

University of South Australia

Claire Woods***The Art and Craft of the Honours Thesis: A rhetorical enterprise*****Abstract:**

In this paper I explore the possibilities of multi-genre/hybrid texts as part of undergraduate, including Honours, writing programs. In particular, I am interested in how students develop the skills and confidence to undertake research projects or theses which push the boundaries in terms of multi-genre and/or multi-modal writing. The intersections between fiction and non-fiction, between the creative impulses of the student who is both writer (poet, novelist, essayist) and researcher, and the tensions between the requirements for critical-theoretical writing and creative writing (including creative non-fiction writing), will be discussed.

I consider ways of teaching to allow students to develop knowledge, skills and understanding of the possibilities of moving across disciplines, across genres, across modes as they explore ideas, worlds, and issues as researchers and writers. The paper is informed by the work of a student who completed Honours in professional writing and communication. (See Note 1)

Beyond the canonized few, writers of dissertations, students at middle schools, tech writers at Boeing, and all the president's memoing men and women are writers too; whether they set out to or not, they exert influence on genres and genre each time they write. Everyone who writes is a writer, a writer working in, on, and around at least one genre; a writer being worked on (worked over?) by genre. (Bishop and Ostrom 1997: :x)

When Simon Behenna wrote his Honours thesis he took on the task of being researcher and writer. There is nothing unusual in this. As researcher, he had to claim the authority for what he presented. As writer he had to use technique to present the data and findings of his writing project. On one hand, he was required to present himself as a researcher with authority to reveal information and draw conclusions; and on the other, as a writer, he had to work the genre of the dissertation in such a way that his authority as researcher was clearly and confidently asserted. In Bishop and Ostrom's, words he was (as are all thesis-writing students) engaged in an exercise of being worked on and/or over by genre - the genre of the thesis.

However, as a writing student he had a more particular problem because the discipline itself - as we who teach writing understand - presents the student with a meta-problem. The very object of the thesis is the writing itself as much as is the content of the thesis. The Honours student (or the postgraduate writing student) is also presenting him or herself as author, the creator of a text. Complexities of treading the fine line between researcher and writer are writ large for the writing student, particularly when the student decides to 'work' the genre of the thesis so that the writing presented cuts across genre boundaries.

Paul Dawson, Kevin Brophy, Andrew Taylor, Eva Sallis and Tess Brady have discussed these issues at previous conferences and in print (Dawson 1999, Brophy 1998, Taylor 1999, Sallis 1999, Brady 2000). Attention has been paid to issues such as, where creative writing is situated in the academy; how creative work is assessed; how a creative work is accepted (or not) as research; and how research contributes to and underpins the creative artefact. In relation to the Honours or postgraduate thesis, the continuing debate is concerned with how the thesis in creative writing should be assessed and what form the writing thesis (with or without exegetical paper or critical reflective commentary) should take.

At issue too is the nature of creativity and what counts as 'creative writing'. Kevin Brophy has ably explored this in *Creativity: Psychoanalysis, Surrealism and Creative Writing* (1998). Brophy notes the impact of the postmodern reconsideration of the text as a 'cultural, political and historical artefact, as a production of language itself, or as inevitably subversive of its own assertions' and the consequent undermining of the author as a 'creative origin of the literary text'. Brophy writes of the 'recent annexing of the creative function to a widening range of discourses' which, he continues, 'seems to breathe a paradoxical life back into the author as creative origin'. There is, he suggests, considerable resistance to such annexation. Citing George Steiner's protestation that the forms with which

creative expression are associated are 'the poem, picture, piece of music', he observes that creative writing is accepted as being 'a narrow band of traditional forms'. (Brophy 1998: 33)

Brophy however asserts a more liberating role for creative writing:

The energetic addition of more genres and types of writing to the discourses operating through a creative function, along with resistances such as Steiner's, reveal 'creativity' as desirable in modern western literary-cultural -commercial life. **To be creative is to be something more: it is to acquire an aura denied to technicians...**

