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The Ghost and the Machine: Creative Writing and the Academic System

This paper, first delivered at the AAWP Conference 'Lighting the Fuse' in Adelaide 1998, is in roughly three parts. The first is a necessarily roundabout approach to what I mean by "The Ghost": it is not Creative Writing as such, but it inhabits and animates it. The second involves a definition of "The Machine" which, likewise, is not the academic system of my subtitle, but relates to it. The third part of my paper focuses on the subtitle itself: Creative Writing and the Academic System.

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Let me start with a little family history. My father used to claim that he could remember his first bath. If this meant his being bathed immediately after birth, it was a striking claim. In the second of his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) - "Infantile Sexuality" - Freud draws attention to what he calls "infantile amnesia", which, "in the case of most people, though by no means all, hides the earliest beginnings of their childhood up to their sixth or eighth year". ⁽¹⁾ It is just possible that my father was one of the exceptions to this general tendency - he was never able to clarify this for me. Be that as it may, his memory of a first bath remains an enigma, because it is also one of my own first memories. In a way that has always rather puzzled me, when I try to recall what my own first bath was like, it is his first bath, his memory of it as he told it to me as a child, that I recall. It's as though my earliest memories have been extended back through my lifetime into his.

This reminds me of a poignant section in the novel, *Ceremony in Lone Tree*, by the American, Wright Morris. ⁽²⁾ A typical mid-western American family travelling to a family reunion contains a very old man and his great-great grandson. The old man's memories go back beyond his own life to those of his ancestors who crossed the American continent in their covered wagons in search of California, gold, citrus fruit and the coast, only to encounter Death Valley. Recounting events of his own life to his great-great grandson, he tells of these experiences in the belief that they were, in fact, his own. Somehow the old man has become a transmitter of a knowledge that he did not personally experience, but which came to him from his own father or grandfather and became his own. Maybe the child, in extreme old age, will in his turn pass it on again. Some memory, it seems, is a kind of ghostly knowledge that can osmose through those apparently impermeable barriers of birth and death, can leak from one life into another - in such a way that it seems not to have come from elsewhere, but to have been ours all along.

Memory is a precious commodity, yet one which, when the circumstances are right, generously shares itself around. I want to come back to this later. But first, it is perhaps worth pointing out that it depends on the proper functioning of memory as a *faculty*. This is most clearly and most painfully demonstrated when one sees someone one has been close to, one - my mother was an example - whose short-term memory was almost completely obliterated as a result of Alzheimer's Disease. After spending at least one afternoon with her each week, my sister would hear our mother sobbing on the phone after each visit, pleading with her "When will you come to visit me? I never see you nowadays." Unable to remember the hours my sister had just spent with her, in her extreme old age my mother - always a gregarious and outgoing person - was gripped by the terrible loneliness that resulted from the obliteration of her short-term memories.

With the failure of the faculty, memory as a commodity disappears too, and with it a sense of identity. Like Mr Thompson, the patient whom Oliver Sacks has so graphically described in Chapter 12 of his wonderful book, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat*, ⁽³⁾ my mother was confined to a tiny memory loop, where her sense of herself as a coherent subject was dependent on constant and constantly exhausting reconfirmation. Every one of her sentences had to contain the first person singular pronoun, and every one of her sentences was a desperate attempt to make it, and herself as subject, something that existed. Descartes' *Cogito, Ergo Sum*, "I think, therefore I am," had been logically turned upside down to "If I do not think, I will no longer be." It sounds remarkably close to Robert Lowell's lines in "Skunk Hour": "I myself am hell - / nobody's here". ⁽⁴⁾

Nobody can claim to be immune from memory deficiency. When I hear someone declare "I can recall exactly what happened" or "I have an infallible memory" etc I breathe a deep sigh. I far prefer David Malouf's forthright claim that he has a photographic memory and it gets things wrong.

Well, we all get things wrong. Our brains make sure we do, especially during that childhood period Freud identified. In later life there are numerous reasons why our memories of things should seem to be incomplete or go astray -

inattentiveness, mishearing or misreading, fear, egotism, repression among them. But one simple reason why we can so effectively distort - or, more accurately, *disremember* - the truth in our adult life, is that truth, like the elephant in the Siamese fable, differs depending on which angle we approach it from. *My* truth is always true. But *your* truth may be a different animal. When you and I start to talk about it, to compare notes, the elephant starts to amble off, misshapen, bulky, that large, loose, baggy monster neither of us can capture.

