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Foundations for a Future Writing Pedagogy

Introduction

Figure 2 Sousanis (2015, p. 66 © Harvard University Press).

Often, when caught up in the day-to-dayness of my own teaching microcosm, I need to remind myself of why academic writing is troubled and why it needs changing. This is not because I ever doubt the problem or because there is a shortage of colleagues who also recognize that it is a problem, but because it isn't always seen as a problem at the macro structural level

of institutional, disciplinary and higher educational decision-making. It has taken me a decade of teaching, assessing, course design, research and finding like-minded communities of writing scholars and practitioners to recognize it as a problem. Had I not researched, I would have believed everything I read in popular 'how to' textbooks and would never have scratched beneath the surface of feedback and advice that tells writers their writing is 'not academic' or that it is 'unclear', such as 'don't use personal pronouns or start a sentence with but': much of this feedback is either unwittingly misguided or wilfully fake because so much evidence has been published and is available on 'bad writing' advice (see, for example, Ball and Loewe (2017) or the zombification of academic writing (Sword, 2009)). Unfortunately (because I think my professional life would have been easier if I had gone along with the 'academic writing is logical, linear and objective' status quo), during this research process, I have become aware of trouble and fake news where many don't see it – the 'need-to-learn the rules' (i.e. 'my' rules) brigade has power, either through silent collusion or through institutionally sanctioned recognitions, such as awards and promotions; it has resources; and it can silence dissenting voices by mocking them as idealistic anarchists who have no standards, or by side-lining and ignoring them. It creates what Bourdieu calls 'censorship and the imposition of form' through symbolic power (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991, pp. 138):

The metaphor of censorship should not mislead: it is the structure of the field itself which governs expression by governing both access to expression and the form of expression and not some legal proceeding which has been specially adapted to designate and repress the transgression of a kind of linguistic code. This structural censorship is exercised through the medium of the sanctions of the field, functioning as a market on which the prices of different kinds of expression are formed; it is imposed on all producers of symbolic goods, including the authorised spokesperson, whose authoritative discourse is more subject to the norms of official propriety than any other and it condemns the occupants of dominated positions either to silence or to shocking outspokenness.

In the UK field of EAP, the field with which I am familiar through paid teaching practice and labour, this censorship manifests itself by ensuring that academic writing practitioners remain at the service of an outsourced commodity operating via what Ding and Bruce (2017) have called 'the edge of academia': even when EAP units are on the university payroll, they nevertheless

remain marginalized as ‘handmaidens to the proper disciplines’ because of limited opportunities to conduct systematic research on academic writing. This is because EAP centres are bound by and committed to commercial imperatives that are more tangible and monetizable than the epistemic virtues of deliberation and reflection, virtues that underpin an educational praxis that is orientated towards nuance and is more likely to push back against the ideologies underpinning template-driven, performative, ‘one-size-fits-all’ cookie-cutter approaches to academic writing. These commercial units, therefore, see little need to invest in writing scholarship of teaching and learning (Braxton et al., 2002; Davis, 2019; Hutchings & Shulman, 1999), preferring instead to rely on popular textbooks and well-crafted ready-to-use internet resources as their main source of knowledge, despite the fact that even John Swales (1980) and others have shown many textbooks to be ‘educational failures’ because they compound popular knowledge to suit the commercial interests of publishers and not the academic literacy needs of writers. The failure to develop procedural knowledge through scholarship prevents the practice and theory of academic writing from having equal disciplinary status as a method for representing and creating academic knowledge because it maims from the outset the agency needed to transform practice. In the US field of writing studies, a field I have learned about through unpaid scholarship and intellectual labour, this censorship manifests itself through maintaining deficit models of literacy, such as the five-paragraph essay, which encourages writers to ‘perform’ academicness (Warner, 2018) and through de-contextualized, impersonal and universal approaches to writing instruction (Wardle, 2017; Williams, 2017), which frame writing as an autonomous, universal and transferable skill. Since academic writing is a method of enquiry and the main academic proxy for enacting SAPs, a lack of institutional investment and parity in its scholarship amounts to censorship.

In light on the above, this chapter is a reminder of why academic writing practices need changing in the first place, but it goes further. It identifies the ‘levers of change’ needed to do this. These levers include a material – not vocational or vicarious or voluntary – commitment to writing scholarship: a far greater range of pedagogies and assessments that include more than language, and deficit models thereof, needs to emerge. Tinkering around the edges won’t make this happen: radical, systemic and macro-structural transformation is needed if higher education writing practices are to be socially just, educationally transformative and epistemically complete.

Why Change: Rationales for Re-thinking Writing Practices

The reasons why universities need to change their academic writing practices have been addressed throughout this book, but as we draw towards a close, now is the time to summarize them and distil their implications so that the alternatives can gain visibility and credence and hopefully earn their place at the academic writing table. In what follows, I list twelve key changes needed to lay the foundation of a future writing pedagogy that is open, non-linear, transformative and humane. I do this by extending previous arguments with new reflections and suggestions. At the end of each key change, I draw on my teaching experiences and on writing scholarship to suggest what kind of academic text might emerge if the change were implemented. Having listed all the changes, I offer three examples of how a future critical realist writing pedagogy might allow for a greater range of texts to count as academic.

Change 1. Towards Multimodal and Multilingual Textual Ecologies

First and foremost, ‘academic writing’ is a misnomer. As we have seen, it makes more sense to refer to this transitive method of enquiry in the plural, as academic *writings*. But I propose we go even further and remove the noun ‘writing’ all together: academic ‘texts’ would be by far more fitting because a ‘text’ can be understood as a ‘communicative event’ that nevertheless must satisfy certain criteria. These criteria include coherence, argumentation and intentionality (Titscher et al., 2002, pp. 20–30), all of which, as we saw in Chapter 3, are equally features of non-linguistic texts. Much of what academic writers do is multimodal: Carson’s PhD included music, voice and rhythm, as well as a written exegesis; Sousanis’s EdD was a visual argument with words to support it; in the arts, particularly, writing plays a minimal role (Ravelli et al., 2013); and in the sciences, applied sciences and social sciences writers are increasingly required to communicate their knowledge visually, interactively and creatively to a range of audiences via social and other digital media (Andrews et al., 2012). Moreover, as multimodal scholars remind us, *all* writing is multimodal (Ball & Charlton, 2015) so narrowing its meaning to a designator (‘writing’) that might suggest it is not is misleading, especially since language itself only partially defines what writing is (Canagarajah, 2013a, p. 1):

Writing is multimodal, with multiple semiotic features (space, visuals), ecological resources (objects, people, texts) and modalities (oral, visual and

aural) contributing to its production and interpretation. Language is therefore only one of the resources that goes into writing. If text construction, circulation and reception involve diverse social, semiotic and ecological resources, we have to ask if we should continue to define writing according to language considerations alone.

