubristic in its claims to self-formation through aesthetic training and its contention that it offers a liberatory and privileged insight into the workings of power through ideological critique. Hunter is therefore disparaging of the genres that are favoured in English: literary criticism,

creative writing and the personal essay. In line with Foucault's repressive hypothesis in the *History of Sexuality Volume 1*, he regards the kind of progressive pedagogy that John Dixon and the Dartmouth circle represent as solicited and institutionalised by government bureaucracies as part of their apparatus of control, rather than liberating students from them.

In the context of the AC:E one has some sympathy with Hunter's views. The renewed emphasis on literature across all levels of schooling and the underscoring of its importance in developing ethical empathy and aesthetic judgement, with their connection to experience and creativity, seem, in some lights, a return to the Personal Growth model of English and the special role of literature in self-cultivation. Moon makes the point that the PGM is now a distant memory for many young teachers. Its emphasis on process, its Romantic investment in the 'whole person,' and the complementary focus on literature itself as a model of what it means to access the self and the world apparently spontaneously has not disappeared but is much attenuated ('Remembering Rhetoric . . .' 37-52). It has become routine to note that progressive pedagogy is very much older than the 60s and that therefore those nostalgic for 60s radicalism are captives of the past. Yet the kind of nagging that goes on in the curriculum documents--you *will* enjoy literature, you *must* study it, it is good for you--is ultimately counterproductive. In the outline of typical skills' development in each of the three strands across the years of schooling, it is significant that the Literature strand is where personal engagement and response, pleasure, and appreciation appear. In the section on skills' development in Years 3-6 (*Shape* 5.8.2) students '**develop ways to explore aesthetic and ethical aspects of literary texts,**' a statement that never occurs under Language or Literacy. This kind of ghettoisation of literature is clearly a defensive response to the felt marginalisation of literature but, once again, it denies these qualities and capacities to other areas of the Curriculum. Ironically, many of these who want literature to be central were never much in sympathy with the Personal Growth model. All tend to agree that literature is enriching and ethically educative, but the study of literature and literary criticism can also be seen as enforcing a certain kind of intellectual discipline on students, ironically akin to the kind of discipline that renewed the humanistic and civic curriculum.

Nevertheless, confining English to a purely rhetorical function contained in purposes, contexts and audiences and to a limited range of genres brings with it its own inherent difficulties. In the first instance, the number of genres and modes in the new communicative landscape has multiplied and it is a matter of judgement or a reliance on some kind of utilitarian argument that must be used to decide which text types should become the basis of instruction. The grammar school (and the ancient rhetorical schools before them) passed on elite knowledge, but the question of what the English curriculum should transmit, apart from literacy, ignores the diversity of the communicative landscape and the multiplicity of student backgrounds. There is, in addition, a proliferation of hybrid forms in which verbal and visual modes of representation are combined in new ways. Sawyer, in his critique of the NSW Basic Skills Tests (a precursor to NAPLAN) remarks that ‘the test [was] especially notorious among English teachers for a highly reductive approach to writing--based entirely on a [predetermined] “genre”’ (‘English in Australia: Complying or Disappearing?’ 16). Alison Lee argues that the model of induction and mastery theory of genre pedagogy (421), exactly the model of that can be traced back to the old rhetorical schools, reinforces dominant theories of knowledge. On the whole, the kind of multimodality made possible by the new communication system has been culturally overlooked (Snyder, *Tasmanian Curriculum* . . . 5). Consequently there is an irony in the fact that the genres encouraged by some aspects of the curriculum--literary criticism, the personal essay and creative writing--are implicitly still central to the English Curriculum, although other genres associated with multimodal and digital texts and writing across the curriculum are strongly encouraged.

Moreover, Aristotelian rhetoric includes ethos and logos, so it is a fraught undertaking to divorce ethics from rhetoric or to avoid questions of the status of knowledge. The Sophists, who advanced the art of rhetoric, nevertheless included an attention to *arête* (virtue) in their curriculum. In fact one wonders whether it is possible to separate ethics and rhetoric. If we return to an earlier moment of remembering rhetoric, the final chapter of Eagleton’s *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983), we find Eagleton discovering in the long rhetorical tradition a form of discourse analysis grounded in the social and the performative and applicable to all texts (206). But of course Eagleton does not mean us to stop with rhetorical analysis directed to

limited goals like making us better people or more aesthetically contemplative but is aimed at transforming society. According to Eagleton, rhetoric's inheritors are discourse theory and cultural studies (210), which today are generally located under critical literacy. Patterson is as wary of this version of 'English,' in which contextual readings serve to bring out the encoded ideological values in texts, as she is of earlier versions of self-formation. They are all part of the continuum of English's preoccupation with the ethical. Perhaps there is simply no single way in which to balance ethics, aesthetics and rhetoric in an English curriculum.

I would like to bring Moon in again, who in his perceptive article makes a plea for the reconsideration of the place of rhetoric in the English Curriculum and discerns 'hints at a renewed focus on elements of style and form' (39). He argues that 'the vitality and pleasure of literature often lies close to the surface, in the language and devices used to render the author's ideas' (45). The Curriculum identifies a few of these devices but in no systematic way. Moon is right in reminding the reader that a vast corpus of work on rhetoric and style exist in the Western tradition, but that the Romantic vision of authorship put a premium on originality and inspiration, which rendered the methods of the rhetorical schools dull, drearily systematic, with too much drilling and imitation of examples to count as the sources of creativity.⁹⁹ Rhetoric acquired pejorative overtones in the twentieth century as a form of deception and vacuity--'empty rhetoric'--not helped by the gradual reduction over the centuries of rhetoric to linguistic ornamentation. He identifies 'teachers' anxieties about how to reconcile the expressive and instrumental functions of writing' (39), and the Curriculum offers few clues as to how to accomplish this aim. I agree with Moon that rhetoric is a Curriculum resource that ought to be exploited. It does not stifle creativity; and it actually facilitates critical approaches to language.

Aesthetics and the Curriculum

⁹⁹ One of the most effective writing exercises I hit upon when I was teaching 12-year-olds was to get them to imitate closely a rather florid description from a short story by Oscar Wilde, using their own choice of subject. The results were remarkable. By using the sentence structure and the Wildean technique of piling of sentence upon sentence they produced really accomplished work. I did not draw from this example the obvious lesson--that more exercises like that could be valuable in increasing students' stylistic control.

Aesthetics, given its origins in Enlightenment idealist philosophy (a metaphysics of which Ian Hunter is highly critical) and its claims to establish universal values of judgment and taste, is vulnerable to cultural critique. For Bourdieu it is a form of cultural capital that reinforces middle-class privilege and is exclusionary in nature. Frow remarks that 'judgements of value are always choices that are made 'within a particular regime' (151), in this case within the autonomous sphere of the aesthetic as it developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which puts objects supposedly outside and beyond the power of the market, purely subjective preference or even perhaps pleasure. According to Frow, it is the task of high culture to convert 'commodities into non-economic values (aesthetic values, which may however take an ethical and experiential form)' (146). However, Frow also maintains that it is easier said than done to escape issues of cultural value because it remains problematic to reduce the aesthetic purely to market value even if aesthetic judgement is enabled and promoted by institutional apparatuses such as the school, the university, and the museum.

The Curriculum assumes that literature contains enduring aesthetic and cultural value and that students will come to understand why through their reading and analysis of literary texts. It is easy to write off these assumptions as hangovers from the past or the nostalgic fantasies of conservatives who remember with fondness the certainties of their educational experience. However, as Frow argues, the category of the aesthetic is not so easily dismissed. Beavis promotes a retheorising of the aesthetic that does not put it at odds with the critical ('Paying Attention to Texts . . .' 25) and, along with Burn, recognises the aesthetic dimension and potential of multimodal and digital texts, which have implications for students as creators and not just analysers of texts.

