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"The rest is silence": Reframing stasis as integral to creative practice

Abstract:

This duoethnographic study examines the relationship between motion and stasis in creative practice through the lens of two creative educators working in postgraduate and undergraduate creative industries. Drawing on our combined experiences as practitioners and educators, we explore how creative blockages can be reframed as productive rather than problematic, challenging dominant productivity paradigms in contemporary creative industries and education. Through structured dialogic exchange, we investigate three interconnected themes: the rhythmic nature of creative practice, the pedagogical value of embracing productive stasis, and the tension between institutional timelines and creative development. We consider how encouraging creative tertiary students to accept periods of stasis may benefit them as they enter the creative workforce, where such rhythms are often intrinsic to professional practice. By recognising the generative potential of apparent non-productivity, we suggest students can be better prepared for the realities of creative careers. This research contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations about creative pedagogy by offering a more textured understanding of creative processes – one that questions the pressure for constant innovation and instead advocates for deeper, more sustainable forms of engagement.

Biographical note:

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Previous to SAE, he taught at the University of South Australia for ten years, in addition to coordinating the Honours course. He has presented on creative and dialogic approaches to engaging with Shakespeare at the World Shakespeare Congress and British Graduate Shakespeare Conference, and has had his poetry and prose fiction featured in *TEXT* Journal, *The Incomplete Book* and *Writing from Below* and local spoken word events such as *SALA (South Australian Living Artists Festival)*.

Keywords:
duoethnography, creative industries, creative stasis, arrhythmia

Introduction

> O, I die, Horatio!
> The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit.
> I cannot live to hear the news from England,
> But I do prophesy th' election lights
> On Fortinbras. He has my dying voice.
> So tell him, with th' occurrents, more and less,
> Which have solicited – the rest is silence. (Dies.)
> (*Hamlet* V.ii.4015–20)

Spoken with Hamlet's dying breath, "the rest is silence" punctuates the royal Dane's existence at the same time as communicating his interest in what is to come beyond (Fortinbras's rule of Denmark), and blessing it ("He has my dying voice"). While for Hamlet this is the final stasis, there is still motion beyond his passing, and events to come in the play, not least of which is his friend's meditation on his passing. After his death, the incoming ruler Fortinbras treats him with respect, and speaks of his potential:

> Let four captains
> Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage;
> For he was likely, had he been put on,
> To have prov'd most royally
> (*Hamlet* V.ii.4065–7)

Thus, although Hamlet's breath is stilled, his body remains in motion through the funerary procession onto the stage. So to begin our contextualisation of our title phrase – "the rest is silence" – is embedded between dialogue and discourse, the very opposites of silence, both before and after Hamlet's passing. Hamlet recognises that events are swirling around him and will continue after his departure, and it could be said that he is claiming the stillness, in forcing an emphasis on the void that will be left by his departure. It is fitting that such a reflexive play, which meditates on the nature of mortality, and the fear of what lies beyond ("the undiscovered country": III.i) informs our paper on the rhythms between obviously productive (or performative!) creative/pedagogical practice, and the quieter reflective moments which we argue are necessary to contextualise and enrich the more demonstrably productive process. Here we will argue that the stasis is a prerequisite for the success of the productive phase of creating an artistic work, teaching a class, or refining an academic program.

There is a strong parallel here between obvious motion/life, and the visibly productive output of an academic paper or a presentation at an academic conference. But without the non-obviously productive moments of pause – to reflect on ideas, make connections which aren't immediately apparent, and allow an idea to ferment over time – the recordable outputs might never come to fruition, or ripen into the unique vintages worthy of discussion.

It is this interplay between visible production and generative stillness that led us to adopt duoethnography. The methodology is a collaborative, dialogic one in which two or more researchers "of difference" juxtapose their life histories to generate multiple understandings of a shared phenomenon, treating their own biographies as the sites of inquiry rather than as illustrative anecdotes (Norris & Sawyer, 2012, p. 9). We chose it because the rhythm between activation and stasis in creative practice is not an object that can be observed from the outside but a lived, temporal experience most legible from within practice itself. As Norris and Sawyer (2013) argue, it is well suited to interrogating how understanding is shaped by temporal and social factors. Rather than seeking a single, generalisable account of creative rhythm, we wanted to set two practitioner trajectories side by side, one grounded in theatre direction and academic leadership and the other in creative writing pedagogy. Where our experiences align and where they part ways, we can see what creative practitioners tend to share, without smoothing over the real differences between us.