Indeed, as evidenced in Chapter 2, the etymology of writing includes ‘drawing’. The implication of what Canagarajah says is that by de-privileging the high status that language – including the English language – enjoys in academic writing practices, we can move towards an ecology of multimodal texts. This would have far-reaching ethical implications for English second or additional language writing instruction, too, because it would provide opportunities for writers whose main academic language is not English to communicate their knowledge by harnessing the skills they may already have, such as digital composition, art and multilingualism (understood here as a modality that de-centres the hegemony of English – see also Canagarajah [2018]). An ecology of multimodal and multilingual texts might go some way towards re-calibrating the imbalance of power and removing the barriers to epistemic access created by convergence towards English as the dominant language in academia. The multimodal pedagogies described in Archer and Breuer (2015) and Palmeri (2012) provide rich insights into how the linearity of traditional academic writing prose can be disrupted to become more recursive and open to creating meanings. The rich body of work on multilingualism and translanguaging referred to in Wei (2016), Canagarajah (2011, 2013b, 2013c), Ávila Reyes et al. (2020) and Zenger et al. (2014) further offers several insights into what multilingual classrooms might look like if they were given space to mobilize, or *mesh*, all the resources of communication available to writers in the joint endeavour to enhance meaning-making and equality of access in the process of composing texts.

Emergent academic text

Academic e-newsletter

Why? Because it would afford flexibility, creativity, collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and a fair amount of writer agency in creating, composing, editing, entertaining, informing, collaborating, communicating to a diverse and multilingual student community and bringing about change within/empowering the academic community it is aimed at (e.g. information about access to health services). See pedagogic example on page 149 for a fuller account.

Change 2. Academic Writing as Composition

Secondly, all texts are compositions and composing is a creative process. The resulting composition is equally creative because it could have been otherwise. Composing and composition, process and product, are also recursive rather than linear because they rely on the selection and ordering of elements that, like a musical symphony or work of visual art, overlap, repeat and intertwine in a process that recalls the creative methods of counter-mapping and creative non-fiction (see, for example, work by sociologist Patricia Leavy). In this sense, even the linearity of the most conventional academic essay or PhD thesis, with its five-paragraphs or default IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results, Analysis, Discussion) sequence is a form of composition, albeit one that has fossilized into a template. The US tradition of Rhetoric and Composition has long argued for thinking of writing as a form of ‘composition’ but Palmeri (2012) has taken it to the next level by arguing for *multimodal* composition that transcends the tyranny of the alphabet. There is much in this well-established field of writing studies that we can learn from. By drawing on (rather than fetishizing) the richness of the classics, writing scholars in this tradition have been able to harness the insights that history affords with regard to different ways of thinking about writing. US Composition Studies is more process and activity-oriented, it reveals the ‘tangible ways in which learning to write within a discipline involves much more than learning particular forms or vocabularies but rather relates to socially preferred ways of knowing and acting’ (Tardy & Jwa, 2016, p. 61). So much so, that recent trends in Composition Studies are increasingly focusing on teaching students *about* writing, the assumption being that teaching students *to* write academically is potentially self-defeating. This is because of ‘the impossibility of teaching a universal academic discourse’ (Downs & Wardle, 2007, p. 552) and of ‘teaching genres out of context’ given that writing is a disciplinary activity that requires a purpose, or ‘exigence’ (Wardle, 2009, p. 767).

Emergent academic text

Infographic/poster

Why? Because it would afford a range of multimodal compositional skills, both digital and paper-based; agentic skills and abilities, such as drawing and graphic design; opportunities to consider a wide range of semiotic features, such as colour, fonts and layouts to convey meaning.

Change 3. Academic Texts Must Afford Thinking

Performativity as Macfarlane has described it is anathema to thinking. It encourages the use of language for display purposes and relies on ‘serviceable templates’ to jump through the hoops of assessment, hollowing out and demeaning the act of authentic knowledge creation and communication in its wake. When mechanical skills are foregrounded at the expense of cultivating the more complex SAPs that make academic writings and text genuinely academic, thinking suffers, hoaxes get published and academic misconduct cases rise. This is unacceptable in a place of higher learning and it raises very uncomfortable questions about the purpose of university in relation to thinking and learning, especially given the internationalization of English-speaking universities and the EAP markets that they have created (Yun & Standish, 2018).

Emergent academic text

Blog/living document

Why? Because it would afford both the academic writer and the reader opportunities to think together in a public or other shared space; knowledge and expertise would grow through accountability and justification of viewpoints as interaction via comments grows.

Change 4. University Must Take Responsibility for Academic Misconduct and Proctoring

Anecdotally, in February 2021, I received a university email looking for ‘expressions of interest to join the growing team of academic misconduct officers’ and stating that this was ‘an opportunity to get an insight into other parts of the School’. The wording and tone of this email struck me as odd, yet it was a reminder of how normalized and embedded misconduct has become in the business discourses of higher education: the university has ‘officers’, which at best connotes that an office clerk is in charge of judging student writing and at worst, it conjures up the image of a police constable, further connoting that the job of the university is to root out and punish, not educate and prevent; it is a ‘growing’ team seemed to echo the neoliberal enchantment with the imperative of growth. Why do I never receive emails offering an opportunity to ‘understand’ the economic, social and

pedagogic conditions that have led to such a ‘growing team’ of plagiarism police in the first place or on the extent to which there may be links between cheating and assessment design and breakdowns in trust, including disenchantment, between students and the institution (Bretag, 2018; Harper et al., 2019; Peters, 2018)? The ‘plagiarism declaration’ forms students are required to sign after they have either self-declaredly admitted to reading university guidance on avoiding plagiarism or to having had sufficient ‘training’ on what is a highly complex issue amount to the same kind of performativity denounced by Macfarlane (2021b). Plagiarism software tools are far more likely to ‘detect’ (another policing metaphor) writing that exhibits mechanistic performativity which in turn leads to an ever-ending spiral in which savvy writers become increasingly adept at gaming the system in order to not be caught (e.g. by paying an essay mill to write a plagiarism-proof essay). The Covid-19 pandemic of 2020–22 has further seen a proliferation of private proctoring surveillance services (Mckenna, 2021; Weller, 2021) to monitor online behaviours in assessments being conducted online and from home. What all of this indicates is that traditional academic writing practices and the ways in which they are assessed are more likely to be the problem because they lend themselves to a culture where cheating is desirable and possible (Medway et al., 2018).

Emergent academic text

Reflective assignments

Why? Because these would afford opportunities for writers and their readers to talk around the texts that are being written. Reflective assignments include portfolios of practice, exegeses to explain the how/why of an experiment or artefact and other holistic approaches that might combine written and oral accounts of research.

Change 5. Re-think Writing as a Fallible Proxy for Representing Knowledge

Writing is a method of enquiry that is transitive. This means that it is a proxy for knowledge. It is not knowledge understood as the intransitive reality that it seeks to investigate. As such, it can never provide a full representation of reality. Other research methods, such as laboratory experiments or statistical

analyses, are equally transitive, functioning as proxies for the reality they are investigating. In virtue of being a proxy, writing must be held to account with regard to assumptions about what it can and cannot represent. The following account of epistemic virtues is taken from a book on the history of science written by Lorraine and Peter Galison (Daston & Galison, 2010) and I share it here to highlight the inherent subjectivity and fallibility of any epistemic proxy, including writing. I do so with the explicit intention of *de-centring* the privilege that writing has as a method of communicating knowledge: this does not amount to *eliminating* writing as method of enquiry but to re-positioning it within an ecology of methods that have parity to equally contribute in making knowledge visible.

