INTRODUCTION

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WHY THIS BOOK?

The idea for this book arose from the many conversations over the years between researchers and practitioners about what it means to adopt, or perhaps more accurately as reflected in the title of this book to *work with* an "Academic Literacies" approach to writing, and more broadly language and literacy, in contemporary higher education. Whilst not necessarily distinct people or groups, a gap in understandings between researchers (those with a specific role in carrying out research about academic writing and reading) and practitioners (those with a specific role in working with students in their academic writing, such as teachers, curriculum designers, policy makers and academic administrators) often seems to be in evidence. The impetus to take forward a project that would bring together researchers, practitioners and researcher-practitioners to illustrate the specific ways in which they/we engage in and develop ideas from Academic Literacies came from the 2010 international *Writing Development in Higher Education* conference, London, following a plenary workshop on "Academic Literacies" by a group of researcher-practitioners, Sally Baker, Lynn Coleman, Theresa Lillis, Lucy Rai, and Jackie Tuck (http://www.writenow.ac.uk/news-events/wdhe-conference-2010). Three questions arising from this plenary were debated and are reflected in the framing and contributions of this book:

1. What does working with Academic Literacies mean "in practice"?
2. How can the transformative approach argued for in Academic Literacies' theorizing be instantiated in practice(s)?
3. In developing a transformative approach, how might work in Academic Literacies usefully draw on and engage with other approaches to writing?

Exactly how, when and in which specific contexts—geographical, institutional, disciplinary, stage of study—particular elements of Academic Literacies are valuable for developing a transformative approach to writing and reading in the academy were (and are) questions we all felt needed more consideration. This book is intended as a contribution to such a development, bringing together ideas, pedagogic case studies and critical commentaries from teacher-researchers working in a range of contexts, from undergraduate to postgraduate levels across a range of disciplines—including natural and social sciences—and a number of geopolitical

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2015.0674.1.3

regions—Australia, Brazil, Canada, Catalonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Portugal, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States. While some contributions are from within specific institutionally "writing designated" spaces (a well-known example being US Composition), many others engage with the question of writing from within disciplinary spaces. Contributions focus on issues such as: How to make language and writing visible in meaningful ways in disciplinary activity, including in areas as diverse as engineering, geography, nursing, natural sciences, graphic design, business studies and photojournalism? How can teachers across all disciplinary areas meaningfully engage with writing? How can and do writing/language specialists work collaboratively with disciplinary specialists? How can a wider range of semiotic resources including modes, media and genres fruitfully serve academic meaning and knowledge making? What kinds of writing-specific designated spaces do we need and how can these be facilitated, for example through postgraduate writing circles and one-to-one language/writing tutorials? How can theory and practice from Academic Literacies be used to open up debate about writing and language at institutional and policy levels?

WHAT IS ACADEMIC LITERACIES?

What is the "Academic Literacies" that contributors are seeking to *work with* in this collection? While acknowledging that the phrase is used in a number of ways (see Theresa Lillis & Mary Scott, 2007), here we briefly set out the particular tradition we are referring to and engaging with.

"Academic Literacies" is a critical approach to the researching and teaching of writing and literacy and to the role and potential of these activities for individual meaning making and academic knowledge construction in higher education. In broad terms, "Academic Literacies" draws attention to the importance, for research and pedagogy, of adopting socially situated accounts of writing and text production. It also draws attention to the ways in which power and identity (at the levels of student, teacher, institution, discipline) are inscribed in literacy practices, and the need to explore the possibilities for adopting transformative approaches to academic writing, which includes working to extend the range of semiotic resources—linguistic, rhetorical, technological—that are legitimized in the academy of the twenty-first century. Key areas of research have included: the nature of academic writing from the perspective of student-writers; the impact of power relations on student writing; the contested nature of academic writing conventions; the centrality of identity and identification in academic writing; academic writing as ideologically inscribed knowledge construction (for overviews see Theresa Lillis & Mary Scott, 2007; David Russell et al., 2009; Jackie Tuck, 2012a; Joan Turner, 2011). More recent work has continued with a focus on student writing but also extended into areas such as the everyday writing of academics (Mary Lea