A ground breaking addition to the literature on the aesthetic and the curriculum is Misson's and Morgan's *Critical Literacy and the Aesthetic: Transforming the English Classroom* (2006), which reclaims the aesthetic in an era when critical literacy has been dominant in senior syllabi. They are right to regard the category of the aesthetic as troubling since it comes with assumptions about rhetoric, the cultivation of the self through literary study, and eighteenth-century notions that aesthetic education performs an important role in improving the nation-state as well

as the individual. In Schiller's *On Aesthetic Education in a Series of Letters* (1795) the poet and playwright argues that an aesthetic education promotes social harmony and equality since everyone is potentially able to access the aesthetic. Thus, as Rosenfeld contends, it is difficult to keep the ethical and the political out of aesthetics (227). One might add that it also comes burdened with assumptions about race and gender embedded in leading Enlightenment philosophies of the aesthetic, worth noting since Misson and Morgan are, understandably, not particularly concerned with these origins. Indeed the category 'art' depends on rather than pre-exists the aesthetic through the work of art historians such as Winkelman and philosophers such as Kant.¹⁰⁰ Misson and Morgan understand that English classrooms have tended, for historical reasons, to confine discussion of the aesthetic to literary texts when, as others such as Burn have noted, aesthetics governs a wide range of text production (xiii). Taking the Western Australian *English Learning Area Statements* as a case in point and contrasting this curriculum with more conservative curricula, Misson and Morgan contend that the two take

seemingly irreconcilable stances towards aesthetic appreciation or political critique of literature and popular texts. Each version of English concentrates on a different range of texts, attends to different aspects of them, aims to develop in students different capacities for reading, seeks to generate and regulate certain desires and satisfactions, and has in view a different society for which students are being prepared and to which they will contribute. (23)

Misson and Morgan make a passionately argued case for aesthetic analysis of and response to texts, seeing nothing fundamentally irreconcilable between binaries such as emotional/intellectual, universal/particular, embodied/abstract which have been understood to constitute the distinction between the aesthetic and the critical (23). They remind us that reason and judgment are not absent from the aesthetic, as the history of rhetoric demonstrates.

¹⁰⁰ A reading of Hogarth, Hume, Burke and Kant on the aesthetic quickly reveals that beauty, however abstract, is gendered feminine, with the male artist and philosopher achieving mastery over beauty through the right to depict and analyse it. Moreover, beauty is racially 'white,' and projected back on the Greeks as white Europeans. It was a shock for many to discover that the Greeks painted their temples and statues. Herder is one Enlightenment voice, in *Critical Forests*, who believes that standards of taste are historically variable ('Herder').

Moon draws attention to the connection between style and aesthetics since the Curriculum insists that students will not only strive for correctness and proficiency but appropriateness to purpose, audience and context through the calculation of linguistic effects: ‘imagination and creativity are crucial to authentic communication along with clarity, accuracy, and fluency’ (*Shape* 5.4.7). Most teachers would settle for clarity, accuracy and fluency. Moon is right to identify a gap between statements on style (and ‘voice’ in the Curriculum) and Curriculum specifications. For example, he comments that phrases such as ‘create particular effects’ reveal that ‘the curriculum is agnostic on the question of which specific effects are worth studying, and in what sequence’ (‘Remembering Rhetoric . . .’ 39). The sequencing of the English Curriculum has already been identified as a problem, since instruction in stylistic devices does not obey a self-evident, inherent logic.

Moon’s position, I take it, is not a call for the return of all the hundreds of Greek technical terms that filled the handbooks of rhetoric in the past (see *The Motives of Eloquence: Rhetoric in Shakespeare’s Time*) but the explicit teaching of stylistic skills. For this, teachers need time and knowledge. Goodwyn, when he argues for teachers to have the leisure to let pupils study literary texts in detail (‘The Status of Literature’ 23) free from the tyranny of constant assessment tasks is also making a case for time for the curriculum to breathe. One of the admirable qualities of state curricula and the Australian English Curriculum is their breadth and scope, responding to new literacy demands and the growth of technologies. For example, the Victorian curriculum has now incorporated graphic novels among its literary texts set for study, an entirely explicable choice though it may infuriate some. Yet the very breadth of the Curriculum may in itself create conflicting demands and disperse teachers’ and students’ energies. Threadgold’s observation on the many-faceted demands made on Subject English and English teachers is testimony to the fact that Subject English now has to fulfil such varied purposes, functions, aims, and goals it will have trouble encompassing them all. And it is hard to escape the conclusion that the Curriculum not so secretly longs for the installation of a duuvium of grammar and rhetoric (read literacy and literature) shorn of the distractions of new technologies. Far from simplifying and clarifying the curriculum, the Curriculum documents can barely contain their ever-multiplying aspirations, targets and objectives.

Critical Literacy

Analysing the place of aesthetics and rhetoric in the Curriculum before tackling head on (the absence of) critical literacy in the documents may appear a diversionary tactic but, I would argue, it is eminently sensible. It is interesting to note that Marshall McLuhan, before he became a media studies guru, completed a doctoral thesis on Renaissance rhetoric. Rhetorical analysis has the potential to lay bare the tricks of argument, persuasion, *inventio* and delivery employed by the orator, which caused Plato to be distrustful of the Sophists' craft. Rhetoric was always clearly connected to systems of political power in the ancient world and those who taught it, though not necessarily themselves from the highest social echelons, garnered admiration and respect and inspired awe. In this context it is not hard to see why some might call for a renovated rhetorical curriculum which initiates students into the 'genres of power.'

The debate that genre pedagogy has stimulated is inevitably a dispute over the exercise of power in the English classroom, the power, for example, to define the literate subject. Alison Lee accuses the proponents of genre pedagogy of installing an idealised liberal subject which erases difference and diversity, thus depoliticising the curriculum and deferring the critical (429). Carmen Luke argues that 'teachers need to come to terms with and actively intervene in the exclusionary and divisive consequences of their own pedagogical practices that continue to distribute knowledge, privilege and educational rewards unequally' (46). The Personal Growth model, when it emerged, was partly meant to redress the alienation of the working classes from education and thus to redistribute cultural capital, although it is difficult to escape the impression that working-class boys, not girls, were its chief object. In the English learning area it is often assumed by detractors that progressive pedagogy--the English teacher as pastoral care giver, guide, friend and inspiration--has got between the student and the mastery of essential skills

There is no more striking example of a pedagogue and theorist whose work crosses the boundaries of literacy, pedagogy and political power than Paulo Freire, whose practice and theory remain influential and whose *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1969) is frequently cited in accounts of critical literacy, critical pedagogy and Marxist

critiques of education. Freire wanted to collapse the boundaries between theory and praxis in the interests of providing the poor not only with literacy but with a self-conscious understanding of their own ideological positioning within a grossly unequal society. His work grew out of his experiences as an educator in Brazil, where centuries of slavery, brutality, exclusion and illiteracy were the lot of most. He began in adult education and drew connections between language and power--a critical literacy, so to speak--in order that the poor not only learned to read and write but to comprehend how language could both free and oppress them. Thus Freire employed the concept of 'false consciousness,' the Marxist notion that subordinate classes make sense of their situation through the prevailing ideology of the dominant class. According to Freire, 'they should be able to "read the world" after they become able to read, understand and critique the text as it reveals the world of ideas' (Bajovic and Elliott 29).

Therefore one strand of critical literacy has been linked to a Marxist theory of ideology and class conflict. There is no room here for a detailed evaluation of Freire's ideas or their educational reach but it is crucial to acknowledge that Freire's praxis emerged from a Brazilian context with a specific colonial and educational history which may not translate seamlessly to other societies:

Freire describes the participant of critical literacy as the *conscientização* (1996: 17): those who learn first to perceive and analyse the presence of oppressive social, political and economic structures within their living situations, and then take political action against these structures. (Bajovic and Elliott 30)

Freire endorses a dialogic mode of interaction among students and between students and teacher, and the program is striking because it constitutes a sustained endeavour to make education serve the emancipatory goal of social justice. Of course the Marxist concept of ideology influenced the emergence of cultural studies in the 60s and 70s, and certainly had a decisive effect on syllabi in Subject English, especially the analysis of mass media. For example, with the introduction of the Texts and Contexts section of the Western Australian TEE Literature exam during the 80s, students were expected to scrutinise literary texts through the lens of race, class and gender and teachers often explicitly taught Marxist readings to students, though such readings were generally conducted by employing the terms 'ideology' and 'representation,' and Subject English was increasingly underpinned by the semiotic analysis of texts, especially since Subject

English included the study of non-print texts.¹⁰¹ Undeniably the concept of ideology and the analytical practice of semiotics are intimately related although they were driven by different intellectual currents. The Second Wave of Feminism, however historically varied its causes, also drew on Marxist and semiotic theory to explain how the power of representation and political and economic power are connected and unequally allocated. The process of decolonisation produced its own ideological critiques of the inequitable dispersion of representational resources. Therefore one can consider Freire's work both a decolonising project, given the racial and ethnic divisions in Brazil, and a Marxist critique of power.