Before the 1800s, artists and scientists worked together to depict idealized paradigms of reality. They were driven by a pedagogic imperative that reified the epistemic virtue of 'truth-to-nature' and worked together with 'four eyes' to capture what they considered to be the 'essence' of nature. This involved interfering in the representation of nature by airbrushing out anomalies in order to select those features which they deemed to be representative of a species. Art allowed them to do this because the artist could, as directed by the scientist, correct, embellish, give more prominence to or ignore one or other details of a plant or human anatomy. This was seen as the prerogative of the pedagogue and scientist (or natural philosopher) who was invested with the authority to embellish nature in this way in order to illustrate textbooks. The 1900s, on the other hand, reified the epistemic virtue of 'eliminating the self', believing that machine-mediation, such as the telescope, afforded the ability to see objects 'as they really were'. This coincides with the gradual elimination of the self in writing, as we saw in Chapter 2, but it also cultivates other epistemic virtues that indicate that the 'self', understood here as the researcher, is very much present in the research process: in order for reality to be represented as 'objective' and untainted by the pedagogic motives of the natural philosopher-cum-artist, the scientific self needed to be 'patient', 'persevering', 'slow', 'methodical', 'reasonable' and 'diligent' (recall Newton 'stumbling across a fact' because of these virtues). But this scientific self was still interfering in their representation of nature because their subjective methods still mediated between the self and the object: however patient, slow and diligent, the scientist was still viewing reality second-hand, through a proxy, i.e. the mechanics of a machine and relying on only two eyes now, meaning that any representations of reality remained even more partial. Although scientists were increasingly able to report their knowledge with

high levels of accuracy, the level of detail that machine-mediation afforded also meant that it could no longer be straightforwardly communicated for pedagogic reasons (because textbooks needed to simplify reality for the purpose of teaching it) or for dissemination purposes across the scientific community (because a wider and more educated readership now meant a more discerning audience). Instead, this highly specialized knowledge needed to be ‘ventriloquized’, meaning it had to be separated from the self so that it could speak ‘on behalf of nature’ by making decisions about what aspects of this nature to communicate. This ‘ventriloquizing’ needed a self to be able to speak on behalf of nature, and so, yet again, the self could never be eliminated. This is why sociologists of science Latour and Woolgar (1986, p. 28) have claimed that scientific communication necessarily *misrepresents* reality because it will always be a partial proxy for reality:

[T]here has been a growing dissatisfaction with outside observers’ reliance on scientists’ own statements about the nature of their work. Some participants have themselves argued that printed scientific communications systematically misrepresent the activity that gives rise to published reports.

Ventriloquizing requires judgement, namely deciding what to ventriloquize and how much. The epistemic virtue of ‘trained judgement’ characterized the scientific virtues of the 1900s and beyond and was founded on the premise that there is always a self who judges and interprets reality. The intransitive objects of reality – the facts, so to speak – are represented through classifications, rankings and orderings that are determined by the values and judgements of a self. It is in this sense that science is fallible, social and subjective, making any method or proxy that is deployed to communicate it equally fallible, social and subjective. This includes the fallibility of the proxy of academic writing. It is this fallibility that provides a rationale for questioning its reliability as a method of representation.

Emergent academic text

An animation of writing as a method of enquiry

Why? Because it would afford the composer an opportunity to reflect on what is lost and what is gained in representing knowledge via the medium of language. It provides opportunities to justify choices in how knowledge is represented and opens up possibilities for learning new ways to represent that knowledge .

Change 6. Question the Politics, Ethics and Ideology of Writtenness

Writing is inherently ideological. It is one method for representing the world, of which there are many, the logic of which has been extended by universities to a 'totalitarian' conclusion, namely that it is the only way of measuring thinking and of representing and disseminating knowledge. Moreover, this logic has been extended to privileging one type of writing, the 'objective' and 'formal' type, at the expense of others. The conflation of writing with thinking amounts to what Turner (2018) calls an 'ontological complicity'. The fact that English, through political and economic expediency rather than any inherent superiority of its language and academic culture, has come to dominate the standards to which academic writing is held further indicates that its script can never be 'neutral' or 'objective' (Bennett, 2010; Lillis & Curry, 2010b) because bias and injustice ensue (Politzer-Ahles et al., 2016). In virtue of remaining the standard against which other epistemologies are measured, such as those of the Global South (Collyer et al., 2019), academic writing encapsulates and perpetuates the value of 'writtenness', a highly contentious and slippery property which, as implied in Chapter 3, can amount to a 'fraud' and can lead to the publication of hoaxes when left unchallenged. Writtenness has been likened to Received Pronunciation (RP) and its discriminatory effects. Measuring the standards of English spoken by the diverse global majority against the putative superiority of RP, spoken by around 3 per cent of the British population, creates 'language regimes' and continues to fuel accent wars (Donnelly et al., 2019; Orelus, 2017) that are reminiscent of the literacy wars referred to in Richardson (1997). Exposure to the underlying assumptions of writtenness can, at the very least, create a space within which diverse forms of writing and textual expression can enter the arena as potential contenders for academic legitimacy. Pedagogic approaches to co-designing writing tasks (Bovill, 2020) could generate opportunities for the literacies of students to emerge as legitimate forms of communication.

Emergent academic text

Student-led peer reviews, assessments and criteria designs

Why? Because designing assignments, co-creating criteria, reading and commenting on the work of others as 'partners' provides opportunities to explain and justify ideas followed by feedback that is relevant to communities who are learning from each other. Feedback between peers affords the emergence of democratic syllabi that respect the literacies of the community.

Change 7. Remind Ourselves That Clarity Is Often in the Eye of the Beholder

Writtenness is further imbricated with the equally contested notion of ‘clarity’ in academic writing. This, too, like the notion of accent and standards, ignites controversy, often originating in the Anglo-American tradition of analytic philosophy (Law, 2014). ‘Western’ standards of clarity are rooted in formal logic, language, positivism and the British Enlightenment via the legacy of philosopher John Locke, for whom words could be chosen in the interests of ‘precision and economy’ (Turner 2018). However, as noted by Peters (2008, p. 828):

‘[C]larity’ in philosophical discourse also has its history and ... ‘normal forms of academic scholarship’ have become ‘normalised’ or institutionalized and are in the process of changing again, especially in response to the rise of the electronic journal. The use of ‘normal’ here betrays a politics of philosophy writing and a deep history of the politics of writing in philosophy that still embraces the false dichotomy of Analytic and Continental philosophy in its material forms and perpetuates the myth of a universal form of writing and the dream of a universal form of language called philosophy.

However, notions of what counts as ‘clear’ are being revisited because of the affordances of new technologies, as the quotation above suggests and because of the epistemic injustices enacted through assessment practices that judge a diverse student body against the ideological literacy standards of writtenness (see, for example, McArthur [2020]). Researcher Carmichael-Murphy (2021) refers to ideologies that lead to the assumption that there is only one standard of clarity, that of the ‘Western’ gaze. In her higher education blog post on decolonizing the PhD, Carmichael-Murphy reflects on the barriers faced by racially minoritized students who are still expected to refer predominantly to a ‘Western’ canon of knowledge in their research even though it may seem wholly ‘unclear’ to them (simply because it is not a form of literacy they are familiar with). The requirement to reference ‘Western’ literatures potentially also risks stifling the emergence of new knowledge by requiring that non-‘Western’ researchers remain within the boundaries of traditional ‘Western’ thought:

The stance taken here is not to discard Western philosophy, but to reject fixed hierarchies of knowledge which ‘other’ alternative ways of knowing. If the original contribution of the thesis is to add to the discipline, does this mean that a thesis should also cement what is already ‘known’? By failing to identify the boundaries of our thought and expression we stifle the emergence of new and alternative knowledges.