It would seem that many individuals and groups approach creative writing, at least in the first instance, with the intention of duplicating what is perceived as mainstream literary forms. One of my purposes...is to suggest that, in practice, creative writing can be an opportunity to free writers and writing from literary endeavours based upon the constructing templates of traditional or established forms. (Brophy 1998: 34, my emphasis)

Brophy himself while constructing a critical text on the nature of creativity, on creative writing, on the distinction between author-function and the creative origin of the text, experiments with the form of the academic text. He interweaves stand-alone essay, personal commentary, short story, diary fragments and extended critical comment to form a text. Thus, he offers a coherent argument for 'creative writing as a practice which offers opportunities to write and create outside established forms of literature.' (Brophy: 4).

He announces himself as 'creative writer - novelist, short story writer and poet' (the traditional forms), as a teacher of creative writing, and as 'critic-scholar, and writer-teacher' of literature. He writes:

It is in acknowledgement of the ways these experiences inform my questioning, and in acknowledgement of the conventionality of boundaries between objective and subjective, academic and creative writing, that I have not resisted including stories with analysis or personal experience with critical discussion. **Being the writer I am I can do nothing else'** (Brophy, 1998: 5, my emphasis)

'Being the writer I am,' he says, having revealed the range of writing in which he is constantly engaged. Thus he identifies himself as writer and creative worker. He is clearly 'something more than a technician,' a label we might well apply to the academic researcher-writer. Brophy of course can make this firm assertion based on a full life of writing experiences. An Honours student with the production of the thesis proclaims perhaps for the first time: 'Being the writer I am...'

What might the thesis reveal about the student as writer? The traditional thesis reveals a student who can competently write an academic discussion and construct a text within the accepted norms of academic style - the writer as technician demonstrated. What might the writing student do when he or she decides to use writing as a way to move outside the constraints of the traditional genre of 'thesis'? What might the writing student do when the production of the text as artefact becomes a creative endeavour in itself? The text thus might become the work of the writer not only as technician but also creative origin. Here is the opportunity for the writing student to 'work against the genre' and against the role of academic technician. Or if not against this role - at least alongside it.

In this paper, I explore what Simon Behenna produced as a writer. I consider *inter alia*: the nature of non-fiction and particularly the essay; the blurring of boundaries between fiction and non-fiction; the writing of research - particularly research from an ethnographic perspective; the creative endeavour in the design and production of a public text; the rhetoric of the thesis text; and finally the student as author; indeed, the student as 'creative origin of text'. In addition, I consider what his undergraduate studies offered him as part of the experience that would allow him to assert confidently: 'Being the writer I am...' as revealed in his thesis text.

Simon had completed an undergraduate program in Professional Writing and Communication. He had undertaken studies in linguistics, sociolinguistics, communication and rhetoric, professional and technical writing, editing and publishing, writing and reading the short story, writing and reading poetry, and several writing and text workshop subjects. The emphasis in the program is not on creative writing. Rather, students are engaged in the writing and reading of texts, and on the reception and production of texts in different rhetorical contexts. They are encouraged to see themselves as ethnographers of their own situations, and particularly as ethnographers of communication in different contexts. The Honours program provides a student with a chance to extend his or her skills as researcher and writer. The thesis can be undertaken as a conventional research study; for example, on aspects of reading and writing practices, on literacy practices in the community, on issues in language use, or a textual or rhetorical analysis. It can be an applied project in document design and production. It can also be a work of fiction or creative nonfiction.