There is no need for me to theorise this phenomenon: feminist and postcolonial studies are based on it. It is sad, nonetheless, that it has taken Western thought so long to recognise what every child in the schoolyard knows yet so often has had denied: that his or her own way of seeing things is not essentially inferior to another's, is not deformed, capricious or mendacious, but that it too has validity. Our Western preoccupation with Truth as a singularity - akin to our tradition of acknowledging only the One True God - whether Hebraic, Christian or Islamic - has nurtured belief in the Individual. But it also, for centuries, denied the validity of the disparateness of individual experience. The early Church, for example, soon forewent its communal characteristics for a more authoritarian, and hence anti-pluralistic, stance. And when the early Protestants rejected the mediating role of the priesthood and asserted the primacy of individual conscience and faith in Western spiritual life, it was *still* to a single (though mystically triune) God that faith had to be directed. Maybe we can trace this line back to Plato, and his notion of Truth. Maybe we can blame Socrates, Plato's philosophical father. Maybe - who knows? - we can blame Socrates' father or grandfather, whose memories of a truly True and Single Truth passed into the philosopher's mind as naturally as his mother's milk, making him believe that they were his own. Maybe - and this is of course not fanciful - we should locate the source for this sense of Truth as single and singular with the Mother. It was she, after all, who provided that sense of coherence, totality and unitariness which is what Truth is meant to be: all-embracing, total and unequivocal. "Trailing clouds of Glory did we come / From God, who is our home," Wordsworth wrote in his Immortality Ode, wisely not assigning a specific gender to God. ⁽⁵⁾ Whatever its source, though, this notion of Truth as singular and non-relative was passed down through the Western tradition by the masculine line.

It is just possible that we have reached the end of that line today. In fact, some people would claim that we have so far overshot the end of the line that we've gone well and truly off the rails. Lyotard, for example, deplores the aesthetics of "Anything Goes" which, he rightly points out, is not genuine pluralism but "the realism of money". ⁽⁶⁾ The Canon has given way to what can be sold - as anyone who has watched seven, nine or ten minutes of commercial television immediately realises. Truth is not what is approached and apprehended by philosophy. Nor is it "the facts" as deciphered by the codebook of journalistic ethics. No, Truth is what makes a good story and - even - Truth is what can be bought.

Our cynicism with regard to the media's devaluation of the concept of Truth does not stop us hankering after it, none the less. I think Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party gets support from this, with its posture that politicians in the major parties don't tell the truth, and are out of touch with what the people really want. Like the Roman Church of the Counter-Reformation, it is Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party (belonging, by the possessive case, to a single person) that determines what 'the truth' is. ⁽⁷⁾ This dangerous and retrogressive Nostalgia of the Singular - if I may coin a phrase - has made a grotesque parody of Lyotard's humane and intelligent call for something more than an indiscriminating eclecticism.

I can hear Dr. Arbuthnot chiding me here, as he did in Alexander Pope's "Epistle": "Good friend, forbear! You deal in dangerous things" (line 75). ⁽⁸⁾ And, of course, I was not invited here to talk about the dreaded pH factor in Australian politics: the recent federal elections have said far more about it than I can conceivably manage here. But I bring it up as yet another example of the lure of the singular, the seductiveness of the simple, the dazzling attractiveness of the unitary. Our Western conception of Truth has both grown out of this and encouraged its apparently ineradicable hold on many of us. When relativity, diversity, plurality, internationality, multi-racialism and - let's breathe the dreaded word that was once always on our lips - multiculturalism, become too prominent in the public domain, when they look like influencing public policy, then there are those who will reach for their gun - even if (one hopes) only metaphorically.

Universities were tainted with this when I first started teaching in one in 1962. The previous year, I had proposed to a lecturer in the English Department of Melbourne University that I write my Honours thesis on Samuel Beckett. I was told, rather frostily by this young Englishman, that Beckett's achievement was "a bit thin." Well, I suppose it was: in 1962 Beckett had published only five novels and four plays. These included his trilogy of novels, *Molloy*, *Molone Dies* and *The Unnameable*, together with *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* and *Krapp's Last Tape*. I suppose that for a certain kind of thinking this, compared with the output of Jane Austen, for example, might seem a bit thin.