The juxtaposition of our accounts creates what Norris and Sawyer (2012) describe, after Bhabha (1994), as a third space, in which each of us reconceptualises our reflections through encounter with the other. In this sense, the writing of the paper was itself an exercise in productive stasis: the intervals between our contributions, where we paused to absorb and respond to one another's reflections, proved as generative as the passages of visible composition.

Below we offer three themes which touch on the tension between stasis and activity, stillness and motion:

1. The rhythmic nature of creative practice
2. The pedagogical value of embracing productive stasis
3. Tension between institutional timelines and creative development.

Theme 1: The rhythmic nature of creative practice

Corinna

Throughout my creative journey, first as a student, then as a practising artist, and now as a creative researcher, I have moved repeatedly between moments of activation and moments where time appears to stand still. During activation, ideas flow, work manifests, progress becomes visible. During stasis, something different happens: understanding consolidates, perspective emerges, and deeper insights become possible. Both states are essential to how I create.

There are also moments of failure when what initially appeared as progress ultimately collapses, and the work must be pulled apart and rebuilt. It is in the stillness, in the pause, that I gain sufficient distance to recognise what is not working. Without stasis, I simply continue moving forward, potentially building elaborate structures upon faulty foundations. This oscillation between activation, stasis, and sometimes failure is not inefficiency requiring correction but rather the fundamental rhythm through which my creative work develops.

Walker's (2024) rhythmanalytic framework has helped me recognise these patterns as characteristic of creative labour rather than personal idiosyncrasy. Walker demonstrates how rhythms operate across multiple scales, from bodily rhythms to institutional temporalities, and how these can exist in states of eurhythmia (complementary harmony), arrhythmia (productive tension), or isorhythmia (problematic dominance of a single rhythm). My creative practice inherently involves what Walker terms "polyrhythmic complexity": periods of intense production alternating with periods of apparent stillness, bursts of activity punctuated by necessary pauses (2024. p. 90).

As a theatre practitioner working with Commedia dell'Arte and devised performance, I have learned to recognise these rhythms intimately. In directing, there are days when I avoid the rehearsal room, hours spent staring at a script without visible progress, weeks where I seem to achieve nothing tangible. These periods of apparent stasis are, I have come to understand, as essential as the moments of visible activity. The work itself seems to demand these pauses. There are moments when pushing forward would be counterproductive, and when the most valuable thing I can do is step back and allow understanding to consolidate. However, my experience as an academic leader has revealed how thoroughly contemporary culture struggles to accommodate such rhythms. As Rosa (2013) observes, "social acceleration" intensifies temporal demands in ways that fundamentally undermine the reflective spaces necessary for deeper creative development (pp.63-93). When I engage in quiet contemplation rather than active production in response to a creative problem, I often experience a sense of guilt, as though such reflective practice constitutes a form of idleness. This internalised pressure exposes the extent to which productivity discourses and performance metrics have permeated my understanding of creative practice itself. The feeling is further reinforced when I observe colleagues being publicly commended for their visible "hard work", while the less tangible processes of reflection, analysis, and critical thought remain largely unacknowledged.

The tension becomes particularly acute when I consider the temporal structures within which I now work. Tertiary institutions operate according to linear temporality of structured progressions of trimesters or semesters, deadlines, and deliverables that privilege constant forward motion. My creative practice, conversely, follows what Lefebvre (2004, p. 73) terms "cyclical time", patterns of advance and retreat, productivity and apparent stasis, that resist linear progression. This creates what our research identifies as arrhythmia: a clash between the cyclical, recursive rhythms of creative development and the relentless linearity of institutional timelines.