Sperlinger et al. (2018) have similarly shown how literacy exclusion at university leads to epistemic injustice. They point out that literatures that are derided by the ‘West’ for being unclear and outright ‘bad’ (such as the writing of Gayatri Spivak [1987]) are, in fact, perfectly understood by those who may share the experiences or be familiar with the ideas these authors are discussing. The assumption that clarity is a universally recognizable and definable property of written texts raises troubling questions about who universities are actually for and what kinds of texts students should be reading and writing. Moreover, by insisting that ‘Western’ standards of what counts as ‘clear’ writing are the most desirable, writing instruction re-enforces the very mechanisms of exclusion and injustice that led to those standards becoming dominant in the first place.

Emergent academic text

A manifesto

Why? Because it would afford the opportunity to challenge and provoke assumptions by declaring a position, intention and ethical orientation towards a contested idea. It would develop the socio-academic practice of critical engagement with relevant scholarship and a chance to explore authorial voice. See pedagogic example on page 150 for a fuller account.

Change 8. Hold Writing as a Socio-academic Practice to Account

Socio-academic practices refer to the specifically academic social practices of higher education and to the *standards of excellence* to which they aspire. They concern what and whose purposes and values are served by a university education, as evidenced throughout Connell (2019), de Sousa Santos (2017) and Sperlinger et al. (2018). Their focus on what is valued in the pursuit of knowledge through a higher education closely aligns them with epistemic virtues and vices. As we head towards considering what levers of change are available to agents who wish to transform academic writing practices, the SAPs of the neo-liberal and capitalist university must be mentioned. The following remarks are brief and can be read as promissories for a future conversation. These are inspired by a thought-provoking and controversial reflection by educationalist Bruce Macfarlane (2021a) who argued that activism and social justice have been co-opted as SAPs by neoliberal universities. Traditionally, activism fell outside the

remit of the SAPs of the university because it was the prerogative of grassroots movements which approached change from the bottom-up, from ‘the street’, so to speak (see, for example, Choudry [2020] on ‘activist knowledge’). It certainly was not the mission of the traditional Humboldtian university, which was explicitly oriented towards the SAP of research excellence and methodological rigour in the pursuit of scientific knowledge (modern universities are, of course, also oriented towards research and scientific knowledge, but my point here is one of emphasis, namely that ‘social justice’ was not visible in the mission statements of past universities). The recent prominence of Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ+, Athena Swan (a measure to promote women in academia), decolonization, EDI (a measure to promote Equality Diversity and Inclusion in academia) and ‘social justice’ movements, as a whole, have traditionally not been part of the university’s mission. Regardless of whether activism, understood as the pursuit of social justice and human rights, should or should not be ‘what or who universities are for’, it remains, in critical realist terms, one of the *de facto* realities of several university visions. This makes social justice a twenty-first-century socio-academic practice and, because of this, writing practices must be held to account by being given the space to be transformed so that they can become agents of change in virtue of their transitive status as methods of enquiry. Pedagogies that allow academic writings to be transformed so that they can function as levers of change are more likely to further the cause of justice because they would allow new and emergent ecologies of knowledge to break free from the chains of their current encapsulations: Carson (2017) ensured the oral culture and rhythms of the communities he was researching could be read/listened to by those communities. He did not want the accounts and the histories of these communities to be transcribed into the straightjacket of standard and impersonal academic writing prose. The knowledge that has emerged from his thesis may in turn become the knowledge that is needed to transform and dismantle the socially unjust imperatives of the university, which either exclude from the outset those whose literacies do not conform or impose a standard of ‘Western’ academic literacy as a pre-condition for accessing university in the first place. In her call to reclaim the PhD as an ‘open dialogue’, Carmichael-Murphy seems to share a similar sentiment:

Knowledge should be accessible to stakeholders, not guarded by shareholders. Universities continue to accrue knowledge in the form of physical theses, only ever read by people who are also constructing theses. A prime example of knowledge being ‘known’ but not comprehended. This is where public engagement becomes

a vital source of agency for the prospective PhD; but public engagement should not be conflated with public good. Academic communication with the public thus far, has been didactic; accumulating shared knowledge which is simply formalized by the researcher and the university. So, perhaps, the PhD should be reclaimed as an open dialogue with the world.

If academic writings are to become ‘open dialogues’ (see, for example, Abdulrahman et al. [2021]) as part of a socially just pedagogy, their genres need to change so that what makes writing academic can include a far greater range of communicative practices.

Emergent academic text

Dialogues, tetralogues and metalogues

Why? Because these would afford opportunities for public engagement and dissemination across diverse interdisciplinary communities. Writers with different disciplinary and cultural perspectives in dialogue on shared concerns, clarifying as required, explaining, interjecting, suggesting synchronously on the page. See pedagogic example on page 151 for a fuller account.

Change 9. Re-thinking Writing Requires Threshold Concepts

Another reason to re-think writing practices is that research in writing studies has shown there are several ways of defining academic writing and that there are multiple exemplars of what academic writing looks like. An understanding of these threshold concepts significantly extends the narrow and flattened definitions favoured by deficit approaches to academic writing instruction. Understanding that academic writing is multimodal and that it mediates activity, for example, is a far cry from describing it as ‘objective’ and ‘linear’. These studies index the richness of the academic writing landscape pointing to further evolutions in the ecology of academic texts.

Emergent academic text

The comic and the graphic essay

Why? Because these would afford opportunities for their authors to engage multimodally in communicating their meaning in ways that represent their histories, literacies and identities (e.g. threshold concepts 2.4 and 3.2).

Change 10. Change Academic Practices and Standards

Further reasons to change writing practices include the fact that what makes these practices academic in the first place is changing. Recall the discussion on practices from Chapter 1: if the practices change, then so must the skills needed to enact the practices. This is because the skills are external to the internal *standards of excellence* of a practice. Skills are the means to an end. Thinking of skills as means to an end also entails, for example, that if the skill of writing a six-sentence paragraph is no longer achieving the *standards of excellence* needed to give voice to the dialects of an indigenous community or to convey the urgency for environmental reform, then the skills of paragraph-writing may need to be replaced with the skills of digital composition, animation and social media engagement.

Several writing scholars, including Paré (2018), Paltridge and Starfield (2020), Badenhorst et al. (2021) and Mewburn (2020), are challenging academia to a radical re-think of its traditional genres, particularly with regard to dissertation writing and its relevance to the world of work. This is because the traditional paper-based thesis may no longer be fit-for-purpose since it rarely reflects the kinds of worlds that newly minted research graduates inhabit. Even if a graduate remains in academia, they will be expected to communicate through a range of literacies that are multimodal. Their audiences will be equally diverse and will transcend the narrow pool of specialists in their research fields. Moreover, research also shows that the majority of university graduates do not go on to have careers in academia (Hancock, 2020). What this entails is that university students (and their parents) measure the investment they make in higher education against their chances of securing employment. This socio-structural reality has become an intransitive one, to use critical realist terminology, and it amounts to a real socio-academic practice, one that is based as the epistemic virtue (or vice) of ‘employability’. As such, students have limited power throughout the duration of their studies, at least, to dismantle the economic imperatives at the level of the REAL that position them as consumers (Naylor et al., 2020). And once they have been positioned as consumers, they are more likely to demand that a university education equip them with skills that are transferable to the job market. Whether or not this requirement should impact on the kind of writing they do at university has a bearing on whether the traditional ‘big book’ 400-page doctoral thesis (Eco, 2015), for example, is still relevant. Whatever changes emerge in academic writing practices, these should not come at the

expense of the complexities of a ‘thinking university’ (Beckett & Hager, 2018; Bengtsen & Barnett, 2018): the challenge, rather, is to ensure that any changes to writing requirements, such as those of the PhD thesis, maintain the *standards of excellence* inherent in the SAP and epistemic virtues that a PhD or any other marker of academic excellence needs to meet (Andrews et al., 2012).