Without doubt the introduction of overtly 'political' readings of literary texts became a lightning rod for discontent in some quarters--the assumption being that such readings are wilfully imposed from without and violate the aesthetic nature of the text. However, plays such as *No Sugar* and *Translations* are overtly political, especially as they form part of a minor literature, and it is hard to resist the ways in which they position readers to engage in a critique of dominant ideologies and the historical injustices they enabled. *Dead White Males* repudiates the merit of feminist readings of Shakespeare that proliferated during the 80s and most audiences cheerfully occupied the conservative reading position Williamson invited them to take up.

Nonetheless, Marxism and semiotics are insufficient to explain how discussions of critical literacy have been caught up with 'postmodernism' and become hopelessly entangled with it, and why postmodernism has become shorthand for everything that has wrong with English curricula, from progressive pedagogy to the neglect of literature and grammar to left-wing views smuggled in under the guise of 'theory.' Lankshear, invited by Michael Peters to reflect on the tensions between critical literacy and postmodernism, makes the point that '[t]he idea of critical literacy [is not] unitary, but rather, has so many discursive meanings manifesting multiple critical traditions' (108). He believes that a critical practice must fulfil two conditions: it must 'advance evaluative judgements' and know closely 'that which is being evaluated and

¹⁰¹ Hence my readings of *Dead White Males* and Indigenous and Irish drama responded to the needs of new curricula and assessment.

judged' (108). Beyond these conditions, critical literacy must be grounded in social justice and equal access to social and economic goods. Lankshear concedes that postmodernism and other 'posts' have decentred subjects by questioning the liberal humanist subject but believes it is possible to reclaim a powerful ethical tradition founded on social justice (111).

In her brilliant discussion on critical literacy and the teaching of English, a reply to Ian Hunter's views on schooling that seek to dismantle any notion of emancipatory pedagogy, Threadgold makes an elegant case for the relevance of 'theory' in the classroom, in this instance what is labelled 'postmodernism' or 'poststructuralism.' She regards it as vital to, and embedded in, practice, and she justifies her arguments eloquently by situating them within feminist scholarship and the lived experiences of women in the school, which destabilise the binaries inscribed in the institutional, statist systems of schooling: public/private; rational/emotional; embodied/disembodied (353-82).

I have previously highlighted the gendered nature of English teaching and the constant appeals to a masculinist 'rigour' in curricula. Threadgold observes how feminism often runs athwart and sometimes thwarts the bureaucratisation and technical managerialism of education bureaucracies and their masculinist bias. Threadgold therefore sees with great clarity, how, in Pam Gilbert's words:

the social construction of gender through language practices provides an obvious window through which to interrogate the authority of a text and an obvious window through which to explore how social practices and language practices are intertwined. (60)

According to Threadgold,

[u]nderstanding that different reading positions are possible involves more than the particular text to be read. It involves understanding how readings are constrained and produced in the complex networks of the social, cultural and gendered realities that we live and embody. (375)

According to Hall, [s]emiotics seemed to confine the process of representation to language and to treat it as a closed, rather static, system' (42), but in postmodernist theories language generates multiple interpretations that can never attain to absolute truth. Language is always 'undoing' itself and the binaries on which it is based, thus

‘deferring’ any final meaning, as we saw in the section ‘A Necessary Detour on Interpretation.’

Threadgold’s point that the reading of a text involves more than reading the text also indicates the pervasive influence of Foucault’s theory of discourse in postmodernist theory--that language is more than an internal set of linguistic relationships but rather is connected to culture, to the production of knowledge, and to systems of power, all of which are linked to social, material and embodied practices. ‘Discourse’ constitutes ways of talking about topics, ideas, behaviour and practices in different institutional settings. Discourse both enables and restricts, sets limits on what we can say, how we say it, and what we can do, but is also productive--it engenders meanings that then regulate conduct but can allow new discourses to emerge in historically particular circumstances. Foucault is less interested in *what* meanings are created than in *how* discourse produces objects of knowledge (Hall 44) that are historically specific, shifting and institutionally located. In this he departs from semiotic analysis, focused on signs and representations: ‘discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things, [which] that renders them irreducible to the language [*langue*] and to speech’ (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 49).

One illuminating example of discourses in action is Kate Summerscale’s 2012 non-fiction book *Mrs Robinson’s Disgrace: The Private Diary of a Victorian Lady*. It relates the story of Isabella Robinson, whose diary, replete with her sexual longings, fantasies and perhaps accounts of her actual behaviour, became the subject of a notorious divorce case and was read out in court. In his *History of Sexuality Volume 1* Foucault advances the by now famous thesis that, far from repressing talk of sex, the nineteenth century solicited it. He also traces the historical and discursive mutations that transformed the Christian sacrament of confession and its attendant spiritual self-scrutiny to the secular world, particularly into the scientific discourses of medicine and psychology wherein the doctor or the scientist became the ‘expert’ in diagnosing, treating and even ‘absolving’ the patient. Mrs Robinson’s intimate diary, a genre that became popular in the eighteenth century and crosses over into other genres such as the novel and pornography, is, first, a spiritual manual, where she examines her conscience as a wife, mother and friend and reproaches herself for her shortcomings,

and, second, an account of her intellectual and aesthetic development, including her religious doubts, and, third, her marital discontent. Thus sexual confession, which is hedged about by her self-diagnosis of her failings, became a case study, a legal case study and a sensation in the yellow press. Her case undermined the distinction between private and public, questioned her ability to exercise her rational faculties and self-control, and embodied her as a slave to her impulses.

This is remarkable in itself, but Mrs Robinson's disgrace came about because of a change in the law in Britain in 1858 that allowed the middle classes access to divorce without an act of parliament. The reform was partly because of agitation for more rights for married women, who legally did not exist. It laid out the grounds for divorce, custody and property settlements, which still favoured men, naturally, but granted some redress to women who were deserted, brutalised or betrayed by their husbands. The Matrimonial Causes Act was a cautious yet important step towards rectifying the imbalance in legal power between the sexes. However, in its early days more men petitioned for divorce than women since one proven act of adultery on a woman's part was sufficient grounds for divorce. Mr Robinson submitted his wife's diary as *prima facie* evidence of her adultery but, ironically, he did not win his case because of the lack of convincing witnesses and because the defence called expert medical opinion to the effect that Isabella was suffering from a female form of erotomania; thus her diary constituted the ravings of a disordered mind overwhelmed by her physical and emotional urges exacerbated by advanced views and the reading of romantic fiction.

The experts classified her feelings not just as sinful but clinical. Mrs Robinson becomes the deviant, sexually perverse woman whose conduct must be explained scientifically. By a coincidence of history, among Isabella's circle were a number of well-known men of science: George Combe the phrenologist, who had read the heads of Isabella and the Prince of Wales and who regarded marriage as a form of legalised prostitution; George Drysdale, who published anonymously a scandalous book called *Physical, Sexual and Natural Religion* (1854), advocating free love and contraception, and Edward Lane, the co-respondent in the case, who ran a hydropathy clinic outside London and whose clientele included Charles Darwin. Mid-Victorian doctors and scientists were bent on formulating a *scientia sexualis* whose scope necessarily

incorporated the reconfiguration both of human nature and nature itself as it related to sexuality, gender and disease. They were carving out professional expertise that entrusted them with the authority to diagnose the deviant through naming the precarious objects of knowledge--madness, sexuality, perversion--that explained Mrs Robinson. She won her case, with the help of relatively clear-eyed and sensible judges, but at the cost of her reputation.¹⁰²

The change in divorce law, an institutional change towards freeing marriage from ecclesiastical authority, was meant to regulate marriage but threatened to reveal its fragile foundations (Summerscale 113) and, like Mrs Robinson's diary, thrilled the public with accounts in which the discourses of psychology, medicine, religious confession and the law were intermingled and alarmed those who thought that the law, while forbidding obscene publications, encouraged their airing in open court. Foucault's theory of discourse, which maintains that '*nothing has any meaning outside discourse*' [italics original] (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 22), adopts a relativist and constructionist position that 'truth' is an effect of power/knowledge dismays those who instinctively reject it or who do not understand it. Not that Foucault's theories are incontestable but they now form part of what critics mean by 'postmodernism' and 'critical literacy.' Ian Hunter's critique of English as an emancipatory discipline is thoroughly informed by a Foucauldian reading of the history of education but he draws from it different conclusions from those of Threadgold. She argues that critical literacy does not necessarily involve sensibility formation or 'full personal development,' but that, in any case, if we accept that education is subsumed by governmentality and that all teachers can do is collude, consciously or not, with the educational project of the state, she regards feminist teachers and feminist pedagogy as 'unruly elements in Hunter's account of governmentality' ('Critical Literacies and the Teaching of English' 78). She also accuses Hunter, in his desire to separate