As both a creative practitioner and an academic, I live with this arrhythmia daily. I know intimately that my best work emerges from cycles that include substantial periods of what appears externally as non-productivity. Yet I am also embedded within institutional structures that measure progress through visible outputs and that struggle to accommodate the temporal unpredictability that creative development requires. This is not unique to my situation; rather, it reflects a systemic challenge facing anyone attempting creative work within contemporary institutional contexts, where the boundaries between work and personal time are increasingly

blurred, and expectations of constant productivity contribute to a pervasive culture of work creep.

What I have learned through this oscillation is that healthy creative rhythms require what Lefebvre and Régulier (2004, p. 78) describe as "stops, silences, blanks" as well as beats. Just as bodily rhythms require both activity and rest, just as music requires both sound and silence, my creative practice requires both production and reflection; and so too does my academic leadership, which must hold space for listening and discernment alongside thoughtful direction and decisive action. When I privilege constant production without corresponding periods of reflection, I risk creating what Lefebvre and Régulier (2004, p. 67) term "isorhythmic conditions". In other words, monotonous temporal patterns that undermine rather than support genuine critical engagement and creative development.

The challenge I face, and that I see reflected across creative fields, is learning to trust these rhythms even when external pressures suggest they are inefficient. When I encounter a creative blockage, my first instinct is often to work harder, to produce more material, to push through. However, experience has taught me that sometimes the most productive thing I can do is stop. Not to abandon the work, but to allow it the time and space it needs to develop beyond my conscious manipulation. This understanding has profound implications for how I now approach both my own creative practice and my role in creative education. If creative work inherently involves these oscillating rhythms, then structures that demand constant linear progression are not simply inconvenient, they are fundamentally misaligned with how creativity operates in practice. The question of how we might create space for these rhythms within institutional contexts, particularly for students entering creative fields, is explored further in the pedagogical value of embracing productive stasis.

Pablo

Here I will reflect on two periods where I too experienced the oscillation in healthy creative rhythms which my colleague discusses above, and where Hamlet's "rest": a period of recuperation and creative reinvigoration, was facilitated by the "silence" in productive output which allowed progress. The first was several years ago when I was in the midst of my PhD, which interrogated the mythology at the core of "The Scottish Play", and how it has permeated modern popular culture, through a novella which transports the story to modern Edinburgh, and explores the central couple's relationship as the motivating factor for the tragedy.

As would be familiar to most of us, the PhD process is one which often progresses in fits and starts, with periods of intense activity followed by chasms of despair and doubt where it is difficult to pick our way through the darkness, for fear of being lost forever. At least that's how it sometimes seems! I was quite enjoying the creative process of writing the artefact though, until I suffered a period of creative blockage where I had no idea what was going to happen next, or how to introduce it organically into the narrative. At the time, my colleague and I were part of a group of PhD students at the University of South Australia (UniSA) who met regularly and provided feedback and support on our theses.

My colleague gave me some invaluable advice: "What happens next should stem from your character's motivation: what would they do next?"

I didn't exactly know what my character's motivation was at this point of the plot, so I had to put down my pen and give it some thought.

Some days later, after almost a week of stillness, the answer.

"Oh, of course that's what they'd do."

This was based on a past betrayal which emerged from the character's subconscious, and provided a natural motivation for the present events in the main tragedy. From that point on, the artefact, and exegesis, flowed freely. But without that significant pause, I'm not sure how I would have resolved the creative element.

My second example is perhaps less dramatic, but shows that the "rest" and "silence" of creative work can prove fruitful over an even longer gestation period. Back in 2020, in the midst of Covid, I had written a short creative piece summarising part of a virtual roleplaying session where my regular gaming group, run by my former Honours student, transferred our in-person meetings to Discord due to social distancing requirements. This was a difficult time for many of us, and I had a few other health issues as well as the mental and financial precarity of sessional academic work. The online gaming session served as a creative escape, a valuable social tool to alleviate many of these challenges, and the short fiction I wrote to memorialise us defeating a particularly troublesome troll was juxtaposed in the story against our real-life challenges.