My point here is that the Canon of Eng Lit was another example of a longing for the singular. Leavis's famous introductory sentence to *The Great Tradition* was just an extreme way of expressing it: "The great English novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad...". ⁽⁹⁾

English Departments or their equivalents today have come a long way from that. In their various ways, they have been in the forefront of changing attitudes towards a singular truth. If one believed everything one reads in the letters to the editor in some of our newspapers, English Departments (or their equivalents) are guilty of everything from the

inability of everyone in the Australian community except the letter-writer to construct a grammatical sentence, to the current alleged breakdown in moral order and the ensuing social chaos. Most of these letters voice a concern that the old certainty is disappearing. One wonders whether the writers of these letters, or even their parents, were born when W.B. Yeats wrote in 1921, "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold, / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world".⁽¹⁰⁾ If they had read a little more, they might have discovered that the Modernists had been there before them, and that the old certainty may be little more than desire. My guess is that they haven't, and are condemned, as George Santanyana once claimed, to repeat the history they failed to learn from.

I seem to keep coming back to the one point - which is a bit of a problem so far as the theory of my argument is concerned. My one point is that there cannot be one point. Memories demonstrate that: the memories of each of us, if played back like a tape, would not be harmonious. They would be, most likely, a disputatious cacophony, especially at the fine grain level, for example at the level of a family. As the grain gets coarser they would start to blend into a kind of general history. For individuals, and for societies, memories are of incalculable value: they are just as vital to the constitution of the identity of a society as we have seen them to be for the identity of an individual. They are the plot-lines which give an individual her singularity and a nation its coherence.

But equally crucial is that these plot-lines must be multiple, they must not be utterly univocal or totally harmonious, but must contain and generate internal dissension, dissonance and difference. What this means, and why this is so, is perhaps best illustrated by the physicist Murray Gell-Mann's discussion of what are termed "fitness landscapes" in his recent book, *The Quark and the Jaguar*.⁽¹¹⁾

A "fitness landscape" is a way of representing the ability of a genotype - or a society - to survive, with biologists conventionally representing greater fitness to survive by means of greater height on the landscape. Gell-Mann reverses this, indicating greater fitness by greater depth. Here is an illustration taken from that book, and his description of the process involved:

The landscape is very complicated, with numerous pits ("local maxima of fitness") of widely varying depths. If the effect of evolution were always to move steadily downhill - always to improve fitness - then the genotype would be likely to get stuck at the bottom of a shallow depression and not have the opportunity to reach the deep holes nearby that correspond to much greater fitness. At the very least, the genotype must be moving in a more complicated manner than just sliding downhill. If it is also jiggling round in a random way, for example, that will give it a chance to escape from shallow holes and find deeper ones nearby. There must not be too much jiggling, however, or the whole process will cease to work. (249)

Gell-Mann's book is not simply about physics and biological evolution: it also concerns itself with societies as wholes, with economics, with creativity in science and the arts, and with the complexities of sustainable development. His aim is to identify general principles underlying a whole spectrum of behaviour in complex adaptive systems, of which individual human subjects and whole societies are two examples. What, in the above quotation, he calls "jiggling" is the product of multiplicity and its occasional random discord. A system such as an individual or society which has only one voice would be, in Gell-Mann's words, "just sliding downhill." It would get trapped in a minor depression and not move on to a greater depth of adaptive fitness. It would, eventually, find itself in a dead end - comfortable enough, no doubt, but ultimately dead. One can see from this how diversity in the realm of ideas, attitudes, and the memory that gives them their substance in time, is as crucial to social survival as genetic diversity is to biological survival.

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My title, *The Ghost and the Machine*, is of course taken (inaccurately) from Arthur Koestler's book, *The Ghost in the Machine*.⁽¹²⁾ My Ghost, as should be patently obvious here, is memory: that capacity of the past to haunt us, to transmit itself across logical and generational boundaries, to appear simultaneously in different guises and contradictory forms. It is unitary in effect, in the sense that our capacity to comprehend ourselves as individual subjects depends on it: if the plot-line of our life is erased, our identity, our sense of our own singularity, becomes fragmented and lost. Yet it is inescapably plural in its manifestations: everyone's memory is different, just as the plot-line of every living thing is different. The Ghost - the past in its manifestation as memory - is what holds us together as societies and families. But when, to revert to Gell-Mann's terms, there is "too much jiggling", when disorder becomes so great as to be counter-adaptive, memory is also what so tragically divides societies - such as Northern Ireland, Cambodia or many African states. It is the ultimate example of human fallibility and - as such - it is what makes us human.