¹⁰² In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault states: 'in the nineteenth century, medicine (as an institution possessing its own rules, as a group of individuals constituting the medical profession, as a body of knowledge and practice, as an authority recognised by public opinion, the law, and government) became the major authority in society that delimited, designated, named and established madness as an object' (42). However, Foucault makes clear that the term 'object' can be deceptive since discourse sets up a 'set of *rules* that are immanent in practice' [italics original](46), part of the nexus of regularities that govern their [these objects'] dispersion' (48), and practices 'that systematically transform the objects of which they speak' (49).

literature from the formation of selfhood and his emphasis on rhetoric and philology as the proper domain of Subject English, of replicating ‘an earlier language/literature binarism in the history of English (368). Unsurprisingly, the English Curriculum replicates just such a binary, although for reasons quite different from Hunter’s. Language is the domain of literacy, and literature of the aesthetic, ethical and experiential. Though Ian Hunter and those who argue for a focus on a more instrumentalist view of English are worlds apart in their theoretical postulates they can end up resembling each other.

Green, Cormack and Patterson’s astute article on ‘the reading lesson’ (examined in the Introduction) historically contextualises its co-implication with literature and its centrality to the formation of a moral-ethical practice. Hunter and Threadgold also take the reading lesson as exemplary. Hunter regards postmodernist theories of reading and critical literacy as encouraging students to ‘systematically misunderstand’ texts, to question the adequacy of their own readings and to regard multiple readings and interpretative possibilities not as a realm of freedom but as yet another form of ‘pastoral surveillance.’ Threadgold counters this by arguing that a ‘reading lesson’ is meaningless if it does not in some way problematise readings and that reading pedagogy does not inevitably exclude opening up to students the ‘possibilities of texts and readership’ (376) that can ‘change the habitus of the reading classroom’ in order to ‘change the social order and the practices that produce gender and racial and class inequality’ (378). She also refutes the idea that Personal Growth and Heritage reading regimes are identical to and can be conflated with those promoted in critical literacy. Hence critical literacy is disputed territory in English and not solely because conservatives object to it on the grounds that it conceals a left-leaning relativism.

It is appropriate to close this discussion of critical literacy in the Curriculum with an examination of Howie’s defence of critical literacy in *Only Connect* (2008), edited by Wayne Sawyer for the Australian Association for the Teaching of English. Howie counters the view held by Kevin Donnelly that critical literacy (a cover for postmodernism) destroys the ‘simple joys of reading.’ Howie argues that the classics are not the only texts worth studying (which goes to the argument for including a variety of multimodal and digital texts in the English Curriculum) and that it is hardly radical to argue that what we (presumably Western culture) understand as true has

changed over time. He cites as evidence productions of *The Merchant of Venice* since 1945 in which directors have had to avoid or mitigate the religious stereotypes of the Jew contained in the play. Shakespeare's instinctive grasp of the human condition can be rescued if one highlights Shylock's speech in defence of his humanity but there is no getting away from the play's vicious anti-Judaism. It is therefore doubly ironical that some believe there is insufficient emphasis placed on the Judaeo-Christian tradition in the Curriculum, since the term only emerged in the wake of the Cold War as a political means of incorporating Jews into the mainstream of political culture. After all, the Jews had been regarded as the enemies of Christ, and the West was very reluctant to take Jewish refugees during and after the Holocaust. Moreover, theological problems bedevil (a good word in the circumstances) the Gospels and Epistles when it comes to explaining and acknowledging the Jewishness of Jesus since all these texts are apologetic documents whatever else they are.

Howie contends that questions of power, marginalisation and ideology 'are not readily distinguishable from questions of aesthetics and moral influence' (226) and disputes the argument that critical literacy is fatal to the teaching of 'great literature.' Howie vigorously contests the notion that English teachers have abandoned the teaching of literature or are hostile to it, an insight with which I wholeheartedly agree, and contends that English teachers have reflected ethically and intellectually on the many meanings of 'English' and have tried to 'reposition the subject for the demands of the twenty-first century' (227). Attempts to exclude teachers from the curriculum dialogue and to be overly prescriptive risks failure (he cites the case of the England national curriculum), and he values his professional autonomy for his own and his students' sake. Howie endorses an eclectic theoretical methodology--he himself draws on Rortian pragmatism--and resists the imposition of one 'correct' model of the discipline on teachers, which leads, Howie believes, to a decline in professional autonomy. Howie does not commit himself to a single definition of critical literacy or to a single theory of language and textuality. However, he sees the function of critical literacy as undoing the binaries that are frequently used to debate critical literacy in the media; real/unreal; truth/relativism; personal/political. In fact he points out that the 'personal' and the experiential are themselves effects of culture. Nor does Howie concede that the aesthetic and the creative are at odds with critical literacy. The

message Howie conveys is that there is no one 'ideal' English curriculum, that a certain amount of eclecticism is desirable and inevitable. However, for him, critical literacy is a non-negotiable set of concepts that must be integrated into the Curriculum, whatever the rubric used to do so.

Chapter Five

A Coda on Syllabus, Standards and Assessment

One criticism I have mounted of the *Shape of the Curriculum: English* is that, far from being a spare document, a high rate of redundancy is its distinguishing feature. But however spare a curriculum is, it needs to be translated into syllabi which guide the selection, sequence and scope of content, the skills and understandings students should master at each developmental level, and the kind of assessment tasks required to validate it (*Curriculum Design Paper: Elements of the Australian Curriculum* 3). Therefore it is appropriate to drill down to see how the Curriculum deals with documents intended to identify achievement standards and map the learning tasks at each level under the rubric of the various modes such as writing, viewing and so on. We expect no less of a world-class curriculum. The issue of how to translate a curriculum into syllabi and how much detail ought to be included either in syllabi or other documents that describe stages¹⁰³ and year levels is a matter of dispute. State syllabi are undeniably very detailed, especially with increased attention to literacy, and syllabus documents--their content, standards, scope and sequence, assessment tasks, and supplementary materials for teachers--are formidable. In this respect the English learning area taken as a whole does not differ significantly from its state equivalents. Yet even with a comprehensive syllabus, much still has (or ought) to be left to the judgement of individual teachers.

When it comes to content, standards and assessment, the technique is to distinguish reliably between levels of achievement, to avoid too many overlaps in each category and stage of learning, and accurately to identify and distinguish between the types of tasks required. English syllabi, depending on level and focus (for example English as a Second Language, extension units, literature units) have been divided up in different ways. The design paper for the Australian Curriculum defines Content Descriptions as 'statements that describe the knowledge, concepts, skills and processes which teachers are expected to teach. . . . The statements will be linked to scope and sequence across years of schooling' (*Design* 18). The Achievement Standards

¹⁰³ Not all state curricula use year levels to express stages of learning.

‘describe what students are typically able to understand and able to do. They describe expected achievement’ (19) and level of achievement. Thus the content descriptions are there to inform teachers what must be taught and the achievement standards tell students, parents, and teachers whether students have met the appropriate standards, students ‘having been taught the curriculum content’ (20). The Design Specifications for the Senior Secondary Curriculum state that ‘achievement standards will be subject-specific and align with the major dimensions of learning (25). Content and standards should be fundamental and developmental, avoid unnecessary repetition and be strongly interrelated. In this case, the Australian Curriculum does not differ radically from already prevailing state curricula.

A word is necessary here on the nomenclature of standards and outcomes. In his 2006 Australia-wide review of curricula, Watt noted a potential confusion over outcomes and standards which reflects deeper conflicts over curriculum planning: ‘the principles underpinning curriculum development in Australia may be shifting from those principles championed by advocates of OBE to ones espoused by standards-based education’ (59). In the Curriculum outcomes have not disappeared, in that skills and understandings must be demonstrated, but there is now greater focus on ‘measurable content standards based on cognitive learning’ (59), which presumably is code for higher order thinking skills that can be spelled out and therefore are easier to evaluate reliably. This is in line with the comeback made by traditional subjects and the language of rigour and depth that pervades curriculum documents. We also cannot ignore the history of OBE in Australia and the opprobrium that came to surround it (‘standards’ has a much harder ring to it), and the distrust of cross-curricular priorities and general capabilities (which remain, but for how long?) that came to be associated with essential learnings and new basics.