Five years later, I rediscovered this piece of short fiction, and realised that in the interim, whole online communities of roleplaying support groups had sprung up, and my own experience had been replicated across continents and demographics, and become part of the social media and even popular media landscape, through such programs as *Dimension 20* (Mulligan et al., 2018–present) and *Critical Role* (Mercer, 2015–present), where real-time online gaming sessions help disparate individuals through social isolation, non-heteronormative or neurodivergent identity, and a variety of health challenges. I tweaked my original short story and contextualised it with similar examples in the literature of online gaming building enduring communities and invaluable social support over the last five years, bookending the piece with my own participation in new online gaming groups over the last few months, and this became an article in SAE's new staff and postgraduate journal. The incubation period, a "rest" of five years, allowed connections to be made over the productive "silence", which enriched the original fiction story with a critical history and allowed it to be viewed in a broader continuum, connecting the creative and the critical.

Theme 2: The pedagogical value of embracing productive stasis

Corinna

A familiar meme in academic circles discusses the relative merits of science and arts degrees: the former will teach you how to clone a Tyrannosaurus rex, while the latter will inform you why this might not be the best idea. Technical capability – the capacity to clone the T-Rex – is increasingly automated. What remains fundamentally human is the capacity for critical judgement: the discernment to recognise when technical capability ought to be deployed, to what ends, who it affects, and why it matters.

At our institution, we have sought to embed this philosophy into our curriculum through two common core units I oversaw the development of as Head of School: Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Communication, and Impact Studio. These units replaced two more traditional units aiming to challenge longstanding assumptions about knowledge sequencing in higher education. As Schön (1983) argues, competent practitioners "usually know more than they can say"; their knowing is tacit, embedded in practice rather than separate from it. Similarly, Guillaumier (2016) demonstrates that when reflection is positioned as a creative and embodied process, students engage more meaningfully with theoretical concepts because they emerge from lived experience.

The poem In Tensile // In Between, which I wrote in response to developing the Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Communication subject and published in the inaugural issue of our institution's journal *Imaginings*, articulates this pedagogical philosophy:

> We teach not only how to make,
> but how to think about what we make,
> who it touches, and why it matters.
> Not to stop for answers,
> but to live in better questions.

Theory, in this approach, is not absent but embedded, surfacing through reflection rather than preceding action. The units are designed around what might be termed "tensile pedagogy": maintaining productive tension between opposing forces rather than seeking premature resolution (King, 2017).

Through their studies, students learn the foundations of interdisciplinary communication, beginning with the recognition that creative fields operate according to different temporal rhythms: a theatre director may embrace change right up until opening night, while for a lighting technician such shifts can constitute chaos. In doing so, they must navigate these tensions, recognising that effective collaboration requires understanding not only what others do, but also how they work, and that dwelling in uncertainty while this understanding emerges is itself valuable labour. Impact Studio builds on this foundation through an extended hackathon-inspired structure, where interdisciplinary groups tackle real-world issues. Experimentation is expected; getting it wrong is part of the process. What distinguishes these units pedagogically is their assessment focus: not output, but process. How did students overcome challenges? What happened when their first idea failed? This approach acknowledges Robinson's (2001) observation that creativity prospers where there is a flow of

ideas between people with different expertise. In prioritising process over product, these units develop what we might call "rhythmically literate" practitioners, graduates capable of navigating complex environments where multiple temporal demands coexist.

This pedagogical approach gains particular significance in the context of generative AI, where conversations about creative practice have become saturated with anxiety about technological displacement. Yet the creative industries have always encountered technological change. When photography emerged, portrait artists feared obsolescence; instead, photography became a new art form whilst painting evolved in directions mechanical reproduction could not replicate. The mobile phone transformed professional practice, enabling work across time zones (albeit also producing expectations of perpetual availability). These technologies did not displace professional roles; they reconfigured them, demanding new literacies and ethical considerations. I suggest we frame generative AI similarly: not as a replacement for human creativity, but as a collaborative partner that expands possibilities whilst leaving human imagination and critical judgement at the centre.