In the discussion here, I focus on a thesis that cuts across the boundaries. It is a project in design and production of a text - a text with an ethnographic research component, with textual analysis, with fiction and creative nonfiction. It demanded that the author demonstrate the skills of a researcher, of an editor, document designer and professional

writer, and of a writer of fiction and creative nonfiction. This was an exercise in textual production - a rhetorical endeavour for a professional writer. Such texts are not unusual and the issues of the creative writing thesis have been discussed and perhaps have been comfortably resolved in universities. However, our experience is that the project of the Honours student as professional writer who seeks to develop the sort of hybrid text now often widely distributed for popular consumption, is not readily accepted by the University committees or examiners responsible for conferring approval or assessment on such a work. In the case of Simon's thesis, his supervisor found herself writing extensive statements of justification for the project and the approach taken to satisfy the division's Ethics Committee.

What I am interested in here is the professional writing student as one who is engaged in text production - in the making of a text as a particular rhetorical enterprise. In producing a text, a rhetorical artefact, Simon was engaged in an endeavour of the creative and the technical: in *tekhnē*, art and craft - '...a reasoned habit of mind in making something'. Thus Ralph Cintron paraphrases Aristotle. (See Note 2) Cintron explains that for Aristotle 'art' seen in this way was not as 'the product of artistic skill but the skill itself'. (Cintron 1997: xii) Is it useful to consider the student thesis from this perspective? Can we elide the creative and the technical? See the thesis as a created object of a particular kind? As a document that reveals the student as academic technician who produces a text that for all its creative force is received without the prejudicial fanfare that often accompanies artistic endeavour in the academy?

Art and the creative artist, suggests Cintron, have been fetishized in the modern world, as 'high art' or 'art as fiction' so that there is a disjunction between artistic and other skills. (See Note 3). He suggests that the concept of *tekhnē* can be useful in asserting the place of artistic skills in everyday life, as well as in the doing and writing of research (particularly ethnography):

Why not, instead, level the concept of high art and recover another sort of art, one that is not dressed in prestige but that names, nevertheless, an intrinsic aesthetic or crafting that underlies the practices of everyday life, including the making of research. (Cintron 1997: xii)

Rather than being 'worked on or over' by the thesis genre, Simon decided to work against the genre of the thesis. Yet, he had nevertheless to produce a work that satisfied the requirements of the Honours project. His project involved the production of a text that involved nonfiction and fiction, critical and reflective commentary, and the research, design and construction of a potentially public document based on interviews as well as document research. In fact he set out to 'transform the use, form and system of the mainstream genre of a cookbook'. (Behenna 1999) (See Appendix for Simon's Abstract)

Simon's thesis in my opinion is evidence of *tekhnē*. It is text as art object - an artefact researched, crafted, designed, written, and produced. More than this however, we also see the blurring of the boundaries between genres and forms. For all intents and purposes this thesis text resides in the territory of 'non-fiction'. Yet it is more than this. It is an interweaving of genres - requiring different skills of the writer. Brophy's book demonstrates such an interweaving and several recently published books illuminate the dialogue between genres actively pursued by the authors.

In Moya Costello's recently published novel, *The Office as a Boat: A Chronicle*, the novelist plays with forms and smudges the borders between genres. John Jenkins writes:

This slim yet polymorphous hybrid of a book could best be described as a fictionalised chronicle of office work. It is also a memoir *cum* 'field study'. (Jenkins 2000: 31)

The forms of chronicle, fiction, narrative memoir and field study contribute to this text as a novel. Jenkins again:

The narrator is a fictionalised version of the author. She once studied philosophy, and still likes to reflect on things - on the nature of Adelaide's café society; the advent of the electronic book; identity markers in the modern office; and much more. And her essay-like reflections appear as tributaries to the main narrative. (Jenkins 31)

Costello's novel, says Jenkins, 'slips between genres' and is larded with lists, anecdotes, memos, and 'theoretical musings'. As well, 'snippets of (gender, semiotic and literary) "theory -speak" are often tucked into the text.' (32). The writer as ethnographer of her situation - the field researcher - is much in evidence. The participant-observer perspective is turned to specific effect in the text. The skills of the writer as both researcher and author of a fiction are turned to the construction of the text as a dialogue of forms. As Brophy has said,