The Machine referred to in my title is not - as some of you may be thinking - the University. But the Machine exists within the University and, like Time in Andrew Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress", this particular "winged chariot" seems to be hurrying ever nearer and nearer, hustling us closer every day to "Deserts of vast eternity".⁽¹³⁾ By "The Machine" I mean an intensification of that unitary mindset which has served Western society quite well for so many centuries but which has had to be defeated, subverted, overthrown or seduced into complicity whenever a

significant advance has taken place. And in this sense Universities in Australia today are increasingly machine-orientated. In such a context, the Ghost - largely in the shape of the Humanities but most pertinently in its protean guise as the Creative Arts - has to be especially wary and wily.

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What exactly do I mean by The Machine in Universities? Universities, traditionally, were a bundle of disparate disciplines: Theology, Law, Medicine, Philosophy and Natural Philosophy, most notably. As such, they represented that diversity in unity so crucial to adaptation. True, universities have often been slow to develop, clinging to tradition and traditional disciplines, reactive rather than generating change. They have tended to build walls between their various diversities, have engaged in in-fighting and backstabbing in their battles for funding and prestige, have displayed quite extraordinary suspicions of new ideas, new disciplines and new ways of doing things. None the less, universities at their best have been places where traditions have been subject to scrutiny and rational debate, where established ideas are questioned, where diversity has found a growing point.

Today, I think this is seriously threatened. The description of Australia's universities as belonging to a "unified national system" should be read as a danger sign. Inherent in it are two assumptions. One is that unity is better than diversity - largely because it is more "efficient", more "cost-effective" and easier to organise. The second is that a single purpose can be found for university education, that single purpose being, of course, education for employment. At a time when it is acknowledged that few university graduates will remain for more than ten years within the vocation they enter on graduation, universities are focussing more and more on preparation for jobs and less than ever on broad, basic conceptual education. "Learning for life" may be the motto. But if you read the advertising and examine the course structures, the reality is "Learning for work."

I cannot talk here about the whole spectrum of universities, nor about the whole spectrum of what goes on within even a single university. I want to focus now, rather, on Writing. And in particular on that sub-section of Writing, specifically Creative Writing. Creative Writing is only one part of many universities' Writing programs, and by concentrating on it for the rest of this paper I intend in no way to denigrate the remainder of those programs. I am acutely aware of how important the acquisition of generic and specific writing skills is in almost every aspect of modern society. Anything that improves the level of literate writing within the community and, concomitantly, raises the level of lucid thought and clear debate in society is to be applauded and supported. Writing programs are doing much towards this in the field of professional writing, whether for traditional text based media or in the electronic and multi-media fields.

Professional writing can often be legitimated within universities as vocational, job-oriented, and seen as posing little threat. But Creative Writing - like the other Creative Arts generally - is a relative newcomer to the university context and will not be so easily assimilated to this growing sense of anti-complexity which I have called The Machine. By its very diversity and plurality, by the way it draws its vitality from the conflicting and the irresolvable, creative writing is a profound challenge to it. Furthermore, it refuses to fit into the job-oriented ethos of so much current university thinking about education - the Machine-made track to a job mentality.

In one sense, of course, graduates in Creative Writing do have a clear path before them. When they graduate, their stories and poems graduate too, from the *Dog Swamp Chronicle*, or *The Useless Loop Guardian* to *The Adelaide Review*, and ever onwards to *The New Yorker*. But as a member of the Committee of Management of the Australian Society of Authors - a society to which you should all belong, since it represents and works for *all* writers, not just novelists, poets etc - I am aware that, on average, a musician can earn about \$21,700 p.a., and craftsperson \$11,000 p.a., from practising his or her artform. But despite the fact that per capita Australians are still comparatively large book-buyers, authors earn on average only between \$3,800 and \$5,000 p.a. from their writing or related activities.

No right-minded University administrator, surely, would see such a future as one worth educating graduates for. The fact that Creative Writing still exists at all within universities is due rather to the perversity of countless students who wish to pursue it there - irrespective of the absence of any employment niche - and who contribute EFTSUs in numbers that make some Science disciplines blanch with envy.