This framing matters because generative AI can simulate technical execution with extraordinary speed; students can now generate a screenplay or design concept in seconds. Yet the wisdom to understand implications and evaluate consequences requires precisely the reflective thinking that develops through productive stasis. When students resist the impulse to generate immediate solutions, whether through frantic activity or AI prompts, they create space for deeper understanding. The question is not whether to use AI, but how to use it in ways that enhance rather than circumvent developmental processes. Through my work as a creative practitioner and academic leader, I have witnessed that using these approaches without critical reflection risks reinforcing the productivity-driven mindset that ultimately works against meaningful creative development. Rosa (2013, p. 73) describes this as the "acceleration imperative": the sense that everything must be completed immediately. Students write reflections the night before submission, treating them as perfunctory requirements rather than genuine opportunities for insight. The challenge for creative education becomes helping students recognise thinking itself as legitimate labour, and developing discernment to distinguish productive reflection from avoidance, necessary incubation from procrastination.
Professional creative practice rarely follows linear progressions. Successful practitioners recognise when pushing forward serves their work and when stepping back does, learning to work with new tools, including AI, in ways that amplify rather than diminish their creative agency. Our research suggests that explicitly teaching students about creative rhythms, and helping them understand that periods of apparent stasis often constitute essential phases of incubation, better prepares them for creative careers than training focused solely on constant production. Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Communication and Impact Studio represent one institutional response to this challenge: an experiment in curriculum design that takes seriously the claim that thinking constitutes essential creative labour. As my poem suggests, it is about learning "how to hold tension without breaking – because that is where the future is built."

Pablo

I have also directly observed non-linear creative rhythms in my own teaching practice and used this idea as an explicit method to assist students with creative work. In this discussion, I show how I impart the idea of productive stasis to my students, most recently in my Screenwriting classes. Many students in this second trimester course find the concept of writing a screenplay – even for a short film over twelve weeks – a challenge. A major part of this is the stress that students put on themselves to come up with an immediate script draft, rather than building up to it with a premise, genre, some characters and story world, then a central conflict, and go from there. So I always begin by asking them questions, and then tell them not to give me the answer until the next class, or the one after that, or even the one after that.

For example, most people are familiar with the "what if" scenario: "What if we could clone dinosaurs?" "What if a meteor were on a collision course with the earth?" "What if you could clone Robert Pattinson and have him as an expendable grunt on an intergalactic colony mission where he dies every day, gets recycled, and gets brought back to analyse the data – but then somehow the second copy gets printed while the original is missing, and now we have two Robert Pattinsons? What then?" This is in fact the main plot of the film *Mickey 17* (Bong, 2025).

In the first weeks of the Screenwriting unit, most students try to give me an answer straight away – after all, a good student is generally eager to please and is conditioned to provide an answer for their lecturer in a timely fashion. But the first answer they provide to my questions on premise, character, conflict or story world is generally not the final one which ends up in their script. This is because they have had a productive stasis of a week, or two or three weeks, or more, to pause and consider other ideas, watch a couple of short films: or make new connections which answer the question better, in a more narratively satisfying way, for example, by exploring a character's motivation over time. It is only the stillness, without being forced to be relentlessly productive, which allows this. To follow on with my colleague's discussion on generative AI, the students who look for an easy fix by plugging any of my questions into ChatGPT, soon find that their ideas are much less interesting than the ones they come up with after a longer period of less "immediately productive", but entirely human, reflection. To borrow another line from Hamlet, "what dreams may come" in this "silence", are all the richer for it.

Theme 3: Tension between institutional timelines and creative development

Corinna

One of the most challenging aspects of my role as Head of School is the frequent need to produce outputs like strategic plans, curriculum documents, assessment frameworks, and quality reports, all under significant time constraints. Across the higher education sector, a growing tension exists between the speed at which such documents are expected and the intellectual labour they genuinely demand. In an era of generative AI, there is an increasing tendency to treat complex strategic thinking as if it can be expedited through technological shortcuts, which represents a significant risk to thoughtful decision-making.

The question of whether time spent thinking is productive should be recognised as fundamentally flawed. Yet contemporary higher education structures increasingly privilege visible output over cognitive process, reward constant production over sustained reflection, and can inadvertently frame time spent thinking as inefficiency. This challenge is not unique to any single institution but reflects a systemic issue across the sector. When leadership roles allow limited time for reflection or for the deep consideration required by complex problems, we risk modelling the productivity paradigm that our research critiques. My own creative practice, described in Theme 1, requires oscillation between activity and stasis, with my most effective work emerging from cycles that include substantial periods of apparent non-productivity. In Theme 2, I highlighted the importance of teaching students about creative rhythms and legitimising productive stasis as essential to critical thinking. Yet in my daily work, institutional structures make sustaining such rhythms extremely difficult.