& Barry Stierer, 2009), disciplinary teachers' perspectives on their engagement with students' writing (Tuck, 2012b), academic writing for publication (Theresa Lillis & Mary Jane Curry, 2010) and digitally mediated literacy practices inside and outside the academy (Lynn Coleman, 2012; Mary Lea & Sylvia Jones, 2011; Robin Goodfellow & Mary Lea, 2013). The approach has a particularly vigorous research base in the United Kingdom and South Africa (see for example, Awena Carter et al. (Eds.), 2009; Roz Ivanič, 1998; Cecilia Jacobs, 2010; Carys Jones et al., 1999; Mary Lea, 2005; Mary Lea & Barry Stierer (Eds.), 2000; Mary Lea & Brian Street, 1998; Theresa Lillis, 1997, 2001, 2003; Lillis & Scott (Eds.), 2007; Lucia Thesen & Linda Cooper, 2013; Lucia Thesen & Ermien van Pletzen, 2006) and has strong connections/resonances with critical arguments found in a number of pedagogical and theoretical traditions across a range of national contexts, for example, critical EAP (Sarah Benesch, 2001; Nigel Harwood & Gregory Hadley, 2004), "basic writing" (e.g., Bruce Horner & Min-Zhan Lu, 1999), *didactique* or *littéracies universitaires* (Isabelle Delcambre & Christiane Donahue, 2011), writing across the curriculum and writing in the disciplines, WAC and WiD (e.g., Charles Bazerman et al., 2005; Donna LeCourt, 1996; David Russell, 2001) and multilingual academic writing (e.g., Suresh Canagarajah, 2002). (See Reflections 1, 3, 4, 6 this volume).

There are strong points of convergence in the ways in which researchers and teachers define or co-opt the notion "Academic Literacies" in their/our research and practice, as well as considerable points of debate and areas in need of development. A core point of convergence (and indeed the imperative driving much research and pedagogy) is a deep and consistent concern with the limitations of much official discourse on language and literacy in a rapidly changing higher education world. This includes the prevailing deficit approach to language, literacy, and indeed students, whereby the emphasis tends overwhelmingly to be on what student writers *don't* or *can't do* in academic writing rather than on what they can (or would like to), and where—even whilst discourses of diversity and internationalization populate university mission statements globally—"variety" of linguistic, semiotic and rhetorical student repertoires tends to be viewed as "a problem rather than resource" (Brian Street, 1999, p. 198). A core area of debate is how best to draw and act on Academic Literacies' critiques of contemporary approaches to language and literacy, in particular, how to design policy, curriculum, assessment and pedagogy which engage with a commitment to "transformation"—rather than solely induction or reproduction—and indeed, to examining what we understand by "transformation" in contemporary higher education. The goal of this book is to focus explicitly on how practitioner-researchers (mainly teachers) are grappling to theorize and develop "transformation" in their/our practice, within the constraints and demands of specific disciplines and institutions within a range of higher education systems globally, each of which have their specific social and geopolitical histories.

WHERE DOES "ACADEMIC LITERACIES" COME FROM?

The use of the phrase "Academic Literacies" to signal a critical and social practice perspective on writing and reading in the academy seems to have been forged out of conversations taking place at different times and in different places by people with similar concerns. From the late 1980s onwards, the term was regularly used, for example, at monthly Academic Literacies sessions at the Institute of Education, London, chaired by Mary Scott—and the related extensive international mail and discussion list—and in ongoing discussions by scholars in South Africa, such as Lucia Thesen and Cecilia Jacobs. The principles underpinning what would come to be labelled as "Academic Literacies" were also evident in some innovative language pedagogy and policy work without the use of this label: for example, in a UK polytechnic in 1989, which subsequently became a "new" university,[1] the Language Policy, written by Phyllis Creme, was designed to both recognize and value diversity and the language practices that students brought with them to the university (see Phyllis Creme & MaryLea, 1999). More widely at the time, the response of many of the new universities to both their students and their attempts to compete with other high status institutions was to develop targeted study skills provision. This frequently included "fixing" student writers with generic approaches, focused on surface features of form, grammar, punctuation, spelling etc.—what Lea and Street in their 1998 paper termed the "study skills" model. However, many practitioners working directly with student writers were increasingly finding these approaches unsatisfactory when faced with actual students completing real assignments.