Emergent academic text

The digital thesis

Why? Because this would afford writers the agency and autonomy to shape their knowledge in ways that serve their futures. Writers would develop the skills needed to communicate complex knowledge in the interests of composition and creative recursiveness rather than the linearity of standard writing.

Change 11. Ecrire: Reclaiming the Art of Writing

A penultimate reason for the need to change academic writing practices is what I referred to in Chapter 1 as the aesthetic rationale. This should not be confused with vanity projects that pit spurious notions of ‘good’ writing against ‘bad’ writing nor does it mean that paying attention to the beauty of form diminishes the truth of the content. Rather, it needs to be understood within the broader and well-established tradition of how form and content are inextricably bound (Nussbaum, 1990). The history of writing, including scientific and academic writing, can be read as a chronicle of which forms best afford the communication of knowledge. As Taub (2017) evidences, prose is a relatively late comer (fifth century) to the art of communicating scientific knowledge and even once prose did establish itself as the most ubiquitous form of literacy in ‘Western’ academia, it still provided writers with choices: letters, encyclopaedia entries, commentaries, biographies, dialogues and chronicles are just some of the genres deployed throughout history to communicate knowledge. Charles Bazerman’s influential and compelling body of work (Bazerman, 1988, 2007, 2015) chronicles the evolution of the eighteenth-century experimental journal article to highlight how changes in form affect content and how changes in content become ‘encapsulated’ in genres. This encapsulation can ossify and become performative. It therefore needs to be ‘rattled’ so that the information chain can be broken and knowledge can continue to be shaped, allowing new

forms to emerge. Writers can and do reclaim the art of writing by drawing on the broad pool of genres that is available to them at the level of the REAL, as evidenced throughout, for example, Phillips and Kara (2021). The example of an emergent academic text that can reclaim the art of *écrire*, below, is inspired by stand-up academic and anthropologist Kate Fox (2021).

Emergent academic text

Humorous writing

Why? Because this would afford writer-researchers to negotiate through humour the ‘in-between spaces’ that exist in inter-disciplinary and inter-methodological academic discourse. Humour allows writers to “interrupt the traditional hierarchy in which monologic, ‘detached’ academic discourse is the best way of showing that you are gathering and disseminating knowledge” (Fox, 2021, p. 160).

Change 12. Respect a Writer’s Right to Flourish

Last but not least, writers, as agents in their own right, have a human right to express themselves in accordance with their abilities (what they are physically able to do) and with their capabilities, understood as the approach to human rights and ethics pioneered by Amartya Sen: this approach highlights the human right to material, emotional and educational resources that enable them to flourish (Nussbaum, 2011; Robeyns, 2016). As long as higher education remains dependent on (and reduced to) monolingual (English) and monomodal (language) proficiency and as long as we continue to measure academic success (almost) exclusively against language proficiency, then we will necessarily judge as ‘deficient’ students who come to university with diverse multilingual, multimodal, dyslexic, autistic, artistic, social, cultural and physical repertoires. Moreover, if language is an expression of socio-cultural identity (Evans, 2014; Holmes, 1992), then by insisting on linguistic homogeneity, we are asking for ‘cultural and social’ homogeneity. And by asking everybody to speak and write in the same way, just as was once the case with RP (Received Pronunciation), we are creating the conditions for a homogenized academy that communicates via a mono-literacy.

Emergent academic text

Code-meshed and translanguaged writing

Why? Because this would afford opportunities for writers' to harness a fuller range of meaning-making resources and ensure their linguistic repertoires and identities were visible in their writing. Readers would need to cooperate to make more effort to decode meaning and writers would need to ensure they were intelligible. Deviation from standard norms and expectations become justified in terms of "rhetorical and communicative functionality" (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 414).

The above provides a non-exhaustive list of reasons to consider change in our academic writing practices. In what follows, I offer three glimpses of what a future critical realist writing pedagogy might begin to look like. My intention is to provide a nascent rationale for making a far greater range of texts count as academic in virtue of the socio-academic practices (SAPs) and epistemic virtues (EVs) that motivate them and because of the positive (socially just) impact that they may bring about.

Example 1. The Newsletter

Authentic task* prompt: *form an editorial team to write, review, edit and publish an e-newsletter to help a student community and aimed at a student readership; draw on your collective socio-semiotic knowledge and skills to convey knowledge and information that is relevant to your readers in both content and form; design an interactive tool (e.g. a survey) to generate and collect feedback; reflect on your individual contribution and on the impact of the newsletter.*

*Task can be adapted to suit undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral requirements and can be set as individual or collaborative.

Example assessment criteria

Learning Outcomes: communicate knowledge intelligibly, multimodally and multilingually		
Impact of text	Semiotic resources	Reflection
Did the text lead to change? What kind and for whom?	Were the most fitting resources used for your readership?	What did you learn? What worked and why?

<i>Who did it benefit, harm, include, exclude?</i>	<i>Was the communicative aim achieved? How?</i>	<i>What would you do differently?</i>
<i>How will you follow up/build on this task?</i>	<i>What peer/readership feedback did you receive?</i>	<i>Did you enjoy this task? Why?</i>

Educational principle: to represent, create, innovate, transform knowledge collaboratively. **Critical realist principle:** to harness writer skills (EMPIRICAL) for the creation of text (ACTUAL) by mobilizing knowledge of which genres, threshold concepts and linguistic affordances are available in the textual environment (REAL) in order to bring about positive change in a community (EMERGENT ACADEMICNESS). See Figure 1 on page 105.

Pedagogic principle: multilingualism and multimodality as methods for representing knowledge.

Scholarship: task ideas and rationales inspired by Bezemer and Kress (2008), English (2011) and Canagarajah (2011).

What makes the text and task academic: it fulfils the socio-academic practice (SAP) of writing for an authentic audience and is motivated by the epistemic virtue (EV) of benefitting the community.

Example 2. The Manifesto

Authentic task* prompt: *identify what ‘clarity’ means to you, your knowledge area, your discipline and your audience. Refer to relevant literature and examples. Compose a manifesto using a range of socio-semiotic resources to create a list of tenets designed to provoke thinking about what clarity is. The aim is to challenge prevailing assumptions, persuade your readers of the alternative; indicate your ethical orientation and epistemic values, and use it as tool that can be re-visited to guide your own writing practices and understandings.*

*Task can be adapted to suit undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral requirements and can be set as individual or collaborative.

Example assessment criteria

Learning Outcomes: to challenge assumptions knowledgeably and purposefully		
Impact of text	Semiotic resources	Reflection
<i>Did the text lead to change? What kind and for whom?</i>	<i>Were the most fitting resources used for your readership?</i>	<i>What did you learn? What worked and why?</i>

<i>Who did it benefit, harm, include, exclude?</i>	<i>Was the communicative aim achieved? How?</i>	<i>What would you do differently?</i>
<i>How will you follow up/build on this task?</i>	<i>What peer/readership feedback did you receive?</i>	<i>Did you enjoy this task? Why?</i>

Educational principle: to critique received wisdom.