The most persistent tension concerns the mismatch between institutional timelines and the thoughtful decision-making academic leadership demands. Universities operate according to what Lefebvre (2004, p. 73) calls linear time: structured progressions of semesters, reporting deadlines, and strategic planning cycles that privilege constant forward motion. Rosa's (2013) analysis of social acceleration demonstrates how modern institutions, which once facilitated progress through standardisation, have paradoxically become decelerators, with structures incompatible with total acceleration. As Rosa (2013) observes, politics frequently responds to immediate pressures rather than cultivating long-term, progressive visions. This tendency closely mirrors the conditions of academic leadership, where strategic thinking is increasingly compressed into reactive timelines. Strategic documents may be required within a week, curriculum decisions finalised under severe time constraints, and quality assurance processes demand immediate responses. Under such conditions, the space for genuine deliberation all but disappears. In this context, Creely's (2025) pedagogical applications of stasis, which rely on the creation of contemplative spaces in which potential energy can be gathered and directed, become difficult, if not impossible, to sustain within academic leadership practice. The result is what our research identifies as arrhythmia: a collision between the cyclical, recursive rhythms necessary for thoughtful work and the relentless linearity of institutional timelines. This tension is not merely inconvenient; it actively undermines both the quality of academic work and the long-term sustainability of academic practice.

The constant pressure to produce without time for reflection reflects broader structural conditions within higher education, where financial pressures intensify and compound these tensions. As Cornelius-Bell and Bell (2023) note, Australian universities have undergone substantial transformation over the last fifty years, with corporatised management structures and funding models prioritising job readiness. They observe that the intensifying pace of capitalist modalities in higher education has become increasingly difficult to ignore. These structural changes shape how time itself is valued within institutions. Universities globally operate under economic constraints that demand accelerated processes and rapid demonstration of efficiency. Time spent thinking then becomes difficult to justify, presenting a sector-wide challenge for institutions committed to thoughtful educational leadership.

The emergence of generative AI intersects with these institutional pressures in complex ways. On one hand, AI offers the promise of accelerating administrative tasks – drafting reports, synthesising documents, generating first drafts of policies – thereby potentially creating more time for the reflective work that leadership requires. On the other hand, the availability of such tools risks normalising expectations that everything can and should be produced faster, compressing timelines further rather than expanding the space for thought. I observe this dynamic already in conversations about workload: if AI can draft a document in minutes, the assumption follows that the human work of refining it should also be compressed accordingly. What disappears from view is the cognitive labour of determining what should be written in the first place, and whether it should be written at all.

Yet I remain cautiously optimistic about AI's place in creative education and practice. The creative industries have navigated technological disruption before, and each time the human capacity for meaning-making, for ethical judgement, and for imaginative leaps that exceed algorithmic prediction, has proven irreplaceable. What changes is the nature of creative work, not its necessity. The pedagogical implication is that we must prepare students not to fear technological change, but to engage with it critically, understanding both its affordances and its limitations. This requires precisely the kind of reflective capacity that productive stasis enables: the ability to step back from the immediacy of a tool's capabilities and ask deeper questions about purpose, ethics, and meaning. Students who learn to navigate their own creative rhythms, who understand that thinking itself constitutes essential labour, will be better equipped to work alongside AI as a collaborative partner rather than viewing it as either saviour or threat.

Lefebvre and Régulier (2004: 67) describe isorhythmia, where a single rhythm dominates, as unsustainable. Academic leadership under constant production without reflection creates isorhythmic conditions that undermine institutional development. These pressures extend beyond leadership to shape the working rhythms of academic staff more broadly. For example, when colleagues require time to develop innovative pedagogy, redesign curriculum thoughtfully, or engage in reflective practice, compressed institutional timelines often conflict with these needs. Expectations frequently demand rapid implementation of curriculum changes, assessment strategies, and pedagogical innovations, leaving minimal space for experimentation or reflection. This creates inequities. Staff with greater job security, lighter teaching loads, or more institutional capital can protect reflective time. Those on casual contracts or with heavier workloads have less temporal autonomy.