But the unease with which Creative Writing inhabits the increasingly Machine-like atmosphere of universities is no more clearly manifest than in relation to the vexed nature of research.

I take as my starting-point the excellent report titled *Research in the Creative Arts*, prepared for the Evaluations and Investigations Programme of the Higher Education Division of DEETYA. ⁽¹⁴⁾ The author is Dennis Strand of the Canberra School of Art, ANU. The project's Advisory Group was chaired by Peter Karmel. Among those involved in the report's preparation were the Project Director, Professor David Williams, Canberra School of Art, Professor Sue Rowley, College of Fine Arts, UNSW, and Professor David Throsby, Department of Economics, Macquarie University. Major input came from ACUADS - the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools - and NACHTMUS - the National Council of Heads of Tertiary Music Schools. As far as I can see from reading the report, there was no formal input from the Association of Australian Writing Programs, nor from Creative Writers generally.

None the less, the report is as pertinent to Creative Writing as it is to music and other performing arts, the visual arts and design. We are all, basically, in the same boat when it comes to definitions of research which govern the attraction and distribution of Research Quantum funding to universities. We are all, you might say, defined out of the picture. I will come back to this question of definition in a moment.

First, it is possibly worth reminding you how research funds from the Commonwealth Government are allocated to universities. They come largely in two ways. The first is by the competitive research grants program of the Australian Research Council which, in 1996, provided \$386 million. The second source of Commonwealth Government funding for research is known as the Research Quantum, which is about 5% of total operating grant - in 1997 it totalled about \$222 million. This 5% is withheld from the operating grant. It is not distributed to universities equally, but in proportion to how each university performs on what is known as the Composite Index. Let's take the ARC program first.

It is not impossible for Creative Arts projects to receive funding for projects from the ARC, but it is extremely unusual. To date, several projects at the University of Tasmania have been successful. When one considers that in 1996 the combined Arts and Humanities received only 5.2% of the total dollar value of Large Research Grants and 7.9% of the Small Research Grants funded through the ARC, one can imagine what a tiny proportion actually went to the Creative Arts. In contrast, the Sciences received 80.3% and 76.8% respectively. Even bearing in mind the fact that research in the Sciences is generally much more expensive than in the Arts, this is a staggering disproportion. I will not give figures for Research Infrastructure, Key Centres, or New Collaborative Grants, because they in no way alter the picture.

As if this were not enough, however, there is also a flow-on effect. I mentioned earlier the Composite Index, on the basis of which that withheld 5% of operating grant, the Research Quantum, is distributed to universities. The Composite Index is comprised of three measures. The smallest portion of the Research Quantum (5%, or \$11 million in 1996) is allocated on the basis of the number of higher research degrees completed. The next smallest (12.5%, or \$28 million in 1996) is allocated in proportion to the number of research and scholarly publications produced by staff and students. The largest portion (82.5% or \$183 million) is allocated on the basis of universities' individual capacities to attract national competitive grants, public sector research funding and industry research funding.

The catch for Creative Writing comes here. With regard to the first measure - research higher degrees - it is important that higher degrees in Creative Writing be recognised as research degrees, otherwise universities will marginalise them because they contribute nothing to their pursuit of Research Quantum. This is something that each university has to pursue for itself, and it has significance for the nature and formal requirements of Masters and Doctorates in Creative Writing or the Creative Arts.

With regard to the third measure (success in obtaining external research funding) it is important to note that grants from the Australia Council and the various State Arts Ministries or Departments - the major source of funding for the Creative Arts - are not recognised. This is despite a substantial submission to DEETYA by the Australia Council late in 1996, and representations from the Advisory Group which prepared the Report. Strong lobbying is required here to have these grants included on an equal footing with the other competitive research grants, which *are* used as a measure within the Composite Index for the distribution of Research Quantum.

This brings us finally to the definition of research. The OECD definition of research reads as follows:

Research and experimental development comprises creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including the knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock to devise new applications. (32)

There must be few people here today who would feel any discomfort in applying this definition successfully to Creative Writing. Perhaps the only point of discomfort might be that phrase "systematic basis": what appears systematic to a writer might look wayward, perhaps even haphazard, to some scientists. Still, I can think of few writers of any real worth who do not apply themselves as rigorously, even punishingly so, to their discipline as any scientist.