In the context of policies of access and widening participation in higher education, "Academic Literacies" came to be used to challenge the strongly deficit orientation towards the writing (and reading) of students, in particular of students who were the first generation in their families and communities to go into higher education and to signal the need for a more questioning and critical stance towards what students were doing and meaning in their academic writing. Available linguistic, theoretical and pedagogic frames just did not seem to articulate or help account for the experiences and practices of the student-writers. Lillis, for example, was struck that student-writers often did not use discourses that their academic teachers were expecting, not because they didn't know these, but because they were not what they wanted to use, to mean, *to be* (Lillis, 2001). Key writers offering ways of articulating such phenomena were Norman Fairclough (1992) and other critical discourse analysts (Romy Clark & Roz Ivanič, 1991). In particular, Roz Ivanič used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explore students' practices and texts, foregrounding the question of identity (1998). Teacher-researchers in the United Kingdom and in other parts of the world grappled with finding a frame that would enable them to explore issues that were often treated as background or secondary—where the job of the teaching discipline-based academic writing, if visible at all, was often

construed as teaching conventions (as if these were uncontested) that students must adopt (rather than critically engage with).

Of course the work that is central to articulating an "Academic Literacies" orientation—and widely cited across this book—is the 1998 paper by Lea and Street. In this paper they outlined three ways or "models" to articulate different approaches to student writing in the academy which they described in terms of "skills," "socialization," and "academic literacies." Whereas '"study skills" was primarily concerned with mastery of the surface features of texts, "academic socialization" pointed to the acculturation of students into the discourses and genres of particular disciplines as an essential prerequisite for becoming a successful writer. Lea and Street saw "academic literacies" as subsuming many of the features of the other two, illustrating that the three models were not mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, they claimed that the academic literacies model was best able to take account of the nature of student writing in relation to institutional practices, power relations and identities, therefore offering a lens on meaning making that the other two models failed to provide.

An important point to signal about this 1998 article was that Lea and Street were adamant that it should speak to both practitioners and researchers—of writing, language and literacy—and chose their target journal carefully. However, getting the article published was not without its challenges. They had to persuade the editor and reviewers that their approach "counted" as research in higher education and that the literacies as social practice frame was legitimate in a context dominated by psychological models of student learning. Its theorized and practitioner-focused orientation is still at the heart of the field that we call Academic Literacies although individual researchers and practitioners occupy different institutional positions and orientations. Some are centrally concerned with finding ways of providing immediate support to students, often in demanding institutional settings against a backdrop of institutional accountability; others are endeavouring to engage critically and make visible issues of power and control over knowledge and meaning making; and many are seeking to do both, as evidenced in the contributions to this volume.

So what was it that the framing and the phrasing "academic literacies"—that was definitely in the air but was honed in Lea and Street's 1998 paper—seemed to be offering? It provided a name for a whole cluster of research and pedagogic interests and concerns that many were grappling to articulate and it anchored concerns around academic writing to a larger scholarly project relating to literacy more generally (New Literacy Studies, e.g., David Barton & Mary Hamilton, 1998; David Barton & Uta Papen, 2010; James Gee, 2007; Mary Hamilton, 2001; Mastin Prinsloo & Mignonne Breier, 1996). Furthermore, the ethnographic impulse in New Literacy Studies in particular—paying particular attention to emic perspectives—connected strongly with progressive voices in adult education and access movements and thus captured the intellectual imagination of many educators and language/writing researchers both in the UK and other national contexts. Thus

whilst the phrase 'academic literacy' and even the plural form were in use in some contexts,[2] the publication of the work by Lea and Street fulfilled three important scholarly functions in configuring the field:

1. It helped generate an intellectual space for the many scholars who were dissatisfied with dominant pedagogical and institutional approaches to student writing.
2. By indexing "New Literacy Studies" and Street's robust critique of "autonomous" approaches to literacy, it opened up routes of intellectual inquiry that differed from the strongly "textualist" (Bruce Horner, 1999) and normative approaches available with which many scholars were also dissatisfied (across a number of traditions, such as English for Academic Purposes and Systemic Functional Linguistics).
3. It helped create a theoretically and empirically robust position from which to challenge the prevailing ideology of deficit which centered on what students could *not* do (rather than what they could) and also shifted attention towards disciplinary and institutional practices.[3]

WHAT DOES "TRANSFORMATION" MEAN IN ACADEMIC LITERACIES?