The fictional page [is]...a meeting place of personal history, imagination, craft and research - a place where eventually it can become impossible to separate these elements. (Brophy: 104)

Exemplifying this process, Garry Crew has described how he consciously wrote the novel, *Strange Objects*, 'as a composite or "collage" of genres, as written history is a collage of genres':

...a combination of fact, fiction, reportage, journalese, personal and stream-of consciousness (automatic) writing'. (Crew, 2000)

The nonfiction page can claim similarly smudged boundaries. Commenting on the different requirements of fiction and nonfiction writing, in a review of John Dale's *Huckstepp: A Dangerous Life*, McKenzie Wark writes:

Fiction writers have absolute liberty to hide and reveal what they like. Nonfiction narrative is to my mind a higher art because the writer has far more demands put on them by the known facts. (Wark 2000: 51)

Whether nonfiction narrative is a 'higher art' is debatable. However, the skills of *tekhnē* are perhaps more overtly demonstrated because the writer must fulfill the demands of ethically handling the details about people and real communities, while constructing the account in a way that invites the reader in. Such issues are also particularly the concern of qualitative researchers, who need to report, recount, and tell the story of a particular cultural scene, event, context, or situation.

In the writing of research, the boundaries have also been pushed, pulled and broken down. There are examples of research being rendered as fiction. These in particular have provoked debate about the way in which data is represented and are part of the continuing discussion of the 'rhetorical turn' in qualitative - and particularly anthropological and ethnographic - research. Packanowsky, for example, conducted an ethnographic study of policing in a small town in the US. He presented the study as a short story titled 'Small Town Cop' (1983). Bruce Grindal, an ethnographer, wrote about an encounter on a bus with a woman who became the focus of his short story 'Redneck Girl'. Then in collaboration with dramatist William Shephard, he developed the short story as a play, which the two directed and produced on stage. (Grindal and Shephard 1993). These are fictionalised research - or qualitative research data made or represented as fiction.

There is a difference between these works and those Sallis describes as 'research fiction'. Research fiction according to Sallis is a specific kind of fiction.

Almost all fiction involves some research and all research fiction will have substantial elements which come from experience and invention; or from diverse, essentially unresearched areas. Research fiction is not fiction which involves research simply to verify or authenticate certain details, characters and events. It is fiction which, to significant degree, expresses the outcomes of a body of research and which is the culminating point of an investigation which could have been written up, at least in part, in academic prose. (Sallis 1999)

Packanowsky in writing a short story was, in my opinion, constrained by his intentions as an ethnographer. The fiction in this instance suffers. Sallis, the novelist and researcher, writes with the intentions of the novelist - and while no less rigorous in her role as researcher, she is not confined by the dictates of the research process. She acknowledges the research process underpinning the novelist's craft as well as the creativity involved in academic writing and comments on the relationship between the work of the academic researcher and that of the creative writer:

Academic prose is an art form: it is a gross error to forget this. Some academics learn to mimic it, but all good research writers will tell you that it is an intensely crafted and creative activity. For myself, my academic writing has been my training, both in discipline and in developing imaginatively. My writing, fiction and nonfiction, grew from the skills and rigour of the academy. But it is in my own practice that I found the notion of research fiction compelling, and it was in response to my research that I was driven to write fiction. (Sallis, 1999)

The writing of research can be seen as an art form. The writing of qualitative research by its very nature highlights this particularly. In the above mentioned examples, the line between the ethnographer's skill as researcher and his/her craft as writer is deliberately blurred. And nowhere is the distinction between the researcher as writer and the writer as researcher more muddled than in the work of the literary journalist or the writer of creative nonfiction/literary nonfiction/new journalism. Ethnographer Michael Agar makes the distinction between the writer conducting research in order to produce an artistic work, and the researcher gathering data that must then be represented credibly. He points out that the creative nonfiction writers who emerged in the 60s and 70s and who generated the styles of literary journalism/CN shared a platform,

...to blend factual content and fiction form, to play the roles of both observer/reporter and text maker, to commit equally to artistic and empirical truth, and to research fact not as an end in itself but as a means to art. (Agar 1995: 117)

Rhetorical purpose and the writer's intention are key elements in textual endeavour. Is the task to represent data? Or is it to represent an imagined world, life or event? Or does the writer/researcher have a textual freedom? Does anything go?