The outcomes and standards are part of the apparatus of accountability that now permeates all education in Australia and elsewhere. Klenowski remarks of ‘accountability’ that it ‘has been dominated by inspection and standardised testing’ (142) but that, according to Sahlberg, it is better to trust teacher professionalism (assuming that there are high standards of training) (qtd. in Bonnor and Caro 147-71). As for the term ‘standards,’ Klenowski, after Maxwell, discerns five shades of meaning: ethical, legal, quality benchmarks, arbiters of performance quality, and learning

milestones, with items three and four being most relevant to schooling (143). She notes that achievement standards can never be totally objective but that there are key principles for standards descriptors. They must: be grounded in practice and piloted; be capable of being moderated; be understood by schools; be written in suitable and positive language for audiences; and be able to describe minimum and aspirational performance (144). High stakes tests as a measurement of performance create distinctive problems for the aims of any curriculum: do they align with the curriculum? Do they attend to students with special needs? Are they valid measures of performance? Do they avoid an over reliance on a single test? (145). Quantitative tests are always vulnerable and may distort or pervert curricula and may not offer good and timely feedback (147). Klenowski sees much to like about the Queensland model in which localised teacher assessments are used to set future learning goals (149). With the advent of the National Australian Curriculum we see standards set centrally with a list of achievement standards for each syllabus and, in the case of general capabilities and cross-curricular priorities, tasks that encompass more than one learning area. Klenowski regards moderation and teacher professionalism as indispensable to good assessment (153). Despite a generally positive response to the Curriculum, the *Trial School Consultation Report* (2010) detected incongruities between Achievement Standards and Content Descriptions, the repetition of material, poor scope and sequencing and lack of clarity (24-32). There were also predictable calls for more specificity in describing achievement levels and content (such as grammar). As I have already indicated, there is no end to specificity, and the result is that curriculum and syllabi drown in detail without necessarily gaining in lucidity.

Let's look at some examples taken from state curricula that can serve as a model and a framework for a discussion of the English Curriculum, bearing in mind that they are entirely representative, not unique. For example, in the 2002 *K-10 Curriculum Framework* issued by the NSW Board of Studies the *Framework* identifies essential learning, outcomes and standards, focuses on a coherent, challenging curriculum and 'developmental continuity,' meaningful assessment and meaningful reporting' ('Melbourne Curriculum Project' 73). The Standards Framework advises that sequence, aims and objectives are linked to outcomes and content, which 'constitute the syllabus standards.' It uses the term 'performance standards' to tie levels of

achievement to syllabus standards. There follows a broad list of learning outcomes that roughly translate to the general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum. The Board of Studies' criteria for a quality syllabus include a clear rationale and statement of purpose; the location of the syllabus's place in the K-10 learning curriculum; the seamless integration of aims, objectives, outcomes and content; clarity of expression; a delineation of what students will learn about and learn to do through the syllabus. I suggest that the *Framework* does not differ markedly from the design specifications for the Australian Curriculum and that an examination of such documents across Australia reveal homologies, parallels and a high degree of consistency. The investigators of the Melbourne Curriculum Project groaned under the weight of the sheer volume of documents and the variations in their modes of presentation and organisation, but one argument for a national curriculum might be that the enormous expertise and depth of thinking that characterise state curricula and syllabi justify abstracting and synthesising these insights. But only if the result is at least as good as state curricula! A lot of abstracting and synthesising has gone into the Australian Curriculum, if the English learning area is anything to go by, but has it resulted in higher quality? I have already drawn attention to the difficulties of sequencing Subject English by the nature of the discipline itself and the danger of fragmentation in the three-strand organisation overlaid by speaking, listening, reading, viewing and creating. These were challenges faced by earlier curricula and not always successfully solved by them. The Scope and Sequence of the national F-10 curriculum summarises the Year level syllabi by amalgamating the content descriptions and achievement standards. Naturally teachers and schools require assistance in translating these into their own programs and there is consequently a temptation to over stipulate and add greater layers of detail.

Before beginning the task of surveying the content, standards and scope and sequence of syllabi, I tentatively and with a certain degree of hesitation offer my own summation of the central understandings that the English Curriculum seeks to develop. I do not make a claim that the table that follows has any special merits beyond brevity and attention to the common elements of English skills and concepts embedded in curricula around the nation. I am agnostic here as to what kinds of texts should be included in syllabi because they can be analysed using the same conceptual

framework. I do not mean to suggest that all texts are interchangeable and may not require different approaches and attention to different conventions according to mode, but that the syllabus can stipulate in advance the genres and modes that a syllabus should cover. Thus a syllabus may require students to analyse and create some literary, multimodal and digital texts in the course of a unit, without needing to stipulate which ones, unless absolutely necessary, thus simplifying achievement standards. Syllabi can also stage skills and concepts in ways that take into account students' developmental patterns and particular needs. I have avoided the confusing distinctions between persuasive, interpretive and informational texts since these are captured under purposes, audiences, contexts and genre. Students will acquire in a staged manner necessary theoretical language as they progress through school, whether this language relates to the decoding aspects of language such as the grammatical, syntactical, and lexical, or the rhetorical, generic and semiotic.

<p>Modes: Reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing.</p> <p>Students learn to distinguish between the conventions of speech and writing. to use appropriate linguistic and non-linguistic conventions and textual strategies for different modes.</p>
<p>Texts:</p> <p>Students learn how linguistic and other choices shape meaning in all texts. In particular, students learn that all texts are shaped by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose • Contexts • Audiences • Genres • Connections to other texts <p>They learn how these characteristics of textuality are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. to apply these understandings in their own work and to provide a rationale, when required, for their own choices. to analyse and assess critically the choices made by others. that texts are patterned and ordered by textual features, such as narrative and argumentative structures, which derive from the social function of texts. to understand that texts are organised and regulated by modal, generic and linguistic features that have emerged in response to on-going social transformations. that such features can be learned, imitated and questioned. that texts, because they emerge from social and cultural contexts, are capable of generating multiple meanings. that texts, through the choices that shape them, carry beliefs, values and attitudes. that, because texts emerge from specific social contexts and carry beliefs and values, they are connected to systems of power.</p>
<p>Language:</p> <p>Students learn to understand that language is a meaning-making system governed by syntactical, grammatical and lexical rules which can, within limits, be flexible in their application according to purpose and effect. that language is social and therefore cannot be isolated from contexts, audiences and purpose. that language carries beliefs, values and attitudes, especially through the connotative, symbolic and representational functions of language. to acquire gradually, developmentally but not in isolation mastery over the multiple levels of language, from the grammatical, semantic and syntactical to the rhetorical.</p>
<p>Aesthetic Choices:</p> <p>Students learn</p>

that texts arouse pleasure and emotion, which influence ideas, responses and opinions, through the linguistic, visual and other choices that writers and producers make.

to analyse and critically assess these choices.

to create texts in a variety of modes and genres that self-consciously and satisfyingly employ aesthetic devices, exploiting the resources of structure, symmetry, repetition, and figurative devices such as symbol and metaphor as well as visual and aural codes

Creativity and Imagination:

Students learn

to recognise that creativity and imagination can be brought to bear on the production of all texts, regardless of purpose, genre or mode.

that creativity and imagination can be demonstrated through fresh approaches to issues, ideas and problems.

that creativity and imagination can be demonstrated through new and unusual combinations of textual features.

that creativity and imagination can be demonstrated through aesthetic choices.

Setting Standards

By way of illustration the Queensland Study Authority's *English Learning Area Standards* is divided into standards that address the main components of syllabi across levels A to E, just like the Australian Curriculum. The document illustrates the difficulties encountered when generating such exercises. The first A-level standard reads that student work has the following characteristics: **[u]nderstanding of and sensitivity to a range of genre patterns appropriate to purposes, audiences and contexts**. 'Sensitivity to' is meant to discriminate among levels, but does it? What does a student have to do to demonstrate this sensitivity? And what is the relationship between genres and audiences, purposes and contexts since genre encodes them?

The second A-level standard reads: **[u]nderstanding of how subject matter is selected and sequenced to emphasise ideas throughout the text**. This phrasing is clumsy. Surely students are being asked to demonstrate that careful selection and ordering of material is important in communicating ideas. Standard three reads: **[I]nterpretation and manipulation of a range of ideas and relationships between text users and producers in a variety of contexts**. This statement can only bewilder. Does it relate to reading practices? And if so, are students being asked to analyse these relationship and use them to produce their own texts?