At the heart of an Academic Literacies approach is a concern with "transformation" and the "transformative." But what does this mean? How is "transformation" to be understood, and what does it look like when using an Academic Literacies lens to investigate and design writing practices in the academy? In this section, the book's editors each offer a perspective on these questions—but without a desire to close them down. We recognize that individual practitioner-researchers will define and work with the notion of transformation somewhat differently depending on their/our particular institutional and/or disciplinary positions and the specific questions they/we ask. An examination and elucidation of this contextual diversity is, indeed, one of the main aims of this volume.

Theresa Lillis: Towards Transformative Design

As a teacher, researcher and participant in contemporary academia I am involved in both working with(in) and against powerful conventions for meaning making and knowledge construction. I am committed to exploring what it is that prevailing academic conventions for meaning making have to offer—and to whom—and what it is they constrain or restrict. My concern (based on many years of teaching and researching) is that we—as teachers, researchers, writers, policy makers—may often adopt prevailing conventions, including those surrounding which specific

semiotic practices are valued, simply because they have become routinised rather than because they offer meaningful, valid and creative resources for knowledge production, evaluation and participation in the contemporary world. The challenge, I think we all face, is to become aware of the vast array of semiotic resources potentially available to us and others (however we construe "us" and "others"—and in positions of both producers and receivers/evaluators) and to explore how these can be harnessed for meaning and knowledge making.

As part of this broader concern with conventions, why is *transformation* an important notion to discuss? In an opening paper of a Special Issue on Academic Literacies in the *Journal of Applied Linguistics* Mary Scott and I set out what we saw as a map of the field of "Academic Literacies" in its current state as well as offering a position statement on what the field could be, some ten years after Lea and Street's influential 1998 paper. In addition to pointing to the key epistemological framing of "Ac Lits"—notably a social practice approach to language and literacy with a particular emphasis on ethnography as a research methodology—we also pointed to the ideological orientation of Ac Lits as being one of transformation. In broad terms, we made a contrast between two common stances (in research and pedagogy): those which could be characterized as "normative" and those that could be characterized as "transformative". Normative stances and approaches to writing and literacy tend to work within a framework which raises questions about writing and literacy in the following terms: What is the nature of the writing and literacy required—at the level of genre, grammar, style, rhetoric? How can these most usefully be researched (made visible) and taught? A normative stance is often considered essential when seeking to induct people into the literacy practices that have become legitimized in academia to the extent that in order for people to participate in existing academic practices, these practices have to be taught and literally "practised". However, we argued that Ac Lits has also encouraged a transformative stance towards writing and literacy which foregrounds additional questions such as: how have particular conventions become legitimized—and what might alternatives be? To what extent do they serve knowledge making—and are other ways of making knowledge, and other kinds of knowledge/knowing possible? Whose epistemological and ideological interests and desires do these reflect and enable—and whose interests and desires may be being excluded?

As transformation/transformative is a key theme in this book, I'd like to quote what Mary Scott and I wrote here:

> The ideological stance toward the object of study in what we are calling "academic literacies" research can be described as explicitly transformative rather than normative. A normative approach evident for example in much EAP work can be summarized as resting on the educational myths that Kress (2007)

> describes: the homogeneity of the student population, the stability of disciplines, and the unidirectionality of the teacher-student relation. Consonant with these myths is an interest to "identify and induct": the emphasis is on identifying academic conventions—at one or more levels of grammar, discourse or rhetorical structure or genre—and on (or with a view to) exploring how students might be taught to become proficient or "expert" and developing materials on that basis (for examples, see Flowerdew, 2000; Swales & Feak, 2004). A transformative approach in contrast **involves an interest in such questions but in addition is concerned with**: a) locating such conventions in relation to specific and contested traditions of knowledge making; b) eliciting the perspectives of writers (whether students or professionals) on the ways in which such conventions impinge on their meaning making; c) exploring alternative ways of meaning making in academia, not least by considering the resources that (student) writers bring to the academy as legitimate tools for meaning making. (Lillis & Scott 2007, p. 12-13, emphasis added)

A key point we were seeking to make was that the normative stance is the default position in much practice in academia (pedagogy and policy) and a necessary stance in order to participate (and enable participation) successfully in academic institutions as currently configured. However we also argued that there was a considerable amount of additional work to be done—thinking, research, engagement and reflection on practice—in order to harness the full range of semiotic practices to intellectual labour.