Agar asserts that the issues of textuality with which the researcher - specifically the writer of ethnographic research - is confronted, are foregrounded by a comparison with CN. The vital point for the former is that an argument or case

is made on the strength of the data assembled, codified, and analysed. His conclusions on this are worth quoting at length:

Ethnographic texts are more about making a case out of collected material than they are about creating entertaining art. ...

Good fiction requires control over the text so that plot, story, character, theme and style work tightly together to yield powerful and entertaining art. Good ethnography requires control over the data so that a skeptical outsider can see how a pattern is grown to enable comprehension of member-produced social action in the context of one world from the perspective of another. (Agar 1995: 127)

The issues are those of data and representation and of evidence, argument and textuality and concomitantly, the role of the writer. The role of the researcher as writer and as maker of the text has become a focus in qualitative research (e.g., Van Maanen 1988, 1995, Richardson 1994). How the writer constructs the text becomes a process of particular reflexivity. On this Robert Brookes suggests that:

Alongside the issue of representation is a second issue: the issue of writing and the question of invention - the issue of how I, as a writer of ethnographic reports, "see" what I see, and the question of who I am as I writer. (Brookes 1997: 12)

He explores what he describes as 'three moments of inscription, three moments where I as researcher-writer "produce" the material that later becomes an article' (Brookes 14). The 'moments' are his observation notebook, the reflective writing that he does about his observation data and the draft of the article. What is important in his argument here is that he sees that the writer's selectivity at moments of inscription is integral to the research process of participant observation. These are moments of rhetorical invention and involve the researcher as writer negotiating and reflecting on his or her position in relation to the observed, to the data and to the potential reader. Thus he claims:

For the writer embarking on a participant-observation project, rhetoric, politics, and the personal must necessarily be "with us", because the rhetorical nature of this work will lead us to rely on and question the categories we use to think, the choices we make about which categories to follow, and the selves we become as we try to explain to others what we've learned. (Brookes 1997: 23)

Thus the process of inscription becomes a self-reflexive activity. Novelists, biographers, autobiographers, CN writers, and journalists are at liberty to do this overtly. The writing student producing a thesis text is specifically engaged in such a process of inscription but rarely has the opportunity to reflect on this directly - that is unless the exegetical paper allows for personal and reflective comment. In Simon's thesis, we can see the rhetorical nature of the work in these terms.

The thesis, *Appetites and recipes: re-making a text* is in two parts. First, Simon argues the case for reconsidering and reconstructing the cookbook as a genre. Second, he provides a re-made text. This text is a mix of genres and includes data from and transcripts of oral interviews, extracts from journals, recipes, short stories, personal reflections, data from document research, photographs and graphics. In his words, Simon aims

...to remind people of the more traditional methods of collecting and preparing food. This knowledge is made available through a variety of textual forms that invite the reader to gain more than factual information about ingredients and methods. The text invites readers to connect with knowledge, traditions and current social food practices through fiction, biographies, recipes and basic procedures. (Behenna 1999: 1)

He sums up his text by describing it as 'edutaining' - a 'mixture of education and entertainment that makes learning fun'. (Behenna: 18)

He was particularly conscious of the rhetorical nature of the enterprise and in particular of the responsibility he had to an intended audience:

primarily that group of people who purchase 'luxury' or 'leisure' books - people who have an interest in food culture in South Australia and are interested in broadening their knowledge in this area and are willing to learn the more traditional methods of food preparation. (4)