Next comes: **[u]se of a range of cohesive devices, including paragraphing, that structure ideas and connect parts of texts**. Structuring ideas seems to be covered by standard two, and cohesion, according to Urszula Clark, runs from the grammatical, lexical and semantic to the rhetorical, and why not the visual? And why single out paragraphing unless there is a vital reason for doing so? For Halliday genre is also a high order form of cohesion. 'Range of' is a discriminator, since, as we read across the columns from A to E, we transition from '**[u]se of cohesive devices, including paragraphing, that connect parts of texts** (Level C) (note: what else is a cohesive device used for other than to connect parts of texts?) to **[u]se of functional connections between sentences**' (Level E). Teachers who understand their duties are quite capable of discriminating between students who have difficulty stringing sentences together and those who can use rhetorical and structural devices resourcefully. The levels bestow a quasi-scientific authority that is unwarranted.

One further example: **[a]nalysis of ideas, information, images and inferences in texts that influence audiences.** At once we note that there seem to be two types of texts--those that influence and those that do not influence an audience. Or, alternatively, 'influence audiences' is meant to modify 'ideas, information, images and inferences,' in which case the student is being asked to identify such features and presumably to comment on their effectiveness. And the list of features is strangely incongruent. 'Images' is vague; there is an assumption that information can be analysed (why? and how?) and 'inferences' are drawn from texts, not analysed. The E level for this standard reads: **[s]tatement of simple ideas, information and images in texts.** No analysis required or demanded. Here one assumes that the student is only able to identify simple ideas, information and images in texts, not that the texts themselves are necessarily simple in these respects.

There is little point in multiplying examples to prove again and again that there are problems with standards. Nevertheless, I have chosen to scrutinise as representative the responses to the Victorian Certificate of Education's *English Learning Area Consultation Report* on draft secondary curricula. While generally positive about the redrafted curricula, respondents had predictable concerns about the achievement standards. There were the usual worries about failure to discriminate among levels and the problems of poor wording. This from the general English unit:

Achievements Standards Units 1 and 2

Level A: creates sustained, imaginative, persuasive and interpretive texts that synthesise ideas and information from varied sources and are pertinent to purpose, audience and content.

Level B: creates imaginative, persuasive and interpretive texts that adapt ideas and information from varied sources and are relevant to purpose, audience and context.

Respondents noted that there was no meaningful difference between 'pertinent' and relevant' (19). Further down, they comment that 'the separation of interpretation as a distinct area of content suggests an explicit teaching and analysis of others' interpretations, rather than viewpoints and perspectives about texts . . .' (20). This is

precisely the kind of problem to which I drew attention in my section on interpretation. More of this confusion can be found in the Content Descriptions.

Unit 1 Content Descriptions:

Identify and explain how audiences [sic] interpretations are influenced by . . .

Unit 2 Content Descriptions

Analyse and explain why texts are interpreted by audiences in a variety of ways including . . .

Unit 3 Content Descriptions

Analyse and explain how the conventions of texts influence audiences including . . .

Unit 4 Content Descriptions

Analyse and evaluate how texts can influence audiences' perspectives through . . .

Respondents complained that the focus should be on creating meaning and noted the problem with 'interpretive' texts. The differences between 'analyse' and 'explain' and 'analyse and evaluate' need to be distinguished. Since texts, by their choices, always influence audiences, the tasks are not differentiated, except if we identify specific means of influence, such as generic conventions, rhetorical devices, narrative structure, and so on. Explaining *why* audiences interpret texts differently is another task entirely, and is not interchangeable with the others.

Unit 1 Learning Outcomes

Understand the relationships between language, text, purpose . . . context and audience

Respondents suggested a rewording for elucidation: 'understand the way decisions about language and text are influenced/shaped by purpose, context and audience' (21). This wording is distinctly better, though 'text' needs elucidation: what are in view here--genres and modes? Purpose, context and audience influence choices of genre and/or mode, and linguistic choices are determined, though not wholly, by genre and mode.

We are now much better prepared to examine and evaluate the Content Descriptions, Achievement Standards and Scope and Sequence of the English Curriculum. Work Samples are provided to help teachers to discriminate among

levels. Let's start with Year 2. At Year 2 level texts should primarily be used for enjoyment (marvellous!) and should incorporate multimodal texts. The Year Level description states that **'[L]iterary texts that support and extend Year 2 students as independent readers involve sequences of events that span several pages and present unusual happenings within a framework of familiar experiences'** (*English Content Descriptions and Achievement Standards*). Informative texts are to be studied because they **'present new content about topics of interest and topics being studied in other areas of the curriculum.'** These texts are to include varied sentence structures, some unfamiliar vocabulary, words that need to be decoded phonically, and a range of punctuation conventions, and accompanying visuals, such as diagrams and timelines (surely this applies to literary texts as well). The trio of informative, imaginative and persuasive texts plus Halliday's text types such as recounts, reports, expositions, etc., cover the kinds of texts students should study and create. The description as a whole provides teachers with scaffolding for their choice of texts, including the text's degree of difficulty, and points to particular skills and content that must be covered, albeit at an elementary level. In fact it is possible that teachers could construct a convincing syllabus from the year level descriptions alone.

Because of the three-strand structure of the Curriculum, the content descriptions are divided into Language and Literature. No Literacy here, but there is a *Literacy Scope and Sequence* document, which we will come to, that fills the gap. I will select key items across the content descriptions, but it is too tedious and unproductive to examine them all. These are an excerpt from the Year 2 Achievement Standards.

Language variation and change

Understand that spoken, visual and written forms of language are different modes of communication with different features and their use varies according to audience, purpose and context and cultural background.

Comment: There is a rather a lot here for Year 2 to grasp. It might be enough that students understand that different modes possess different features.

Language for interaction

Identify language that can be used for appreciating texts and the qualities of people and things.

Comment: It is unclear what such language is. Does it mean that students develop a vocabulary that enables them to express what they like or dislike about a text or the emotions it arouses in them? And what is a language that can be used for appreciating the qualities of people and things?

Text structure and organisation

Understand that different types of texts have identifiable text structures and language features that help the text serve its purpose.

Comment: Perhaps we could lose everything after 'features.' There is obviously an attempt to introduce purpose, audience and context in a structured manner, but cramming too much into each content description or achievement standard is not the answer. However the Achievement Standard is clearly a reference to genre-based pedagogy which explains the link between structure, language and social function.

Literature

Literature and context

Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in which they were created.

Comment: Quite an ask. It would be hard for a Year 2 to discuss the contexts in which characters in a fairy tale emerged though not impossible to make generic connections among fairy tales. This content description is a nod towards context but pitched far too high for beginners.

Creating Literature

Create events and characters using different media that develop key events and characters from literary texts.

Comment: Here students are asked to retell a story (or parts of a story?) in a different medium (or different media?) and/or use characters from the same literary text or texts. Or are students being asked to use characters and events from literary texts as prompts to create their own texts in a different medium?

Under Language there is a section entitled Expressing and Developing Ideas that details early reading, writing and spelling skills, and initiates students into compound sentences, and nouns and noun phrases--content many early primary teachers already cover, although there is no harm in pointing to the types of skills, especially in sentence structure, that students should learn. One achievement standard is more daunting: **'identify visual representations of characters' actions, reactions, speech and thought processes in narratives, and consider how these images add to or contradict or multiply the meaning of accompanying words.'** Incredibly clumsy wording. Students are obviously being asked to analyse multimodal narrative texts and explore the relationship between language and other semiotic systems they employ. A legitimate exercise and story books or comics or plays fit the bill beautifully but don't confuse the issue by being too specific. Let students explore the relationship for themselves.

Each Year level is accompanied by a set of Achievement Standards meant to reflect the content descriptions. Under Receptive Modes (listening, reading and viewing) students **'understand how similar texts share characteristics by identifying text structures and language features used to describe characters, settings and events.'** Presumably we are dealing with narrative texts both in print and multimodal forms. Is this achievement standard meant to refer to intertextuality? Why not say so. This standard relates to **'identify visual representations . . . and 'understand that different types of texts. . . .'** Students read texts that **'contain varied sentence structures, some unfamiliar vocabulary, . . . images that provide additional information,'** and so on. This standard certainly links to the content descriptions. But it goes on to say: **'they [students] identify literal and implied meaning, main ideas and supporting detail.'** There is no mention in the

content descriptions of implied meaning, and **'main ideas and supporting detail'** seem to refer to informative and persuasive texts, which occur under Creating Texts, though this content description also includes imaginative texts. There is much more under achievement standards but I have adequately demonstrated that the standards merely repeat the content descriptions and that key theoretical terms are rearranged in more or less convincing combinations.