Critical realist principle: to develop an authorial voice (EMPIRICAL) for the creation of text (ACTUAL) that mobilizes knowledge of what genres are available in the textual environment (REAL) in order to stimulate deeper thinking (EMERGENT ACADEMICNESS). See Figure 1 on page 105.

Pedagogic principle: understanding genre, its purpose and its readership.

Scholarship: task ideas and rationales inspired by Hanna (2014) and Hodgson et al. (2018).

What makes the text and task academic: it fulfils the socio-academic practice (SAP) of critical engagement with relevant scholarship and is motivated by the epistemic virtue (EV) of questioning established knowledge.

Example 3. The Dialogue

Authentic task* prompt: *you are going to explain your disciplinary understandings** of a complex idea and/or threshold concept to someone who is not as familiar as you are with this knowledge. Record or imagine a conversation between you and them in which you explain, exemplify, re-cast, your understanding in response to your interlocutor's questions, objections, re-formulations and counter-examples. Write this conversation as a play, radio interview, children's story or other genre that affords dialogue.*

*Task can be adapted to suit undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral requirements and can be set as individual or collaborative.

** Recalling the example of Lucia, the psychology student who was excluded from her class because she was unfamiliar with the jargon of academic psychology, this writing task would provide an opportunity for her to remain in her psychology class and work with other students to mutually explain their understanding of psychology. The benefit to Lucia would be that she remains in the psychology class and in so doing, develops her understanding of the discipline through written dialogue. The benefit to her more academically-trained peers would be that they learn about situated experiences of psychology from Lucia and hone their own academic skills of communicating complex knowledge through dialogue with readers who have different understandings.

Example assessment criteria

Learning Outcomes: to critically explain disciplinary concepts to different audiences		
Impact of text	Semiotic resources	Reflection
<i>Did the text lead to change? What kind and for whom?</i>	<i>Were the most fitting resources used for your readership?</i>	<i>What did you learn? What worked and why?</i>
<i>Who did it benefit, harm, include, exclude?</i>	<i>Was the communicative aim achieved? How?</i>	<i>What would you do differently?</i>
<i>How will you follow up/ build on this task?</i>	<i>What peer/readership feedback did you receive?</i>	<i>Did you enjoy this task? Why?</i>

Educational principle: to understand and communicate complex ideas to those who are less familiar with them in order to understand them better yourself.

Critical realist principle: to mobilize the writer's linguistic skills (EMPIRICAL) in creating a text (ACTUAL) that demonstrates knowledge of reader expectations in the textual environment (REAL) in order to bring about mutual understanding of complex ideas (EMERGENT ACADEMICNESS). See Figure 1 on page 105.

Pedagogic principle: increase awareness of the communicative affordances of the dialogue as an academic genre.

Scholarship: task ideas and rationales inspired by English (2011, 2015).

What makes the text and task academic: it fulfils the socio-academic practice (SAP) of writing for an authentic audience and is motivated by the epistemic virtue (EV) of transforming understandings of existing knowledge.

Pedagogies as Levers of Change: Investment in Scholarship and Pedagogy

Resistance to change has many causes. It includes a toxic mix, or perfect storm, of contentment with the *status quo*, fear of the unknown, unfamiliarity with the alternatives, lack of resources and opportunities and lack of agency. To paraphrase Laurel Richardson, resistance can also take the form of defensiveness:

If comics and rap count as academic writing and I can't do it, what happens to my identity, my prestige, my status – my place in the pecking order – ME?

Richardson took her academic field of sociology to task for writing in boring, linear and de-personalized prose suggesting instead that poetry better captured

the rhythms and voices of the sociological reality she was investigating (see Chapter 1). Her fellow sociologists argued that poetry was not an appropriate method of enquiry because it lacked validity. What they overlooked, though, was that all methods of representing reality are proxies for that reality and, as such, they are all, to varying degrees, fallible. This is why different research methods and methodologies are chosen or discarded depending on the object of enquiry. In fact, Richardson had not suggested that they too adopt poetry as their preferred method of enquiry: she was simply making the point that it was one of *her* chosen methods and that it afforded validity as a methodological proxy for the social reality she was researching (namely as a way of transcribing her interview data so as to evoke as closely as possible the rhythms and emotions of the women she had been interviewing). Similarly, advocating for a re-configuration of what makes writing academic, based on the warrants afforded throughout this book, does not imply that all academic writers should rap or draw their research or that teachers of academic writing, trained to teach the genre of linear prose, should lose their jobs because their skills are no longer required: those skills will be required for many futures to come, but they are likely to become part of a broader ecology of skills as new forms of writing emerge. As Sousanis reminds us in opening this chapter, ‘linear sequences have their strengths, but they are not the only possibility’. The visual argument of his graphic dissertation can be read through the theoretical lens proposed by Jude Fransman, who shares her rationale for re-imagining the conditions of possibility for the PhD by mobilizing the metaphor of a map. Maps are ‘open systems’ that allow us to organize reality rather than reproduce it; they are open to change because they are not determined by a single use or purpose (Fransman, 2012, p. 140):

The map is [...] detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group or social formation.

Although she does not draw on critical realist philosophy to argue this, she is nevertheless describing what is one of the defining properties of an open system, namely their permeability, which is what makes them ‘susceptible to modification’ and, therefore, open to change.

What I am similarly suggesting is that we harness the permeability afforded by academic texts understood as open systems to *open up possibilities* for re-configuring what makes them academic based on our values, on a range of SAPs and EVs that extend beyond tired and anachronistic notions of ‘objectivity’, ‘linearity’ and ‘reliability’. For change to happen, university leadership, teachers

and students need to democratically activate the judgemental rationality of their agencies to trigger change at the level of the ACTUAL, which is the transitive and epistemological level of reality agents have direct access to and which requires deep knowledge at the level of the REAL to be effective. Writing pedagogies can be the levers of change that teachers, students and academic writers can activate to open the spaces needed for these possibilities to emerge. I argued in Chapter 4 that academic texts are open systems in virtue of their social complexity. This makes them porous whilst still remaining stable enough to warrant their status as 'systems'. By being porous, they have the inbuilt capacity to allow new skills and practices to enter their systems without the system collapsing. For this reason, academic texts are located at the level of the ACTUAL, where change is possible. When new academic texts emerge, they do not replace the old ones: a graphically drawn or musically performed thesis does not pose a threat to the traditional monograph, but remains very much within the system of academic knowledge production because it still has to comply with reality at the level of the REAL within which university structures are historically, economically and socially bound to enacting specific SAPs. This includes, for example, the requirement to reference research, gain ethics committee approvals and justify methodological frameworks, none of which rule against using comics, to mention one of any number of semiotic resources, as a scientific research method (Al-Jawad, 2015).

Levers of change include new pedagogies and access to relevant scholarship. They can be understood as 'cracks in the system' that need to be both pro-actively and collectively created and then picked away at so that the old foundations either collapse or become replaced by the new ones. Levers require several structural conditions for agents to activate them. The next section limits itself to considering the two conditions with which I am most familiar and have had access to as a salaried permanent teacher of academic writing with no contractual obligation to do research: these levers are scholarship and pedagogy. It is important to declare my positionality because my own agency to enact pedagogical change at the level of the ACTUAL is also subject to material opportunities and constraints afforded at the level of the REAL. These differ from the material opportunities and constraints of someone who is casually employed or of an academic manager or professor, for example, each of whom is likely to have varying degrees of agency, such as access to budgets, and varying degrees of autonomy to activate a range of levers of change, such as research time built into their workloads or membership of committees where they can contribute to making decisions about scholarship and pedagogy. Positionality with regard to agency is crucial

because each level of professional status comes with different opportunities and constraints that agents are more or less free to act upon.