Even here, though, there is a ghost-like element - one which defies simplification - and it seems to contribute to a major breakthrough in both the sciences and the Creative Arts. This is the phase of thinking known as "incubation" which, to use the terminology of the great nineteenth century physicist Hermann von Helmholtz, follows a researcher's "saturation" in an idea or a problem which had been "investigated...in all directions". As the psychologist Graham Wallas described it in his book, *The Art of Thought*, published in 1926, during incubation nothing seems to happen. ⁽¹⁵⁾ No progress is consciously made, and it can continue for days, weeks and longer. Then suddenly, often without warning, there occurs what Helmholtz called illumination. Wallas points out that "much very important thinking, done for instance by a poet exploring his memories", may not be "very easily fitted into a 'problem and solution' scheme," - the rather simplified paradigm of scientific research - but it follows exactly the same pattern. Murray Gell-Mann discusses this strange but everyday process in his book also, and similarly draws no

distinction between its occurrence in the sciences and in the Creative Arts, both areas exemplifying, in his words, "the highest expression on Earth of that kind of skill... human creative thinking" (266).

Unfortunately, DEETYA's definition of research - for the purpose of the Composite Index - is not so enlightened, or illuminated. It hinges on what it means by publication, and it includes, as you know, only four categories: publication as scholarly books, book chapters, refereed journal articles and refereed conference proceedings. Novels, poems, plays etc are excluded. An article on David Malouf, for example, counts. Half a dozen novels by Malouf do not.

This peculiar situation came about because of the apparent inability of universities to present DEETYA with reliable publication data. It is also important to remember that these four categories of publication were only intended as proxies: i.e. their use resulted, it is claimed, in much the same ranking of universities as a far wider data compilation would have provided. It was also never intended that the *internal* distribution of research funds should be determined by only those four categories and, in fact, most universities do use a wider Research Activities Index for internal distribution of research related funds, my own university included.

The effect of this, however, has been further to marginalise Creative Writing. Universities are putting pressure on staff to concentrate their publications only in the four proxy categories, irrespective of how inappropriate these might be, since only these can lead to an increase in Research Quantum. In a time of acute funding shortages in the university sector, a single-minded pursuit of research funding, hand in glove with an arthritically restricted definition of research, provides us with a clear example of the Machine trying to grind the Ghost out of its system, or at least to grind it so small that it doesn't jam the cogs.

The Report on Research in the Creative Arts advocates a slightly devious strategy - a bit of jiggling, you might say - to counter this situation. Rather than arguing head on that research in the Creative Arts is *the same* as research elsewhere, it argues for the concept of *Research Equivalence*. To quote from the Report:

The adoption of the notion of research equivalence does not require...any re-definition of research as it is commonly understood by the universities, the ARC [etc]...Rather it *extends* the definition to accommodate the work of artists/researchers... whose research and research equivalent activity currently receives limited recognition, or no recognition at all. (46)

Very briefly, research equivalence is seen as original creative activity exercised in a systematic way which produces a published result equivalent, but not identical with, the four DEETYA categories of scholarly books, book chapters, refereed articles and refereed conference proceedings. This has been achieved by keeping within the spirit of the OECD definition of research, but widening the DEETYA definition of publication to accommodate modes of publication acceptable to the Creative Arts (all of which, I should add, are included within the legal definition of publication should it come to matters of defamation or copyright.)

As I said, the Report does not address Creative Writing. But it does include comprehensive tables of correspondences which serve as a guide. They are based on factors such as 1. the amount of time involved; 2. the amount of material produced; 3. its complexity, i.e. the resources involved in its realisation; and 4. the place or location of publication, a prestige factor equivalent to scholarly refereeing. For example, an original choreographic work lasting at least 60 minutes, involving at least ten dancers, and consisting of previously unrepresented material would score 5 points, equivalent to a published original scholarly book. One major or more original art works exhibited for the first time in a recognised gallery by invitation would score 1 point, equivalent to a refereed article. I refer you to pages 133 to 152 of the Report for a very detailed set of equivalences.