He also specifically acknowledged the inscription process and reflects on the various roles he adopted

...(as) participant observer for providing first-hand knowledge for the fictional work; as photographer for documenting visual information on cooking practices; and as a biographer for interviewing participants and subsequently presenting their knowledge in a communicable fashion. (5)

Thus his study involved a rhetorical analysis of mainstream cookbooks and an exploration of the way knowledge is discursively constructed. Second it involved informal interviews with local cooks. Third he 'explored the process of food travelling from the paddock to the plate' via semi-autobiographical fiction. And this had been based on the ethnographer's tool in trade - participant-observation - when he had been a restaurant worker. Finally, he designed the prototype for the new text, making decisions about the relationships between all the elements of the reconstructed cookbook. This was research in textual design and production. Templates for the proposed design were included as attachments to the framing essay - the first part of the thesis. The text proper forms the second part of the thesis.

Concluding his theoretical and reflective essay, Simon states:

The aim of this thesis was to produce a sample of a particular style of text, the final product of which appeals to the general population. By combining the skills I have learnt through the Professional Writing and Communication degree, the presentation of the ideas and knowledge of others, and the conveyance of my own experiences, the final product is a text that constructs, explains, and shares knowledge of a particular field and encourages readers to become active participants in their own journeys around food-gathering and preparation. (1999: 21)

Simon deals with issues of genre and style, with the rhetorical concerns of text and audience, with the researcher representing information and data, with the craft of the fiction and nonfiction writer, with the need for self-reflexive practice as writer/researcher, and with the *tekhne* of being both thesis writer and cookbook creator.

In this Honours thesis, it is possible to observe a conjunction of several elements. Simon has begun to develop a distinctive voice as both a fiction and nonfiction writer. He has understood the rhetorical exigencies of writing and producing a text as artefact for an audience. He has experimented with form and made decisions about style and design in order to produce a persuasive and readable text. He has been a researcher and interviewer - a participant observer in the wider community. This is surely an exercise that reflects *tekhne*, in which Simon reveals (and here I hark back to Brophy's stricture about creativity) that he is 'something more than a technician'. He is (while acknowledging of course the dialogic and inherent and inevitable intertextuality of the final artefact) the creative origin of this text.

The Honours thesis completes four years of undergraduate work in an arts degree in the new Humanities. A program that enables students to develop a complex set of skills should underpin Honours work. Richard Coe, writing of the undergraduate program at Simon Fraser University, suggests that students should

...understand their own creative writing processes;...understand writing as a social, communicative process that takes place in discourse communities;...understand the relationship between form and process, structure and strategy. (Coe 1991: 75)

Coe points out that the SFU program 'confronts students with writing tasks that involve realistically complex (even contradictory) purposes, audiences, and occasions. It embodies both *generative rhetoric* and a New Rhetorical understanding of form-in-process' (Coe: 75).

This is territory that Simon and other students in the Honours program have experienced in the undergraduate writing program at the University of South Australia. In brief, the courses students take as part of the program are underpinned by theoretical perspectives and knowledge across five areas: an ethnographic perspective; a rhetorical perspective; knowledge and research about literacies in context; studies in discourse and the construction of knowledge; and language studies. Students are involved in literary work in the widest sense. To all of this we bring a socially critical framework for reading and writing the world.

The subjects Simon studied in the major in Professional Writing and Communication, as well as the further set of writing subjects he took as a cognate study, demanded that he develop and apply skills and knowledge in subjects framed by the above categories. These included studies in linguistics, sociolinguistics, literary theory, writing of fiction and nonfiction and poetry, business and technical writing, literacy research, community-based writing and research, textual analysis, and document design and editing - both in hard copy and electronic.