The capacity to embrace productive stasis, whether personally or pedagogically, is therefore unevenly distributed. Without leadership that models the value of reflective time and articulates thinking as essential work, institutional cultures will continue privileging speed over depth and output over understanding. The challenge for creative higher education is systemic: it is not only about creating spaces for stasis but fundamentally reconceptualising what counts as work, what merits recognition, and which temporal structures genuinely support educational development.

Pablo

Walker (2024, p. 92) discusses arrhythmias, when work and human rhythms are out of balance, and explores the tension when work rhythms dominate relational rhythms. As a Unit Coordinator, Masters supervisor and lecturer, I'm very familiar with the end of trimester "Death Race", where final grades need to be locked off in an intense two day period, and after this deadline, late or missing grades need to be reconciled in an electronic system that itself suffers from arrhythmia, as too many simultaneous inputs clog up the data ports. But ironically, there has to be a stillness: a "rest" period when the trimester is locked off, and no new data can be entered into the archived system. At the same time, unit sites need to be released for the coming trimester, and any major improvements from Unit Coordinators must be cleared several weeks before that. The time to consider significant or systemic change can often be very limited: and in a tertiary environment where continuous, obviously measurable improvement is expected, this goes against the natural biological, temporal rhythms of intense activity followed by other periods of stillness and rest.

One solution to promote creative development within our educational institutions might be to prioritise relational over temporal rhythms, and shift our assessment to one that is more in tune with students' holistic learning: both in terms of content, and the pace at which they demonstrate this. For example, we are currently moving away from traditional written projects with two or three hard deadlines for projects, towards a more iterative model where students can demonstrate their learning over the trimester (secure/two-lane assessment): where temporal time is in better synchrony with relational time, and students can express themselves at their own pace in real time in class, without the temptation of reaching for generative AI in order to meet the temporal deadline of a 4,500 word paper, and demonstrate their "productivity" in this way.

Conclusion

This discussion has explored stasis as an integral part of creative practice. Through the lens of duoethnography, we have interrogated three main themes exemplifying this stasis, drawing on the divergent perspectives of a creative writing scholar and a theatre scholar, and identifying where these converge in pedagogical approach. Insights into the first theme, the rhythmic nature of creative practice, include the common importance of periods of rest and stillness in both theatrical composition for Commedia dell'Arte and creative writing, and an understanding of how the arrhythmia between the academic calendar and the natural rhythms of academics and students can prove counterproductive. Our second theme, the pedagogical value of productive stasis, takes this idea further by highlighting practical ways in which students can be taught to harness stasis in their creative and scholarly work: designing assessment around process rather than product, and encouraging students to let ideas incubate rather than settle for the first answer, and also treating generative AI as a creative partner rather than a shortcut that bypasses their own reflection. For our final theme, the tension between institutional timelines and creative development, we have presented the difficulties that arise when institutional

deadlines (isorhythmias in which a single timeline dominates) clash with the periods of stillness we argue are crucial both for meaningful student learning and for valuable unit development. Our dialogue thus surfaces tensions rather than resolutions: the pull between institutional timelines and creative possibility, between preparing students for industry and offering space for alternative modes of practice, between momentum and the value of pause. Rather than seeking a single solution, we suggest that creative education may benefit from helping students and practitioners learn to navigate these shifting demands for themselves.

Future work could look at how we help students develop a sense of when to push forward and when to pause, and how institutions might better value thinking, reflection, and slower periods as real academic work. It's also worth exploring how universities can build in protected time for research and deep thinking within academic roles, especially in leadership, where quick reports and strategies are often expected, while the thinking behind them is assumed but rarely supported.

As Shakespeare reminds us, "We know what we are, but not what we may be" (*Hamlet* IV.v). Finding better harmony between the institutional and temporal rhythms – seeing "rest" as an integral part of a fruitful creative "silence" – might allow our students, ourselves, and our institutions to discover *all* that we may be.

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