One conceptual way forward is to acknowledge the importance of critique which is strong in Academic Literacies research (for example the critique of the dominant deficit discourse on writing, the critique of an autonomous approach—Street (1984)—to language and literacy, the concern with issues of power and identity in academic writing) but at the same time to work with the notion of *design*. Gunther Kress usefully offers "design" as an epistemological and ideological move which builds on critique but moves beyond it:

> Design rests on a chain of processes of which critique is one: it can, however, no longer be the focal one, or be the major goal of textual practices. Critique leaves the initial definition of the domain of analysis to the past, to past production. (Kress, 2000, p. 160)

The question of design—or what I am referring to as "transformative design" in

order to signal the critical basis for Kress's notion—has been explored by colleagues and myself, Lillis (2003, 2006) and Lea (2004) in specific relation to the relevance and use of Academic Literacies to practice in higher education but we have both pointed to the need for considerably more work to be done. For this book, the four editors came together to begin to engage in this *design work*, each of us committed to the importance of interrogating possibilities for transformation and interested in exploring the potential of "Ac Lits" in designing pedagogy and policy and all aware that working towards transformative design in higher education is a large and challenging project, possible only through extensive collaboration. We see this collection as reflecting examples of transformative design and as therefore a part of this larger collaborative project.

Kathy Harrington: Border Crossing

My interest in transformation, how I think about and understand what this might mean in the context of Academic Literacies, stems from the position I occupy as a relative newcomer to the field, coming in from the outside and bringing with me questions and perspectives from other domains of knowledge, experience and work. In her book on encounters between science and other disciplinary fields in nineteenth century Britain, Gillian Beer (1996) suggests that "ideas cannot survive long lodged within a single domain. They need the traffic of the apparently inappropriate audience as well as the tight group of co-workers if they are to thrive and generate further thinking" (p. 1). I have been intrigued and stimulated by Beer's ideas since coming across her work while writing my PhD in Victorian Studies in the late 1990s. What happens, I have been wondering more recently, when ideas harvested in other domains are trafficked into the field of Academic Literacies? What transformation might become possible in my own thinking and practice, particularly in my role as a teacher on academic and professional development programmes for other teachers in the academy?

I am interested in boundaries, how and why edges lie where they do, how we demarcate and decide what's inside and what's outside, and the transformative, or restrictive, possibilities this field mapping allows. I am interested in the potential for transformation as located within self-understandings, in the perceptions we have of ourselves as students and as teachers, and in the fluidity of the relationship between these identities. I am interested in the connection between transformation and being able to take the risk of not knowing whether the destination will be better than what has been left behind. None of these questions is specifically about, or originates from my engagement with, writing practices in the academy. They come from outside, from my personal history and experiences of border crossings, and from other fields—from perspectives gleaned from psychoanalysis and group analysis, group relations and open systems theory.

So, what does this mean in practice? What "further thinking" do these perspectives and questions generate in the context of Academic Literacies? In her application of open systems theory to the study of organizations, Vega Zagier Roberts notes that "a living organism can survive only by exchanging materials with its environment, that is, by being an *open system*" (1994, p. 28). In keeping something alive, boundaries are important. They can provide a helpful frame and hold a space within which something can live and flourish, such as a research or teaching community, ideas and people. But if drawn too tightly, boundaries can isolate and close down dialogue and growth. Boundary setting happens both from within and outside a field, and there are gains to be had by questioning which interests are being served by these processes. Where are the lines around Academic Literacies being drawn, by whom, and why? The rich and various contributions in this volume attest, I think, to the inspiring fecundity of thought and practice that comes of questioning and constantly re-thinking where the edges of the field might lie, and how permeable, and to which outside influences, they might most vitally remain open.

There is another sense in which working with a notion of boundaries informs my sense of the transformative potential of Academic Literacies. Boundaries can delineate an intellectual and professional field, but also an internal space, where *one's own norms and assumptions*—about the nature of writing and learning, about oneself as a teacher/authority and about the other/student—and one's own experiences of difference, inequality and power situated in specific contexts and relationships, can be brought to the surface and worked with. In my understanding, this questioning, self-reflective attitude and challenging work of seeing and confronting one's own assumptions is integral to the practice of teaching as informed by an Academic Literacies approach—and it is itself transformative, and empowering, for both teachers and students.