For purposes of comparison I want to examine some examples from the Year 10 content descriptions, and in this case the syllabus possesses much greater clarity. Under Language for Interaction students are asked to consider how language can have **'inclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people'** an observation also found in the NSW English curriculum and vital to the analysis of texts at higher levels, though younger students are certainly capable of grasping this point. The content descriptions want students to comprehend that how people respond to texts is conditioned by their value systems and the context, purpose and mode of communication. In this case I think syllabi have sufficiently established that context, audience and purpose are vital but value systems should be separately considered.

Under Text Structure and Organisation students **'compare the text structures and language features of traditional and contemporary texts in different media.'** How is 'traditional texts' to be understood? Are traditional texts print texts? If so, what kinds of print texts, since this section excludes literary texts? What is the point of differentiating between traditional and contemporary texts in the first place?

Under Literature and Context students are to **compare representations of individuals and groups in different historical, social and cultural contexts.** 'Representations' is a problem here because for many English teachers 'representation' takes on a cultural studies flavour. For example one can usefully and tellingly compare representations of Indigenous people in early Australian paintings, in nineteenth-century novels, and contemporary texts by Indigenous writers and artists. Later on 'represented' is used in the content description: **evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts**, when it would be easier to say 'evaluate texts' moral and ethical positions.'

Under Examining Literature students are asked to **identify, explain and discuss how narrative viewpoint, structure, characterisation and devices**

including analogy and satire shape different interpretations and responses to a text. I am totally against such blanket, all-encompassing content descriptions that contain too many keywords and tasks. Satire is deserving of its own content description if we think students should study it at Year 10 level, and analogy would be better grouped with metaphor, and why not under ‘Expanding and Developing Ideas,’ since metaphor and analogy are powerful modes of thinking common to all disciplines and texts? I’m unsure whether we must both ‘identify’ and ‘explain,’ and we only require the phrase ‘shape meaning in texts’ and not ‘different interpretations and responses to a text.’

Under Creating Literature we find another content description that has developed elephantiasis: **‘create literary texts with a sustained ‘voice,’ selecting and adapting appropriate text structures, literary devices, language, auditory and visual structures and features for a specific purpose and intended audience.’** Auditory and visual structures and features could encompass poems, plays or other multimodal texts depending on one’s definition of literature, but ‘voice’ is sufficiently demanding at this year level. Moreover, if, for example, we include poetry under texts with visual and auditory structures and features, then it could be quite difficult for students to determine what specific audience and purpose a poem is designed for in quite the same way as we can with other text types.

It is illuminating to inspect *The Literacy Scope and Sequence: Foundation to Year 10* since literacy does not appear in the content descriptions or the achievement standards, although it is everywhere implied. It is divided into a) Interpreting, Analysing and Evaluating and b) Creating Texts. Interpreting, Analysing and Evaluating is further divided into

- I. Purpose and Audience
- II. Reading Processes
- III. Comprehension Strategies
- IV. Analysing and Evaluating Texts

Creating Texts is subdivided into

- I. Creating Texts
- II. Editing
- III. Handwriting

IV. Use of Software.

Analysing and Evaluating Texts does not begin until Year 6, while Handwriting finishes at Year 8. Each thread within the sub-strand has a focus statement that governs the F-10 achievement standards: for example, under Analysing and Evaluating texts we discover: **analysis and evaluation of how text structures and language features construct meaning and influence readers/viewers.**

In the Foundation Year, students identify **some differences between imaginative and information texts**, while in Year 1 they add persuasive texts, and in Year 2 they identify the audience of those texts. In Year 3 students identify the purpose and audience of text types. In Year 4 they identify characteristic features to meet the purpose of the texts. In Year 5 students identify and explain both text structures and languages features that explain the text's purpose. If the social function of texts is so vital then surely purpose needs to be examined much earlier. The sequencing of tasks is not logically persuasive. Under Use of Software, which signals the integration of the ICT general capability into syllabi, Year 8 students **will use a range of software, including word processing programs, to create, edit and publish texts imaginatively**, while Year 9 specifies that students **use a range of software, including word processing programs, flexibly and imaginatively to publish texts**. Again, we have pointless specification. The Curriculum really needs to deal somewhere with creativity and imagination instead of just adding 'creativity' and imagination' in a token manner.

Comprehension Strategies reads: **[s]trategies of constructing meaning from texts, including literal and inferential meaning**. If we glance across the scope and sequence for each year level we discover that the content/standards (they are much the same) are phrased almost identically; some include digital and media texts. For example Year 6 reads: **[u]se comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including media and digital texts**, while Year 10 reads: **'[u]se comprehension strategies to compare and contrast information and ideas within and between texts, identifying and analysing embedded perspectives and evaluating supporting evidence.'** This is a mouthful. We can lose 'use comprehension strategies' altogether. Students are here being asked to evaluate the quality of arguments while

‘embedded perspectives’ seems to be an acknowledgement that texts carry values and attitudes since all texts are situated. Why introduce the complication of ‘compare and contrast’? The reader also encounters in this sub-strand references to the author’s point of view (oh, dear) and the already analysed representations of issues, characters, events and situations. This sub-strand is distinguished from Analysing and Evaluating Texts because the latter concentrates on linguistic and other semiotic systems and links them to persuasion--that is, influencing readers, viewers or listeners. There may be a rationale for separating ideas from textual strategies but comprehension could also be grouped under Analysing and Creating Texts. There is an argument for reducing the number of sub-strands altogether because there are so many overlays.

The ‘Achievement Chart: English, Grades 9-12’ (2) of the Ontario Curriculum is a much less daunting affair. The syllabus is divided into a) Knowledge and Understanding, b) Thinking, c) Communication, d) Application. In all cases the four levels are expressed as a percentage range (50-59; 60-69; 70-79; 80-100). Identical wording is used under each achievement standard: limited understanding or effectiveness, some understanding and effectiveness, considerable understanding and effectiveness, and high degree of understanding and effectiveness (24). This is a simple and intelligible system and leaves much to teachers’ judgement. Some may complain that this grid is not specific enough but in my view the Australian Curriculum suffers from over specification without a significant gain in comprehensiveness or clarity. If teachers feel the need for very detailed amplification then perhaps more professional development is indicated or a better designed curriculum.

One of the strengths of the Ontario English Curriculum is that it offers various pathways for students via compulsory and optional units that assist them to extend their knowledge in various areas. The categories of knowledge and skills that govern all English courses are:

- knowledge and understanding
- thinking (critical and creative skills)
- communication
- application (*The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 11 and 12--English 22*)

The domains of writing, reading speaking, listening and viewing are located in appropriate places within the syllabi. In Grades 11 and 12 there is a suite of compulsory

courses that encompass university, college and workplace preparation. Optional courses comprise a range of literary studies courses, presentation and speaking skills, the writer's craft guide, and business and technological communication. Syllabi are shaped in line with the demands of each course, though there are many common elements.

One can demonstrate these principles at work in the Grade 11 Reading and Literature Studies course. The overall expectations are listed as: reading for meaning; understanding form and style; reading with fluency; reflecting on skills and strategies (46). The specific demands are listed in each of the strands and sub strands, with clear information on what each one means and what can be expected from students, with a teacher prompt added. For example, under Reading for Meaning the teacher discovers information on a) the variety of texts to be covered, b) using reading comprehension strategies, c) demonstrating understanding of content, d) making inferences, e) extending understanding of texts, f) analysing texts, g) evaluating texts, and h) critical literacy. There is a lot here but it is lucidly organised and simple to access. For example, Extending Understanding of texts reads:

[e]xtend understanding of texts, including increasingly complex and difficult texts, by making appropriate and increasingly rich connections between the ideas in them and personal knowledge, experience, and insights, other texts; and the world around them. (47).

I find this approach more elegant than that adopted by the English Curriculum, because it clearly separates curriculum from syllabi, is helpful to teachers, and easier to understand. Obviously there are commonalities but they are uncomplicated to deal with. The program is rigorous but not too crowded and by its shape and organisation it suggests programs of study that could be developed by teachers, increasing, not diminishing, teacher autonomy. If there is a world-class curriculum to be found, then Ontario must be one of the contenders.