We can read his thesis and see it as adumbrated in much of his undergraduate work. The threads are there. He has the confidence in the thesis to mix storytelling with the theoretical essay and to use visual design to attend to the needs of the audience in creating a text as artefact. He is particularly and critically aware of the way a particular kind of knowledge construction occurs through discourse and the rhetoric of the text. He interweaves nonfiction and fiction in a creative and yet technically skilled way.

It is the consistency between the undergraduate program and Honours that is most evident - in writing pursued across a range of genres - all of which require in some measure a creative and critical energy. While it is important to proclaim the value of creative writing, I want to argue that the place for such work can be proclaimed via programs that cover a broad notion of writing and significantly that demonstrate the *tekhne* involved in all writing. This should be a vital component in an arts and humanities education today.

Simon's undergraduate education, underpinned by the perspectives I have listed above, comes close to reflecting what Roly Sussex called recently, the 'Nine wisdoms of the modern world citizen'. Sussex (building on five points offered by a colleague, Peter Cryle) suggests that the arts degree should involve: textuality, historicity, cultures, critique, linguistic abilities, values and ethics, argumentation, technological literacy, and interdisciplinarity. (Sussex 2000: 48-9) What Sussex does not include or mention in elaborating on these categories is creativity - the possibilities and potential of creative endeavour (although he says nothing that would deny this).

To the points made by Sussex, I would add therefore the place and role of the craft and art of writing within the arts and humanities and within the community. This is the case that Brophy argues cogently when he calls for creative writing students to be involved in courses integrated with other disciplines in literature and cultural studies (Brophy 203). And when he calls for an acknowledgement of the importance of creative writing to the academy 'which wishes to remain relevant (...connected to the real flow of power in society either through opposition or influence)...' (242).

Of relevance here is his observation to which I alluded earlier, that with the creative function being annexed to a wider range of discourses, the role of the author as creative origin of a text or document acquires greater salience. In addition, the possibilities inherent in electronic and hypertextual media also provoke a reconsideration of the creative function because these enable multi-modal as well as multi-genre presentations of text. Multi-modal texts 'use devices from more than one semiotic mode of communication simultaneously' (Goodman and Graddol (1996) in Lea 2000: 71). Simon's thesis reflects some of these possibilities. Indeed his thesis would not have been as it is without the use of the capacities for desktop publishing and merging of text and image, of formatting and maneuvering of text first on the computer screen. Simon's thesis is, as I have pointed out, a multi-genre work; one that has allowed him to explore a topic with imagination and artful purpose, writing in different styles and forms. It is also in some part multi-modal with its use of photographs and design templates for a potential book publication.

We can anticipate that electronic and other multimedia technologies might prompt future students to represent their research by taking advantage of the capabilities of the different media. This being the case, then there is a need to rethink the creative function of the author/designer/researcher. There is a need to reconsider the criteria by which we judge the work produced in multi-modal, multi-genre form. The acknowledged difficulty in assessing such a thesis or placing it within the academy is that it is not readily acceptable within the traditional frames of writing for academic purpose. Or at least until recently this has been the case. The assumption has been that knowledge can be represented in one dominant mode - written; and in a dominant style, namely exposition or argument as epideictic rhetoric - a display of knowledge for assessment. The need to argue the case with a university committee for Simon's project and thesis suggests that a presentation of research in a form different from the academic norm has *not* yet been accepted.

I contend that if we can describe the kinds of knowledge and skills being represented in hybrid theses, then we can assert the validity for these as demonstrations of students' capacity for *tekhnē*. Students will have revealed 'a reasoned habit of mind in making something'. If the thesis produced by students in writing programs is to gain increased acceptability, then it must be seen to have emerged from a program which has engendered such skills. The place of writing programs in the academy can be asserted via the status accorded to the Honours or postgraduate thesis, or to the texts produced by academics as writers/researchers. We have an opportunity to make a status claim by responding to the 'paradoxical' reemergence of the 'function of the author as creative origin', with an explicit delineation of the complex elements involved in the production or construction or creation of any representation of a topic.