Change through Scholarship

If teachers and assessors of academic writing are to be equal partners in laying the foundation of a future and open academic writing pedagogy that transforms practices and closes the theory *versus* practice gulf between ‘what goes on in the classroom’ and ‘what is said in the research journals’, then writers and teachers of academic writing at all levels and across all disciplines must have access to scholarship. I locate scholarship at the level of the REAL because it is part of the intransitive ontological reality, i.e. it exists whether or not we choose to or can engage with it. As agents, we can choose to ignore this reality, but that doesn’t change its ontological realness. By ‘access’ I mean material access in the form of access to a library and to open resources but I also mean ‘access’ in the form of contractual terms, whereby employers support and value the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) as part of employment terms and conditions at the level of the REAL that enable academic staff to flourish through professional growth and fulfilment (Braxton et al., 2002; Hutchings & Shulman, 1999). Material investment in SoTL is likely to inspire teachers who have the curiosity and the disposition to bridge the theory–practice divide to join communities of writing practitioners and researchers engaged in sharing and disseminating their work. This would also serve to bridge the knowledge gap between teachers of academic writing working on the ‘edge of academia’ and those teaching and researching ‘the proper disciplines’.

But it is not just access to knowledge that practitioners need: however much scholarship one engages with, a teacher of academic writing is unlikely to be knowledgeable of every academic genre at the level of the REAL. This is why Sam, my semi-fictional student from Chapter 1, was confused. She had clearly been taught, to the best of her teachers’ knowledge, that academic writing was pretty much the same, formulaic and transferable across the disciplinary board. This is why Sam was unable to then make sense of the differences in standards and expectations that they ended up encountering on their degree programme. Even when teachers do become familiar with studies that have identified some of the skills and practices students need to write at university, it remains difficult to decide what a general academic writing course, such as those taught by EAP or in Academic Writing Centres and Library Services, should select, prioritize and then teach. One answer to the general *versus* specific academic

writing conundrum is provided by Wardle (2017). She argues that students be taught general principles about writing and what it means to be an author so that they can critically transfer *knowledge of writing*, rather than skills, to other contexts. This would avoid the ‘rigid’ and ‘inappropriate’ application of rules from one context to another and would educate students in a reflective and mindful approach to writing whereby they notice disciplinary conventions in their readings and are able to then infer relevant patterns rather than accumulate a set of rules. But who can teach the teachers to teach their students in this way? The solution, for Elizabeth Wardle, is to create MA (Master’s)-level degree programmes that teach university teachers about both the theory *and* practice of academic writing. As Downs and Wardle (2007, p. 554) claim: ‘Having a major ... dramatically changes a field’s standing in the academy’. Indeed, as argued in Molinari (2013), MAs in Creative Writing abound yet those in Academic Writing do not.¹ This seems highly incongruous given the challenges that all academic writers deal with and the high-stakes audit culture that academic writing is invested in, from undergraduate writing assignments all the way to the high-impact writing that academics are expected to publish in order to fulfil the requirements of the REF (the 4-yearly UK Research Excellence Framework that determines the extent to which research departments receive government funding and that creates promotion pathways).

In addition to the more traditionally published literatures on academic writing referenced throughout this book, there are online communities of scholars whose work is possibly more readily and freely accessible to anybody with an internet connection. These scholars freely share their own and each other’s knowledge and resources, they form reading groups and organize seminars, have journals and blogs and, via social media, fulfil the prophecy of the ‘networked university’ described by Nicolas Standaert in Barnett (2012). There are simply too many of these ‘networked resources’ to list and any selection is necessarily at the expense of equally generous and thorough scholarship, but three examples of where scholarship on a more nuanced, creative and socially just approach to academic writing is regularly evidenced, updated and shared are:

- the blog of independent writing scholar Dr Helen Kara (<https://helenkara.com/>), who publishes research on creative methods and indigenous knowledges;

¹ Notable exceptions in the UK are an MSc in Chemistry and Scientific Writing [accessed 27 December 2018] at the University of Warwick and an MA in Academic Writing Development and Research [accessed 27 December 2018] at Coventry University.

- the blog of The Hidden Curriculum Team (<https://drhiddencurriculum.wordpress.com/>), whose book on the hidden landscape of doctoral writing chronicles opportunities and possibilities for writers rather than foregrounding rules and conventions (Elliot et al., 2020);
- the blog of Professor Pat Thomson (<https://patthomson.net/>), who enacts her agency by triggering the levers of change that her status as an academic supervisor, writer, teacher and tenured professorship affords her.

Change in academic writing practices that re-configures what makes writing academic can be actioned via access to such and other scholarship and by giving degree-level status to the complex intellectual and methodological work carried out by the practice of writing as a method of enquiry. Change is also actioned when scholars join collectively to build communities of knowledge and practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that are networked and therefore amplify the chances of triggering levers of change that an individual alone would not have the power to do. Through scholarship, agents can become invested with the agency needed to action the levers of change between the levels of the EMPIRICAL and the ACTUAL of a critical realist stratified reality. What this means in practice is that knowledge of academic writing scholarship at the level of the REAL can enable a writer at the level of the EMPIRICAL to mobilize their knowledge of all the possible genres (at the level of the REAL) that can then become available at the level of the ACTUAL.

Change through Pedagogy

If you teach academic writing or if you are a student of academic writing, at any level of university instruction, you will hopefully have experienced some very good practice. You may have had a mentor or tutor or supervisor or even have read some inspiring and liberating work on teaching that spurred you on to become the best writer, or composer of texts, that you could be. Equally, like Sam, you may have had some frustrating, confusing and unnecessarily time-consuming experiences. Either way, you will have become aware of how important pedagogy is to becoming a happy, fulfilled and confident academic writer. Several such pedagogies exist. What they tend to have in common is a meaningful purpose, authentic content and a genuine commitment to your flourishing. From a critical realist perspective, this also means writing and teaching writing from a position of knowledge that ensures these three qualities – meaningfulness, authenticity and genuineness – enact a socially just pedagogy. Without these

three qualities, academic writing is unable to fulfil its transformative educational imperative, which is to change the world for the better. Meaningfulness can be understood as writing that is knowledge or content-informed, writing that means something to someone somewhere; authenticity can be understood as writing that has a purpose, such as a newsletter to inform a community, a blog to share scholarship, or a PhD thesis that is inclusive because it broadens its readership (Harron, 2016); and genuineness can be understood as the opposite of 'performativity', that hollowed-out semblance of an academic text that is more akin to *écriture* than to *écrire*.