Transformation as I see it, and as distinguished from induction or reproduction, is essentially about this increased level of awareness. Whether the focus of a particular piece of work is on students, teachers, resources, institutional culture, or classroom practices, what is transformed through a "transformative approach" is fundamentally a way of seeing and being—and in particular, seeing and being with respect to *one's own* contribution to variously perpetuating, subverting and re-writing exclusionary narratives of power and identity inscribed in the practices and discourses of "academic writing". This is about daring to be curious, to ask difficult questions and to be honest about the answers. For example, it might be interesting to ask how requiring the "submission" of written work—and how one's own attitudes to the authority and power of the teacher in this relationship—influences the nature of the knowledge it is possible to create within formal writing and assessment processes. From a place of self-awareness, it becomes possible to step back, imagine and actually begin to do things differently—more creatively, more thoughtfully, and more radically. Rather than set the "transformative' against the

"normative, " as has sometimes been implied, it is through this critical process of nurturing transformation in self-understandings, uncertainties and identifications as teachers in higher education that I believe *the normative has the potential to enable the transformative.*

Returning to the notion of an *open system*, my sense of the transformative potential of Academic Literacies lies in being able to delineate living, creative yet protected spaces—within the curriculum and in institutional structures, in the interactions and relationships between and among students and teachers, in academic professional development programmes where discussions about assessment and literacy inevitably bring deficit and autonomous models of student writing to the surface, and, perhaps most importantly, in ourselves—where diverse and often conflicting beliefs, values and knowledges about writing in the academy can be made available for further thinking and ongoing transformation.

Mary R. Lea: Heuristic Thinking, Institutions and Transformational Possibilities

My interest has always been around the contested nature of textual practice. The ethnographic perspective—which permeates our Introduction and many contributions in this book—has been crucial here. It has helped me to develop my earlier work, which was concerned with making visible the detail of encounters between students and teachers around meaning making, towards the consideration of broader institutional perspectives.

So what do I mean by transformation when I am thinking institutionally? As I argued in Lea (2004), I believe that we need to attend to the workings of academic literacy practices, more widely, rather than focus our attention solely on students who may appear marginalized from the dominant practices and cultures of the academy. I think there is a danger that if we concentrate our attention on the latter it can mask the implications of academic literacies research and practice for laying bare the ways in which textual practices become instantiated through institutional processes and procedures. In fact, many of the chapters in this volume attest to how broader institutional practices are implicated in many day-to-day encounters around writing, assessment and feedback between students and their teachers. Deficit views of student writing still hold significant sway in higher education despite the extensive body of work in both academic literacies and other traditions of writing research which offers evidence to the contrary. My belief is that, in order to counter these deficit stances, we need to be interrogating practice at both an institutional and sectoral level, since the complexity and diversity of textual practices are evident across the institution and not merely in the practices of writing students. This might help us also to deal with the ongoing tension that is evident between conceptualizing "academic literacies as a heuristic" and more normative approaches

associated with "teaching academic literacies". As a heuristic—one that is in progress as illustrated in this book—Academic Literacies has illuminated and helped me to understand more about the contested space of knowledge making and to build on this in practical ways in a range of practice settings in higher education. In contrast, I see the normative approach as more orientated towards inducting students into academic and disciplinary writing conventions, what Brian Street and I have referred to as "academic socialization". Although in some ways these may appear to be rather crude distinctions, I have found them invaluable when it comes to examining institutional practice within the changing landscape of higher education. Indeed, they emerged for us from our own research.

The development of academic literacies as a field of study in the early 1990s reflected a very different landscape from that which is in evidence today. The last decade has seen a combination of both structural and technological change, reflected in emergent textual practices around teaching and learning. Potentially these signal a breaking down of old boundaries and opening up of new spaces for meaning making in higher education. In this regard, my own curiosity about writing and academic professional practice (Lea, 2012; Lea & Stierer, 2009) was sparked by my teaching role in academic and professional development with Open University teachers. This signaled to me how different experiences of writing, values about writing in relation to academic identity and the models of writing associated with specific professional fields all suggest a contested space for teachers' own writing and their students' writing (see Lea, 2012; Tuck, 2013).