Conclusion

Truly, Madly Deeply

To employ Plato's useful metaphor again, this thesis has taken the long way round, in that it situates the Australian Curriculum and prompts more comprehensive enquiries about the general course of educational change in the new millennium, which has discernible effects on curricula, of which the English Curriculum is no exception. As Young states, *what* and *who* shapes the school are important questions because they involve the inclusion and exclusion of certain types of knowledge . . .' (qtd. in Howard Lee 60-61). One can conclude, as Lee does in his 'Outcomes-based Education and the Cult of Educational Efficiency,' that certain trends and pressures have been present in Western education under the supervision of the nation state for a century or more. Some of these pressures can be encapsulated in the persistent yearning for a 'scientific' and efficient education system and curriculum that would contain 'precision, sequence, high-level specificity and regulation' (64). This has now migrated to the global arena with the growth and significance of international measures of achievement. It has often led to the belief that teachers' subjective judgments could, given the right methods, be largely eliminated from the process. I am not the only one who insists that to think in this way is to be captive to an illusion. There can be better or worse systems, better or worse curricula, but not maximally efficient techniques and structures, totally objective measures or fool proof delivery.

Another common theme that runs underneath twentieth-century schooling debates is how much schools and training institutions should prepare students for the 'real world' and the workplace through relevant curricula capable of effectively delivering the appropriate competencies, in place of or alongside more 'academic' subjects. This debate is inevitably implicated in discussions about school retention rates, economic success and maximising personal potential. As Barcan notes, competencies and training tend to be supported by government, business, industry and trade unions, while being opposed by teachers and academics (114). There remain ongoing tensions between vocationalism and a liberal education. Yet a concentration on practicality can lead to a backlash, with complaints that students are being denied challenging subjects and are being fed pap, such that the nation's long-term future is

being put in jeopardy through lack of investment in science and technology. When the Soviets launched Sputnik it led to panic in the US for fear that American students lagged behind their Soviet counterparts, which led to calls for more intense and thorough academic programs (Howard Lee 69). Today the competitors are more likely to be South-East Asians nations, who are seen to be making significant gains at the expense of less nimble-footed opponents.

Furthermore, education in Europe since at least the eighteenth century has been increasingly intertwined with the needs of the nation-state, and in particular with ensuring the individual subject's suturing into Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community.' This process of ideological inscription is seen to be dependent on fostering civic values and citizenship in students, as well as fostering autonomy, productivity and the capacity to function well as members of society. Rosenfeld observes that

[b]y the start of the twentieth century, the nationalist state and its outreach institutions, from mass parties and public schools, had made it its business to craft a new, integrated sense of national belonging through rhetoric, symbols and rituals alike. (239).

What Billig labels 'banal nationalism' (qtd. in Rosenfeld 317) must be reinforced and curated by curricula, so no wonder that in globalised curricula national cohesion and the management of difference are high on the list of goals, notwithstanding the fact that each polity possesses distinct cultures (Rosenfeld 239) and distinct historical burdens and legacies.

Additionally it is impossible to ignore the issues raised by progressive pedagogies since the 70s. It is tempting but unwise to collapse the differences between a child-centred pedagogy that can be traced back to Rousseau and Dewey, bent on harnessing and releasing the creative, intellectual and emotional possibilities of the individual child, and the class and identity politics that emerged during the 60s and 70s under the rubric of 'social justice.' While both imply the need for pedagogies to be tailored to student needs, social justice seeks to redress the inequalities that result from marginalisation. The *Melbourne Declaration* places equity at the core of education but equity can be differently understood and there is no necessary agreement about how it should be implemented. Because social justice has been

associated with the left of politics conservatives react to it cautiously, nervous that it might be seen as too politically correct, although, there is a much more nuanced appreciation of the causes of injustice today, even if the recognition that some groups are structurally marginalised can be grudging.

One of the issues that persistently surfaces, even if it is not directly addressed by the Australian Curriculum, is the quality of teachers and teacher training. In Australia teachers' workloads have generally increased with each 'reform' as the history of OBE demonstrates, and this experience has not been confined to Australia--England and New Zealand have been through similar cycles (Howard Lee 94-96). Teacher training faculties are often targeted as a weakness, enrolling undergraduates with scores too low to make it into more prestigious degrees, and filling up the curriculum with useless knowledge such as the philosophy of education. However, vilifying teachers and sidelining them in the curriculum process is bad strategy because teachers interpret, translate, and sometimes subvert curricula. They are the key to good education and their enthusiasm, commitment and skill--to be truly, madly and deeply engaged with their students and their discipline--make the difference, other things being equal.

As well as aligning the English Curriculum with the aims of the Australian Curriculum, writers had to review and conceptually assess the disciplinary history and dominant theoretical models of each learning area. An examination of the *Framing Paper Consultation Report* is a quick way to gauge what disciplinary understandings and theoretical models stimulated comment, admittedly only from those who thought it worth their while to respond (333 submissions and survey responses for English). Admittedly, responses are inevitably scattered and do not add up to a coherent critique, which means that diffuseness gives equal weight to relatively trivial matters and those of major importance. The absence of critical literacy and personal growth models was noted and regretted, while respondents struggled with definitions of literature, the choice of literary texts and the renewed emphasis on literature. Doubts were expressed about the overlap between language and literacy in the three strands and whether too much weight was placed on grammar and the functional aspects of language. The imbalance that favours print rather than multimodal and digital texts,

and writing and reading over listening, speaking and viewing were also the subject of complaint.

Apart from the oft-repeated mantra that texts must be analysed according to context, audience and purpose, the Curriculum and its accompanying documents do not identify the theoretical models, such as social linguistics, semiotics, cultural studies and rhetoric, which are layered in, cohabit with and sometimes collide in the English Curriculum. Perhaps they don't need to, or perhaps it would have been unwise to do so, but the Australian Curriculum offered an opportunity for the drafters of the English Curriculum to be explicit about their assumptions. Many problems respondents had with the Curriculum can be sourced to this lack of clarity. The decision to treat literary texts (however defined) as if they are somehow ontologically different from other types of texts, the uneasy place of creativity in the Curriculum, the less than wholehearted endorsement of multimodal and digital texts as legitimate, the hesitation around the critical, all bespeak a kind of timidity in the tone of the Curriculum.

Above all, and granted the difficulty of making any curriculum document come alive, the English Curriculum lacks a sense of enthusiasm, inclusivity or real coherence. The poor editing and drafting of the *Shape* document make it clumsy and uninspiring, and for this reason alone the new Curriculum is not world-class. No one who picks up this document, I venture to suggest, will feel that the trouble and expense of producing it has been entirely worthwhile.

Finally, there is the now released *Review of the National Curriculum*, co-chaired by Kevin Donnelly and Ken Wiltshire. The recommendations and observations contained in the Review are predictable but not therefore to be dismissed out of hand. The Review advocates for a discipline- and subject-based traditional curriculum taught by direct and explicit instruction. In fact the Review is a critique of the aims of the Australian Curriculum as they are expressed in the *Melbourne Declaration* and the National Curriculum framework. In particular the authors object to:

- the pedagogies the AC appears to favour
- the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities
- the AC's futures-oriented perspective
- the AC's 'political correctness'

the overcrowded nature of the Curriculum, especially in primary school

Donnelly and Wiltshire are hostile to 'whole language' approaches to reading and writing, want more emphasis on grammar, believe that the Judaeo-Christian heritage and the liberal-humanist subject have been undermined in the Curriculum, to its detriment. They note that most interviewees and professional associations were broadly supportive of the English Curriculum (perhaps because they were unwilling to see yet another round of changes). The authors' three recommendations for the English learning area are that more phonemic awareness be taught in the early years, that more texts from the Western canon be included, and that during the middle years students should create fewer texts and learn more about literary texts and fine writing. Donnelly and Wiltshire also concur with Professor Barry Spurr from Sydney University, the nominated English subject specialist, that there should be less emphasis on Indigenous texts in the Curriculum (169-70). As far as English is concerned, this is not much to come out of an expensive review and was in any case a foregone conclusion, given the ideological orientations of the reviewers. While the recommendations may please some, if they are implemented they may produce only cosmetic changes. The recommendations are not a thoroughgoing examination of the theoretical models, pedagogies or design of the English Curriculum. No doubt adjustments to the Curriculum will be made over time as teachers fine tune it, but its weaknesses will persist.

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