I would argue that the kind of writing and text production required and encouraged in the University of South Australia's program necessarily involves students being engaged in some way in the elements profiled by Sussex. Yet while he calls for critique and understanding of textuality and so on, he does not allow for the 'creative possibilities of the mind' in such activity. The phrase is Vera John-Steiner's. In the book *Notebooks of the Mind*, she investigates the creative and critical thinking of writers, scientists and artists, and educators. She notes that 'tools and skills used for solving daily problems may not be so different from the tools and skills used by individuals engaged in creative endeavours'. (221) For the acknowledged creative thinker, the difference, she suggests, is in the 'intensity and continuity of the creative individual's mental life' (221).

Not all our writing students will sustain their creative impulses with intensity. Some might. Most will however use their writing skills and knowledge in a wide range of occupations and contexts - for solving everyday problems. John-Steiner comments:

The ability to apply and extend productive ideas only succeeds when an individual can join these with a profound knowledge of his or her craft or the tools of a discipline. (John-Steiner: 222)

What I would hope is that an undergraduate or graduate program would create opportunities for students to develop a productive mix of knowledge and creative and technical skills.

Students in a program such as this might understand what Cintron describes as the 'intrinsic aesthetic or crafting that underlies the practices of everyday life, including the making of research' (Cintron 1997: xii). The writer writing a

public document, a poem, a brochure, a media release, a personal account, implicitly understands this; understands the role of creativity in the everyday. I would suggest that this is an important extension to the claims that Brophy (as one among many) makes for the role of creative writing within the academy.

As teachers and writers we should be explicit about the kinds of learning students do as it is reflected in the texts they produce. Such evidence enables those of us who teach writing to adopt, as Tess Brady and Eva Sallis have suggested, 'a positive approach' to our relationship with the academy (Sallis, 1999; Brady, 2000). Brady writes:

Instead of seeing the academy as stifling the creative and performing arts, as undervaluing our work, as reducing our citizenship in the convocation, we can begin to see how the creative arts are at the cutting edge of the new, opening up enormous opportunities for those restricted by the traditional academic discourse. (Brady 2000)

The student thesis that interrogates or opens out the genre of the traditional academic text is evidence of the place of writing programs at the cutting edge. But it is also evidence of how a writing program in the new Humanities provides an education for the 'modern world citizen' - someone who engages confidently as writer, reader and thinker in the world.

Notes

1. Ruth Trigg, who teaches in the Professional Writing and Communication program at University of South Australia, supervised Simon Behenna's thesis. I am grateful to Simon for permission to write about and quote from his work. return to text
2. Cintron's book *Angels' Town - Chero Ways, Gang Life and the Rhetorics of the Everyday* - is a narrative account of ethnographic research on the discourses and relationships of a Mexican-American community. return to text
3. Cintron notes: 'With such fetishization, art becomes aggrandized, a product of the mysterious, irrational, creative, and individual mind; in contrast, mundane skill becomes a product of generic minds'(xii). return to text

Appendix

Thesis abstract:

Appetites and recipes: re-making a text

(Thesis submitted as part requirement for BA (Honours) - in Professional Writing and Communication at the University of South Australia, 1999)

by Simon J. Behenna

This thesis is about the work of transforming the use, form and system of the mainstream genre of a cookbook, and theorising the re-construction of such a text. The following work is therefore presented in two major parts. The first part is a proposal for the current genre of cookbooks to be re-made and discusses the theoretical and practical issues involved with this re-development. The second part provides an example of such a re-made text. Its construction is the practical realisation of the interplay between the theoretical analysis and the creative process. In its current state the second part of this work, the 're-made' genre, also serves as a model, or conceptual rough stage, to present to publishers for negotiation towards the publication of a fuller version. return to text

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Debate

Jeri Kroll *The Role of the Examiner: Scholar, Reviewer, Critic, Judge, Mentor*

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