When Brian and I undertook the research for our 1998 paper, the use of digital technologies was still in its infancy. As these have gained centre stage, practitioners and researchers—including myself—committed to an academic literacies orientation in their work have begun to explore the relationship between literacies and technologies (Robin Goodfellow & Lea, 2007; Bronwyn Williams 2009; Goodfellow & Lea, 2013; Lea & Jones, 2011; Colleen McKenna, 2012; Bronwyn Williams, 2009). Williams (2013) discusses how certain virtual learning environments reinforce conservative views of knowledge-making practices, for example where the software and design of the online teaching environment privileges print and makes it difficult for students to engage in multi-modal text making. Colleen McKenna and Jane Hughes (2013) take a literacies lens to explore what technologies do to writing practices, in particular the ubiquitous, institutional use of plagiarism detection software and how this is reframing the concept of plagiarism for students and their teachers, taking them away from useful discussions, in disciplinary learning contexts, around attribution and knowledge-making practices. Research I carried out with Sylvia Jones offered an alternative to the representation of students as "digital natives" (Marc Prensky, 2001), purportedly comfortable online but unable to engage in more conventional study practices, such as academic reading and writing. Our project explored this issue through a literacies lens, il-

lustrating the complex interrelationship between literacies and technologies with the potential to disrupt traditional academic literacy practices. We argued that in order to understand the changes that are taking place for learners in today's higher education more attention needs to be paid to textual practice around learning and less upon the technologies themselves and their applications. While on the one hand students accessed online resources and engaged in a wide range of digital and print-based textual practices, on the other we found that assignment rubrics did not generally reflect or engage with the rhetorical complexity of these practices. This meant that the opportunity for teachers to work explicitly with the processes of meaning making with their students was being missed. These examples signal to me the intransigent dominance of normative perspectives towards learning and literacies in a changing landscape and, therefore, the pressing need to think about transformation institutionally if we are going to work across the myriad nature of textual practices emerging in today's higher education.

Sally Mitchell: Open-ended Transformation: Ethnographic Lens and a Suspicious Tendency

In my experience transformation is not to be understood as a finished state, something that is fully achieved, rather it is an inclination towards envisaging alternative understandings of, and actions within any particular context. In this sense transformation is set against the normative and the status quo. And there are many things within educational settings which can become the object of transformative thinking. Clifford Geertz lists some of them when he calls for an "ethnography of thought, " a consideration of thought's "muscular matters":

> … translation, how meaning gets moved, or does not, reasonably intact from one sort of discourse to the next; about intersubjectivity, how separate individuals come to conceive, or do not, reasonably similar things; about how thought frames change (revolutions and all that), how thought provinces are demarcated ("today we have naming of fields"), how thought norms are maintained, thought models acquired, thought labor divided. (p. 154)

If an ethnography is a description and an interrogation of "what is" in a particular setting, to this I would add a suspicious orientation towards findings, and, after that, a tendency to pose the next question—the transformative question—"what if"?

Suspicion is a term I borrow from Paul Ricoeur who in *Freud and Philosophy* (1970) talks about the "hermeneutics of suspicion" as compared to the "hermeneutics of obedience". A suspicious tendency is a willingness to question how things—especially dominant things—are as they are, and *why*, and to seek for alternatives.

For me similar powerful ideas are the notion of taking a "paradigmatic" approach to "knowledge" (Aram Eisenschitz, 2000), and of acknowledging the crucial role of "warrants" and "backing' (Stephen Toulmin, 1958) in establishing, and hence critiquing, any position (Sally Mitchell & Mike Riddle, 2000). These ways of unpacking knowledge claims help to make sense both of what I observe in practice and of how I might want to respond.

Looking at a fraction of data from my study of "argument" in educational settings in the 1990s (Mitchell, 1994; Richard Andrews, 1995) may help to anchor what I mean. Picture an upper secondary school sociology class where students are gathered in small groups around tables to discuss Ivan Illich's (1976/1990) theory of "Iatrogenesis. " In one group, two students dominate: Andrew—questioning the value of hospital treatment and pointing out that treatment ultimately doesn't stop people from dying and is also costly; Susan—strongly resisting this view.