It should be even easier for Creative Writing to determine equivalences, since the bulk of it is still print published, the only medium recognised in the DEETYA proxy categories. For writing published in multimedia form, much of the work has already been done in the Report anyway, in relation to the other artforms. Writing, however, does not figure in the Report, and it is time that we acknowledge the problems our colleagues in Music, Visual Arts and Design have addressed, and join with them in pressing for a solution. If we don't, we will be considered a distraction from the serious business of maximising research funding - and we cannot expect the universities to reward our own research aspirations under those circumstances. Even worse, we will be contributing to the dominance of the Machine within the tertiary education system, a dominance which will not only hurt us but will, in the long run, hurt everyone.

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What has to be done? First, I believe it is imperative that the Association of Australian Writing Programs becomes a membership organisation with a representative Committee of Management which can provide ongoing coordination of its activities. It should charge a membership fee to help fund ongoing activities and build a sense of corporate purpose. Second, these activities must go beyond the organisation of Annual Conferences and begin to address the problems I have attempted to outline here. (They are, I want to stress, only examples.) It must become a body with an advocacy role. Paradoxically, but in a way which is completely consistent with my argument, it must be able to speak with a unified voice in order to preserve the diversity and multiplicity of its constituents. One model - although it exists largely outside the universities - is the Australian Society of Authors: it represents writers of all kinds, genres,

political persuasion. Another model might be the Association for the Study of Australian Literature, which in its early days fought for the legitimising of the teaching and study of our own writing against the hegemony of a canon of Eng Lit.

The role of this organisation can only be carried out if it has a significant journal. TEXT would seem to be it, but if and when the organisation is established on a more on-going basis other publishing possibilities might be explored. I have in mind some kind of newsletter, possibly as an extension of TEXT. And the organisation would need, among other tasks, to fight the ongoing credentialism which is a further example of the Machine's grip upon universities.

We are all in the business of assigning credentials to those who successfully complete the requirements of our courses. If they do well enough, and pass through enough difficult hoops, some students will be awarded PhDs or DCAs. Does that mean that, on the strength of these credentials, they will be given precedence in appointments and promotions before writers with a strong commercial publishing record but no, or lesser, academic degrees?

The Machine would answer Yes. Academic qualifications are easy to quantify, and it is easy to make the distinction between those who have them and those who don't. But what do they mean? But how can meaningful comparisons between degrees from different institutions, and between degrees and commercial publication, be made? This is another area where the concept of research equivalence can be invaluable. A well-defined table of equivalence for Creative Writing, as has already been established for Music and the Visual Arts and Design, would go a long way to avoiding the absurdities and the injustices which our own Creative Writing programs are beginning to make possible. An ongoing professional body could be instrumental in using such a table to define consistent standards of professional competence and qualification relevant to appointments and promotions - not just between published writers and graduates of our own programs but, just as importantly, across institutions. We have a great need to know what our colleague institutions - and TAFE is included here, of course - are offering, and what their degrees consist of, mean, and are equivalent to. AAWP as I envisage it would take on the task of sorting this out, and provide ongoing monitoring and moderation.

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Arthur Koestler's book *The Ghost in the Machine* concerned itself with how the impalpable and the indefinable animate a biological and social mechanism. Today, advances in theoretical physics and related disciplines have shown how non-mechanical the physical world is. The Ghost is the spirit presiding over the Cosmos today: not as a manifestation of monotheism, but as chance, randomness, probability. It operates within a set of rules, but it adds diversity, multiplicity, the co-existence of conflicting demands which, in turn, make adjustments to the rules. The Ghost is what Gell-Mann has described as "jiggling", the multiplicity and indeterminacy which enables complex adaptive systems such as us, as individuals, and the society we live in, to adapt. Gell-Mann's one-time colleague and rival, the Nobel physicist Richard Feynman, might have described it, by way of one of his famous diagrams, as a system of leaps and binds.

The Ghost manifests itself, as it should, in many ways. The manifestation of it which I have concentrated on today is memory - memory by which Creative Writing must be animated, if it is not itself to become a Machine. This memory leaps, and it binds. It tangles with itself - mine especially - and it tangles with the memory of others. It has its gaps, the more as we get older, so that the memories of the young have a place to be heard and to grow. It is our lifeline to a sustainable future, just as it is the means by which we draw nourishment and wisdom from the past. This Ghost is what enables me to hear, as I write this and as I speak to you today, the sound of water being poured into a bath which was not mine, but my father's - forty years before I was born.

Professor Andrew Taylor is an established Australian poet and teaches writing at Edith Cowan University.

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