As part of his critical realist pedagogy to enact change for social justice, Donald Judd triggers the levers of change by cautioning against generic academic writing instruction that lacks a subject matter and that purports to teach transferable skills. Specifically, Judd takes the socio-academic practice of critical thinking to task, arguing that in order to write well, we must also understand what we are reading. This is because change in the social world cannot take place without a deep understanding of the REAL social structures that constitute the world (Judd, 2003, pp. 126):

The traditional lack of a subject matter in writing courses is both a strength and a weakness. Sophisticated writing cannot be divorced from a degree of sophisticated understanding of a concrete subject matter. Even if you apply formal logic to your writing and detect logical fallacies and conflicting assertions in an argument, while important, this will not necessarily lead to a more sophisticated understanding and, thus, to more sophisticated writing. 'How could someone learn,' asks Frank Smith (1990: 97) 'to detect conflicting assertions in a chemistry text, an article on chess, or to estimate for repairs to an automobile, without an understanding of chemistry, chess or automobile mechanics, in which case contradictions would be immediately apparent?'. The answer of course, is that one cannot. A pre-requisite to using critical thinking skills is an adequate grounding in the subject matter about which one is thinking critically. It may be unrealistic to expect that your writing will get progressively better when you are writing about several unrelated topics over the course of an academic term because little opportunity is given to you to develop a more sophisticated understanding of those topics.

Since most generic academic writing instruction, such as IELTS, EAP and other academic writing services, tends to teach writing about 'several unrelated topics', it is no surprise that students do not develop sufficient disciplinary knowledge to be exposed to the genres of their disciplines and to become confident critical academic writers.

Judd goes on to make the case for an interdisciplinary approach to the teaching of academic writing because this is the only way that a deep understanding of social phenomena can be gained. Without this understanding, the levers of change cannot be activated (Judd, 2003, p. 132):

Critical thinking involves understanding a process/product as simultaneously interconnected to or interpenetrating multiple structures, both social and natural. Students often have a tendency to see the workings of the world as fragmented and disconnected. For example, if we consider a phenomenon like 'homelessness' we might say that is only a social problem, not an economic or medical one. By ignoring the impact of the economic system on unemployment, the connection between homelessness and the economic system is lost. By seeing the interconnections between homelessness, the economic system, the welfare system, the health system, the educational system, etc. students begin to understand the issue in a much more complex fashion than before.

Both Judd (2003) and Bernard-Donals (1998) refer to writing as 'an agent of change' because it is a transitive method of enquiry. Like all methods of enquiry, it aims to understand reality in order for something to happen to that reality (which can include anything from publishing it, to sharing it and transforming it). For writing to be an agent of change, writers must understand the structural realities at the ontological level of the REAL. This understanding is likely to ensure they write meaningful, authentic and genuine texts, which, in turn, can have a material and transformative impact on the world. In this sense, a critical realist understanding of what makes writing academic is its capacity to 'mediate activity' (Threshold concept 1. 5) because it enables *things to happen*.

The references to 'interconnectedness' and 'complexity' in the above quotation further align with the critical realist approach to curriculum design discussed in Mirzaei Rafe et al. (2020). Indeed, interdisciplinary praxis is the foundation of a critical realist pedagogy because only an interdisciplinary praxis founded on knowledge of science, sociology and philosophy can realistically enhance the agency required to trigger the levers of change (Mirzaei Rafe et al., 2020, p. 3): 'The thinking curriculum of CR [Critical Realism] is therefore a dynamic, predominantly collective interdisciplinary enquiry between "the real", "the actual" and the "empirical".'

I conclude this section with reference to two more fully developed pedagogies that have the potential to trigger the levers of change needed to reconfigure what makes a text academic. This is because they engage students with knowledge at the level of the REAL, thus empowering them to make writing choices such as

those advocated by Carmichael-Murphy (2021), who argues for a de-colonial re-configuring of what and whose knowledge writers should be allowed to represent and how they should represent it. The first pedagogy is by UK scholars Lomer and Anthony-Okeke (2019) and the second is by Australian scholar Manathunga (2017, 2020a).

An Active Blended Learning Model

In their article on ‘ethically engaging international students’ in higher education, Lomer and Anthony-Okeke (2019) push back against the deficit model discussed in Chapter 1 by proposing an ‘engaged’ and ‘ethical’ pedagogy based on the work of Madge et al. (2009). This pedagogy seeks to dismantle imperialist and colonialist ideologies about what students should know and how they should represent their knowledge. Instead of asking students to demonstrate their knowledge via the traditional academic essay format, students’ knowledge and critical thinking was assessed on their blog writing and their level of interaction and engagement with other students. Students were required to share, comment, explain and analyse their chosen topics via a series of posts that they managed and curated creatively. This pedagogic choice speaks directly to laying the foundation of a future pedagogy that reconfigures what makes writing academic on at least two fronts: first, it indexes teacher agency in identifying the levers of pedagogical change needed to enact such an assessment; and secondly, it empowers students by developing their own creative agencies as knowers and writers. In the spirit of sharing scholarship that builds networked communities that can collectively activate the levers of change, information about the authors’ ‘pedagogies for internationalization’ has been made available here: <https://internationalpedagogies.home.blog/>

Creating Space for Southern Knowledge Systems

Mindful of what de Sousa Santos (2009) refers to as the ‘ecology of knowledge’ and of the sociologies of absence that this ecology exposes when it becomes apparent that only some knowledges make it into the curriculum, Manathunga (2020b) enacts her agency as a doctoral supervisor by modelling and encouraging in her students ‘gentle reflection, deep listening and courageous radical action’ as a way for Southern, Transcultural and Indigenous knowledge systems to emerge and become visible. This involves a series of pedagogical, as well as epistemological, commitments, such as defining your standpoint as a writer and knower (what I referred to earlier as ‘positionality’) and knowing history, what

Manathunga refers to as ‘deep’, ‘slow’ and ‘ancient’ time. This ensures writers are able to identify the events, violences, values and cultures that have led to what is visible in the present. Her blog post on ‘decolonising doctoral education’ shares examples of doctoral writers who have shaped their texts to fit the knowledge they are representing. For example, Manathunga refers to a Cambodian doctoral researcher who wrote her thesis as a memoir because she had to literally rely on her memory to allow the knowledge of her Cambodian grandmother’s memory to emerge as knowledge. All this has been shared via the Hidden Curriculum team and further signals the power of networked communities to trigger change by making this kind of knowledge visible: <https://drhiddencurriculum.wordpress.com/2020/07/09/decolonising-doctoral-education-sociologies-of-emergence>

Conclusions

For academic writers and their teachers to become agents of change in both their own practices and in re-configuring what makes writing academic, new pedagogies need to emerge. The foundations of such pedagogies require writers and teachers to have the agency and material conditions to be able to lay them in the first place: one way of ensuring that teachers of academic writing are empowered to lay such foundations is to ensure they are securely employed and that they are supported in scholarly enquiry. I have identified two key levers that can help activate this agency: scholarship and pedagogy itself. Scholarship can act as a lever of change because it affords deep knowledge of the structures operating at the level of the REAL. This knowledge is needed if agents are to engage in transformative practices that allow for change at the level of the ACTUAL. Pedagogy can act as a lever of change because it can provide opportunities for interdisciplinary knowledge, which is REAL knowledge (in critical realist terms), to be the focus of a writing curriculum. Interdisciplinary knowledge enables writers as knowers to create texts that are more likely to become ‘agents of change’ because they represent the knowledge needed to transform reality for the better at the level of the ACTUAL. Examples of pedagogies that might engage students with this kind of deep learning were given together with examples of the kinds of academic texts that would allow this knowledge to emerge. I have suggested that what makes writing academic are texts that afford the emergence of socio-academic practices (SAPs) and epistemic virtues (EVs) aimed at transforming knowledge in the interests of social justice.