> Susan: Rubbish. No sorry Andrew, I don't agree.
>
> Andrew: Why?
>
> Susan: Because I wouldn't want to die and I don't think you would and if it comes to the choice where you'd got a chance of living, you would have it. You would have it!

In this scene "argument"—the object of my study—emerges as a conflict between what Susan knows and feels to be the case in her everyday experience and Andrew's espousal of the new, counter-commonsensical idea. She's annoyed, it seems, by his detaching *himself* (what *he* would do if he were ill and needed treatment) from the discussion. And indeed Andrew is getting more abstract in his thinking, becoming more "sociological. " Towards the end of the discussion he seems to grasp—to arrive at for himself—the "bigger picture" argument being put forward by Illich. Referring to the Health Service, he says:

> Andrew: So it's an excuse for, like, the government not intervening in causes of ill health, isn't it?

Andrew's aha! moment isn't the end of the story however: I observed how much of the argument that had emerged collaboratively and antagonistically through the peer to peer discussion dropped out of the writing the students subsequently did (see Mitchell, 1995). What accounted for this disappearance? Was it control over the medium, the medium itself, the fact that the writing would be read and assessed by the teacher as part of working towards a public exam, a resultant reluctance to take risks?

These kinds of question about "translation, how meaning gets moved, or does not …", about "intersubjectivity, how separate individuals come to conceive, or do not, reasonably similar things …" make clear that it was not possible thinking

about what I observed, to conceive of "argument" simply as a text or simply as talk. It was also absolutely necessary to think about beliefs, identities, permissions, what was tacit or silenced as well as what was shared—by whom and for what purposes.

Then comes the shift to new kinds of question. What other kinds of transformation besides those achieved through the class dialogue, would Andrew and Susan have had to make to express their insights powerfully in their written texts—and to have them recognized against official assessment criteria? What might have been done differently and by whom? What might make a difference? To what and to whom? What *kind of a difference*? And why? Seeking to address these questions suggests that there would be no such thing as straightforwardly "better argument. " This is absolutely not to say that change shouldn't be tried—and my study gave rise to numerous suggestions, including ways of bridging the gaps between generative and formal writing, meta-discussion of what counts as knowledge and so on.

To return to where I started, however. The combination of an ethnographic lens with a suspicious tendency, means that any transformative goal is never finalized; being socially, politically, ideologically constructed, what counts as "good" or "better" is always rightly the object of further scrutiny. Many of the contributions to this book suggest a willingness to engage in such scrutiny.

THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

The goal of this book is to offer examples from a range of institutional contexts of the ways in which teacher-researchers are working with Academic Literacies, engaging directly with the three questions set out in the first section of this Introduction. The contributions are 31 "case studies, " a term we use here to refer to the detailed discussion and/or illustration of specific instances of "transformative design" which are often also anchored to specific theoretical concerns. Contributors have worked hard to offer concise snapshots of their practice and key challenges in order to:

- illustrate how they have sought to "work with" Academic Literacies
- offer their perspectives on what constitutes transformative design in current practice
- provide resources for teacher-researchers working in a range of contexts which are practical in nature whilst being theoretically robust.

We have also included six contributions that we have called *Reflections*. These are comments and dialogue from scholars from different traditions and geolocations and reflect some of the "troublesome" areas we are all seeking to grapple with, both theoretically and practically. These are interspersed across the book.

We have organized the contributions into four main sections, the sections determined by the key focus of each contribution: Section 1—Transforming pedagogies of academic writing and reading: Section 2—Transforming the work of teach-

ing: Section 3—Transforming resources, genres and semiotic practices: Section 4—Transforming institutional framings of academic writing. Whilst we provide an introduction at the beginning of each section, we do of course recognize that there is considerable overlap in themes, questions and issues across the contributions and we strongly encourage readers to move back and forth across the book to follow threads of particular interest.

NOTES

1. "New" universities were created in 1992 in the United Kingdom, with the abolition of the binary divide between polytechnics and universities. Initially, they took students from the local community and had close links with colleges providing "Access to Higher Education" courses. Many of their students were the first in their family to attend university.

2. Tracking the use of terms is not straightforward. This is discussed in Lillis and Scott 2007.

3. These three points are discussed in more detail in Lillis 2013.

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